

Winter menaces camp as pipeline protesters dig in

By JAMES MACPHERSON
Associated Press

CANNON BALL, N.D. — So far, the hundreds of protesters fighting the Dakota Access pipeline have shrugged off the heavy snow, icy winds and frigid temperatures that have swirled around their large encampment on the North Dakota grasslands.

But as they defy government orders to abandon the camp and vow to stay put even after a surprise federal decision to further delay and review the project, demonstrators know the real deep freeze comes when the full force of the Great Plains winter descends on their community of nylon tents and teepees. Life-threatening wind chills and towering snow drifts could mean the greatest challenge is simple survival.

"I'm scared. I'm a California girl, you know?" said Loretta Reddog of Placerette, California, a protester who said she arrived several months ago with her two dogs and has yet to adjust to the harsher climate.

The government had ordered protesters to leave federal land by Monday, though authorities made no noticeable effort to enforce that mandate as the deadline passed. Many demonstrators insist they will stay for as long as it takes to permanently divert the \$3.8 billion pipeline, which the Standing Rock Sioux tribe believes threatens sacred sites and a river that provides drinking water for millions of people.

The pipeline is largely complete except for a short segment planned to pass beneath a Missouri River reservoir, and opponents scored a victory during the weekend when the Army said it would not approve a permit for the crossing while further assessing potential changes. The company doing the building says it is unwilling to reroute the project.

For several months, the government permitted the gathering, allowing its population to swell. The Seven Council Fires camp began growing in August as it took in the overflow crowd from smaller protest sites nearby. It now covers a half square mile, with living quarters that include old school buses, fancy motorhomes and dome-like yurts. Hale bales are piled around some teepees to keep out the wind. There's even a crude corral for horses.

The number of inhabitants has ranged from several hundred to several thousand. It has been called the largest gathering of Native American tribes in a century.

Increasingly, more permanent wooden structures are being erected, even though the Army Corps of Engineers considers them illegal on government property. The Standing Rock Sioux insist the land still belongs to their tribe under a nearly 150-year-old treaty.

Nate Bison, a member of South Dakota's Cheyenne River Sioux, came to the camp after quitting his job in



AP Photo/David Goldman
People walk along a snowy hillside in a storm at the Oceti Sakowin camp where people have gathered to protest the Dakota Access oil pipeline in Cannon Ball, N.D., Monday.

Trump not saying what he'll do about pipeline

CANNON BALL, N.D. (AP) — Industry leaders are urging President-elect Donald Trump to make approval of the disputed Dakota Access oil pipeline a "top priority" when he takes office next month, while opponents who have protested the project for months are vowing to stay put on their sprawling North Dakota encampment despite harsh winter weather and a tribal leaders' call to leave.

The moves come after the Army declined to issue a permit for the \$3.8 billion pipeline to cross under a Missouri River reservoir in southern North Dakota near the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation. While the Army's decision doesn't end the debate over the pipeline, industry analysts and the chairman of the Native American tribe that's led the protests said Monday they don't expect any developments for months.

Standing Rock Chairman Dave Archambault lauded the Army's decision as taking "tremendous courage," and National Congress of American Indians President Brian Cladoosby said it showed "respect for tribal sovereignty."

Tribe members are protesting the pipeline, spokesman Jason Miller told The Associated Press on Monday, but Miller wouldn't say whether Trump would reverse the Army's decision.

"We will review the full situation when we're in the White House and make the appropriate determination at that time," Miller said.

Las Vegas. He said last week that he intends to stay indefinitely, a prospect that may cause him to lose his house in Nevada.

"But since I've lived in these conditions before, to me it's not all that bad," he said.

Camp morale is high, he added, despite the onset of winter.

"Everybody I've talked to, you hear laughter and people just having a good time, enjoying the camaraderie and the support from each other," Bison said. "And the love. People are taking the shirts off their own backs for other

people. No one is left out that I've seen."

In the last week, the camp near the confluence of the Missouri and Cannonball rivers has been shrouded in snow, much of it compacted by foot and vehicle traffic.

Temperatures hovered in the 20s. This week's forecast calls for single digits and sub-zero wind chills.

Camp dwellers are getting ready for the hardships of a long stay. Mountains of donated food and water are being stockpiled, as is firewood, much of which has come from outside of North



AP Photo/David Goldman
U.S. Air Force veteran Jarrod Phillips, of St. Louis, left, serves stew to veterans at the Oceti Sakowin camp where people have gathered to protest the Dakota Access oil pipeline in Cannon Ball, N.D., Monday.



AP Photo/David Goldman
A woman offers cleansing smoke during a ceremony with military veterans and Native Americans on a closed bridge outside the Oceti Sakowin camp in Cannon Ball, N.D., Monday.

Dakota, the least-forested state in the nation. A collection of Army surplus tents with heating stoves serve as kitchen, dining hall, medical clinic and a camp-run school. Many of the smaller tents have become tattered by the wind.

Thane Maxwell, a 32-year-old Minneapolis native who has been living at the camp since July, said North Dakota's bitter cold will not deter protesters committed to fighting the pipeline, or "black snake" as they call it.

Tribes from the Great Plains states are adept at surviving brutal winters, he said. Others from warmer climates are being taught how to endure the frostbite-inducing temperatures that are sure to come.

"A lot of these people have been living in this climate for hundreds of years," said Maxwell, a member of Minnesota-based Honor the Earth Foundation. "It's a skill set that can be learned. The danger is escalating from law enforcement, not the weather."

Reddog said she has confidence in the camp community. "Everybody's really stepping up and taking care of each other," she said.

Maxwell put out a call on social media for more donations, seeking four-wheel drive trucks and foul-weather clothing. He also asked for gas masks and protective baseball and hockey gear to shield protesters from any future skirmishes with police.

More than 525 people from across the country have been arrested since August. In a recent clash between police and protesters near the path of the pipeline, officers used tear gas, rubber bullets and large water hoses in sub-freezing temperatures. Organizers said at least 17 protesters were taken to the hospital, some for hypothermia and one for an arm injury. One officer was hurt.

North Dakota has often conjured images of a windswept, treeless wasteland. The perception was so great that it led to a short-lived proposal to change the state's name by dropping "North" and leaving just "Dakota," to dispel the image of inhospitable winter weather.

Washington (AP) — The bizarre rumors began with a leaked email referencing Hillary Clinton and sinister interpretations of references to pizza parties. It morphed into fake online news stories about a child sex trafficking ring run by prominent Democrats operating out of a Washington, D.C., pizza joint.

On Sunday, it culminated in violence when police say a North Carolina man fired an assault rifle multiple times inside the Comet Ping Pong restaurant as he attempted to "self-investigate" a conspiracy theory known in the Twitterverse as "Pizzagate."

No one was hurt and the man was arrested. But the shooting alarmed those from neighboring businesses all the way to the White House about the real life dangers of fake news on the internet. One of those posting on the conspiracy theory is the son of President-elect Donald Trump's proposed national

security adviser. White House Spokesman Josh Earnest, asked about the shooting Monday, said, "There's no denying the corrosive effect that some of these false reports have had on our political debate ... It's deeply troubling that some of those false reports could lead to violence."

Edgar Maddison Welch, 28 of Salisbury, North Carolina, was arrested Sunday

afternoon outside the popular eatery in an affluent capital neighborhood, police said.

At a first appearance Monday in D.C. Superior Court, Welch appeared handcuffed in a white jumpsuit and was ordered held pending a hearing Thursday. A public defender representing him didn't immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

Comet's owner, James

36 dead in Oakland warehouse fire

By PAUL ELIAS AND JANIE HAR
Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Terry Ewing was among the anxious family and friends who received confirmation Monday of what he already knew in his heart: His girlfriend was among the three dozen killed in the Oakland warehouse fire.

Authorities confirmed the death of Ara Jo as the death toll rose to 36. Prosecutors also said Monday that murder charges could result from their investigation into the fire that broke out during an underground dance party at a building known as the "Ghost Ship."

Alameda County Sheriff Gregory Ahern told The Associated Press he didn't believe there would be additional bodies found in what is the most lethal building fire in the U.S. in more than a decade.

But he cautioned that it was "impossible to be absolutely positive" until the entire recovery effort is complete. Authorities had gone through about three-quarters of the building by Monday afternoon.

The laborious job of digging with shovels and buckets through the debris was suspended overnight because of a dangerously unstable wall. It resumed in the morning, though a rainstorm Tuesday could complicate the effort. The cluttered warehouse had been converted to artists' studios and illegal living spaces, and former denizens said it was a death trap of piled wood, furniture, snaking electrical cords and only two exits.



AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez
Alameda County Sheriff J.D. Nelson holds an aerial picture of a warehouse fire near the site Monday in Oakland, Calif.

Alameda County District Attorney Nancy O'Malley said Monday her office has sent a team to search for evidence of a crime in the warehouse, but has not yet determined whether a crime even occurred. She said potential charges could range from involuntary manslaughter to murder. She declined to say who her team has interviewed.

"It's too early to speculate on anything," O'Malley said. "We just started our investigation, and we owe it to the community and those who perished in this fire, and those who survived the fire to be methodical, to be thorough, and to take the amount of time it takes to be able to look at every piece of potential evidence."

Derick Ion Almerna and his partner, Micah Allison, ran the building's arts colony called the Satya Yuga collective.

Almerna told San Jose television station KNTV in an interview Monday that about 20 people lived there. He said he had gone to a hotel Friday night with his wife and children because he was exhausted.

"We're sorry to the families and all the friends that have lost loved ones," he said, with Allison by his side holding his hand. "I gladly would give my entire life of fortune, of wealth of experience again and again and again, and I say this to you and I say this to the camera and to whoever is watching me that I surrender everything."

Police: Fake news story led gunman to pizzeria

WASHINGTON (AP)

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AP Photo/Jose Luis Magana
The front door of Comet Ping Pong pizza shop, in Washington, Monday. A fake news story prompted a man to fire a rifle inside a popular Washington, D.C., pizza place as he attempted to "self-investigate" a conspiracy theory police said.

afternoon outside the popular eatery in an affluent capital neighborhood, police said.

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Alefantis, said in a statement Sunday night: "Let me state unequivocally: These stories are completely and entirely false, and there is no basis in fact to any of them. What happened today demonstrates that promoting false and reckless conspiracy theories comes with consequences."

Still, at least one person clinging to the conspiracy theories is prominently connected to Trump's transition team. Michael Flynn Jr. is an adviser to his father, Michael Flynn, whom Trump selected to serve as national security adviser.

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AP Photo/Gerald Herbert, File
In this Aug. 25 file photo, former Republican presidential candidate Dr. Ben Carson speaks before Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump's arrival at a campaign rally in Manchester, N.H.

Trump taps Carson for HUD secretary

By JONATHAN LEMIRE
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump chose retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson on Monday to be secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, raising fresh concerns about the lack of experience some of Trump's Cabinet picks have with agencies they're now being chosen to lead.

Carson, who opposed Trump in the Republican primaries, has no background in government or running a large bureaucracy.

In addition, South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, Trump's choice to be ambassador to the United Nations, has no foreign policy experience. Steve Mnuchin, a former Goldman Sachs partner and Hollywood executive, is Trump's man to lead the Treasury Department but has never worked in government. And retired Gen. James Mattis, a widely praised battlefield commander, spent decades in the Marines but now is tapped to run the nation's largest government agency, the Defense Department, with 740,000 civilian employees in addition to 1.3 million service personnel.

Democrats swiftly criticized Carson's qualifications for his job. House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi called him a "disconcerting and disturbingly unqualified choice." And New York Sen. Charles Schumer said he had "serious concerns about Dr. Carson's lack of expertise and experience in dealing with housing issues. Someone who is as anti-government as him is a strange fit for housing secretary, to say the least."

Carson would oversee a budget of nearly \$50 billion that provides rental assistance

for more than 5 million households. Demand for that assistance is high in part because housing costs are rising faster than incomes. HUD also promotes home ownership with the Federal Housing Administration underwriting about 1 in 6 mortgages issued in the U.S. The agency is charged with enforcing federal fair housing laws, too.

In a statement, Trump said he was "thrilled to nominate" Carson, describing his "brilliant mind" and his passion "about strengthening communities and families within those communities."

Carson, who grew up poor, quickly endorsed Trump after ending his own presidential bid despite Trump noting what he called Carson's "pathological temper." Carson has been coy about joining the new administration, saying shortly after Trump's election victory that he wasn't certain he'd fit into a Cabinet-style role in a job like Health and Human Services secretary.

"Ben shares my optimism about the future of our country," Trump said, "and is proud of ensuring that this is a presidency representing all Americans."

Heading a Cabinet agency is a huge bureaucratic job, with responsibility for overseeing massive budgets and thousands of employees. Choosing a leader without management experience could present challenges, warned Ben Chang, who worked under three different administrations.

"People can learn the policies and the talking points, but the transition will be dictated by their own managerial style," said Chang, who remembered incoming Secretary of State Colin Powell walking the halls to meet with career officers and not just his executive staff.

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