

Trump DMZ trip thwarted by fog

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — It was the big surprise that was not to be.

Donald Trump, America's showman president, hatched a secret plan to visit the Korean Peninsula's demilitarized zone before he ever left Washington last week on a five-nation tour of Asia, the White House said.

Trump teased a show-stopper during a toast at a state dinner being held in his honor in Seoul on Tuesday night, promising: "We're going to have an exciting day tomorrow for many reasons" that "people will find out."

With reporters sworn to secrecy and a beefed-up security retinue in tow, his helicopter took off in the dim early morning light Wednesday bound for the heavily fortified border.

Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders had announced the destination by scrawling the letters "DMZ" on a notepad, saying that was how she was told to communicate the sensitive information.

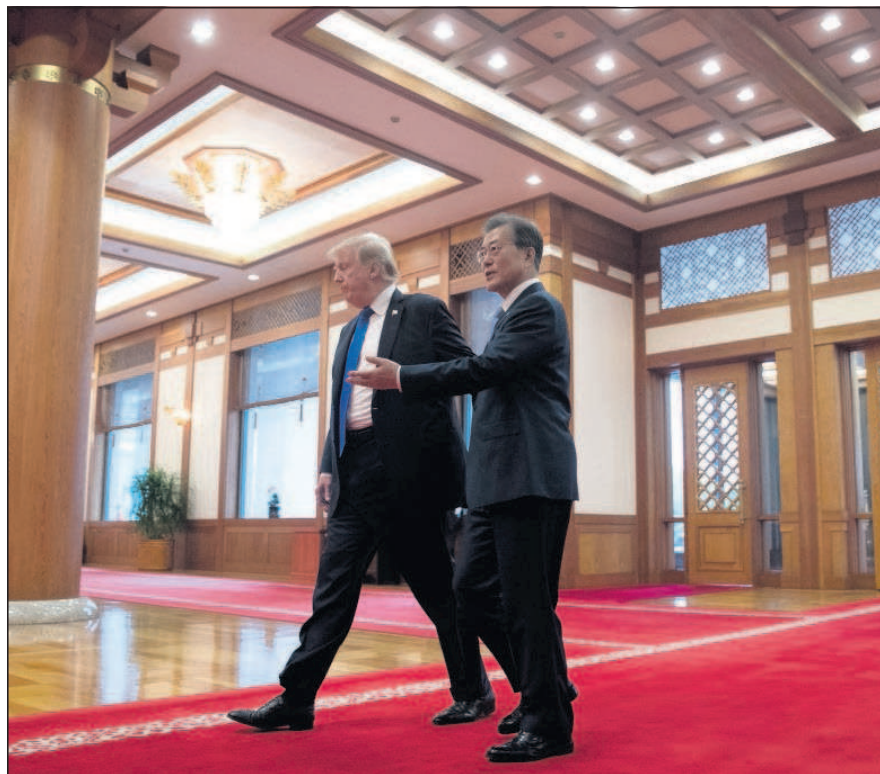
But plans for the grand reveal were botched by Mother Nature, and Sanders described Trump as disappointed — and "pretty frustrated."

The snafu is a particularly humbling moment for a win-focused president. Trump has employed increasingly tough rhetoric against North Korea over its continued nuclear and ballistic missile programs, but found his DMZ power-play derailed by weather.

Just after daybreak, Trump's motorcade had departed unannounced for Yongsan Garrison, a U.S. Army base in Seoul, where a fleet of military helicopters was standing by for the roughly 35-mile flight to the DMZ. Trump had been scheduled to arrive at Observation Post Ouellette, the closest post to the 1953 armistice line, where he would follow his three direct predecessors in peering into North Korea.

But visibility below one mile and misting conditions determined otherwise. Trump was traveling in a five-helicopter air convoy, consisting of two identical VH-60Ns — Marine One and a decoy — and three Chinooks carrying press, aides and heavily-armed security.

As they neared the DMZ landing site, the pilots were unable to see the other helicopters around them, Sanders said. Military pilots, in conjunction with



AP Photo/Andrew Harnik
U.S. President Donald Trump and South Korean President Moon Jae-in arrive Tuesday for a guest book signing ceremony at the Blue House in Seoul, South Korea. Trump is on a five-country trip through Asia traveling to Japan, South Korea, China, Vietnam and the Philippines.

the U.S. Secret Service, decided it was unsafe to continue, and the helicopters reversed course and returned to Yongsan.

Undeterred, Trump waited nearly an hour in his armored limousine near the helicopters in hopes of a clearing in the weather, but none was forthcoming. White House staff, including Sanders and chief of staff John Kelly, passed the time making frequent glances at the overcast sky.

Just before 9 a.m., the final call was made: the stop was off. Trump's 11 a.m. address to the South Korean National Assembly could not be delayed to accommodate a later trip. Trump had also been scheduled to visit with families of diplomats at the U.S. embassy in Seoul, but first lady Melania Trump filled that engagement.

Trump was set to depart Seoul for Beijing, China after the Assembly address. The elaborately choreographed arrival ceremony there, which has been timed to sunset, meant Trump could not afford to visit the DMZ later Wednesday.

In advance of the 12-day trip, White

House officials had publicly dismissed the idea of a visit to the DMZ as "a little bit of a cliché." But behind the scenes, Trump made clear to aides he intended to follow through with the presidential rite of passage.

Shrouded in secrecy and symbolism, presidential visits to American troops stationed in South Korea and the DMZ have become a staple of trips to the peninsula for decades. Every president since Ronald Reagan has visited the 1953 armistice line, except for George H.W. Bush, who visited when he was vice president. The show of bravado and support for one of America's closest military allies has evolved to include binoculars and bomber jackets.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in was set to join Trump at the DMZ, but was diverted as well. The South Korean leader landed at an alternate site about a 20-minute drive from the DMZ, but that was not a possibility for Trump, given the logistics of moving his larger motorcade along streets that hadn't been secured.

Democrats sweep Virginia, New Jersey governor's races

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Voters in Virginia and New Jersey gave Democratic gubernatorial candidates large victories Tuesday and sent a clear message of rebuke to Republican President Donald Trump.

In Virginia's hard-fought contest, Democratic Lt. Gov. Ralph Northam defeated Republican Ed Gillespie. In New Jersey, front-running Democrat Phil Murphy overcame Republican Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno to succeed unpopular GOP Gov. Chris Christie.

"The days of division are over. We will move forward," Murphy said in his victory speech.

The wins in Virginia and New Jersey are a morale boost to Democrats who had so far been unable to channel anti-Trump energy into success at the ballot box in a major election this year.

"The people are gonna rise up. They're not gonna take what he says and this is not fake news," said Leanna Barnes, a 76-year-old from East Orange, New Jersey, who voted for Murphy and added she saw his victory as a message to the president.

Virginia college student Tamia Mallory said she began paying attention to her state's gubernatorial race when she saw tweets from Trump endorsing Gillespie. That motivated her to examine the race and find out who was running against Gillespie, she said.

"It was kind of an anti-Trump vote," Mallory said. Northam, the state's

lieutenant governor, repeatedly sought during long months of divisive campaigning to tie Gillespie to the president. His victory was in large part due to the surge in anti-Trump sentiment since the president took office. Democrats said they had record levels of enthusiasm heading into the race in Virginia, a swing-state and the only Southern state that Trump lost last year.

Gillespie, meanwhile, sought to keep Trump at a distance throughout the campaign but tried to rally the president's supporters with hard-edge attack ads focused on illegal immigration and preserving Confederate statues. The strategy was criticized by Democrats and some Republicans as race baiting, but drew praise from former Trump strategist Steve Bannon and others as a canny way to win a state that voted for Hillary Clinton last year.

Trump lent limited pre-election support to Gillespie with robocalls and tweets.

In one call, Trump said Gillespie shared his views on immigration and crime and would help "Make America Great Again." Trump also said Northam would be a "total disaster" for Virginia.

But after Tuesday's loss, Trump suggested that Gillespie hurt himself by not more closely aligning himself with the president.

"Ed Gillespie worked hard but did not embrace me or what I stand for," Trump said in a tweet after Northam won.

BRIEFLY

Texas church gunman once escaped from mental health center

SUTHERLAND SPRINGS, Texas (AP) — The gunman who carried out the massacre of 26 people at a small-town Texas church briefly escaped from a mental health center in New Mexico in 2012 and got in trouble for bringing guns onto a military base and threatening his superiors there, police reports indicate.

Devin Patrick Kelley was also named as a suspect in a 2013 sexual assault in his Texas hometown of New Braunfels, about 35 miles from the scene of the church attack.



Kelley

The records that emerged Tuesday add up to at least three missed opportunities that might have offered law enforcement a way to stop Kelley from having access to guns long before he slaughtered much of the congregation in the middle of a Sunday service. Kelley died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound after he was chased by bystanders and crashed his car.

The Air Force confirmed Tuesday that Kelley had been treated in the facility after he was placed under pretrial confinement stemming from a court-martial on charges that he assaulted his then-wife and hit her child hard enough to fracture the boy's skull.

Involuntary commitment to a mental institution would have been grounds to deny him a weapon provided that records of his confinement were submitted to the federal database used to conduct background checks on people who try to purchase guns.

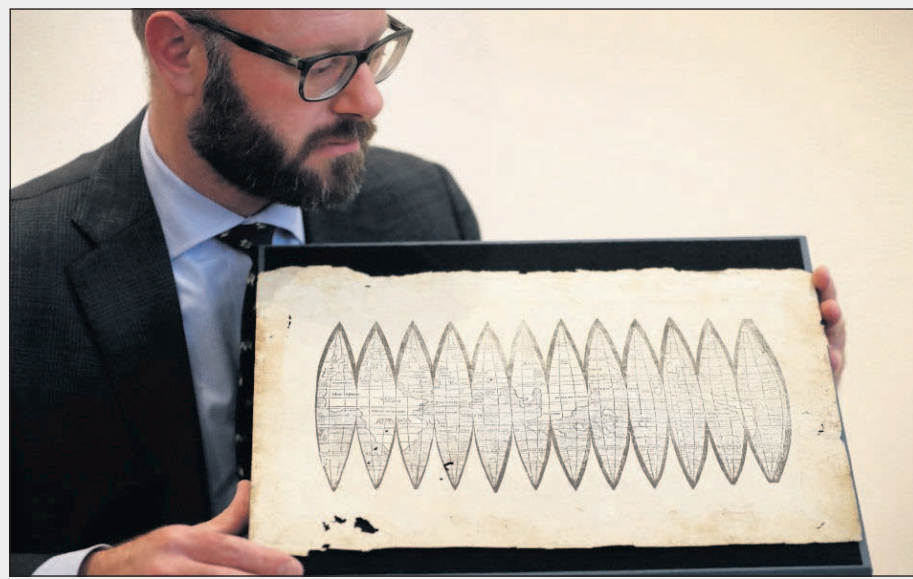
Kelley was also caught trying to bring guns onto Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico when he was stationed there, according to an El Paso, Texas, police report released Tuesday.

While in the military, Kelley, who was 21 at the time, made death threats against superior officers, according to the June 2012 report, which also mentioned the military charges. He was eventually sentenced to 12 months of confinement for the assault.

The Air Force acknowledged Monday that it did not enter Kelley's criminal history into the federal database as required by military rules, another way he could have been denied a weapon.

Had Kelley been convicted of sexual assault, he would likely have been prevented from purchasing a gun because federal guidelines prohibit sales to anyone convicted of a felony punishable by more than one year in prison. The Comal County sheriff said he was reviewing whether his department mishandled the sexual assault investigation.

Authorities recovered a Ruger AR-556 rifle at the church and two handguns from the shooter's vehicle. All three weapons were purchased by Kelley, said Fred Milanowski, the agent in charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives in Houston.



AP Photo/Kirsty Wigglesworth
A world map in the form of a set of gores for a terrestrial globe, from 1507 by cartographer Martin Waldseemueller is displayed by Julian Wilson, specialist from the books and manuscripts department, at Christie's auction rooms in London, Tuesday.

Oldest map to use word 'America' up for sale

LONDON (AP) — Christie's auction house said Tuesday it has discovered a previously unknown copy of a 510-year-old map dubbed "America's birth certificate" because it gave the New World its name.

Julian Wilson, a senior specialist in Christie's books department, said the two-dimensional globe created in 1507 by pioneering German cartographer Martin Waldseemueller is "the earliest piece of writing that uses the word America."

Waldseemueller decided to name the landmass after Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci, who helped show that lands being explored by Europeans in the 15th and 16th centuries were not — as Christopher Columbus initially surmised — part of Asia.

A wall-map version of the same chart by Waldseemueller, purchased by the Library of Congress for \$10 million in 2003, has been called "America's birth certificate," and Wilson said the name equally applies to this version.

"This is the first time that America is on the map, in more ways than one," he said. Christie's plans to offer the map for sale in London Dec. 13, and set the price it is estimated to fetch at between 600,000 pounds (\$788,000) and 900,000 pounds (\$1.2 million). Four other copies of the map exist in museums and private collections, but this one was previously unknown.

The map is the oldest-known printed globe, designed to be cut out and pasted around a wooden ball. It is also the first map to show North and South America as separate continents and to depict a distinct Pacific Ocean, which no European had then seen.

Wilson said the map is remarkably accurate. Waldseemueller was one of a group of cartographers based in Saint-Die, France that charted discoveries made by Spanish and Portuguese explorers and had access to the newest and most detailed information.

He said the map has "some quirks," including "a very large Sri Lanka and a very small India." Japan is placed in the mid-Pacific and Australia is missing.

Repeal of medical deduction prompts tax bill pushback

WASHINGTON (AP) — The medical expense deduction targeted for repeal by GOP tax writers has helped to offset costs including nursing home care and fertility treatments, laser eye surgery and travel out-of-state for a second opinion on a rare cancer.

Several million people unlucky enough to face big medical bills not covered by their insurance would lose a valuable deduction under the House GOP bill. Groups representing older people and patients are trying to save it.

"Anybody who is paying for the cost of nursing home care is paying a great deal

of money, and they are going to lose that deduction, and their taxes are going to go up," said Thomas DeCoursey, a retired lawyer from Kansas, in his 70s.

He relies on the deduction to help offset costs associated with nursing home care for his wife, who has Alzheimer's. Some of his own medical expenses also factor in. DeCoursey estimates that in a couple of years their annual costs will pass \$100,000.

"There are a lot of people in my shoes," said DeCoursey, who lives in Leawood, a well-to-do Kansas City suburb that voted for President Donald Trump last year.

About 9 million households — 6 percent of tax filers — claim the medical expense deduction, said Gordon Mermin, a senior researcher at the nonpartisan Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center. The annual cost

to the U.S. Treasury is about \$10 billion, which ranks it as a modest tax break. Those who benefit tend to be middle-income and upper-middle-income people.

"For the people who claim it, it is not a trivial benefit," said Mermin.

The medical expense deduction is also versatile. In addition to nursing home care, not generally covered by medical insurance plans, it can be used for:

- Transportation expenses to a top hospital, like a comprehensive cancer center.
- Some long-term care insurance premiums.
- Installing specialized medical equipment in a patient's home or vehicle.
- Dental procedures.
- Bills from out-of-network doctors.

"When you are faced with large medical costs and don't have a lot of options, this is one that helps people," said Barbara Collura, president of RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association. Most insurance plans do not cover fertility treatments, which can cost from \$15,000 to \$30,000. The deduction can offset some of that cost.

Friend says Rand Paul does not know what prompted attack

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — U.S. Sen. Rand Paul does not know why a longtime neighbor tackled him in his yard and broke five of his ribs, sidelining him from the Senate, a close friend of the lawmaker said Tuesday.

Rob Porter, who says he has known Paul for 20 years, visited the senator on Saturday just one day after the attack. He said Paul was mowing his yard and had stopped to remove a limb when 59-year-old Rene Boucher, Paul's neighbor for 17 years, tackled him from behind, slamming him to the ground. Porter said Paul was wearing ear protection and did not hear Boucher coming.



Paul

For days, mystery has swirled around what led to the assault, from Washington, D.C., to the high-end gated community where both men live. Rumors spread in the community that the attack stemmed from a festering neighborhood dispute about lawn debris. But Porter said in all the years he has known Paul, he has never heard him mention Boucher or any type of yard issue with his neighbor.

"Rand doesn't really have any interaction with the guy. If there was a dispute, I do believe Rand wasn't aware of it," Porter said. "I have been to their house socially and for a variety of reasons for going on 20 years, I've never heard (Paul) mention (Boucher), good or bad."

The FBI is investigating the assault to see if it was politically motivated. Boucher's attorney, Matt Baker, said the attack had "absolutely nothing to do" with politics but was "a very regrettable dispute" that was "trivial."