

Snowman pops up in Vegas as city sees rare winter weather

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Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Winter storms in the U.S. Southwest brought rare snowfall Thursday to the Las Vegas Strip, dusting casino marquees and prompting revelers to erect a snowman near the famous “Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas” sign.

The National Weather Service reported the first significant snowfall at McCarran International Airport in a decade with 0.8 inches falling by Thursday afternoon.

“We expected cold, but not snow,” tourist Lila de Guerrero said after taking a photo at the Las Vegas sign wearing a puffer coat and hat.

De Guerrero, who is visiting from El Salvador, said it was the first time she had ever seen snow.

German tourist Daniela Huber said she was surprised that her vacation to the desert wasn’t much of an escape from winter.

“We thought it was strange because we came from Germany, where it snows all the time,” she said.

Some suburban foothill areas near Las Vegas were pillowy white after getting several inches of snow. On the casino-lined Las



AP Photo/John Locher

A man, who declined to give his name, takes a picture of a small snowman at the “Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas” sign along the Las Vegas Strip on Thursday in Las Vegas.

Vegas Strip, the snow was fleeting, melting faster than a bad gamblers’ luck.

Outside the city, authorities closed portions of the main routes from Las Vegas to

Los Angeles and Phoenix because of snow, ice and limited visibility.

About 50 miles of Interstate 15 closed from Primm, Nevada, to Baker, California.

The Nevada Department of Transportation reported a 22-mile line of cars and trucks backed up on U.S. 93 between Boulder City, Nevada, and Kingman, Arizona.

Snowstorms also blanketed other parts of the Southwest, further easing drought conditions while clogging traffic in California, and forcing the closure of Interstate 40 and an airport in Flagstaff, Arizona.

Barney Helmick, director of the Flagstaff Pulliam Airport, said its only runway closed when the visibility level hit zero. Intense snow also forced the closure of schools and businesses in the region.

Snow coated large areas of the desert outside Los Angeles and left traffic stalled near Joshua Tree National Park. Wet weather this winter has almost washed drought conditions out of California, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.

In Nevada, snow delayed flights at McCarran airport and traffic on highways.

“We don’t have snowplows,” airport spokeswoman Christine Crews said as she tallied about 100 flight cancellations because of snow and ice. “But we have airfield maintenance vehicles and sweepers ready to go.”

Some flight delays reached more than two hours, the Federal Aviation Administration said.

Judge imposes gag order on Trump confidant Stone after post

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge issued a broad gag order forbidding Roger Stone to discuss his criminal case with anyone and gave him a stinging reprimand on Thursday over the longtime Trump confidant’s posting of a photo of the judge with what appeared to be crosshairs of a gun.

She promised to throw him behind bars if he violates the court order in any way.

U.S. District Judge Amy Berman Jackson said that it would be “foolhardy” for her not to take any action over the Instagram post and that Stone would “pose a danger” to others in the case if the conditions of his release weren’t modified to include a gag order.

“Roger Stone fully understands the power of words and the power of symbols and there’s nothing ambiguous about crosshairs,” the judge said. “How hard was it to come up with a photo that didn’t have a crosshairs in the corner?” she quipped at one point.

Stone has pleaded not guilty to charges

he lied to Congress, engaged in witness tampering and obstructed a congressional investigation into possible coordination between Russia and Donald Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign. The charges stem from conversations he had during the campaign about WikiLeaks, the anti-secrecy group that released material stolen from Democratic groups, including Hillary Clinton’s campaign.

New election ordered in disputed North Carolina House race

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — North Carolina’s elections board Thursday ordered a new election in the nation’s last undecided congressional race after the Republican candidate conceded his lead was tainted by evidence of ballot-tampering by political operatives working for him.

The State Board of Elections voted 5-0 in favor of a do-over in the mostly rural 9th Congressional District but did not immediately set a date.

In moving to order a new election, board

chairman Bob Cordle cited “the corruption, the absolute mess with the absentee ballots.”

The board action came after GOP candidate Mark Harris, in a surprising turn, dropped his bid to be declared the winner and instead called for a new election. He reversed course on the fourth day of a board hearing at which investigators and witnesses detailed evidence of ballot fraud by operatives on his payroll.

“Through the testimony I’ve listened to over the past three days, I believe a new election should be called,” Harris said. “It’s become clear to me that the public’s confidence in the 9th District seat general election has been undermined to an extent that a new election is warranted.”

Threat allegations keep Coast Guard officer jailed

GREENBELT, Md. (AP) — A Coast Guard officer suspected of drawing up a hit list of top Democrats and network TV journalists spent hours on his work computer researching the words and deeds of infamous bombers and mass shooters while also stockpiling weapons, federal prosecutors

said Thursday.

Lt. Christopher Paul Hasson, 49, was ordered held without bail on drug and gun charges while prosecutors gather evidence to support more serious charges involving what they portrayed as a domestic terror plot by a man who espoused white-supremacist views.

Hasson, a former Marine who worked at Coast Guard headquarters in Washington on a program to acquire advanced new cutters for the agency, was arrested last week. Investigators gave no immediate details on how or when he came to their attention.

Federal agents found 15 guns, including several rifles, and over 1,000 rounds of ammunition inside his basement apartment in Silver Spring, Maryland.

In court papers this week, federal prosecutors said he compiled what appeared to be a computer-spreadsheet hit list that included House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer and presidential hopefuls Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand, Elizabeth Warren, Cory Booker and Kamala Harris. Also mentioned were such figures as MSNBC’s Chris Hayes and Joe Scarborough and CNN’s Chris Cuomo and Van Jones.

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