

## BRIEFLY

### At least 8 died in marina boat dock fire in Alabama

SCOTTSBORO, Ala. — At least eight people were killed early Monday in an explosive fire that consumed dozens of vessels docked at a marina along the Tennessee River in northern Alabama.

Scottsboro Fire Chief Gene Necklaus said all eight people who were known to be missing have been confirmed dead, and “that number could go up, because we don’t know how many were on boats” that sank.

The fire began just after midnight at Jackson County Park Marina and quickly consumed the dock as people were sleeping. The wooden dock with at least 35 vessels went up in flames and an aluminum roof that covered many of the boats melted and collapsed, cutting off escape routes and raining debris over the area as boaters leaped into the river.

“It was scary. The worst thing for me is you could hear people screaming for help, and there was nothing we could do. Nobody could do anything to get to them,” said Julie Jackson, who lives with her husband and son in a houseboat on another dock that did not burn at the marina.

At least seven people were sent to hospitals suffering from exposure to the flames or the frigid water.

MIAMI — An ally of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro has hired a Washington lobbyist whose business has boomed under the Trump administration as part of a \$12.5 million effort to ease sanctions and reset bilateral relations as the U.S.-backed campaign to oust the socialist leader stalls.

The Maduro government’s top lawyer, Inspector General Reinaldo Muñoz, hired lobbyist Robert Stryk’s Sonoran Policy Group as part of a larger contract he signed with Foley & Lardner, a law firm with offices in Washington.

Both the law firm and Stryk’s Sonoran Policy Group registered as agents of Muñoz in separate filings with the Justice Department that were published Monday on the agency’s website.

Their work includes “developing a strategy to approach the U.S. Government in support of delisting the Foreign Principal or other parties subject to U.S. economic sanctions due to their connections to the Republic,” according to the filing by Foley, which in turn is paying \$2 million to hire Stryk as a consultant.

The outreach comes as U.S. support for opposition leader Juan Guaidó, whom it recognizes as Venezuela’s rightful president, has come under fire.

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## China extends Lunar New Year holiday to fight virus

BEIJING — China on Monday expanded its sweeping efforts to contain a deadly virus, extending the Lunar New Year holiday to keep the public at home and avoid spreading infection as the death toll rose to 81.

Mongolia closed its vast border with China, and Hong Kong and Malaysia announced they would bar entry to visitors from the Chinese province at the center of the outbreak following a warning by medical officials that the virus’s ability to spread was growing. Travel agencies were ordered to cancel group tours nationwide, adding to the rising economic losses.

The death toll rose Monday when the southern island province of Hainan in the South China Sea reported its first fatality, an 80-year-old woman whose family arrived from Wuhan on Jan. 17.

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# GOP defends Trump as Bolton book adds pressure for witnesses

By ERIC TUCKER, ZEKE MILLER AND LISA MASCARO  
*Associated Press*

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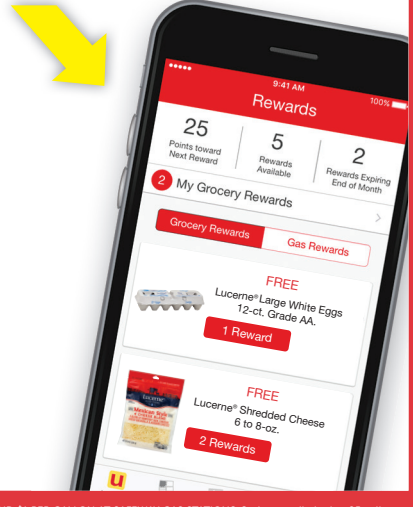
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