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Ballistic missile warning sent in error by Hawaii authorities

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - An emergency alert sent on Saturday to Hawaii's residents warning of an imminent ballistic missile attack was transmitted mistakenly by state authorities due to human error, Hawaii's governor and emergency management chief said.

State officials and the U.S. military's Pacific Command confirmed that there was no actual threat to the state.

Governor David Ige, a Democrat, said in comments aired on CNN, "I was awakened by the alert like everyone else here in the state of Hawaii. It was unfortunate and regrettable. We will be looking at how we can improve the procedures so it doesn't happen again."

The alert, sent to mobile phones and aired on television and radio, was issued amid high international tensions over North Korea's development of ballistic nuclear weapons.

Ige, who apologized for the incident, said the alert was sent out by mistake during a shift change at the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency. He said such shift changes occur three times a day every day of the year.

Vern Miyagi, the agency's administrator, said in comments also aired on CNN, "It was an inadvertent mistake. The change of shift is about three people. That should have been caught. ... It should not have happened."

The U.S. Federal Communications Commission announced it was initiating a full investigation. The FCC has jurisdiction over the emergency alert system. Earlier this week, FCC chair-

man Ajit Pai said the agency would vote at its January meeting to enhance the effectiveness of wireless emergency alerts, which have been in place since 2012.

Miyagi said there was a "check list" that should have been followed. He said, "I think we have the process in place. It's a matter of executing the process. I think it's human error."

"This will not happen again," he added.

Media reports said it took 38 minutes for the initial alert to be corrected.

After the alert was sent, the Emergency Management Agency later said on Twitter: "NO missile threat to Hawaii."

An information related to a false emergency alert is displayed in Oahu, U.S., January 13, 2018 in this picture obtained from social media. Courtesy of Instagram /@sighpoutshrug /via REUTERS

A spokeswoman for U.S. Representative Tulsi Gabbard said the congresswoman checked with the state agency that issued the alert and was told it was sent in error. Gabbard then tweeted, "HAWAII - THIS IS A FALSE ALARM. THERE IS NO INCOMING MISSILE TO HAWAII. I HAVE CONFIRMED WITH OFFICIALS THERE IS NO INCOMING MISSILE."

Gabbard also tweeted the mistaken alert, which stated: "EMERGENCY ALERT BALLISTIC MISSILE THREAT INBOUND TO HAWAII. SEEK IMMEDIATE SHELTER. THIS IS NOT A DRILL."

North Korean President Kim Jong-un has threatened to unleash his country's growing missile weapon capability against the U.S. territory of Guam or U.S. states, prompting President Donald Trump to threaten tough actions against Pyongyang,



A screen capture from a Twitter account showing a missile warning for Hawaii, U.S., January 13, 2018 in this picture obtained from social media. Courtesy of TWITTER @wpugh/via REUTERS

including "fire and fury." Trump was wrapping up a round of golf at Trump International Golf Club in West Palm Beach, Florida when the incident was unfolding. White House spokeswoman Lindsay Walters said Trump was briefed and that it "was purely a state exercise."

Hawaii State Representative Matt LoPresti, described his family's reaction upon receiving the alert, adding that

"someone should lose their job if this was an error."

"We took shelter immediately ... in the bathtub with my children, saying our prayers," LoPresti told CNN.

"I was wondering why we couldn't hear the emergency sirens. I didn't understand that. And that was my first clue that maybe something was wrong, whether a hack or an error. But we took it as seriously as a heart attack," LoPresti added.

Hawaii, a chain of islands in the

Pacific Ocean, has a population of about 1.4 million people, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, and is home to Pacific Command, the Navy's Pacific Fleet and other elements of the American military.

In November, Hawaii said it would resume monthly statewide testing of Cold War-era nuclear attack warning sirens for the first time in at least a quarter of a century, in preparation for a possible missile strike from North Korea, state officials said at the time.

'Wintry precipitation' possible for Houston on Tuesday Weather

Cold weather will continue to blanket Houston throughout Martin Luther King Jr. weekend and early next week, according to the National Weather Service.

The opportunity to see some more white stuff comes Tuesday as temperatures fall, creating the possibility of a "wintry precipitation mix." Forecasters said the precipitation depends on how fast temperatures cool down and the pace of dry air entering the region.

If temperatures don't fall fast enough or the dry air comes into the region too quickly, then the chance for frozen precipitation decreases.

The weather will remain sunny and clear through the weekend with lows dipping

into the 30s and 40s. On Monday, the temperature will climb back up into the 60s, but get much colder as the week progresses."



South Korea and North Korea to hold working-level talks on January 15

SEOUL (Reuters) - North Korea and South Korea have agreed to hold working-level talks at the Tongil Pavilion on the North Korean side of the truce village of Panmunjom on Jan. 15, South Korea's unification ministry said in a statement on Saturday.

The delegation led by the unification minister Cho Myung-kyun, will be sent to hold talks on the prospects of North Korea sending its performance art group to the Winter Olympics in South Korea, the ministry said in a statement. Inter-Korean talks are held alternately at the Peace

House, which is on the South Korean side of Panmunjom in the demilitarized zone, and Tongil Pavilion in the North.

"In addition, the ministry also requested for a quick response for South Korea's proposal on Jan. 12 to have working-level talks about the North's participation in Pyongchang winter Olympics," added the ministry.

Officials from North and South earlier this week said they had agreed to hold negotiations to resolve problems and avert accidental conflict, after their first official dialogue in more than

two years amid high tension over the North's weapons program.

South Korea had also said that it is seeking to form a combined women's hockey team with the North. The North Korea's International Olympics Committee (IOC) official said the committee is considering the proposal, while the two sides will also have talks hosted by IOC on Jan. 20.

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Texas Senator John Cornyn Expressed Concern Over Disaster Relief For Puerto Rico, Florida, Texas And The West Being "Slow Walked"

Funds For Disaster Aid Become Hostage To Funding Fight

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

A massive disaster aid package is getting caught up in a broader political fight on Capitol Hill over spending, immigration and other contentious issues.

The stalled relief money may wind up in the next round of government funding, as the issue is quickly being overtaken by a race to prevent a shutdown and automatic across-the-board spending cuts.

Senate Democrats are holding up the disaster aid because they say it doesn't provide enough relief to hurricane-ravaged places like Puerto Rico. They are seeking changes to the legislation before allowing it to move forward.

But some Republicans have reacted angrily to the move, accusing Democratic senators of blocking the disaster bill so that they can have more leverage in the spending talks.

"Why do Senate Dems slow walk disaster relief (for Puerto Rico, Florida, Texas and the West) plus defense needs in order to force a DACA deal?" Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas) said Friday in a tweet, referring to the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which Trump is ending.



Democrats are seeking protections for people enrolled in DACA, a program that has allowed some immigrants who came to the country illegally as children to live and work in the United States.

Cornyn said lawmakers "are negotiating in good faith on DACA and will beat the deadline if Dems do so as well; no need to abandon USG's other responsibilities."

The impasse in the Senate comes after House members from Florida and Texas demanded that Congress tackle the disaster funding before the end of 2017.

Right before leaving town for the holidays, the House passed a mammoth \$81 billion relief bill — nearly double the White House's request — aimed at helping communities impacted by recent hurricanes in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, as well as wildfires in California.

The package includes nearly \$28 billion for the Federal Emergency Management Agen-



cy, more than \$26 billion in community block grants and more than \$12 billion for the Army Corps of Engineers. Congress has already approved more than \$50 billion in disaster aid since September to help areas affected by hurricanes and wildfires. If the latest \$81 billion package is enacted, it would bring the total amount spent on helping people affected by natural disasters to more than \$130 billion.



Puerto Rico Devastation 2017

House GOP leadership was forced to pass the relief money as a stand-alone bill, rather than part of last month's continuing resolution (CR), after some conservatives balked at spending \$81 billion without offsets.

But Senate GOP leadership punted the recovery aid into 2018, leaving the bill to languish as leaders scramble to hash out a deal to fund the government past Jan. 19 and raise federal spending caps.

Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer

(D-N.Y.) signaled the disaster money has been folded into the larger spending talks, urging leadership to secure a "global" agreement that addresses several outstanding issues, including the relief funding.

"We said we want to come to an agreement and a quick agreement, but it has got to be fair, and it has got to be involving the things we think are important, as well as the things they think are important," Schumer told reporters, referring to a meeting between congressional leadership and top White House officials.

Democrats argue they were left out of the loop on the disaster aid bill by the Trump administration and congressional Republicans.

Schumer said the House-passed bill didn't do enough to help Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands or states ravaged by fires.

"The administration submitted its proposal three weeks ago. They didn't consult us," he said.

Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), who recently visited Puerto Rico with Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.), called the Trump administration's response to the devastation on the island territory "shameful and disgraceful."

As of late last month, nearly half of Puerto Ricans were still without electricity. Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló has asked for more than \$94 billion in recovery aid. Blumenthal, noting that Rosselló's request



A neighborhood near Lake Houston under water following Hurricane Harvey.

is far higher than what is in the House bill, said the total funding in the legislation "has to be vastly increased."

"In the short-term relief package that is coming to us from the House of Representatives, we must make sure that some of that aid, a significant proportion, is specifically targeted to Puerto Rico," he said. Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) placed the House-passed bill on the Senate calendar. The move will allow him to bring it up once lawmakers are able to work out a larger agreement.

But in order for McConnell to fast-track an emergency relief measure in the Senate, he'll need unanimous consent — meaning not a single senator objects. And Democrats aren't the only ones who have problems with the legislation.

Sen. Richard Shelby (R-Ala.), asked about the status of the disaster bill, pointed to Cornyn and Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas), who have been demanding revisions to the measure.

Cornyn, whose state was hit by Hurricane Harvey, said the House's top-line number of \$81 billion could remain, with senators shuffling around how the money is allocated.

"We're visiting with the Appropriations Committee members here in the Senate to talk about what modifications might need to be made, but I think they could all be made within that top line," he said.

Cornyn, who is looking at increasing the block grant funding, predicted Democrats would also try to increase the overall price of the bill to get more help for Puerto Rico.

"We're happy to work with them to try to come up with something that works for everybody," he said.

The haggling over disaster aid comes amid fierce debates over government funding and immigration.

Democrats believe the fights over preventing a government shutdown and increasing the budget caps give them leverage because Republicans will need their votes in the Senate to do both. They want to ensure that there is also a DACA fix and an equal funding increase in the package for defense and nondefense programs, among other things.

But with congressional leadership appearing to make little progress on a deal this week, it's likely that another short-term CR will be needed on Jan. 19 to give appropriators more time to write a massive, trillion-dollar "omnibus" package.

The disaster aid could hitch a ride on the spending bill, but that may cause consternation among fiscal conservatives in the House, who signaled last month that they would oppose the December CR if it included emergency relief money.

House Democrats refused to supply votes for that stopgap measure, so GOP leadership had to corral enough Republican support to avoid a shutdown.



A man and his dog grieve following the destruction of Hurricane Harvey.

This time around, however, the funding package may have some Democratic buy-in if leaders reach a broader deal.

And some House Republicans signaled that they would be open to attaching a revised disaster aid bill to a spending measure, as long as there is bipartisan agreement in both chambers on the issue.

"I don't have any objections to that, there just has to be an agreement," Rep. Tom Cole (R-Okla.), a senior appropriator, told The Hill on Thursday.

"You can't force anything down the other side's throat. We passed this through the House, explain to us what your problem is, and let's find a way to deal with these problems together." (Courtesy <http://thehill.com/homenews/senate>)

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A Snapshot Of The World



Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipient Jovan Rodriguez prepares to go to work in his apartment in New York



Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients Gloria Mendoza and Jovan Rodriguez sit down and laminate their protest sign to take to demonstrations regarding their situation in New York



Citroen WRC team signing autographs at Autosport International Show in Birmingham on 11th January 2018 // Leo Francis/Red Bull Content Pool



Aeromexico Boeing 737-752 is seen between hanging clothes as it prepare to land at the Benito Juarez International Airport in Mexico City



A Saudi woman is seen during the soccer match between Al-Ahli against Al-Batin at the King Abdullah Sports City in Jeddah



Haiti's President Moise greets attendees during an event in commemoration of the eighth anniversary of a devastating earthquake, in Port-au-Prince



U.S. President Donald Trump scratches his chin before signing a proclamation to honor Martin Luther King Jr. in the Roosevelt Room of the White House



Handball - Men's EHF European Handball Championship - preliminary round Group B - France v Norway - Zatika Sports Centre, Porec, Croatia - January 12, 2018.



People line-up to attend the funeral of Thomas S. Monson, President of the Mormon Church, in Salt Lake City, Utah



Vanessa Tijerina addresses the panel about her 13-year-old special needs child who has been denied special education for four years on December 13, 2016. U.S. Department of Education officials held a meeting in Edinburg on their tour of Texas to hear community members' experiences with special education, continuing an investigation of whether Texas is capping services for students with disabilities.

A U.S. Department of Education investigation concluded Thursday that Texas violated federal law by failing to ensure students with disabilities were properly evaluated and provided with an adequate public education.

After interviews and monitoring visits with parents, school administrators and state officials, the federal investigation found that the Texas Education Agency effectively capped the statewide percentage of students who could receive special education services and incentivized some school districts to deny services to eligible students. It also told TEA that it needs to take several corrective actions, including producing documentation that the state is properly monitoring school districts' evaluations for special education, developing a plan and timeline for TEA to ensure that each school district will evaluate students previously denied needed services and creating a plan and timeline for TEA to provide guidance to educators on how to identify and educate students with disabilities.



"Far too many students in Texas had been precluded from receiving supports and services under [the Individuals with Disabilities]

Education Act," said U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos in a statement Thursday. "I've worked directly with TEA Commissioner [Mike] Morath on resolving these issues, and I appreciate the Texas Education Agency's efforts to ensure all children with disabilities are appropriately identified, evaluated and served under IDEA.

Feds Say Texas Illegally Failed To Educate Students With Disabilities

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

While there is still more work to be done, leaders in the state have assured me they are committed to ensuring all students with disabilities can achieve their full potential."

In response to the report, Gov. Greg Abbott sent a letter to Morath demanding that TEA prepare an initial plan to reform special education within the next seven days, with the input of parents, advocates and educators. He also demanded TEA develop legislative recommendations to help ensure districts comply with federal and state special education laws.

Legislators passed a law in May prohibiting Texas from capping special education services. Special education advocates and parents had lobbied for a number of smaller reform bills during the session, few of which passed.

The report comes more than a year after federal officials traveled to five Texas cities in December 2016 and heard parents tell numerous stories about educators who had not been properly trained on what services they were legally required to provide students with disabilities. The agency also collected more than 400 public written comments from those who could not attend a meeting in person.

Federal officials returned to Texas last February to tour selected school districts for a firsthand look at local special education data and policies. The report Thursday confirmed the complaints of many the parents who spoke out at those meetings. It said: TEA was more likely to monitor and intervene in school districts with higher rates of students in special education, creating a statewide system that incentivized denying services to eligible students. School district officials said they expected they would receive less monitoring if they served 8.5 percent of students or fewer.

According to internal reports reviewed by federal officials, administrators at multiple districts worked to decrease the percentage of students identified for special education services — even though there was no evidence to indicate those actions were necessary. School administrators provided some students suspected of having disabilities with intensive academic support as a way of delaying or refusing to evaluate them for necessary federally funded special education services. Teachers and staff did not understand how to deploy this support in a way that complied with federal law.

Disability rights advocates are urging the Texas Education Agency to hit pause on a contract with a company to mine data on how schools are serving students with disabilities.

Continuing its investigation into whether Texas capped special education services, federal officials will visit Texas districts and schools. Rio Grande Valley parents and educators told federal and state officials that school districts lacked knowledge and resources to get students special education services that comply with federal law. (Courtesy https://www.texastribune.org)

and training for our school systems, including 39 statewide special education support staff in the last year," he said. "I am committing today that there will be more."

The federal investigation was prompted by a series of reports from the Houston Chronicle alleging TEA had denied needed special education services to thousands of students with disabilities across the state. Texas provides special education to a small percentage of students compared to other states. That number has gone up from 8.5 percent in 2015-16 to 8.8 percent last school year, according to TEA's statewide academic performance report. TEA has denied all allegations that it capped services for students.



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According to internal reports reviewed by

special education and general education classrooms. The agency's attempts to address some of these problems in the last several months collapsed recently after it awarded a contract to overhaul special education to a company with a short track record without letting other firms bid for the job. After parents of students with disabilities argued the contract was poorly thought out, Morath terminated it — with \$2.2 million in federal funding already spent for services rendered. The agency is now conducting an internal review of its contracting processes.

After pushback from special education advocates, the Texas Education Agency is terminating a no-bid contract with a company to analyze thousands of personal records of students with disabilities — and reviewing agency contract processes.

Disability rights advocates are urging the Texas Education Agency to hit pause on a contract with a company to mine data on how schools are serving students with disabilities.

Continuing its investigation into whether Texas capped special education services, federal officials will visit Texas districts and schools.

Rio Grande Valley parents and educators told federal and state officials that school districts lacked knowledge and resources to get students special education services that comply with federal law. (Courtesy https://www.texastribune.org)

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Rio Grande Valley parents and educators told federal and state officials that school districts lacked knowledge and resources to get students special education services that comply with federal law. (Courtesy https://www.texastribune.org)

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Astros' Yuli Gurriel completes league-mandated sensitivity training



By Jake Kaplan

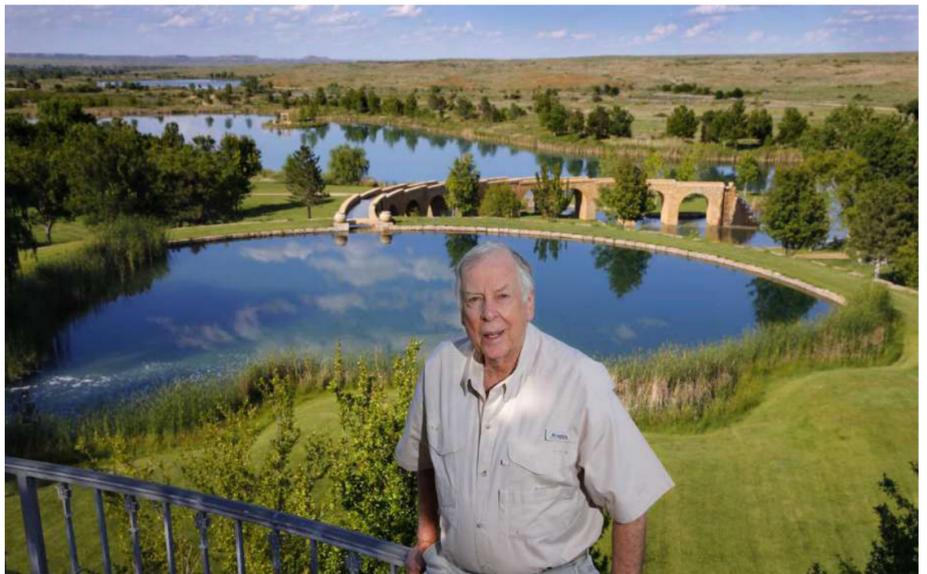
Astros first baseman Yuli Gurriel said he completed his Major League Baseball-mandated sensitivity training this past week in his offseason hometown of Miami. It lasted seven to eight hours, he said.

Gurriel, 33, is suspended for the first five games of the 2018 regular season for his racially insensitive gesture toward then-Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Yu Darvish during the World Series. As part of the suspension, which was announced during the World Series, MLB ordered Gurriel, a Cuban defector, to undergo the sensitivity training during the offseason.

"I learned a lot," Gurriel said through an interpreter on Saturday while attending the Astros' annual FanFest at Minute Maid Park. "There were a lot of things I didn't know when I came to this country (in 2016), and I think the sensitivity training was really beneficial in a lot of different areas in helping me acclimate to life in the U.S."

Gurriel was also asked how he felt about the possibility of the Astros signing Darvish, arguably the best free-agent starter available. The team met with Darvish last month in the Dallas area and is reportedly among five or six of his finalists.

T. Boone Pickens, raider-turned-wildcatter, shuts hedge fund



Meenal Vamburkar and Margot Habiby

Legendary oil tycoon T. Boone Pickens is closing his hedge fund, saying oil trading has lost its luster. Instead, the onetime Texas oil wildcatter wrote in a LinkedIn post that he wants to invest in "personal passions like promoting unbridled entrepreneurship and philanthropic and political endeavors."

Pickens, 89, also cited his health in the post, writing, "I'm still recovering from a series of strokes I suffered late last year, and a major fall over the summer." He added, "It's time to start making new plans and setting new priorities."

Pickens was managing more than \$4 billion at the start of 2008 before one of his funds was almost completely wiped out and a second plunged 64 percent. Undaunted, he sought out new investors the next year for new hedge funds that invested in stocks and futures. As of the end of 2016, BP Capital Fund Advisors had about \$335.1 million under management.

"All the funds have been shuttered and the money returned to investors," other than investments Pickens specifically listed in his LinkedIn post, Jay Rosser, his spokesman, said in an email. Pickens said he will continue to be an owner and investor in the TriLine Index Solutions energy index series and the BP Capital TwinLine Energy Fund.

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