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As waters recede, death toll rises

Harvey returns for second swipe, east of Houston

By Nomaan Merchant and Juan Lozano
Associated Press

HOUSTON | Harvey's floodwaters started dropping across much of the Houston area and the sun came out Wednesday in a glimmer of hope for the stricken city, even as the storm doubled back toward land and battered communities farther east, near the Texas-Louisiana line.

The scope of the devastation wrought by the hurricane came into sharper focus, meanwhile, and the murky green floodwaters from the record-breaking, 4-foot deluge of rain began yielding bod-

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Searching: Navy squadron from Jacksonville searches for Harvey survivors. **B-1**

Hospitals: Wolfson pediatric specialists helping hospitalized Houston children. **B-4**

ies as predicted.

The confirmed death toll climbed to 23, including six family members — four of them children — whose bodies were pulled Wednesday from a van that

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Adriana Perez (left) and Clair Hummel help remove drywall and boards damaged by floodwaters from Tropical Storm Harvey from a friend's home. (David J. Phillip/Associated Press)

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1898 Hemming monument dedication feted 'Lost Cause'

As statue comes under fire, a look at how area memorial was unveiled

By Matt Soergel
matt.soergel@jacksonville.com

June 16, 1898, was hot and sticky in downtown Jacksonville, but that didn't stop the orators from giving one florida speech after the other to celebrate the new 62-foot monument to Florida's Confederate soldiers.

The Lost Cause of the Confederacy was held up as a noble thing indeed, and ex-Gov. Francis P. Fleming, born and raised near Jacksonville, gave the opening speech — a long, defiant defense of the Confederacy, for which he'd fought.

"No intelligent and well-informed person of the present day, whose mind is not imbued with fanatical teachings, believes that the Confederates were traitors," he said. "No people ever espoused a cause, or went forth to battle in defense of home and country, with a clearer conscience of right in the discharge of duty."

All the speechifying that followed came as out-of-towners and locals jammed the streets around St. James Park, which in the next year would be renamed Hemming Park after the Confederate veteran who donated the statue.

Mixed in with the crowd were throngs of U.S. soldiers in blue, sweating out their days at Camp Cuba Libre in Springfield, ready to mix it up with the Spanish in Cuba.

With that war a constant theme, the Florida Times-Union and Citizen waxed poetically and patriotically about the day, "a scene that will be remembered as long as time."

What a sight it was, the

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The Florida Times-Union and Citizen of June 17, 1898, spent almost three pages on the dedication of the Confederate Monument at St. James Park, later renamed Hemming Park. Top inset, young women from Jacksonville society took part in an unveiling pageant for the monument. A parade included a float carrying Miss Belle Dewson, who wore a sash reading "Confederate States." With her were women representing Southern states, border states and the Indian Territory. Bottom inset, an undated postcard shows the monument.

Amendment would end Mueller's Russia probe

Potential candidate for Florida governor pushing for measure

By Elise Viebeck
The Washington Post

Rep. Ron DeSantis made a special demonstration of his loyalty to President Donald Trump last week by introducing an amendment to protect him from the Russia investigation led by Special Counsel Robert Mueller.

DeSantis, a potential candidate for Florida governor in 2018, hopes to attach language to a government spending package that would end Mueller's investigation after six months and stop it from looking into activities that took place before June 2015. Democrats, on the other hand, have introduced at least four separate measures designed to protect Mueller's probe.

It is not likely these provisions will receive a vote, let alone become part of the final bill. But at a time when few Republicans are proactively defending Trump, DeSantis' amendment stands out as a conspicuous effort to back the president, and possibly curry favor with him and his political

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DESANTIS

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base ahead of a possible bid for higher office.

DeSantis, a Republican whose district includes part of St. Johns County, said the order from Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein appointing Mueller “practically invites a fishing expedition” because it did not name a possible crime.

“Congress should use its spending power to clarify the scope and limit the duration of this investigation. Rosenstein has said that the DOJ doesn’t conduct fishing expeditions; the corollary to this admonition should be that Congress will not fund a fishing expedition,” DeSantis said in a statement.

A spokeswoman for DeSantis did not respond to a question about the possible political motivation behind the amendment.

The Mueller proposals are just one example of Trump-related measures winding their way into the debate over House appropriations. At a time of broad congressional inaction, when members of Congress are judged not by what they pass, but merely by what they propose, several lawmakers have seized the opportunity to position themselves for and against Trump in the eyes of voters.

In one example, Democrats have become increasingly concerned with Secret Service payments to the Trump Organization since last week, when Secret Service Director Randolph “Tex” Alles told USA Today more than 1,000 agents have already hit their federally mandated salary and overtime caps while protecting the Trump family.

The top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, Rep. Adam Schiff, joined the chorus Wednesday with a proposal to block Secret Service funds from going to Trump-owned entities. The amendment seeks to stop Trump properties from making money off the security demands imposed by the president’s frequent visits.

“The immense honor and responsibility of serving as president of the United States should never be exploited for profit or personal gain,” Schiff, D-Calif., said in a statement. “That the Trump Organization is profiting off the Secret Service is an abuse of taxpayer money and an improper method of enrichment.”

Another Schiff amendment would block funding for Trump’s Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity, which is tasked with investigating voter fraud in the 2016 election. There is no evidence widespread voter fraud took place, experts say.

Other Democratic amendments focus on Mueller’s probe: Reps. Nita M. Lowey, D-N.Y., Ruben Gallego, D-Ariz., Ted Lieu, D-Calif., and Sheila Jackson Lee, D-Texas, introduced language that would deny federal funds to efforts to remove Mueller, hamper his work or destroy documents he obtains.

Democrats have also introduced provisions that would bar the federal government from contracting with Trump-related enterprises (Rep. Steve Cohen, D-Tenn.), stop public money from flowing to Trump properties in the form of reimbursements (Lieu) and even end salary payments to Trump senior adviser Stephen Miller (Rep. Barbara Lee, D-Calif.).

All of these lawmakers represent districts that went solidly for Hillary Clinton, allowing them to introduce anti-Trump amendments without political backlash. The provisions are unlikely to become part of the final spending bill, but serve as a tacit acknowledgment of Democratic voters’ anger with Trump.

“This is just a recent, disturbing example of the Trump family and President Trump forcing the American taxpayer to stuff money directly in their pockets,” Jack D’Annibale wrote in an email.

U.S. clears gene therapy for childhood leukemia

By Lauran Neergaard
Associated Press

WASHINGTON | Opening a new era in cancer care, U.S. health officials on Wednesday approved a breakthrough treatment that genetically engineers patients’ own blood cells into an army of assassins to seek and destroy childhood leukemia.

The Food and Drug Administration called the approval historic, the first gene therapy to hit the U.S. market. Made from scratch for every patient, it’s one of a wave of “living drugs” under development to fight additional blood cancers and other tumors, too. Novartis Pharmaceuticals set the price for its one-time infusion of so-called “CAR-T cells” at \$475,000, but said there would be no charge for patients who didn’t show a response within a month.

“This is a brand new way of treating cancer,” said Dr. Stephan Grupp of Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, who treated the first child with CAR-T cell therapy — a girl



Emily Whitehead was the first pediatric patient in the world to receive an experimental therapy and has put her leukemia in remission going on five years. (Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia via AP)

who’d been near death, but now is cancer-free for five years and counting. “That’s enormously exciting.”

CAR-T treatment uses gene therapy techniques not to fix disease-causing genes but to turbocharge T cells, immune system soldiers that cancer too often can evade. Research-

ers filter those cells from a patient’s blood, reprogram them to harbor a “chimeric antigen receptor” or CAR that zeroes in on cancer, and grow hundreds of millions of copies. Returned to the patient, the revved-up cells can continue multiplying to fight disease for months or years. It’s a completely different way to harness the immune system than popular immunotherapy drugs called “checkpoint inhibitors” that treat a variety of cancers by helping the body’s natural T cells better spot tumors. CAR-T cell therapy gives patients stronger T cells to do that job.

“We’re entering a new frontier in medical innovation with the ability to reprogram a patient’s own cells to attack a deadly cancer,” said FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb.

The first CAR-T version, developed by Novartis and the University of Pennsylvania, is approved for use by several hundred patients a year who are desperately ill with acute lymphoblastic leukemia, or ALL. It strikes more than 3,000

children and young adults in the U.S. each year and while most survive, about 15 percent relapse despite today’s best treatments. In a key study of 63 advanced patients, 83 percent went into remission soon after receiving the CAR-T cells. Importantly, it’s not clear how long that benefit lasts: Some patients did relapse months later. The others still are being tracked to see how they fare long-term.

Still, “a far higher percentage of patients go into remission with this therapy than anything else we’ve seen to date with relapsed leukemia,” said Dr. Ted Laetsch of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, one of the study sites. “I wouldn’t say we know for sure how many will be cured yet by this therapy. There certainly is a hope” that some will be.

Among concerns, sometimes leukemia can develop resistance, and sometimes patients worsen while waiting for new cells, said Dr. Mikkael Sekeres, who directs the Cleveland Clinic’s leukemia program.

HARVEY

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had been swept off a Houston bridge into a bayou.

Authorities are investigating at least 17 more deaths to determine whether they were storm-related.

“Unfortunately, it seems that our worst thoughts are being realized,” Harris County Sheriff Ed Gonzalez said after the van was found in 10 feet of muddy water.

While conditions in the nation’s fourth-largest city appeared to improve, authorities warned that the crisis across the region is far from over. The storm, in fact, took a turn for the worse east of Houston, close to the Louisiana line.

Beaumont and Port Arthur, Texas, struggled with rising floodwaters and worked to evacuate residents after Harvey completed a U-turn in the Gulf of Mexico and rolled ashore early Wednesday for the second time in six days. It hit southwestern Louisiana as a tropical storm with heavy rain and winds of 45 mph.

Forecasters predicted that a wobbling and weakening Harvey will be downgraded to a tropical depression late Wednesday or early today and completely dissipate within three to four days.

But it still has lots of rain and potential damage to spread, with 4 to 8 inches forecast from the Louisiana-Texas line into Tennessee and Kentucky through Friday. Some spots may get as much as a foot of rain, raising the risk of more flooding.

For much of the rest of the Houston area, forecasters said the rain is pretty much over.

“We have good news,” said Jeff Lindner, a meteorologist with the Harris County Flood Control District. “The water levels are going down.”

Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner said the city’s two major airports would be up and running again in the afternoon.

At Hermann Park, south of downtown, children glided by



Evacuees sit in the bleachers Wednesday in Port Arthur, Texas, after floodwaters caused by Tropical Storm Harvey inundated the center overnight. Authorities said it was unclear where they might go. (Beulah Johnson/Associated Press)

in strollers and wagons, joggers took in midday runs and couples walked beside cascading fountains and beneath a sparkling sun. People pulled into drive-thru restaurants and emerged from a store with groceries.

Xyrius Langston, 26, went fishing along with several family members at a pond in the Houston suburb of Missouri City.

“I’ve been waiting to go fishing for a while now,” he said. “Once the water went down this morning, we were out.”

At the same time, many thousands of Houston-area homes are under water and could stay that way for days or weeks. And Lindner cautioned that homes

near at least one swollen bayou could still get flooded.

Officials said 911 centers in the Houston area are getting more than 1,000 calls an hour. About 10,000 more National Guard troops are being deployed to Texas, bringing the total to 24,000, Gov. Greg Abbott said.

Altogether, more than 1,000 homes in Texas were destroyed and close to 50,000 damaged, and over 32,000 people were in shelters across the state, emergency officials reported.

“This is going to be an incredibly large disaster,” Brock Long, chief of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, said in Washington. “We’re not going to know the true cost for years

to come. ... But it’s going to be huge.”

Maricedalia Osorio, who is living in the U.S. without permission, was staying with her seven children at a shelter set up at Houston’s NRG Center. She went there only after Houston authorities assured her she would not be asked about her immigration status.

Confirmed deaths from the storm include a married couple who drowned after their pickup truck was swept away while they were on the phone with a 911 dispatcher asking for help, officials said.

Others among the dead include a woman whose body was discovered floating in Beaumont, a man who tried to swim across a flooded road, and a woman who died after she and her young daughter were swept into a drainage canal in Beaumont. The child was rescued clinging to her dead mother, authorities said.

Port Arthur found itself increasingly isolated as floodwaters swamped most major roads out of the city and spilled into a storm shelter with about 100 people inside. Motiva Enterprises closed its Port Arthur refinery, the largest in the nation, because of flooding.

Port Arthur Mayor Derrick Freeman posted on his Facebook page: “city is underwater right now but we are coming!” He urged residents to move to higher ground and avoid getting trapped in attics.

More than 500 people — along with dozens of dogs, cats, a lizard and a monkey — took shelter at the Max Bowl bowling alley in Port Arthur after firefighters popped the lock in the middle of the night.

In Orange, Texas, about 30 miles east of Beaumont, residents of a retirement home surrounded by water were rescued by National Guardsmen and wildlife officers, who carried them from the second floor and put them aboard an airboat.

Harvey’s five straight days of rain totaled close to 52 inches, the heaviest tropical downpour ever recorded in the continental United States.

MONUMENT

Continued from A-1

paper wrote, to see young soldiers in “the blue uniform of a reunited nation” marching with grizzled vets in gray, to see how “the Starry Cross and the Star Spangled Banner mingled in the same procession and no one murmured.”

The story went on in that vein, noting how in downtown Jacksonville that day soldiers from the north “joined with Florida in honor to those who fought and bled and died for the Lost Cause, the cause which in the words of one speaker ‘went down in defeat, but not in dishonor.’”

There was a parade of soldiers and vets and bands and dignitaries. The procession included a float bearing Miss Belle Dewson, who was dressed in white, with a sash reading “Confederate States.” With her were 15 other women, also in white, each with her own sash.

After a prayer and a hymn came the unveiling of the bronze statue. It did not go smoothly — the rope holding the canvas over it broke as Sarah Elizabeth Call pulled.

So firefighters came to

the rescue. Chief Haney brought out a ladder that Assistant Chief Singer climbed, and they had the canvas off in a few minutes.

‘O DAUGHTERS OF THE SOUTH’

That’s when Fleming began his stem-winder of a speech about the “heroes and patriots” the monument honored. He stressed how, though there were differences of opinion, the Southern states did have the right to secede “from a union that had ceased to be fraternal.”

So when war came, he argued, “it was neither a civil war nor a rebellion, but a war between separate de facto nations.” He then went on to praise Confederate soldiers for continuing bravery, even in the face of “insufficient food and scanty clothing, contending against fearful odds.”

Fleming hit home his theme: “No traitor’s heart found place in the breast of the Confederate soldier.”

He wrapped up, eventually, by praising the women on the home front (“O daughters of the South!”), then urging those in attendance to “be true to the flag that waves over a reunited people, under which



Robert E. Lee’s nephew, Fitzhugh Lee, was one of the speakers at the 1898 ceremony unveiling the Confederate monument in Jacksonville. (File)

our sons are now facing a common foe.”

The Times-Union and Citizen story the day after the ceremony sprawled over three dense pages, with detail after detail — all the way to the names of the dozens of people who served on various committees for the festivities.

No mention was made, however, of Duval County’s majority black population and what various reactions those citizens might have had. (The next U.S. Census, in 1890, found more than 22,000 blacks living in Duval, compared to 17,276 whites.)

There was also no mention about slavery, and nothing of the divided loy-

alties of the whites who lived in the area during the Civil War. While there were many in Northeast Florida eager to take up the Confederate cause, a fair number remained stubborn Unionists, all the way through four federal occupations of the city.

‘TERRIBLE DAYS GONE BY’

On this hot day in 1898, the Lost Cause was the center of attention, symbolized by the statue of a Confederate soldier in winter dress, high atop a granite pillar. Yet there was also much talk of unity, of heroism on each side.

The monument was a gift from Charles Hemming, a Jacksonville native who’d gone on to be a successful banker in Texas. He didn’t journey home for the dedication, but the newspaper quoted him from an earlier visit to Florida, during which he announced his plans for a Confederate statue — while saying that if Northerners wanted to put up a monument to their dead, “let us help them. I will.”

The Times-Union and Citizen reported Hemming intended to later add four columns to the Jacksonville monument. Overall that would be an American ea-

gle — “illustrating the idea that we are one people, and that the nation now guards the memorial to the Confederate dead.” That plan went unfulfilled.

Robert Hamilton McWhorta Davidson, a U.S. congressman from Quincy and former Confederate colonel, came as a representative of Hemming. He gave a lyrical speech that took note of the “terrible days gone by,” as well as the heroism and sacrifices of both sides in the war:

“I would have you on occasions like the present to remember that every monument erected to Confederate soldiers is a reminder of the skill and bravery of the Northern soldiers, who triumphed over courage and heroism unsurpassed ... We are not a divided people, and ... the Union has been and is forever restored.”

Algernon Sartoris, grandson of Ulysses S. Grant, was also there. No doubt if his grandfather had been there, the newspaper writer surmised, “he too would have raised his voice in praise of heroism and valor of the Southern soldiers.”

Robert E. Lee had a relative at the ceremony too — a nephew, Maj. Gen. Fitzhugh Lee, commander

of the thousands of troops lodged in tents at nearby Camp Cuba Libre. He was a celebrity, greeted by cheers when he stepped forward.

By the oratorical standards of the time, he was blessedly brief with his comments, saying, in part:

“Both sides answered the bugle call in ‘61; we fought for a great cause. They fought for a Union from the Atlantic to where the waves of the broad Pacific wash the slopes of the Western coast. Those differences of opinion had to be settled by the sword, and by the sword they were settled. But to-day, look out at yonder tented city and you will see Illinois and North Carolina, Virginia and Wisconsin gathered together for one common cause and under one flag. Their only rivalry is as to which shall carry the flag furthest for freedom.”

After the speeches, Lee and many others gathered in front of the Windsor Hotel as soldiers fired blanks from a Gatling gun, demonstrating the difference between 600 and 1,200 shots per minute. It was, the story said, “an exceedingly pleasing exhibition of the firing of the gun,” and it wrapped up the day’s festivities.