

Inside Sports

NFL Players who could star in the playoffs

Congratulations to these "TOA o SAMOA" graduating from Basic Training on Tuesday, Jan. 10, 2017, at Fort Jackson Military Base, South Carolina.

Pictured in no particular order are: Precious Patricia Karite Brown, Vanessa Jaye Himpfill, Charlene Sòòàèmalelagi, Vea Seumanytafa, Dora Tories Ah-Fook, Anastasia Helena Car-ruthers, Uila Marcella Taesalialii Lefti, Jessie Soò Talafua Faafetai, Angelina Italia Agaiava Lafaele, Rodrigues Lourenco.

Samoa News would like to thank all of our readers for sharing photos of people & events that matter to them, and we will continue to publish the photos when possible. [Courtesy Photo]



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Michael Agasiva arrested on Monday, following release on Friday

by Joyetter Feagaimaali'i-Luamanu
Samoa News Reporter

Michael Agasiva has been arrested again; this time he's facing charges of burglary, sexual abuse, trespassing and third degree assault.

Agasiva, who is being held on bail of \$10,000, made his initial appearance in the District Court this week. According to the government's case, the matter was reported to the Leone Police Station on New Year's Day. It's alleged that the police officers arrived at the scene and found the complaining witness in tears.

Court filings say the defendant is alleged to have sexually assaulted a 52-year-old woman, who is a relative. The officers, who responded to the call, then contacted Criminal Investigation Division Commander; Falana'i Lavata'i Ta'ase Sagapolutele for assistance, and Police Detective Fiailoa Moafanua was assigned to investigate the matter.

According to the government's case, the victim told the police that their family had a party for the New Year around her neighborhood.

The woman left the party and went home to sleep. Court filings say the woman fell asleep on the couch while her children were still home, however when the children left the house they forgot to lock the door. Court filings further say that the victim felt a tickling sensation on her breast and when she woke up, she allegedly saw the defendant in a sexual act.

The government's case also claims that the defendant did not have permission to be in the house. It's alleged the complaining witness pushed the defendant away and swore at the defendant to get out of the house. The complaining witness then locked the house after the defendant left and called the police for assistance. The defendant refused to make a statement to the police when he was approached.

According to the arrest warrant, the penalty for the burglary charge in the second degree is a class C felony and it's punishable up to seven years in jail and or a fine of up to \$5,000. The sexual abuse first-degree count is a class D felony and if convicted the defendant is looking at serving five years and or a fine of up to \$5,000.

(Continued on page 4)

DOH: Proposed contract of \$12K per month for financial consultant was a mistake

by Joyetter Feagaimaali'i-Luamanu
Samoa News Reporter

Department of Health Acting Director Motusa Tuileama Nua has cleared the air that the "proposed contract" of \$223,000 for DOH's Independent financial consultant Uti Gebauer was a mistake that has been fixed with a proposed increase of \$6,000 per month for an extension to one year, not the \$12,000 per month, which allegedly is what kicked up a fuss among Health department employees.

Responding to Samoa News questions in a phone interview, Motusa said "currently the contract is for six months and it's \$4,000 monthly and they proposed a change order, which was denied by the Budget Office, that's when I realized our mistake and I fixed it."

The DOH Acting Director said that it wasn't until after

he signed the contract and it was denied that he realized the change order contract #C006094 was to the tune of \$200,000 and that is a "significant amount of money — so I fixed my mistake and we have already made another proposal for a change order and this time it will be \$6,000 a month."

Motusa admitted, "This was my mistake and I have fixed it and moved on from there."

(Samoa News notes the \$6K a month contract change order approval is still pending.)

CONTRACT CHANGE ORDER ERROR

According to the Change order #001 for contract # C00C09A that was leaked to Samoa News, and is referred to by the DOH director as his mistake, the original six-month contract sum from September 2015 to February 2016 was \$25,000 and the change order increases the amount to

(Continued on page 4)



ASG's \$13.6 million MV Manu'atele vessel docking the morning of Jan. 4 at Pago Pago Harbor's main dock, which was packed with government officials, leaders and members of the public. However, it appears that the vessel is having a minor problem. Port Administration Acting Director Taimalelagi Dr. Claire Poumele explained yesterday that the vessel took 23 days to get from Seattle to Pago Pago. The voyage home with three certified US licensed engineers, as mandated by the US Coast Guard, "was a continuation of our sea trials," she said.

She said the vessel and all of the equipment and parts have a warranty for a year. She explained that five days before the MV Manu'atele arrived in Pago Pago the "bow thruster" (propulsion device) which makes the vessel more maneuverable "auto-

matically started or kicked in."

"The Engineers say it's an electrical issue," she said, adding that Nichols Brothers shipbuilders were contacted by their observer, who was on the vessel, and will stay here until the vessel goes to Manua.

The part for the "bow thruster" is being shipped to the territory and is expected to arrive tomorrow.

"We anticipate that there will be other issues with this new vessel. That is why there is a one-year warranty on the vessel," Taimalelagi said and noted Nichols Brothers, who constructed the vessel in Washington State, will send their technicians in December this year to provide maintenance and other work that is outlined in the contract.

[photo: FS]



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Long term criminal attorney and former Deputy Attorney General Mltzie Jessop-Ta'ase has returned to the Senate as their Legal Counsel, she's pictured here with her husband, Tupulua "Bone" Taase. [Photo: JL]

Long time prosecutor Mltzie Jessop-Ta'ase resigns from AG's office

by Joyetter
Feagaimaali'i-Luamanu
Samoa News Reporter

Long time prosecutor Mltzie Jessop-Ta'ase has resigned from the Attorney General's office, and returns to the Fono as the Senate's Legal Counsel, citing an opportunity and challenge "to grow" as too good to pass up.

Jessop-Ta'ase was the Deputy AG and a criminal prosecutor, who managed more than 10 attorneys, with the criminal and civil division, which has a staff of 70 plus. One prosecutor told Samoa News that Jessop-Ta'ase would be missed. Jessop-Ta'ase who was with the AG's office for seven years said she will miss working with the Attorney General's office.

"I spent 7 great years at the AG's Office enforcing the laws of our Territory and I will always have a soft spot for the AG's Office. However, the opportunity presented itself where I am allowed to shift gears and now help the fathers of our territory to write the laws the AG's Office enforces. I welcome the opportunity and challenge to grow at the Fono."

She is now the legal counsel for the Senate side of the Fono, and it's not her first time working in this position — in 2006, she was also legal counsel for the Senate.

It was during the 34th Legislature, former Senator Soliai Tuipine Fuimaono asked Senate President Gaoteote Tofau Palaie on several occasions to have an attorney assist the late Senate counsel Henry Kappel, before he passed on. In her current position, Jessop-Ta'ase takes over the duties of the late Senate counsel, who passed in 2016.

A graduate of Brigham Young University Law School, Provo, Utah Jessop-Ta'ase welcomes the challenge at the Fono.

During her time as a prosecutor with the AG's Office, Jessop-Ta'ase was the lead in some significant cases in the territory.

For example, in 2012, she was the lead in the case of a government teacher who had sex with his 13-year-old student. The former teacher left the territory when the charges were filed and Jessop-Ta'ase reached out to the FBI in Honolulu and the accused was extradited to American Samoa to face criminal charges.

Jessop-Ta'ase was also the lead in the shooting death of the late Police Lt Detective Lusila Brown, where she sought the death penalty against the defendant. However upon the request of the former governor, the request for the death penalty

was withdrawn.

The former Deputy AG was highly active with the AG's Office in support of the Amnesty Bill, as well as other legislation that have now become law.

She leaves the AG's Office with the 'first' case of prosecution of a teacher for allegedly using corporeal punishment — citing the 2014 child abuse law — still proceeding through the courts, for which she was the lead prosecutor.

BACKGROUND ON CHILD ABUSE LAW

The child abuse bill states that a person commits the crime of child abuse if he or she purposely or knowingly causes injury to a child by unreasonable force by burning, biting, or cutting a child, striking a child with a closed fist, shaking, kicking or throwing the child, interfering with the child's breathing, threatening or injuring a child with a dangerous instrument, or other acts that create a substantial risk of harm or death.

Additionally a person commits child abuse if he inflicts serious emotional damage to a child, evidenced by the child's severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, substantial change in behavior, emotional response or any injury diagnosed by a medical doctor or psychologist.



by Fili Sagapolutele
 Samoa News Correspondent

The Senate has approved the 17 standing committees for the new 35th Legislature, which is taking a two-week mid session recess at the close of business tomorrow, while lawmakers await submission by the Administration of proposed legislation and cabinet director appointments.

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEES

Senators' approvals came during yesterday's Senate session in which Sen. Nuanuaolefeagaiga Saoluuga has retained the post of Senate Pro Temp, or Senate Vice President, and he therefore, again, retains the chairmanship post of the Senate Rules Committee.

Except for Senate President Gaoteote Tofau Palaie, all 17 senators have committee chair posts. Except for the Senate Retirement Committee, which has 15 members, the rest of the committees' membership is nine senators.

Gaoteote informed his colleagues that committee membership was initially set at 7 senators, but he later decided for nine, because of past years, where witnesses for a hearing have showed up, while a committee awaits for a quorum in order to proceed.

He said nine members would ensure a quorum in order for the committee to proceed with its work. However, he said senators who are not members of committees could still attend hearings to ensure there is thorough understanding of all matters that come before the Senate. According to the Senate President, their work is a collaborative effort among all of them.

The 35th Legislature standing committees also covers the 36th Legislature (which begins in January 2019) — meaning four years, as senators serve a four-year term, unlike faipule terms, which are for 2 years.

As Senate President, Gaoteote selects the chair,

vice chair and members. A look at committees and chairpersons:

- Senate Rules chair, Nuanuaolefeagaiga Saoluuga;
- Agriculture chair, Sen. Taua'a Saunoua Vaouli
- Budget and Appropriations/Human Resources chair, Sen. Magalei Logovi'i
- Education chair, Fai'ivaie Iuli Godinet
- Energy, Power & Waster (ASPA) chair, Sen. Misaaalefua John Hudson
- Communications/Fisheries/Marine and Marine and Wildlife chair, Sen. Fano M. Shimasaki
- Economic Development/Way and Means chair, Sen. Tilo Vasaga
- Retirement chair, Sen. Tualo Manaia Fruean
- Judiciary chair, Tuiagama T. Tavai
- Parks and Recreation chair, Levu T. Solaita Jr.
- Public Works chair, Sen. Alo Fa'au'uga
- Public Safety/Homeland Security chair, Sen. Fa'amausili Mau Mau Jr.
- Hospital/ Public Health chair, Sen. Satele Galu T. Satele Sr.
- Samoan Affairs chair, Sen. Muagututia Tauoa
- Transportation/Port and Airport chair, Paepae Iosefa Faiai
- Government Operations chair, Sen. Galeai M. Tu'ufuli
- Human Social Services chair, Sen. Fonoti Tafaifa Aufata

FONO TO TAKE A TWO-WEEK MID SESSION RECESS

The Fono is taking a two-week mid session recess at the close of business tomorrow, Friday, and will reconvene on Jan. 30, according to separate Senate and House concurrent resolutions introduced and approved yesterday by each chamber.

The recess is necessary to "preserve legislative ses-

sion days for most efficient use" and to fully prepare for disposition of additional and incoming agenda items for the First Regular Session of the 35th Legislature, according to the identical language of the measures.

Pressing incoming agenda items the Fono will await include the nominations by the governor for directors of ASG departments and offices.

On Tuesday, the Fono received from the Governor's Office the nominations of:

- Talauaga Eleasalo Ale, for the Attorney General, and also head of the Department of Legal Affairs;
- Ueligitone Tonumaipea, for ASG Treasurer and head of the Treasury Department;
- Le'i Sonny Thompson for Police Commissioner, who oversees the Department of Public Safety;
- Dr. Ruth Matagi-Tofiga as Education Department director; and
- Taimalelagi Dr. Claire Tuia Poumele, as Director of Department of Port Administration

"We look forward to your favorable decision reflective in your vote of confidence inherent in your confirmation of our nominee," wrote Gov. Lolo Matalasi Moliga in separate nomination letters for each nominee to the Fono leaders.

Samoa News notes that all 5 nominees are familiar names — they served in the Administration's last cabinet, however two of the individuals are being nominated to new departments — Le'i from Department of Human Resources to DPS, and Dr. Matagi-Tofiga from the Department of Marine Wildlife & Resources to DOE.

Official introduction of the names of each nominee along with their resumes, provided by the Administration, is not expected to happen in both the Senate and House, until lawmakers return from their two-week recess. It's also at that time that confirmation hearings are scheduled in each chamber.



**DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND WOMEN'S AFFAIRS
 2017 (First Quarter)
 COMPREHENSIVE CALENDAR OF TRAINING AND EVENTS**

DATE	PROJECT/ACTIVITY	DATE	PROJECT/ACTIVITY
January 23 - April 13	Culinary Training 9:00 am to 12:00 pm (Session 1) 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm (Session 2) MWF Instructor: Malia Lui	January 23 to March 31	Walk and Talk Program 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm (M/W/F)
January 23 - April 13	Flower Arrangement Training 9:00 am to 12:00 pm (Session 1) 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm (Session 2) T/TH Instructor: Malia Lui	January 23 to March 31 (Tutuila) January 23 to March 31 (Manu'a)	Wrestling Program 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (M-TH) 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (M-TH)
January 23 - April 13	Elei/Hand Print Training 9:00 am to 12:00 pm (Session 1) 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm (Session 2) MTWTH Instructor: Tou Collins	January 23 to March 31	Gymnastics Program Kinder gym - 11:00 am to 1:00 pm (M-F)
January 23 - August 25 (Tutuila)	Sewing Training 8:00 am to 11:00 am (Session 1) M/W 8:00 am to 11:00 am (Session 2) T/TH 12:00 pm to 3:00 pm (Session 3) M/W 12:00 pm to 3:00 pm (Session 4) T/TH	January 23 to March 31	Health and Fitness Program 5:30 am to 6:30 am (M-F) Morning Session 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm (T/TH) - Afternoon Session
September 5 - December 7 (Manu'a - Fitiuta, Ta'u, Faleasao)	Every Day Instructor: Johanna Samana	January 23 to March 31	Weightlifting/Powerlifting training 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (M-TH)
January 23 - March 8	Basic Computing/Resume Preparation/Job Application/Interview Preparation Session 1 - M/W/F, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm	January 23 to March 31	Volleyball training 6:30 am to 7:30 am (M-TH)
January 23 - April 13	Basic Samoan Oratory Language and Cultural Training 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm (M/W)	January 25 to March 29	College Prep for Student Athletes 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm (W)
		January 23 to March 31	National Football Training 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm (F)
		February 6 - 10	Coaches National Level 1 Certification Course 5:00 pm to 9:00 pm (M-F) Instructor: Ethan Lake
		February 7 - April 6	Teen Mothers and Parenting Training Session 1 10 am to 12 pm (T/TH)
		March 14	Service Providers Fair - Mulugaveve

Call 644-2835/644-2836 to register for any of the programs/courses at the Department of Youth & Women's Affairs Office in Pago Pago. Deadline for registration is Thursday, January 19, 2017 @ 4p.m. Fa'afeso'ota'i mai le matou ofisa ile 644-2835/644-2836 auā le resitara mo polokalama o lo'o fa'apea ona faailo atu i le kalena.
 E tapunia le resitara o vasega ile Aso Tofi, Ianuari 19, 2017 ile 4p.m

Orientation for all programs/courses is scheduled for Friday, January 20th, 2017 at 9a.m-10a.m & 3p.m - 4p.m

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▶ DOH: Denied contract ...

Continued from page 1

\$204,000 with a total contract sum of \$229,000. The contract, which was signed in November 2016, by Attorney General, Eleasalo Ale and the DOH Director, while Gebauer's signature has no date, indicates that the contract is being "extended to 2 years with an increased rate to \$12,000 month." The contract also requests that it be expedited and according to the document the contract should be completed by September 28, 2018.

GEBAUER'S CONTRACT — SCOPE OF WORK

In a letter to the Procurement Office dated October 21, 2016 regarding contract #C006094 for Gebauer, the DOH Acting Director noted that the letter "serves as official notice" that the contract (#C006094) is being extended to two years with an increased rate.

Motusa in his letter pointed out that the existing contract is scheduled to expire February 28, 2017 and the extension will continue to August 28, 2018.

"The scope will expand to include all grant programs. The new title; finance administrator will full oversight on all grants and finance matters for DOH."

According to Motusa, the duties will include oversight on all operational procedures for the Finance Team; oversight on all operational procedures for the grants team; grant intermediary on grant compliance and deliverables; review, design, train and implements specific scope of work for each grant programs; monitor and administer periodic audits on all grants program; continue to review and recommend new systems to increase departmental efficiency; monitor past due accounts to vendors and implement timely payment schedules; work availability for DOH on Monday's Wednesdays, and Fridays."

Motusa further noted In his letter that the deliverables would be weekly and monthly attendance at key Leadership Meetings; weekly and monthly monitoring of finance team; monthly monitoring of grant managers team monthly meeting; attendance on all conference calls with identified high risk grant program and monthly training logs.

The new rate as stated in the Procurement letter is: "Monthly rate adjusted to \$12,000".

DENIAL LETTER FROM BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS OFFICE

Acting Director of Budget and Appropriations, Catherine Dora Saelua denied the "mistake" contract or the change order on December 2, 2016 in a letter addressed to DOH Director Motusa Tuileama Nua with the title "contract change order" that was leaked to Samoa News along with copies of the actual change order contract and emails from Gebauer sent to DOH Director and Deputy Director Fara Utu, on his scope of work, which indicates that Gebauer will oversee "all" of the Financial Administration of DOH amongst other duties.

The letter signed by Mrs. Saelua with serial number 2016-025 states that the Contract Change Order was denied because the "contract is not budgeted und the Local Account, nor was it approved under Public Law for FY (Fiscal Year) 2017; there was no justification provided to use the restricted grant account for the contract service."

The Budget director indicates that there is "a standing Executive Directive to withhold excessive spending on Local Accounts," and says "such actions are not in compliance with this Executive Order."

Samoa News reached out to Uti Gebauer for a comment regarding this \$200,000+ contract, and he told Samoa News the contract has been voided, and it was denied.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Samoa News welcomes and encourages Letters to the Editor. Please send them to our email news.newsroom@samoatelco.com Box 909, Pago Pago, American Samoa 96799. Contact us by Telephone at (684) 633-5599 Contact us by Fax at (684) 633-4864 or by Email at news@samoanews.com

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Across the board fuel hikes effective Jan. 15

VEHICLE GAS WILL SEE A 20¢ HIKE

by Fili Sagapolutele

Samoa News Correspondent

Because of the increase in crude oil prices and transportation costs, the new maximum allowable price (MAP) or wholesale price of all petroleum products sold in American Samoa will see a major increase in fuel cost for the MAP, which goes into effect this week, according to the ASG Office of Petroleum Management (OPM) data.

"Increase in crude oil prices translate to an average increase of 17 cents per gallon in Base Price for diesel and 20 cents per gallon for gasoline, kerosene and jet fuel imported and sold in American Samoa," OPM petroleum officer Sione Kava explained yesterday.

Additionally, the cost of transportation on all products also went up by three cents per gallon compared to last month's MAP.

Kava further explained that the Base Price and Transportation cost makes for 54% of the MAP on gasoline sold on island.

For example, current retail for gasoline is \$2.93 gallon — which means local motorists are paying: \$1.57 (or 54%) for Base and Transportation cost; 26 cents for the suppliers margin (16%); taxes, fees and rents 59 cents (or 20%); and retail markup 49 cents (17%), according to data provided by OPM.

"These costs are determined by the global market for American Samoa and the rest of the region for that matter have very little to do

with it," said Kava, who added that the fixed Fees, Rents, and Taxes imposed on the MAP by the American Samoa Government have not changed for many years and remain the lowest in the region.

Effective Jan. 15- Feb. 14, the new MAP for gasoline, jet fuel and kerosene will see a hike of 20 cents per gallon; ultra low sulfur diesel, which is used for boilers/generators at the Satala power plant, and in some school buses will increase by 19 cents; and a 17-cent hike for diesel fuel, including road diesel, commercial fishing vessel and other marine diesel.

Regarding the global market dynamics impacting local fuel supply, OPM provided a summary released recently by the American Automobile Association, which states in part that crude oil closed out the year 2016 posting the largest annual gains since 2009.

These gains, it says, can largely be attributed to the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) agreement, a deal brokered by OPEC and non-OPEC countries to cut crude oil production in an effort to rebalance the global oil supply.

Additionally, this trend will continue to hold if participating countries adhere to the OPEC agreement.

However, a factor that would keep a lid on oil prices has been the growing US rigs count and the possibility of more output down the line that would offset the OPEC supply deal.



In this photo provided by NBC, First Lady Michelle Obama speaks during an interview with host Jimmy Fallon on "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon," Wednesday, Jan. 11, 2017, in New York. The show aired Jan. 11 on NBC, 11:35 p.m.-12:35 a.m. ET. (Andrew Lipovsky/NBC via AP)

▶ M. Agasiva...

Continued from page 1

The remaining charges are misdemeanors where the trespass count is a class B and its punishable up to six month and or a fine of \$500 while the assault charge is punishable up to 15 days in jail.

Samoa News notes that Agasiva was released from the Territorial Correctional Facility last week after District Court

Judge Fiti A. Sunia ordered his release on Friday in order for the government and the court to start all over again the process of filing charges against Agasiva as well as a new arrest warrant to be issued by the court once the government had filed the charges.

Samoa News understands Agasiva was taken into custody the first week of January and was in TCF until his court ordered release. During his time in jail, Agasiva refused to

appear in court twice, causing the District Court Judge Sunia to issue a subpoena for three TCF officials to appear in his courtroom and explain why Agasiva was not appearing in court. At the end of the hearing, Sunia then ordered the defendant to be released.

Agasiva then appeared in court on Monday for his initial appearance, having been served with the arrest warrant, which outlines the charges against him.



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Seven government agencies (AS-EPA, ASPA, DOH, DMWR, DPR, DPS, and OSA) are authorized to enforce this new law. Violators will be prosecuted. Fines range from \$50 to \$1,000.





Indian women wait at a bus stop in Bangalore, India, Wednesday, Jan. 4, 2017. Police detained at least six suspects Wednesday, days after outrage erupted in India over several women being groped and molested during New Year's Eve celebrations in the southern city of Bangalore, the country's information technology hub. The incident highlights the persistent violence against women in India despite tougher laws against sexual assault imposed after the December 2012 death of a young woman who was gang-raped on a bus in New Delhi. (AP Photo/Aijaz Rahi)

Outrage over Indian flag doormats on sale on Amazon

NEW DELHI (AP) — India's foreign minister has demanded an apology from online retail giant Amazon.com Inc. for selling doormats depicting the Indian flag through its Canadian retail website.

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj warned in a Twitter message on Wednesday that she could deny Indian visas to Amazon employees if the company did not apologize and "withdraw all products insulting our national flag immediately."

"If this is not done forthwith,

we will not grant an Indian visa to any Amazon official. We will also rescind the visas issued earlier," Swaraj tweeted.

India is not the only country whose flag was featured on a doormat, which were sold by a third party on the website. Amazon sells similar mats showing flags of the U.S., U.K., Canada and other countries.

Swaraj ordered the embassy in Canada to take up the matter with Amazon "at the highest level."

The site removed the Indian-

themed product, however, following Swaraj's Twitter threat.

The flag doormats had outraged many among the Indian diaspora in Canada, who posted pictures of them on social media and urged the foreign minister to formally object.

In India, insulting the national flag is punishable with fines and imprisonment.

Last year, there were protests after the online marketplace offered doormats depicting Hindu gods.

Lolo appoints task force to look at education reforms

by Fili Sagapolutele
Samoa News Correspondent

Gov. Lolo Matalasi Moliga has established a seven-member task force, charged with providing recommendations pertaining to the future of public education in American Samoa, as the administration remains concerned with public high school graduates having to take remedial courses at the American Samoa Community College, before being able to continue with higher education courses.

Lolo first hinted about the appointment of a task force to look at education reforms for ASDOE during a cabinet meeting last month. (See Samoa News edition Dec. 28 for details).

In his Jan. 10 executive order, regarding the future of ASDOE, and creating the task force, the governor points out that the state of public education does not result in a sufficient number of local graduating high school seniors having adequate skills in core subject areas of math, science, language arts, and the trades to enable them, absent remedial courses, to move on to higher levels of education or to join the workforce in a skilled trade.

Lolo acknowledged that this is a "long-standing and systemic problem that permeates through all grade levels and has not been effectively addressed for decades". He also said that most of the legal and structural framework for public education "is rooted" in laws adopted in the 1960s and 1970s.

"Plans are not being converted into specific actions that would result in immediate improvements," he said. "The ongoing organizational and funding model for public education... may not be sustainable into the future."

According to the governor, it's time to review the local public education system from a view that includes broad spectrum of society, to bring in fresh thinking of qualified and successful individuals from outside the traditional field of education and promote the idea of new and, if need be, non-traditional solutions to

what are now old problems.

Therefore, he said, he hereby establishes a task force "on meeting our near, mid and long term educational goals" to be known as the "Task Force on the Future of Education in American Samoa."

Among the duties and responsibilities of the task force, is to review the final report of the 2013 Governor's Summit on Education and the ASDOE Five-Year Comprehensive Based Improved Plan (2014-2019) and such other documents available at the American Samoa Community College.

Additionally when comparing governance models for school systems serving like-sized communities — the task force should not be limited to reviewing models from U.S. jurisdictions only. The task force is asked, as part of its responsibilities, to give preliminary consideration to financing sources necessary to adequately fund a meaningful vocational trades program that integrates the resources of both ASDOE and ASCC.

Further, make recommendations with respect to changes in the governance structure of ASDOE; and draft statutory changes as may be necessary to accommodate the recommended governance structure.

The task force is chaired by ASPA Executive Director Utu Abe Malae with membership comprising Port Administration Acting Director Taimalelagi Dr. Claire Tuia Poumele, a former ASDOE Director; current Acting ASDOE Director Dr. Ruth Matagi-Tofiga; ASCC vice president of administrative services and finance Dr. Mikaele Etuale; former ASDOE director Vaitinasa Dr. Salu Hunkin-Finau; acting Attorney General Talauega Eleasalo Ale; and the Governor's chief legal counsel Steve Watson.

Work of the task force became effective Jan. 10 and is to conclude its work within 90-days.

They are to provide the governor a report for review and subsequent discussion with the Fono relative to the implementation of the task force's recommendations.





Meet A Spelling Champ!

The student at the right will represent Leone Midkiff Elem in the American Samoa Spelling Bee to be held February 22nd. The winner of that Bee will represent American Samoa in the 89th annual Scripps Howard Spelling Bee to be held in Washington, D.C.



BIOGRAPHY OF A 2017 SPELLING BEE FINALIST

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Pitoula Alexes Crichton

What is your school name?
Leone Midriff Elementary

What grade are you in?
Grade 5

Who is your English Teacher?
Mrs. Filipinas Adams

Who are your parents?
Andrew and Palagi Sunia

What village are you from?
Vailoa

What was your winning word?
TECHNICALITY

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Ivanka Trump shifting gears, heading to Washington



FILE - In this Nov. 11, 2016, file photo, Ivanka Trump, daughter of President-elect Donald Trump, arrives at Trump Tower in New York. Ivanka Trump plans to step aside from her executive roles at the Trump Organization and her lifestyle brand, but says she is confident both businesses will continue to "thrive."
 (AP Photo/ Evan Vucci, File)

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Ivanka Trump plans to step aside from her executive roles at the Trump Organization and her lifestyle brand, but says she is confident both businesses will continue to "thrive."

said separation will be key because "all of her assets and income are attributable to him."

Painter added that if Ivanka Trump continues to have a financial stake in her business, then Kushner must recuse himself from areas that impact it, like foreign trade.

Ivanka Trump's independent lifestyle brand promotes her image as a successful working mother and partners with companies to make the branded blush pink dresses and trendy booties offered in department stores.

In a post on her Facebook page Wednesday, Ivanka Trump said she would take a "formal leave of absence" from her executive positions at the Trump Organization and her lifestyle brand — which offers shoes, clothes and messages of female empowerment.

President-elect Donald Trump said Wednesday that he would put control of his company in the hands of his sons and an executive, put his business assets in a trust and take other steps to isolate himself from his business.

Ivanka Trump said her company will be run by the current president and a board of trustees. For now, she is not taking a role in her father's administration, but her husband Jared Kushner will serve as a senior advisor.

As the family moves to Washington, Ivanka Trump said she will be focused on getting her three children settled. But she also stressed her ongoing interest in issues affecting women and girls and said she would seek to determine the "most impactful and appropriate ways for me to serve our country."

An informal adviser to Ivanka Trump is expected to join the White House. Goldman Sachs partner Dina Powell will be leaving the bank to take a role in the Trump administration, said a source with knowledge of the matter who was not authorized to speak publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity. The source said Powell is expected to focus economic issues and policies relating to women and will work with Ivanka Trump and Kushner.

Powell declined to comment. The Trump transition team did not respond to questions.

The Trump team has said Ivanka Trump will divest some assets and will receive fixed payments rather than a share of the profits from the Trump Organization. She will also not be involved in the company's Washington hotel. No details have been released on her financial arrangement with the lifestyle brand.

Transition officials also said Kushner will recuse himself from any matters impacting the Trump Organization. Richard Painter, who served as chief White House ethics counselor for President George W. Bush,



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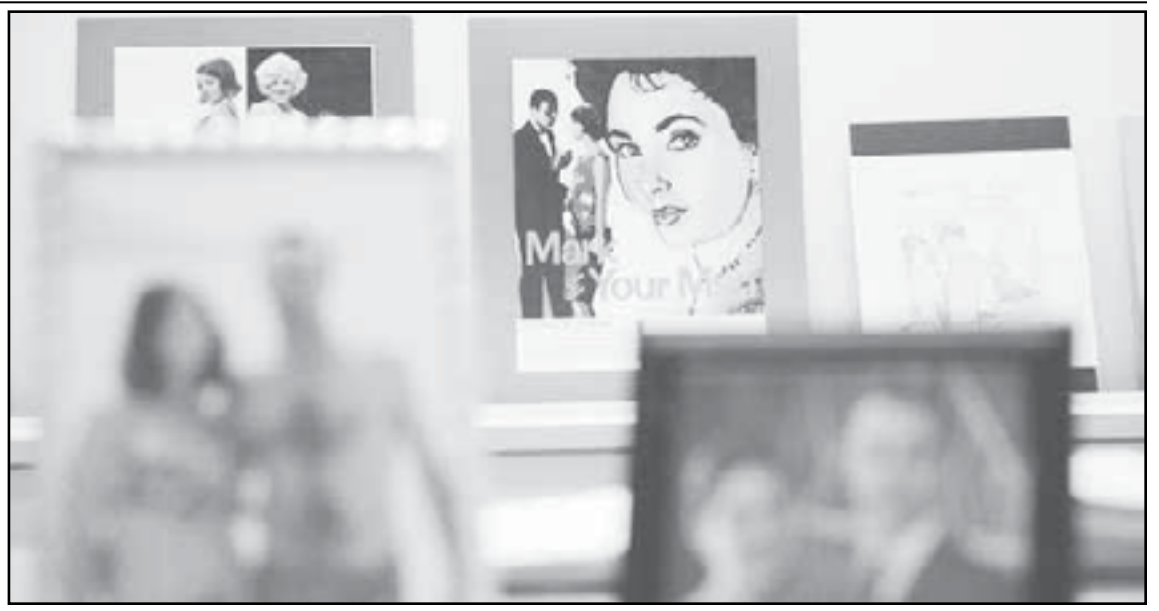


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In this Monday, Jan. 9, 2017 photo, donated props from the show "Mad Men" are seen on display at the University of Texas' Harry Ransom Center humanities library in Austin, Texas. Included in the donation are boxes of scripts, drafts and notes, props, costumes, digital video and reams of research materials that went into creating the show's richly-detailed presentation of the American 1960s. (AP Photo/Eric Gay)

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HALECK MOTORS WILL BE CLOSED ON FRIDAY 01/13/2017 & SATURDAY 01/14/2017 FOR STOCKTAKE

NORMAL BUSINESS RESUME TUESDAY 01/17/2017



HALECK MOTORS

Don Draper and 'Mad Men' archive land at University of Texas

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The last America saw of Don Draper, he was meditating on a Pacific hillside, imagining one of the iconic ads in television history.

What's left of the flawed protagonist of "Mad Men" has now gone to Texas.

Show creator Matthew Weiner and production company Lionsgate have donated the "Mad Men" archive — scripts, drafts, notes, props, costumes, digital video and reams of research materials that went into creating the show's richly-detailed presentation of the American 1960s — to the University of Texas' Harry Ransom Center humanities library.

Weiner, who also wrote and directed many episodes, said he donated the archive to the Ransom Center because he couldn't stand the thought of the material being dispersed at auction or lost forever.

"There is a record here of mid-century America that digs so deep," Weiner said. "It would have been sad to let that go."

The donation was scheduled to be announced Thursday.

Weiner chose the Ransom Center as the resting place for a show about Madison Avenue advertising professionals almost by chance. He was in Austin to attend a film festival when a visit to the Ransom Center's "Gone With the Wind" exhibit inspired him to donate the "Mad Men" archive for preservation and research.

cover of Vogue," Weiner said.

Kevin Biggs, Lionsgate television group chairman, said "Mad Men" is more than a great show. "It is part of American television history, a groundbreaking classic worthy of the scholarly research the Ransom Center supports."

If the collection holds any secrets about the characters or stories, Weiner said they reside in the rough drafts, rewrites, screen tests and Weiner's own notes that show how episodes or seasons evolved before they aired.

"It often didn't start the way it came out. You will get to see the origin of everything, from what a character was supposed to be like, to how a story was originally supposed to work. It's all there," Weiner said.

The "Mad Men" collection from its 2007-2015 run starring Jon Hamm and Elisabeth Moss includes a selection of costumes and props. They include Draper's terms of re-employment letter (meticulously typed in a size of font typical of the time), Betty Draper's medical file, advertising poster boards, rolodexes full of phone numbers, and even a fictitious "Star Trek" episode that one of the show's characters had hoped to get produced.

Boxes of research materials show how deeply show writers dug to preserve an authentic feel, even before the first episode was aired. "Look books" of period fashion and style were laid out for each character, home and office design, with details from the average kitchen toaster to re-creating a check-book or men's suits. Magazines of the times were scoured to research the news and language of the era, such as when the word "groovy" would first be used.

"We would take things from the Sears catalog, not just the

Weiner's personal notes also reveal production battles, such as his years-long efforts to be allowed to use Beatles music in the show, or archive news footage of CBS news anchor Walter Cronkite covering the 1969 moon landing.

"My argument was my show is fake until I get a Beatles song in there," Weiner said.

Steve Wilson, the Ransom Center's film curator, said it will take about a year to catalog the entire collection. Some pieces will be put on display and the collection will be available to researchers and the university's radio, television and film students.

Weiner wants the students and researchers to see all the work behind the show, including the burps and missteps that went into crafting the final product.

"Artists have traditionally hidden the long road of mistakes," Weiner said. "When you see a finished work, it can be intimidating. Showing all the brush strokes hopefully is very encouraging to people."



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Police suspect arson in fatal blaze at Honolulu home

HONOLULU (AP) One man died in a Honolulu house fire that police suspect was intentionally set early Monday.

Firefighters responded to the blaze and found the victim, who has not yet been identified, dead in the living room of the multi-story home. Several others there when the fire broke out were able to escape uninjured.

Police Lt. Phillip Lavarias said the 58-year-old suspect was also at the home and had tried leaving before being detained by firefighters until police arrived. He faces murder and arson charges.

“The suspect exited the residence and confronted the HFD (Honolulu Fire Department) personnel,” Lavarias said. “He actually attacked one of the firefighters. He was subdued by HFD personnel as well as some witnesses and the responding police.”

Lavarias said witnesses reported seeing the suspect pour flammable liquid in one of the bedrooms.

Damage to the home is estimated at about \$240,000. The property has eight different units.

Angel Baldonado, 22, who lives next door to the unit where the fire occurred, said she heard a smoke detector go off and people shouting. She then saw flames coming from the unit.

“We heard a commotion going on outside, and I heard one of the guys say, “fire” and I opened the door and the flames were right there,” Baldonado said.

Hawaii News Now reported that the owners of the residence face nearly \$16,000 in fines related to the number of people living on the property. The city said in a notice issued in March that there is a six-unit, multi-family dwelling on the property occupied by a family and 11 other people.

Property owner Cipriana Luczon said she was unaware of the violations.

Hawaii public worker pension shortfall grows to \$12 billion

HONOLULU (AP) — The shortfall in Hawaii’s public employees’ pension fund has grown to more than \$12 billion, meaning taxpayers could have to pay an additional \$385 million a year to make up for the budget gap.

The Honolulu Star-Advertiser reports (<http://bit.ly/2jui7MQ>) that a study release this week by an independent actuary shows the Employees’ Retirement System pension fund deficit was up about \$4 million from last year.

ERS Executive Director Thom Williams said the pension plan needs the \$385 million additional contribution from taxpayers each year to stay afloat. But getting that additional revenue would mean taxpayers would be putting a total of \$1.1 billion toward the plan each year.

“Even though these contributions are high, they are intended to avoid great expense down the road,” Williams said. “So the sooner we begin to address the unfunded liability in a proactive way, the less it will ultimately cost to amortize it.”

Senate Ways and Means Committee Chairwoman Jill Tokuda (D-Kailua-Kaneohe) said the new figures were “truly overwhelming.”

“It can rain money out of the sky, it still cannot account for these kinds of payments,” she said.

Dallas-based actuary Gabriel Roeder Smith & Co. said without the taxpayer payment increases, it would take the fund until 2082 to become whole. The pension plan could be fully funded in 2042 with the added \$385 million from taxpayers.

A bill being introduced by ERS to help reduce the budget shortfall would increase annual employer contribution rates for police and fire workers to 42.5 percent from the present 25 percent of an employee’s wages beginning July 1. It also seeks to raise employer contribution rates for general employees to about 25 percent from 17 percent.

The pension plan provides retirement, disability and survivor benefits to more than 120,000 active, retired and inactive state and county employees.

About \$1.5 billion of the added shortfall is due to life expectancy changes with ERS members living longer from their age of retirement to their death. Another \$300 million of the shortfall comes as a result of salaries increasing more than anticipated.



American Samoa Government
OFFICE OF PROCUREMENT

INVITATION FOR BIDS IFB 025-2017

Issuance Date: January 11, 2017

Closing Date: January 25, 2017
No later than 2:00 p.m. (local time)

1. INVITATION

Sealed bids are invited from Department of Agriculture Certified Farmers to provide “Supply of Local Produce” for the Department of Education, School Lunch Program.

2. RECEIPT & OPENING OF BIDS

Sealed bids will be received by the Chief Procurement Officer, American Samoa Government, Tafuna, American Samoa 96799, until 2:00 p.m. (local time), January 25, 2017 at which time and place the sealed bids will be publicly opened and read.

3. PRE-BID CONFERENCE

A Pre-Bid Meeting for all Department of Agriculture certified farmers will be held on January 19, 2017 at 9:00 a.m. at the Department of Agriculture Conference Room.

4. CONTRACT DOCUMENTS

Electronic copies of contract documents, including Plans and Scope of Work can be examined or obtained from the Office of Procurement during regular business hours free of charge.

- 5. The American Samoa Government reserves the right not to accept the lowest or any bid.
- 6. The American Samoa Government reserves the right to waive any informality in bidding as may be in the best interest of American Samoa Government.

DR. ORETA MAPU CRICHTON
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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

RFP No: ASPA17.016.WW

Closing Date & Time: January 25, 2017

Issuance Date: January 4, 2017

No later than 2:00 p.m. local time

The American Samoa Power Authority issues this Request For Proposals (RFP) to invite qualified firms to submit formal, written proposals for the:

**“Utulei and Fogagogo Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP)
Outfall Diffuser Modification Project”**

Submission

An Original and one PDF of the Proposal must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked: “RFP No. ASPA17.016.WW Utulei and Fogagogo WWTP Outfall Diffuser Modification Project.” Submissions are to be sent to the following address and will be received until 2:00 p.m. (local time), **Wednesday, January 25, 2017:**

Materials Management Office
American Samoa Power Authority
P.O. Box PPB
Pago Pago, American Samoa 96799
Attn: Procurement Manager

Any proposal received after the aforementioned date and time will not be accepted under any circumstances. Late submissions will not be opened or considered and will be determined as being non-responsive.

Document

The RFP package outlining the proposal requirements is available at The Materials Management Office at ASPA s Tafuna Compound and may also be obtained from our Website: <http://www.aspower.com>.

Right of Rejection

The American Samoa Power Authority reserves the right to reject any and/or all proposals and to waive any irregularities and/or informalities in the submitted proposals that are not in the best interests of the American Samoa Power Authority or the public.

Approved for Issuance: Utu Abe Malae, Executive Director



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FILE - In this Nov. 20, 2016 file photo, President-elect Donald Trump talks to media as he stands with retired Marine Gen. John Kelly at the Trump National Golf Club Bedminster clubhouse in Bedminster, N.J. Kelly is likely to be pressed about plans to build a border wall and other steps to boost immigration security at a Senate confirmation hearing on Jan. 10, for President-elect Donald Trump's pick for Homeland Security secretary.

(AP Photo/Carolyn Kaster, File)

Homeland Security pick cites securing border as top priority

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump's choice to lead the Department of Homeland Security likes the idea of a wall to secure the border with Mexico but says technology and manpower are also a must.

"A physical barrier in and of itself will not do the job," retired Marine Gen. John Kelly told members of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee during a confirmation hearing Tuesday. "Certainly it has to be a layered approach."

The normally blunt-talking Marine walked a fine line in his answers to several questions about how Trump's Homeland Security Department will carry out its many varied missions, specifically efforts to find and deport immigrants living in the country illegally. He struck a balance between defending Trump's hard-line positions on immigration and border security, and the more moderate positions of some senators, especially Democrats.

Asked about the fate of young immigrants protected from deportation by President Barack Obama, Kelly told Democratic Sen. Kamala Harris of California that "the law would guide him" in every decision he will make if confirmed.

Kelly also said the agency doesn't appear to have a particularly efficient way to track visitors who have overstayed their visas and suggested it may be appropriate to "send someone to their house ... and ask them why they haven't departed."

Answering questions about his plans to secure the border, stop the flow of drugs and curb illegal border crossings, Kelly told lawmakers border security shouldn't only focus on the frontier with Mexico, but said "security of the border starts 1,500 miles south of the Rio Grande in the jungles of Latin America." He added that the U.S. should do more to curb demand for drugs in the United States and help stem the violence in a trio of Central American countries whose residents have been fleeing to the United States in recent years.

Kelly's confirmation is almost assured — a reality expressed by both Republican and Democratic senators Tuesday — but members of the committee nonetheless pressed him to specify his stances on immigration enforcement, border security and some of Trump's more controversial suggestions during the campaign, including the possibility of a registration system for Muslim immigrants.

Kelly told lawmakers he does not support registering people based on ethnicity or religion and said he didn't think religion should be a basis for counterterrorism or law enforcement operations. "I don't think it's ever appropriate to focus on something like religion as the only factor," Kelly said.





He also said he accepts with "high confidence" reports from the intelligence community that Russia attempted to interfere in the 2016 presidential election.

Kelly said he did not anticipate that immigration enforcement officials would focus on young immigrants living in the country illegally who have been temporarily protected from deportation.

"There's a big spectrum of people who need to be dealt with," Kelly said. "Those categories would be prioritized. I would guess this category might not be the highest priority for removal."

He is one of several retired generals tapped for top positions by Trump. That has raised some concerns about undue military influence in his administration and weakening the American tradition of civilian control of government.

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Former New England Patriots player Aaron Hernandez, left, appears beside his attorney, Ronald S. Sullivan Jr., in Suffolk Superior Court during a pretrial hearing before Judge Jeffrey Locke, on Tuesday, Dec. 27, 2016 in Boston. Hernandez, who is serving a life sentence for a 2013 murder, is scheduled to go on trial in Feb 13, 2017 for the murder of two men in a 2012 drive-by shooting. (Josh Reynolds/The Boston Globe via AP, Pool)



Aaron Hernandez's tattoos may play role in murder trial

BOSTON (AP) — Former NFL star Aaron Hernandez's tattoos aren't the first to be used as evidence in a murder trial. Body art has played a role in a surprising number of criminal cases nationwide, though legal experts concede that tattoos by themselves are rarely a deciding factor in convictions.

A Massachusetts judge ruled this week that prosecutors can tell the jury about two tattoos they contend relate to the crimes Hernandez is awaiting trial on: murder charges for the fatal shootings of two Boston men in 2012 and a witness intimidation charge for the nonfatal shooting of a former Hernandez friend in 2013.

Here are some other cases in which tattoos have figured prominently:

MURDER SCENE TATTOO

In 2011, a tattoo helped convict a California gang member in a 2004 fatal shooting at a liquor store. The tattoo on Anthony Garcia's chest depicted the murder scene, including the name of the liquor store, the Christmas lights outside the store, a light post in the store's parking lot and a convalescent home located next to the store. The tattoo also showed a chopper spraying bullets on a victim. Garcia's gang nickname was "Chopper." A prosecutor called Garcia's tattoo a "non-verbal confession."

GANG TATTOOS

Gang members often get tattoos to show allegiance to the group or to boast about a crime they've committed for the gang. Just last month, the purported leader of Chicago's powerful Hobos gang, testifying at his own racketeering conspiracy trial, denied the existence of the gang despite a large tattoo on his arm proclaiming "Hobo: The Earth Is Our Turf." Gregory "Bowlegs" Chester and five others were convicted last week.

TATTOOS AS IDENTIFYING MARKS

It's unusual for tattoos to make the difference between a conviction or acquittal, but law enforcement officials frequently use body art to help identify suspects. "What actually comes up in victims' statements is that they sometimes can recognize a person by a tattoo more than they recognize what their face looks like. It's something you can latch onto," said Clairissa Breen, an assistant professor of criminal justice at Buffalo State College.

One problem is that tattoos are usually not specific enough to be seen by juries as proof of a defendant's guilt. For example, a spider web tattoo can have various criminal meanings, but some may get similar tattoos simply because they

like spider webs. "You need a lot more than that to convict someone," said Boston criminologist Jack Levin.

COVERED TATTOOS

In some cases, judges have granted motions to allow defense attorneys to cover up tattoos they believe will prejudice the jury against their clients. In Florida, a judge decided that the court should pay a makeup artist to cover up a swastika tattoo on the neck of a self-described neo-Nazi accused of stabbing his neighbor and killing a friend of his neighbor's son. John Allen Ditullio's lawyers argued successfully that his "scary" tattoos, which also included barbed wire on his face, could influence the jury. Ditullio was convicted of murder and attempted murder. Prosecutors said Ditullio targeted his neighbor because she was friends with a black man and killed her son's friend because he was gay.

In 2014, a Kansas man charged with murder was given permission to wear a turtleneck to cover a tattoo of the word "murder" spelled backwards on his neck. The same year, an Indiana judge ordered a twice-convicted killer to grow out his hair to cover a new tattoo — "Death Row X 3" — before going on trial for allegedly killing a third person.

AARON HERNANDEZ TATTOOS

What sets the Hernandez case apart is the distinctiveness of two of his tattoos. One depicts a 6-shot revolver with five rounds of ammunition in the cylinder and one empty chamber, with "God forgives" beneath.

Prosecutors say they plan to present evidence that Hernandez fired five shots from a revolver into a car on July 17, 2012, killing two men.

The other tattoo depicts a semi-automatic pistol and a single spent shell casing with a wisp of smoke. Prosecutors accuse Hernandez of shooting his former friend, Alexander Bradley, with a single round from a semi-automatic pistol in 2013 because Bradley witnessed the 2012 double slaying.

Breen said prosecutors could try to persuade the jury that the tattoos are an admission of guilt by Hernandez, but his lawyers would also make a case that they have nothing to do with the crimes. "You can say he was very proficient with a firearm and likes guns and therefore had tattoos of the guns as a means of showing strength or showing an ability to protect himself," Breen said. "On the other side, you can say five bullets (for the double slaying), and one shell casing with the smoke to show the attack on the other victim. It becomes a matter of whose story speaks better to the jurors."

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Notice for Proposed Registration of Matai Title

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to Section 6.0105 of the Revised Code of American Samoa that a claim of succession which has been filed with the Territorial Registrar's office for the registration of the Matai Title FILIFILITAULA of the village of TA'U by AUMAGA M. SEGA of the village of TA'U, county of TA'U, MANU'A District.

THE TERRITORIAL REGISTRAR is satisfied that the claim, petition by the family and certificate of the village chiefs are in proper form.

NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that anyone so desiring must file his counterclaim, or objection to the registration of this matai title with the Territorial Registrar Office before the expiration of 60 days from the date of posting. If no counterclaim, nor any objection is filed by the expiration of said 60 days, the matai title FILIFILITAULA shall be registered in the name of AUMAGA M. SEGA in accordance with the laws of American Samoa.

POSTED: DECEMBER 7, 2016 thru FEBRUARY 7, 2017
SIGNED: Taito S.B. White, Territorial Registrar

Fa'aaliga o le Fa'amauina o se Suafa Matai

O le fa'aaliga leni ua faasalalauina e tusa ma le Maga 6.0105 o le tusi tulafono a Amerika Samoa, e pei ona suia, ona o le talosaga ua faalufaleina mai i le Ofisa o le Resitara o Amerika Samoa, mo le fia faamauina o le suafa matai o FILIFILITAULA o le nu'u o TA'U e AUMAGA M. SEGA o TA'U faalupega o TA'U, falelima i MANU'A.

Ua taliaina e le Resitara lea talosaga, faatasi ma le talosaga a le aiga faapea ma le tusi faamauina mai matai o lea nu'u, ma ua i ai nei i teuga pepa a lea ofisa.

A i ai se tasi e faafinagaloina, ia faalufaleina sana talosaga tete'e, po o sana faalavelave tusitusia i le Ofisa o Resitara i totonu o aso e 60 mai le aso na faalauloia ai leni fa'aaliga. Afai o lea lea se talosaga tete'e, po'e se faalavelave foi e faalufaleina mai i aso e 60 e pei ona taua i luga, o lea faamauina loa lea suafa matai i le igoa o AUMAGA M. SEGA e tusa ai ma aiaiga o le tulafono a Amerika Samoa.

12/12/16 & 01/12/17





Flooded California residents rescued as major storms recede

HOLLISTER, Calif. (AP) — Rescue workers used boats and firetrucks to evacuate dozens of Northern California residents from their flooded homes Wednesday as a drought-busting series of storms began to move out of the region after days of heavy rain and snow that toppled trees and created havoc as far north as Portland, Oregon.

Reports of the flooding started about 2 a.m. Wednesday as water from a quickly rising creek in the small rural town of Hollister deluged homes on a two-lane stretch of road called Lovers Lane.

Torrents of rain gushed down the street even after rescuers finished evacuating residents more than seven hours later. Some homes had mudlines about five feet high, marking how far the water rose. The water by

that time was receding but still waist-deep in places.

“It’s just a lot of water,” said Kevin O’Neill, emergency services manager for San Benito County. “Fields that look like lakes. The ground just can’t soak it up. Vehicles that are partly submerged, homes have water damage.”

Hollister resident Richard Sanchez said he didn’t evacuate because he wanted to look after his animals after seeing his yard flood.

“My yard is just an ocean,” Sanchez said. “I decided to stay because I have animals. I wasn’t being hardheaded. I just wanted to make sure they were safe.”

Forecasters said precipitation would continue through Thursday, but the brunt of the back-to-back systems fueled by an “atmospheric river” weather phenomenon had passed after delivering the heaviest rain in a decade to parts of Northern California and Nevada.

The massive rain and snowfall that prompted a rare blizzard warning in parts of the Sierra Nevada mountains is helping much of Northern California recover from a six-year drought. The series of storms has also added 39 billion gallons of water to Lake Tahoe since Jan. 1.

Stormy weather extended north where Portland, Oregon and Southwest Washington were slammed with a surprising foot of snow, unusual for an area that normally sees rain. Crater Lake National Park in Oregon closed Tuesday and into Wednesday with more than 8 feet of snow on the ground.

The staggering snow totals in the Sierra Nevada — up to 11 feet the past week at some ski resorts around Lake Tahoe — was great for easing drought conditions but bad for area ski enthusiasts as road closures and avalanche threats kept most resorts closed for the third day in a row Wednesday.

“In all my years, it’s so rare to have too much snow,” said Dan Lavelly, who moved to Lake Tahoe in 1968 and now lives in Reno. “Having a season pass, you pretty much live for these conditions. You want 2 or 3 feet of fresh powder, and you want to go play in it.”

In Southern California, as the latest round of rain tapered off, a 9,000-pound of concrete wall and foundation slid down a rain-soaked, unstable hillside in Los Angeles’ Hollywood Hills neighborhood.

It landed on a roadway that had been closed because of concerns about the undermined home. No injuries were reported.

The home, built in 1925, was red-tagged as unsafe to occupy while two neighboring homes were yellow-tagged, meaning residents can stay inside but can’t go into their backyards.

Floodwaters surround a property Wednesday, Jan. 11, 2017, in Hollister, Calif. Forecasters said rain and snow would continue through Thursday, but the brunt of the system had passed after delivering the heaviest rain in a decade to parts Northern California and Nevada.

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