

NBC Nightly News – Saturday, January 19, 2019

Jose: Tonight states of emergency, more than 100 million Americans under winter weather alerts from Oklahoma to Maine. Wind, rain, ice and snow. Dangerous roadways, thousands of flights canceled, trains too. The temperatures are expected to drop drastically in major Northern cities. We'll have a live forecast.

President Trump offers a deal on border security.

Donald Trump: It is a compassionate response to the ongoing tragedy on our Southern border.

Jose: But will the Democrats get on board to end the shutdown?

Outrage after some teenagers taunted a Native American elder, a Vietnam Veteran during a special ceremony in the nation's capital.

A new more personal twist in the trial of a Mexican drug kingpin, El Chapo's mistress testifies against him as his wife sits nearby.

The accidental invite, a typo in a bachelor party email turns into a cross country adventure to celebrate with strangers.

Announcer: This is NBC Nightly News with Jose Diaz-Balart.

Jose: Good evening, as we begin our broadcast a third of the United States is in the path of a major winter storm. From Oklahoma to Maine, making for a chaotic and messy holiday weekend. The storm is bringing rain, gusting winds, snow and treacherous ice along with brutally cold, life threatening temperatures. It's already causing major problems for travelers. NBC's Kathy Park is following it all and has the very latest.

Kathy Park: Severe winter weather is slamming much of the country.

Speaker 5: We finally landed and next thing we know we are on the runway and stuck in snow.

Kathy Park: In the Midwest travel troubles. This United Airlines Flight slid off the runway at O'Hare this morning. More than 17 hundred flights canceled nationwide today, and nearly a thousand already grounded for tomorrow. As the same system heads Northeast.

In New York, prepping for rain, snow, sleet and freezing temperatures. Even possible power outages. How are you starting to spend your weekend, it sounds like you already have the weekend planned out already.

Speaker 6: Well we got all the food, the grocery shopping is done, all the salt and the shovels and the ice breakers, prepared.

Kathy Park: The warning: stay inside.

Governor Cuomo: If you do not need to be on the road, people should not be on the road.

Kathy Park: In Minnesota a mess on the roads, visibility getting worse throughout the day.

Speaker 8: 19.99.

Kathy Park: And in Massachusetts hitting the stores, trying to prepare for what's to come. As a system the moves out an Arctic blast moves in. The wind chills will be brutal. On Sunday it will feel like minus 17 in Pittsburgh, on Monday New York will feel like minus 12 and Boston's wind chill could be minus 13. Late today even a tornado hit near Montgomery, Alabama. Reports now of extensive damage in downtown Watumpka, as well as several injuries.

Jose elsewhere, three deaths are being blamed on these massive storms and here in Albany they're anticipating up to 20 inches of snow. Crews will be working throughout the night, salting the streets and plowing the roadways. Jose.

Jose: Kathy Park, thank you very much. Let's get right to WNBC chief meteorologist Janice Huff, who is tracking the storm. Janice.

Janice Huff: Jose, this storm has everything as you saw. From snow in the North to severe weather in the South. Strong thunderstorms between Atlanta and Columbus, Georgia right now. And heavy snow spreading from Cleveland over to Buffalo and approaching New York City right now. The heaviest snow will be in the Northeast, but inland away from the coast. So if you live in New York City don't expect a snowstorm coming your way, it's going to be mainly rain. Up through New England, heavy snow inland on Sunday and the system moves out late on Sunday. By then the damage is done, along with the snow and ice. The heaviest snow, may be upwards of 18/20 inches for parts of Northern New England. Back towards Burlington and Albany, New York.

As you go farther South though the totals do drop off a bit. This ice is going to cause major problems for the Northeast. Stretching from Scranton all the way Bangor and Portland, may be as much 3 quarters of an inch of ice can bring down trees, power lines, and power outages will be a major deal across this region. As well as that flash freeze that comes up on Sunday night. Jose.

Jose: Janice Huff, thank you very much.

Now to the four week old government shutdown, President Trump offered a deal to Democrats today, but refused to change his demand for nearly six billion

dollars for a wall at the Mexican border. NBC News White House Correspondent Kelly O'Donnell has more.

Kelly O'Donnell: On this day 29, President Trump hosted a naturalization ceremony swearing in five new American in the Oval Office.

Donald Trump: You are now officially United States citizens.

Kelly O'Donnell: And with a new offer, he made government shutdown negotiations a national TV event.

Donald Trump: I'm here today to break the logjam.

Kelly O'Donnell: The president pledging new support for a long held priority for Democrats. Legal protection for certain immigrants.

Donald Trump: This is a common sense compromise both parties should embrace.

Kelly O'Donnell: The White House offer would extend legal status for an estimated 700 hundred thousand young undocumented immigrants. Another 300 thousand refugees from war torn or disaster ravaged nations, who status will expire.

Donald Trump: This extension will give them access to work permits, social security numbers, and protection from deportation.

Kelly O'Donnell: The compromise would come with a price for Democrats, emboldened by their political base to oppose funding the president's border wall. But President Trump's demand remains 5.7 billion dollars over five years.

Donald Trump: The radical Left can never control our borders. I will never let it happen.

Kelly O'Donnell: Tonight House Speaker Nancy Pelosi issued a statement calling the president's offer unacceptable and a non starter. As she insists the government must reopen before border negotiations. Pelosi writes: "The president has taken pride in shutting down government, now he must take action to open up government." Without a real breakthrough, another hardship looms. Tuesday at midnight is the payroll deadline for 800 thousand federal workers who would miss another check.

Tonight the vice president reacted to early criticism of the proposal, rebuffing conservative opposition. Mr. Pence told me and other reporters the extension of legal status for qualified immigrants is not an amnesty bill. For Democrats who demand permanent protections the vice president said this offer would provide three years of certainty as a compromise. Now strategically the White House said it hopes a shutdown weary public will encourage Senate Democrats to vote for the plan on Tuesday, to try to break this impasse. Jose.

Jose: Kelly O'Donnell at the White House, thank you.

At the center of the shutdown is one federal agency, US Customs and Border Protection. Tonight an inside look at how Border Patrol agents are working without pay as Washington remains at an impasse. NBC's Gabe Gutierrez is on the Arizona border.

Gabe Gutierrez: In this nighttime video from the Border Patrol you can see a bus in Mexico dropping off dozens of migrants, and then simply walk across a remote stretch of the Arizona border. Marked only with a small fence. This is where it happened, that's Mexico right there, and exactly where the undocumented immigrants were dropped off and then walked right here to the US side of the border.

Fernando: I think you can ask any Border Patrol agent here that has been around from one year to 30 years as myself, and they'll tell you that this is a crisis.

Gabe Gutierrez: Earlier this week more than 300 undocumented immigrants crossed illegally near Yuma. Smugglers burrowed under the border fence to slide them through.

Fernando: We see large groups of family units and unaccompanied children, and it's created this backlog in the immigration system.

Gabe Gutierrez: Overall apprehensions at the Southwest border have plummeted over the last two decades. In the Tucson sector alone a drop from more than 600 thousand to just 52 thousand last year.

Is there a crisis on the border?

Jeffrey Self: Yes there is.

Gabe Gutierrez: Jeffrey Self is the acting chief of the Border Patrol in Tucson. He said the crisis is humanitarian, because though the overall numbers are lower his agents are seeing more families from Central America. He says they take longer to process.

Is the stand that the president is taking worth it?

Jeffrey Self: We're an apolitical organization, we execute our orders from the executive office. I can only tell you from folks going on field operations that border security is imperative to this nation.

Gabe Gutierrez: Whether all this really adds up to a crisis is the central question of this shutdown. Amid the debate the Border Patrol's nearly 20 thousand agents are among the federal employees still working without pay. Jose.

Jose: Gabe Gutierrez in Nogales, thank you.

Now to that rare move by the special counsel, disputing the facts of a BuzzFeed article that claimed President Trump directed his former personal attorney, Michael Cohen, to lie to Congress. NBC's White House Correspondent Jeff Bennet joins us with more, Jeff.

Jeff Bennet: Jose, good evening. The Office of Special Counsel, Robert Mueller issued a rare statement to dispute the report by BuzzFeed News that President Trump had instructed his former lawyer to lie to Congress. It reads: "Buzzfeed's description of specific statements to the Special Counsel's Office, and characterization of documents and testimony obtained by this office, regarding Michael Cohen's Congressional testimony are not accurate." Now it's highly unusual for the Special Counsel's Office to comment on any of its ongoing investigative work, and in response President Trump took an unusual step of his own. The president, who so often criticizes Mueller, today thanked him.

Donald Trump: I appreciate the Special Counsel coming out with a statement last night. I think it was very appropriate that they did so. I very much appreciate that.

Jeff Bennet: President Trump taking a victory lap of vindication, denouncing both the story and the media in general for reporting on it. Jose.

Jose: Jeff Bennet at the White House, thank you.

Earlier today President Trump met privately with the families of four Americans killed by a suicide bomber in Syria this week. The remains of the victims were returned to Dover Air Force Base in a formal ceremony. At least 19 people were killed in the attack, including the two US service members, a former Navy Seal, and a Defense contractor.

A troubling scene many are calling racist played out in Washington yesterday on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Some students harassing Native American man, a Vietnam Vet in the midst of a special ceremony. Tammy Leitner has more.

Tammy Leitner: It was meant to be a time for Indigenous people to be seen and heard. But this viral video taken during Friday's rally in Washington has sparked outrage and confusion. The video appears to show dozens of youths wearing Make America Great Again hats, mocking Native American elder and Vietnam Veteran Nathan Phillips. Many jeering and others looking on.

Nathan Phillips: I was there singing and I heard them "say build that wall, build that wall." You know this is indigenous lands, not supposed to have walls here. We never did for millennia.

Tammy Leitner: Some of the youths may be from Covington Catholic, an all male high school in Kentucky. Although it's not clear if everyone in the crowd was from the school. The Diocese of Covington saying in a statement: "The matter is being

investigated and we will take appropriate action, up to and including expulsion." It's unclear how the event started. Tonight some are wondering how this peaceful rally became a sad display of disrespect?

Tammy Leitner, NBC News.

Jose: For the third January in a row, peaceful protestors took to the streets in hundreds of cities across the country. The women and men marched in support of women's rights, and other progressive causes. In New York City, two marches took place. The second organized by marchers who were concerned about allegations anti-Semitism against the organizers of the original march.

Still ahead tonight, a fresh look at the empire of Mexican Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, through the eyes of his mistress.

A new turn in one of the most watched trials in the country, this week the Mexican drug lord known as El Chapo sat in a federal courtroom in Brooklyn as his former mistress took the stand against him at his drug trial. Her testimony giving new insight into the man behind a billion dollar narcotics empire. NBC's Morgan Chesky has more on the family drama playing out in open court.

Morgan Chesky: His stories have become almost mythic, eluding authorities through tunnels while running a billion dollar drug cartel. This week, Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman's story was overshadowed by another, a Mexican lawmaker and mistress named Lucero Guadalupe Sanchez.

Rebecca Smith: As a proper narco novella, the mistress is on the witness stand. She's telling all these stories, these love stories. [00:13:39 speaks in Spanish].

Morgan Chesky: Rebecca Smith has covered the trial for Telemundo since it began. Watching the leader of the Sinaloa Cartel face hours of testimony, but none this personal.

Rebecca Smith: She knew everything, she was in love with him. Although the relationship lasted only for three years, they were very, very close.

Morgan Chesky: So close Sanchez explained she was the woman in bed with El Chapo when Mexican Marines busted down his door in 2014. Prompting one of his several escapes, this time down a set of stairs under a bathtub to an underground tunnel naked. Courtroom sketches show El Chapo sitting near his wife Emma Coronel paying little attention to the woman who said she ran his household, trafficked narcotics and even bought his underwear.

Rebecca Smith: He was capable of dominating and changing, and maneuvering all these young women to do things for him.

Morgan Chesky: Sanchez herself acknowledged her former lover's powerful attraction, telling the jury "Up until today I'm still confused because I thought our relationship... we

were romantically involved as partners." More explosive testimony came this week from one of El Chapo's closest associates, who claimed the kingpin paid 100 million dollar bride to former Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto. A claim the president's former chief of staff called both false and absurd. Jose.

Jose: Morgan Chesky, thank you very much.

We're back in a moment with a bachelor party playing out on social media. Why one man traveled across the country to celebrate with a group of strangers.

We are back with a mix up that brought together strangers living on opposite sides of the country for the party of their lives. A wayward email and the response created a social media sensation. Here's Joe Fryer on what's trending as #AngelosBachelorParty.

Joe Fryer: As far as bachelor parties the one happening this weekend at a Vermont ski resort is getting a stunning amount of attention. All thanks to a tiny type on an invitation.

Will Novack: Urgent, Angelo's bachelor party, respond right away.

Joe Fryer: That's the email sent to Will Novack in Phoenix, the one that was supposed to go to Bill Novack in New York.

Will Novack: I don't know how to ski, I don't know Angelo, but I thought I'll write back a silly email just to make these guys laugh.

Joe Fryer: "Angelo sounds tremendous", Will kiddingly replied, and "I want to help send him off in style."

Will Novack: About two days later they wrote back and they were like you might be think you're kidding, but you are not.

Joe Fryer: With that [inaudible 00:16:08], Will Novack a 35 year old new dad.

Speaker 22: Cheers.

Joe Fryer: Was officially invited to the party.

Speaker 22: Will the real slim shady please stand up.

Will Novack: All right everybody I'm about 30 minutes outside the destination.

Joe Fryer: He arrived in Vermont overnight, picking up some swag along the way. Even getting upgraded to a Maserati. Will brought 80s attire to fit the party's theme, and even launched a GoFundMe account to pay for the trip. With the extra money going to Angelo and his bride who are expecting a baby.

Have you had any second thoughts at all about this?

Will Novack: No, no, did we have second thoughts about going to the Moon? Come on you gotta do it, you gotta just lean into it, be open to life.

Joe Fryer: Even the strictest of copy editors would have to admit this type was a good one. Joe Fryer NBC News.

Jose: When we come back, how a heart attack changed the life of the doctor who saved his.

Finally tonight, most who survive a heart attack feel lucky just to be alive, but Duane Picken's doctor was willing to go the distance to help him thrive. Matt Bradley has the inspiring story.

Duane Picken: Second mile into the 5.2 miles is when I had my heart attack.

Matt Bradley: Duane Picken's didn't so much brush with death last year, as run straight into it.

Duane Picken: For almost two minutes I did not have a heartbeat, that's when I went oh my gosh I was pretty much gone out there.

Matt Bradley: The three time marathon runner was lucky the day he almost died, he was running just ahead of a Dallas firefighter and a nurse.

Speaker 25: I just happened to be in the right at the right time.

Matt Bradley: The first responders rescued Duane, but they didn't have to revitalize him.

Duane Picken: Dr. Hamman said hey we're gonna do this next year, and I looked at him and he goes no we're gonna do it together. I went hey I'm gonna run this thing again next year.

Matt Bradley: Heart surgeon Barron Hamman of Baylor Scott and White Hospital hadn't worked out much over the years.

Dr. Hamman: The first time I ran I couldn't run, I couldn't run around the track a mile and it was really a little bit embarrassing and humiliating.

Matt Bradley: Though he spent his career saving patient's lives, it was a patient that would change his own.

Dr. Hamman: Here's a patient whose been through a near death experience, and I thought well my goodness if he can do it probably I can do it.

Matt Bradley: Dr. Hamman recruited Duane's four sons to run the race too.

Duane Picken: Having them there meant a lot.

Matt Bradley: As well as a few of the first responders who had been there when Duane collapsed.

Duane Picken: I had special shirts made this year thanking all these people.

Matt Bradley: They all competed as marathon relay teams in the Dallas Marathon in December.

Dr. Hamman: The relay teams are important and somewhat symbolic.

Matt Bradley: Together again, a year later.

Dr. Hamman: It's just an example of how it takes a whole group of people to make us all whole and healthy.

Matt Bradley: To pass inspiration and health from one to another. Matt Bradley NBC News.

Jose: That's NBC Nightly News for this Saturday. Join Kate Snow tomorrow for a preview of a natural wonder. Sunday night's Super Blood Wolf Moon. Sounds scary. I'm Jose Diaz-Balart reporting from New York. Thank you for the privilege of your time, and good night.