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Mexico-US Tariffs Agreement

Trump claims victory in deal

BY JILL COLVIN, ZEKE MILLER and COLLEEN LONG
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's deal to avert his threatened tariffs on Mexico includes few new solutions to swiftly stem the surge of Central American migrants flowing over America's southern border.



Trump

But it delivers enough for Trump to claim a political win.

The decision — announced by tweet late Friday — ended a showdown that business leaders warned would have disastrous economic consequences for both the U.S. and one of its largest trading partners, driving up consumer prices and driving a wedge between the two allies. And it represented a win for members of Trump's own party who had flooded the White House with pleading calls as well as aides who had been eager to convince the president to back down.

But ultimately, it gives Trump the ability to claim victory on a central campaign promise that has been largely unfulfilled as he prepares to formally launch his 2020 campaign.

"In the face of naysayers, President Trump yet again delivered a huge victory for the American people," Trump campaign spokesman Tim Murtaugh said in a statement, applauding the president for using "the threat of tariffs to bring Mexico to the table" and "showing that he is willing to use every tool in his toolbox to protect the American people."

Trump ran in 2016 pledging to crack down on illegal immigration, but instead has watched as the number of border crossings has spiked to its highest level in over a decade — with U.S. Border Patrol apprehending more than 132,000 people in May, including a record 84,542 adults and children traveling together.

See **TRUMP**, Page A7

ALONG THE RAILS

LIFE OF A HOBO

Mark Nichols — aka 'Hobo Shoestring' — finds freedom, danger in train hopping



DAVID CRIGGER/BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Mark Nichols, aka "Hobo Shoestring" (his hobo name), talks about his years of riding trains across the United States, Canada and Mexico.

BY ROBERT SORRELL | BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

"I've done and tried almost everything on Earth, and nothing makes me more happy and sound than riding trains and being free."

— Mark Nichols, longtime hobo

JOHNSON CITY, Tenn. — Mark Nichols lives in a small apartment near downtown Johnson City, but four static walls aren't what he's used to — home is on the rails.

The 48-year-old former U.S. Army helicopter mechanic is one of just a handful of modern-day railroad hobos — a longtime American lifestyle that had its heyday in the Great Depression but has since lost popularity. He goes by the moniker "Hobo Shoestring" — a name pulled from the lyrics of an old Mel McDaniel country music tune from the 1980s.

The tune's lyrics are practically about Nichols' life, he said, one that has taken him along the rails to every state except Hawaii. He's also ventured into Canada and Mexico.

See **HOBO**, Page A6

COMING MONDAY

» Learn more about local train hopping and hobos in Monday's edition of the Bristol Herald Courier.

INSIDE

» The railroad was an important theme in Bristol, Johnson City sessions. **A6**

» Photos from Nichols' life as a hobo. **A6**



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COMMUNITY
Different historic eras to share spotlight for upcoming Timeline and Heritage Festival at Rocky Mount » D1

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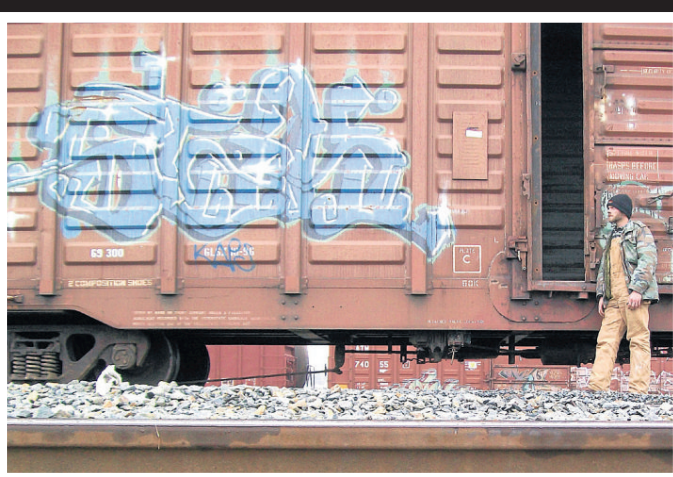
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LIFE OF A HOBO

MARK NICHOLS' PHOTOS

Mark Nichols prepares to board a boxcar in the Shreveport, Louisiana, KCS Yards.



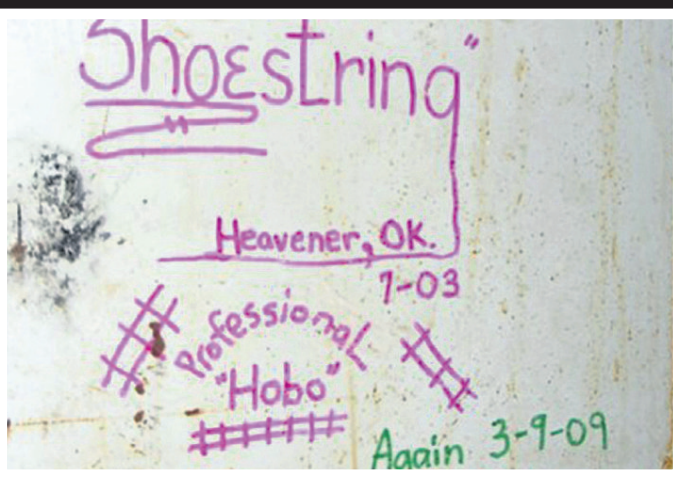
Mark Nichols shows how he judges if a boxcar is empty. If you can place your finger between the springs, the boxcar is most likely empty.



Mark Nichols is arrested in New Smyrna Beach, Florida, while riding Florida East Coast railway.



Mark Nichols boarded a boxcar to find that he had been in the same car once before.



Mark Nichols inside a boxcar traveling from Kansas City to Nebraska.



Mark Nichols riding on the pusher-unit of a shuttle grain train bound for the Port of New Orleans on the "KCS."



Mark Nichols nearing Heavener, Oklahoma, on KCS



Bristol, Johnson City Sessions

Railroad an important theme in recordings

BY ROBERT SORRELL
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

When a big city record producer came to Bristol and Johnson City in the 1920s to discover new Appalachian region talent, local performers sang about love, death, religion and the railroad lifestyle.

On July 22, 1927, Victor Talking Machine Company record producer Ralph Peer and his two engineers, who came into town by train, set up a studio on the Tennessee side of State Street in Bristol, according to East Tennessee State University professor Ted Olson, a music historian.

Major recording companies had been interested in finding new music acts from the south.

Peer and his team began recording area musicians on July 25 and concluded on Aug. 5, yielding 76 performances by 19 acts, according to Olson. Peer later returned for additional sessions in Bristol and Johnson City.

"There weren't hobos among the performers at the 1927 and 1928 Bristol sessions and the 1928 and 1929 Johnson City sessions, but the railroad was an important theme at all those sessions," Olson said.

Recordings from the 1927 Bristol sessions on the theme include Blind Alfred Reed's "The Wreck of the Virginian," Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Baker's "The Newmarket Wreck," and the Tenneva Ramblers song "The Longest Train I Ever Saw."

Rene Rodgers, head curator at the Birthplace of Country Music Museum, noted that there are some songs from the Bristol sessions that reference trains in their title or lyrics, such as the instru-

mental "Narrow Gauge Blues" by El Watson and "Train on the Island" by J. P. Nester.

"As far as I can know, none of these are focused in on the hobo life on the rails," Rodgers said.

At the Johnson City sessions, Olson mentioned two train songs: the Roane County Ramblers' "Southern No. 111" (in 1928), and the Bowman Sisters' "Railroad, Take Me Back" (in 1929).

Jimmie Rodgers, a musician from Mississippi, performed during the Bristol sessions and went on to become a household name. Before becoming a musician, Rodgers worked on the railroad and befriended a number of hobos.

Olson said the hobo theme can be found in three of Rodgers' tunes, including "Hobo Bill's Last Ride," "Waiting For A Train" and "Hobo's Meditation."

Since the 1920s, country music, of which Bristol claims to be the birthplace, has had a few songs about railroads and hobos, such as "Hobo Heaven" by Boxcar Willie and "Hobo's Lullaby," which has been recorded by numerous musicians.

One song, Mel McDaniel's "Shoestring," is even the inspiration for a present-day hobo's nickname.

Mark Nichols, a 48-year-old hobo originally from Texas, said his moniker, "Hobo Shoestring," is from McDaniel's tune. Nichols, who lives in Johnson City, said the song, which he enjoys, is basically about his life.

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Hobo

From Page A1

Before moving to Johnson City, a historic railroad hub, Nichols said he would travel through the Tri-Cities region at least two or three times a year. He usually caught a train in Washington, D.C., and traveled south, through Roanoke, Virginia, the Tri-Cities and Knoxville, Tennessee.

"Rarely do they ever stop in Johnson City," Nichols said of the trains. "They have to stop in Bristol for a crew change. That's usually where I go to catch a train out of here."

Nichols said he wasn't aware of any other hobos — someone who hops on trains and works for a living — who use the rail yards in Bristol or Johnson City, but they do pass through.

"I've ridden with other riders through Bristol," he said. "It's not really big enough for a place to get a shower or a job."

Do any train hoppers call Bristol home? It's unknown, but the Norfolk Southern Railroad passes through the center of the city. When asked about local hobos, police and railroad officials said they weren't sure if any call Bristol home. They also note that train hopping is dangerous and illegal.

Nichols said he started train hopping nearly 30 years ago.

"We moved a lot when I was a kid, being a military family," said Nichols, who was born in Freeport, Texas, but grew up in Port Arthur. "We moved 28 times before I graduated in '89."

Nichols said his mind never shuts off; he's always on the move. Like many, he looked for ways to occupy himself.

"For me, it's traveling," Nichols said. "To give myself a challenge, it just keeps me focused on one thing, even though it's a bad way, a hard way of living. It's got its ups and downs. Just the thrill you get out of it, the freedom and not being tied down."

'Straight to the rails'

After high school, Nichols said he joined the military and served for about two years. He worked on Bell helicopters and was stationed at various bases in the continental U.S.

"But after I got out, I went straight to the rails," Nichols said. "It just got in my blood and I never stopped doing it. I learned by myself."

These days, young train hoppers get help from others, or guides, and learn the ins and outs on how to find the right train to ride, he said. He rode his first train while traveling through Laramie, Wyoming.

"I just hopped on trains and went wherever it went," said Nichols. "I was hitchhiking and trying to get to Denver. This old hobo and his dog, I was waiting on an overpass and he was waiting on a train down below."

The older hobo asked Nichols where he wanted to go.

"He showed me what train to get on and the next thing I know, I stayed on through Denver and stayed on to Stockton, California," Nichols said.

Nichols had hopped on a parked grain car, known by hobos as a grainer, and traveled for nearly four days across several western states to California. He remembers going through Salt Lake City, Utah, and the Donner Pass in the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

During that first trip, Nichols spent \$23 on canned food and a loaf of bread. He also had a half gallon of water for the trip.

"I was hooked right then," he said. "I don't know what to compare it to."

Nichols said his family was concerned about his new adventures at first and thought he was going through a phase.

But as time passed, Nichols continued to hop aboard trains — landing a couple times a year in jail for trespassing — and his family made him an out-cast, he said.

Today, however, he often talks with his family, and he tries to visit his mother at least once a year.

"I've done and tried almost everything on Earth, and nothing makes me more happy and sound than riding trains and being free," Nichols said.

Learning the rails

Over the years, with experience, Nichols also became more accustomed to picking the right train — the ones that provide more comfort, more scenery and less of a chance of getting caught.

"After about seven or eight years of 24/7 doing that, I pretty much learned the North American continent," Nichols said.

His favorite train car: the boxcar. He usually prefers to step foot on a stopped train at the local rail yard, climbing up four feet to the deck, which he described as a 6-by-8-foot platform.

The boxcar is slow moving, Nichols said, and can travel up to 48 mph.

"You can enjoy the scenery and not be in a rush," Nichols said. "The railroad police don't check them out that much."

Railroad police, known by hobos as "bulls," often check trains as they stop at yards.

"Usually they don't throw you in jail," Nichols said. "If they do, it's an overnight for trespassing."

Nichols has been arrested and charged with misdemeanor trespassing about two dozen times, he said. He was last incarcerated in Regina, Saskatchewan.

He said railroad staff often don't care when they find him aboard trains.

Trump

From Page A1

That surge has been straining federal resources, leaving officials struggling to provide basic housing and health care to families fleeing violence and poverty in Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador.

With Trump overseas and an unproductive opening negotiating session with Mexican officials Wednesday, many at the White House had expected Trump to move forward with the 5% tariff he'd threaten to slap on all Mexican goods on Monday in an effort to strong-arm the country into action, according to people familiar with the deliberations. Aides including Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of State Mike Pom-

peo were no personal fans of the policy, but they understood Trump's frustration and presented several suggestions to the Mexican delegation to walk him back. They also made clear that Trump was dead set on the tariffs without dramatic action.

U.S. officials were nonetheless surprised when talks resumed Thursday and Mexico agreed to some of the things Pence had put on the table, including an expansion of a program that forces some asylum-seekers to return to Mexico as they wait for their cases to be adjudicated. And while such a measure never made it into the agreement, Mexican officials also expressed an openness to discussing something they had long opposed: having Mexico become a "safe third coun-

try," which would make it harder for asylum-seekers who pass through the country to claim refuge in the U.S.

Conversations continued Friday during a marathon session at the State Department led by White House counsel Pat Cipollone, with Trump briefed by phone aboard Air Force One.

A final decision was made during an evening conference call once Trump returned to the White House on Friday evening, and shortly thereafter he fired off his tweet announcing the deal.

The decision was a relief for Trump aides—nearly all of whom were united in opposition to the tariffs, disagreeing on principle and in practice. It also came as relief for Republican lawmakers and their allies in the business

community, who'd spent the week burning up White House phones and personally nudging the president to back down. In a rare rebuke, several had threatened to block the effort, with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell saying publicly there was little support.

Still, one Republican who discussed the situation on condition of anonymity said the outreach from Capitol Hill appeared to play far less a role than the concessions made by the Mexicans — particularly the agreement to expand the remain-in-Mexico policy.

Critics, meanwhile, pointed out that little announced on Friday appeared to be new.

A joint statement released by the State Department said Mexico had agreed to

"take unprecedented steps to increase enforcement to curb irregular migration," including the deployment of its new National Guard, with a focus on its porous southern border with Guatemala. Mexico, however, had already intended to deploy the National Guard to the southern border and had made that clear to U.S. officials.

The U.S. also hailed Mexico's agreement to embrace the expansion of a program under which some asylum-seekers are returned to Mexico as they wait out their cases. But the remain-in-Mexico program was implemented earlier this year and, from the start, U.S. officials have vowed to rapidly expand it, even without Mexico's public support. Indeed, officials from the Department of Homeland Secu-

rity were working to spread the program, which has already led to the return of about 10,000 to Mexico, before the latest blowup, though it has been plagued with scheduling glitches and delays. Immigration activists also have challenged the program in court, arguing that it violates migrants' legal rights. An appeals court recently overturned a federal judge who had blocked the program as it makes its way through the courts.

Administration officials noted the deal leaves open the possibility of "further actions" if "the measures adopted do not have the expected results." And while the "third safe country" agreement did not make it into the deal, it is something officials plan to continue to discuss in the coming months.

Life

From Page A6

Upon recognizing him as a seasoned hobo, they'll allow him to ride, he said.

Riding on trains is a dangerous lifestyle, Nichols admits.

He was hurt one time while traveling on the Kansas City Southern Railroad in Pittsburg, Kansas. He fell and had a pinky and ring finger on top of the rail. The train ran over his fingers.

"I didn't really even know it happened," he recalled.

After being transported to Kansas City, Nichols stayed in the hospital for three weeks. He lost his two fingers in the mishap and was cited for trespassing.

"I just can't play the harmonica and guitar anymore," Nichols said.

He recalled another train hopper, known as James "Stobe the Hobo" Hobie, who was struck and killed by a train. Hobie, 33, who became a YouTube star, died in 2017 near Baltimore, Maryland. Nichols has also encountered two bodies while traveling. On both occasions, Nichols said he contacted authorities.

National Hobo Convention

Since 1900, hobos and their supporters from around the country have gathered in Britt, Iowa, each August for the National Hobo Convention. The small town hosts a parade, entertainment, arts and crafts, food and the election of the King and Queen of the Hobos.

The hobos come to town and set up a hobo jungle, sell their crafts and provide free entertainment to visitors, according to the event's website. Visitors can also visit the Hobo Memorial Cemetery, where many steam-engine era hobos are buried, and the National Hobo Museum, where authentic artifacts are on display.

For more information, visit BrittHoboDays.com.

The hobo also sells items on eBay, like his \$7 harmonica and an old hat that he said went for \$156.

In recent years, hobos, like Nichols, have used social media and gained many followers. Nichols has developed a following on Facebook, Flickr and YouTube.

"I never asked for the fame," he said. "It's fame for a certain crowd. Most people look down on people like me. They don't want to be around him. 'He stinks. Get a job.' People like that are misinformed. I guess that's what they see on TV and reading books."

In recent years, Nichols has been filming some of his trips, including one from Bristol to Knoxville, and sharing them on YouTube. His videos have been viewed about 1.3 million times. A few railroad employees have even complimented him on them, he said.

Nichols' videos led him to befriend a local family because the son watched them and became fascinated with the railroad lifestyle.

The family eventually let Nichols live with them for a while, and in the spring he moved into his first home, an apartment in Johnson City.

"The railroad is my home," Nichols said. "It

weighs on me really bad. I just sit there and look at the walls [of his apartment]. I have to get out and do something."

Like many hobos, medical problems have kept Nichols from riding recently. Surgery this summer is keeping Nichols in Johnson City.

But Nichols is looking forward to returning to the rails. He has set up a GoFundMe account to raise funds to fly northwest and hop on a train in Alaska, a state he fondly remembers. He also said he enjoys riding trains in New England, especially in Maine.

Eventually, Nichols said he'll retire and possibly settle down, but not yet. He continues to encounter other train hoppers, but they are getting few and far between.

"There aren't really more real riders anymore," Nichols said.

He estimates that two decades ago there were likely a couple hundred full-time hobos around the country. The number has decreased. Today, most of the train hoppers that Nichols said he encounters are 20-25 years old.

Nichols said many people want to experience adventure and excitement when they get out of school and decide to

train hop, despite it being a crime.

He said many participants move on with their lives away from the railroad, while others continue the railroad lifestyle. Few live as long as Nichols due to derailments, murder, prison, alcoholism and drugs, he said.

Hobos often get confused with other individuals living on the streets, Nichols said. A hobo is an individual who travels by train and works for a living, he said. A tramp is an individual who wanders, or travels, by foot, hitchhiking or train, to find work or beg, and a bum is a person without a home, does not work and typically begs for a living, according to the Urban Dictionary.

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Working and riding

Like other full-time hobos, Nichols often gets jobs while traveling. Day-labor can be found in larger cities, those with at least 50,000 people, he said.

He often will get jobs moving furniture from homes and storage units, which allow him to be paid regularly, rather than waiting weeks at a time for a paycheck.

"That's usually how I survive," Nichols said.

Nichols said many people want to experience adventure and excitement when they get out of school and decide to

Nichols said many people want to experience adventure and excitement when they get out of school and decide to



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REGION » A5

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ALONG THE RAILS

TRAIN HOPPING

Bristol, other towns likely saw share of hobos

BY ROBERT SORRELL | BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

More Online

In case you missed it: Mark Nichols, a 48-year-old former U.S. Army helicopter mechanic, is one of just a handful of modern-day railroad hobos — a longtime American lifestyle that had its heyday

in the Great Depression but has since lost popularity. He goes by the moniker "Hobo Shoestring." Before moving to Johnson City, a historic railroad hub, Nichols said he would travel through the Tri-Cities region at least two or three times a year.

Read about Nichols at [HeraldCourier.com](#).

The last passenger train departed from the Bristol Train Station in 1971, but that doesn't mean no one rides the trains that continue to pass through the city. Like many railroad towns, Bristol's history has included a few hobos and train hoppers.

As long as railroads have crossed the nation, hobos have hopped aboard them. Train hopping is a lifestyle that has deep roots in American history. The practice was especially common during the Great Depression, when men and women often traveled to find work.

Bud Phillips, the late Bristol historian, wrote about hobos and train hopping in his book, "Ghosts of Bristol."

During the Great Depression, the railroad years in Bristol became "infested," as one old-timer put it, with hobos seeking the opportunity to hop a freight train for a ride to somewhere, most of them knew not where, Phillips wrote.

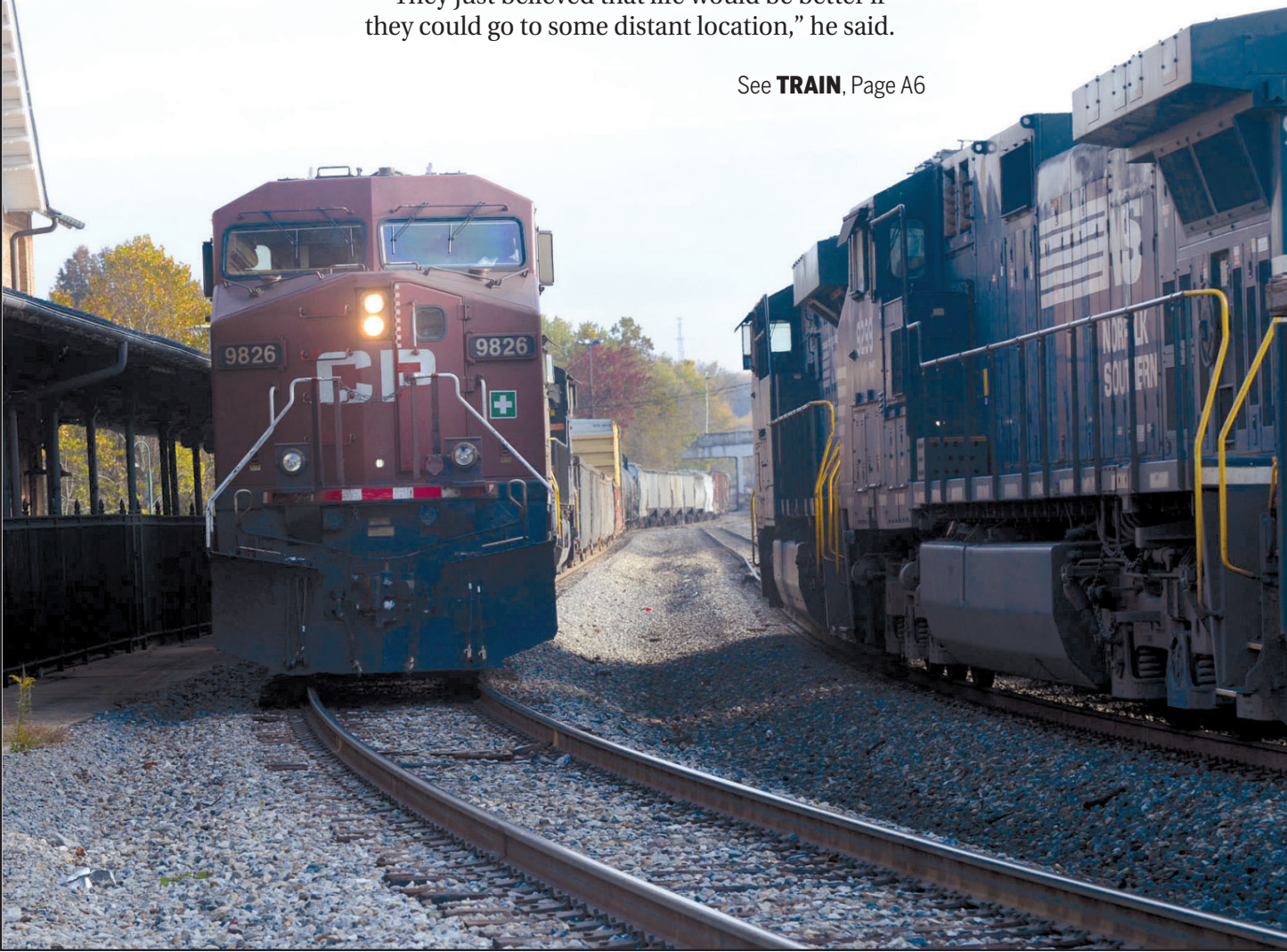
"They just believed that life would be better if they could go to some distant location," he said.

Laws Pertaining to Railroad Trespassing

» In Virginia, it is a Class 4 misdemeanor for any person, not being a passenger or employee, to trespass on a railroad car or train of any railroad. It's a Class 4 misdemeanor to trespass on the tracks, but a Class 3 misdemeanor for a second infraction and a Class 1 misdemeanor for all subsequent infractions. In Virginia, Class 3 and 4 misdemeanors result in fines, and Class 1 misdemeanors result in jail time and fines.

» In Tennessee, aggravated criminal trespass on railroad property is a Class A, which carries up to one year in jail and fines.

See **TRAIN**, Page A6



This file photo shows trains at the Bristol Train Station. Today, local officials said they aren't sure whether hobos still hop aboard trains in Bristol.

Hearings set this week on Mueller report

House Democrats intensify their focus on the Russia probe

BY MARY CLARE JALONICK
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump says it's "case closed." But Democrats are just getting started with Robert Mueller.

House Democrats have scheduled a series of hearings this coming week on the special counsel's report as they intensify their focus on the Russia probe and pick up the pace on an investigative "path" — in the words of Speaker Nancy Pelosi — that some of them hope leads to impeachment of the president.

In doing so, they are trying to draw the public's attention on the allegations that Trump sought to obstruct a federal investigation and they want to highlight his campaign's contacts with Russia in the 2016 election.

And they will lay the groundwork for an appearance from Mueller himself, despite his stated desire to avoid the spotlight.

The hearings will focus on the two main topics of Mueller's report, obstruction of justice and Russian election interference.

The House Judiciary Committee plans to cover the first topic at a Monday hearing on "presidential obstruction and other crimes."

The House Intelligence Committee on Wednesday intends to review the counterintelligence implications of the Russian meddling.

Mueller said there was not enough evidence to establish a conspiracy between the Trump campaign and Russia, but he said he could not exonerate Trump on obstruction.

On Tuesday, the House has scheduled a vote to authorize contempt cases against Attorney General William Barr and former White House counsel Donald McGahn for failing to comply with subpoenas from the Democratic-controlled House.

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Thank you, Keela Rose, for subscribing to the Bristol Herald Courier.



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After years of dealing with an older, costly and failing lighting system the Paramount Performing Arts Center has updated its lights » A5

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Train

From Page A1

Upper Spencer Street, now known as Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, was then lined with cottages facing the railroad yards. Hobos often visited the homes, Phillips said.

Since May 1971, the Twin City has only been serviced by freight trains of the Norfolk Southern Railroad.

Today, local officials said they aren't sure whether hobos still hop aboard trains in Bristol.

"While I am sure it is probably happening, it is not something that we have observed or received complaints on, at least not recent ones," said Capt. Charlie Thomas, who supervises the patrol division at the Bristol Tennessee Police Department.

Thomas said he often interacts with the railroad police, and train hopping isn't something they have mentioned as being an issue, he added.

Sgt. Steve Crawford, a detective in Bristol, Virginia, said he hadn't heard about train hopping in the city in several years. He did recall hearing about hobos being in the city and setting up camp in the past.

Bristol, as well as nearby Johnson City, have had hobo camps, known as hobo jungles, in the past.

Crawford said he remembered seeing some in the city.

Thomas said he was also aware of past train hopping in Bristol.

"I've talked with a couple of people that said they rode the trains in here, but I've never personally seen someone jump on or jump off one, and I don't remember ever answering a complaint from the railroad," Thomas said. "I do remember people messing with the trains, or climbing over them when they have the crossing blocked."

Representatives at the Salvation Army and the Haven of Rest, two local shelters, said they weren't familiar of any train travelers stopping for rest, a shower or a meal.

Founded as a gospel rescue mission in 1955, the Haven of Rest began serving the transient homeless who came to Bristol by riding the rails, according to information posted on its website.

Haven of Rest Director Brian Plank said he believes people still travel by hopping trains, but his organization, located a few blocks from the tracks, has not seen anyone reporting rail as a means of transportation.

Norfolk Southern, which has a rail yard in Bristol, also passes through nearby Abingdon, Virginia.

"Very rarely we will get a call from the railroad say-



BHC FILE

The last passenger train departed from the Bristol Train Station in 1971, but that doesn't mean no one rides the trains that continue to pass through the city. Like many railroad towns, Bristol's history has included a few hobos and train hoppers.

ing they have an unauthorized rider, but they usually let the train get to Bristol, where they normally stop anyway," said Abingdon Police Chief Tony Sullivan.

Like Bristol, hobos may have visited Abingdon in the past.

David Adams recently opened the Hobo Hostel, a lodging facility along Railroad Street.

"[I] came up with the name because I am next to the tracks in a 100-year-old home that would have seen hobos back in the day, but not now," Adams told the Bristol Herald Courier when asked about the site's unique name.

The home in Abingdon was owned by the town bootlegger, but Adams said nowadays the hostel now mainly hosts hikers and bikers off the nearby Virginia Creeper Trail.

Freight trains operated by CSX and Norfolk Southern also pass through several other communities in Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia.

"I have not seen a report of this happening in the last 10 years," said St. Paul Police Chief Jonathan Johnson. "The biggest issue we have in reference to trains is trespassing on railroad property, but that is on the decline."

In the town of Erwin, Tennessee, another railroad community, Police Chief Regan Tilson said his department used to get calls regarding unauthorized persons.

In 2015, CSX closed its railroad yard in Erwin.

"CSX left here, so there are fewer trains resulting in fewer calls. We get the calls for trespassing on railroad property sometimes," Tilson said.

Johnson City Police Chief Karl Turner said he has never read a report of someone attempting to board a train, but he noted that railroad

BY THE NUMBERS

Biggest North American railroads in 2018 based on revenue:

\$23.86B

BNSF

\$22.83B

Union Pacific

\$12.25B

CSX

\$11.46B

Norfolk Southern

\$10.56B

Canadian National Railway

\$5.39B

Canadian Pacific Railway

\$2.17B

Kansas City Southern

Source: Statista.com

police often investigate incidents in the city. Norfolk Southern and CSX pass through Johnson City.

The acts of train hopping and trespassing on railroad property are illegal and Norfolk Southern, CSX and other railroad companies, which have their own certified police forces, investigate such incidents.

When asked by the Bristol Herald Courier, the two railroad companies declined to release reports about unauthorized persons on railroad property.

Norfolk Southern's police chief, Mark Sinquefield, said his department takes reports of people trespassing on the railroad or unauthorized riders, but those are not public records.

"In some cases, we do file criminal charges," said Sinquefield, adding that trespassing is typically a misdemeanor charge.

He said cases of repeat offenders and more egregious cases result in charges.

"Yes, it's very dangerous,

especially when you get on a train because of all the moving equipment," Sinquefield said.

It's unknown whether anyone locally has ever been injured trying to travel on a freight train, but a number of individuals have been struck and killed or seriously injured by trains in the region.

Since 2016, three casualties, including injuries and deaths, have been reported in trespassing cases along railroad tracks in Washington County, Virginia, according to data from the Federal Railroad Administration.

One casualty was reported in Sullivan County, Tennessee, and three were reported in Washington County, Tennessee. The FRA reported no other casualties in the region.

A total of 3,260 casualties were reported across the country. Virginia had the 12th most casualties and Tennessee had the 15th.

CSX said it is committed to protecting the safety of its property and that of its customers.

"Railroads are privately owned, and any activity by unauthorized persons on railroad property is considered criminal trespassing and is prosecuted as such," CSX said in a written statement. "All trespass encounters are documented in official police reports and is added to a law enforcement database that can be accessed by any agency and other railroads. We remind the public that any activity on or near rail equipment is not only illegal, but also very dangerous."

Local prosecutors said this week that they couldn't recall any railroad trespassing cases in their jurisdictions.

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Trump still hangs tariff threat over Mexico despite deal

BY JILL COLVIN
The Associated Press

STERLING, Va. — President Donald Trump on Sunday dangled the prospect of renewing his tariff threat against Mexico if the U.S. ally doesn't cooperate on border issues, while some of his Democratic challengers for the White House said the last-minute deal to avert trade penalties was overblown.

In a series of tweets, Trump defended the agreement heading off the 5% tax on all Mexican goods that he had threatened to impose Monday, but he warned Mexico that, "if for some unknown reason" cooperation fails, "we can always go back to our previous, very profitable, position of Tariffs."

Still, he said he didn't believe that would be necessary.

The tweets came amid questions about just how much of the deal — announced with great fanfare Friday — was really new. It included a commitment from Mexico, for instance, to deploy its new National Guard to the country's southern border with Guatemala.

Mexico, however, had already intended to do that before Trump's latest threat and had made that clear to U.S. officials. Mexican officials have described their commitment as an accelerated deployment.

The U.S. also hailed Mexico's agreement to embrace the expansion of a program implemented earlier this year under which some asylum-seekers are returned to Mexico as they wait out their cases. But U.S. officials had already been working to expand the program, which has already led to the return of about 10,000 to Mexico, without Mexico's public embrace.

"The president has completely overblown what he reports to have achieved. These are agreements that Mexico had already made, in some cases months ago," said Democratic presidential candidate Beto O'Rourke, speaking on ABC's "This Week." "They might have accelerated

China Trade

China is creating a system to protect its technology, according to state media, as the U.S. restricts the access of Chinese companies to American technology in a spiraling trade dispute.

The People's Daily newspaper said Sunday that the system will build a strong firewall to strengthen the nation's ability to innovate and to accelerate the development of key technologies.

"China ... will never allow certain countries to use China's technology to contain China's development and suppress Chinese enterprises," the main paper of the ruling Communist Party said, without directly referring to the United States.

No details have been released about what China is calling a national technological security management list. The plan was announced Saturday evening in a brief three-paragraph dispatch by the official Xinhua News Agency.

The aim is to forestall and defuse national security risks more effectively, Xinhua said, adding that detailed measures would be unveiled in the near future.

The initiative follows U.S. moves to restrict sales to Huawei Technologies and other Chinese tech firms on national security grounds.

—The Associated Press

the time table, but by and large the president achieved nothing except to jeopardize the most important trading relationship that the United States of America has."

But acting Homeland Security Secretary Kevin McAleenan, speaking on "Fox News Sunday" insisted "all of it is new," including the agreement to dispatch around 6,000 National Guard troops — a move Mexico has described as an "acceleration."

Mexico's ambassador in Washington nonetheless said his country is committed to working with the U.S. and that discussions will continue.

G-20 officials pledge to protect global growth

The Associated Press

FUKUOKA, Japan — Finance ministers and central bank chiefs from the Group of 20 major economies wrapped up a meeting in Japan on Sunday with a pledge to use all the policies they can to protect global growth from disruptions due to trade and other tensions.

The G-20 finance leaders said in a joint communique that risks from trade and geopolitical tensions were "intensifying." They did not refer directly to the tariffs war between the United States and China, though leaders participating in the meetings indicated it was the No. 1 concern.

"We will continue to address these risks, and stand ready to take further action," the statement said. "We reaffirm our commitment to use all policy tools to achieve strong, sustainable, balanced and inclu-

sive growth, and safeguard against downside risks."

Global growth appears to be stabilizing and is expected to pick up later this year and next year, the statement said.

But there was an evident rift between most participants in the meeting and the U.S., which has shifted away from support for tackling issues in multilateral forums such as the World Trade Organization in favor of a country-by-country "America First" approach.

French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said the current global slowdown was linked to political issues, "especially trade tensions."

"So it's high time that we put an end to those tensions and we should avoid trade wars which would have real deep negative impact and long-term impact on global growth," he said.

Meetings

ABINGDON TOWN COUNCIL: Abingdon, Va. Meets first Monday, 6:30 p.m., Municipal Building on Main Street; visit www.abingdon-va.gov.

BLUFF CITY BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN: Bluff City, Tenn. 4391 Bluff City Hwy. July 2, 6 p.m.: Board meeting regular session, everyone welcome 423-538-7144.

BRISTOL HOUSING AUTHORITY: Bristol, Va., 809 Edmond St. Meets third Wednesday, 1:30 p.m.: Board of Commissioners, 276-821-6251.

BRISTOL TN TREE CITY USA BOARD: Bristol, Tenn., 325 McDowell St., Slater Center. Meets, third Monday, 5 p.m. Public welcome. 423-654-4023.

BRISTOL REPUBLICAN WOMEN'S CLUB: Bristol, Va. Food City, Euclid Avenue. Meets last Monday, noon. 423-361-1774.

CITIZENS CEMETERY ORGANIZATION: Bristol, Va., Lee Street Baptist Church, Mary Street. Meets third Tuesday, 11

a.m. All members of the community are welcome to attend. Community input for fundraising projects to preserve Bristol history may be sent to CCO, P.O. Box 16322, Bristol, VA 24209.

LONESOME PINE REGIONAL LIBRARY: Wise, Va. 124 Library Road SW. 276-328-8325.

SULLIVAN COUNTY EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS DISTRICT 911 BOARD: Blountville, Tenn., 1570 Highway 394, SCECD 911 building. Meets second Monday, every other month, 10 a.m. Due to conflict in schedules, meetings can change at any time, public welcome. 423-279-7606.

SULLIVAN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS: Blountville, Tenn. Sullivan County Courthouse. 423-323-6417.

SULLIVAN COUNTY DEMOCRATS: Blountville, Tenn. Monthly meetings at Northeast State Community College Library. Meets third Thursday, 7 p.m., 423-989-3953.

SULLIVAN COUNTY ANTI-DRUG COALITION: Blountville, Tenn. 154 Blountville Bypass, Regional Health Department. Meets second Thursday, odd number month, 10 a.m. – noon. Speakers on various prevention topics; snacks will be provided. 423-742-2991 or www.scad-coalition.org.

TRI-CITIES AIRPORT AUTHORITY: Blountville, Tenn. 2525 Hwy 75, Suite 301. 423-325-6000.

WASHINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS: Abingdon, Va., County Administrative Offices, 1 Government Center Way. Meets second and fourth Tuesday, 6:30 p.m. www.washcovva.com

WASHINGTON COUNTY, VA. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE: Abingdon, Va., One Partnership Circle. Meets third Thursday. Doors open at 7 a.m., breakfast at 7:30 a.m. Networking and business breakfast. Free to chamber members. 276-628-8141.

WASHINGTON COUNTY, VA DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE: Abingdon, Va., 300 Senior Drive, NE Community Abingdon Center. Meets second Thursday, 6 p.m., visitors and new members welcome, email karencombs6522@gmail.com

WASHINGTON COUNTY LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS: Abingdon, Va., Washington County Library. Meets second Wednesday on odd months, 4 p.m. washco.va.lww@gmail.com.

WASHINGTON COUNTY, VA, REPUBLICAN PARTY: Abingdon, Va., 1070 W. Main St., above State Farm Exit 14. Meets fourth Thursday, 7 p.m. Visitors and new members welcome. Questions: maryann14146@gmail.com.

WYTHEVILLE COMMUNITY COLLEGE: Wytheville, Va., Galax Hall Room 202. Signup sheet available 30 minutes prior to meeting for those in addressing the board.