

# Midwest endures incredible cold spell during January

by Hyuntae Byun  
News Editor

During the first few weeks of January, the East Coast of the US was hit by a mass of cold Arctic air, resulting in freezing temperatures and snow. Commonly referred to by meteorologists as a "polar vortex," the dramatic shift in daytime temperatures



AFFLICTED WITH EXTREME COLD: A man walks his dog despite the extreme cold spell.

was largely due to a dense, cold air originating in the North Pole. This mass would normally have been confined within a southbound air current, but happened to break free and travel to the Midwest and Eastern Seaboard. As a result, the states in the Midwest and the East Coast experienced much wind and snow and temperatures 70-100 degrees F lower than average.

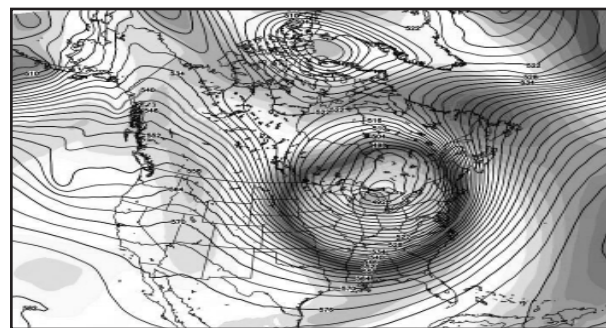
The cold air evidently was stuck in a high pressure area known as "the ridge," which was formed by pools of warm water near the Gulf of Alaska heating up the surrounding air, causing expansion. As time passed, the cold air kept accumulating and became colder, until it flowed down south through Canada and into the United States. Interestingly enough, the same "ridge" that was responsible for the polar vortex is also the cause of the current drought in the southwestern US.

The ridge, due to its high pressure, has successfully blocked storms from travelling south. Though such high pressure spots are common, the resilient nature of the ridge has prompted some confusion, even as California experiences precipitation at levels that are below 20 percent normal. Some scientists credit the stubborn nature of the ridge as an effect of climate change.

As a result of the polar vortex on the Eastern Seaboard and the Midwest, airports and highways became difficult to navigate, with many shutting down. In the northeast, Washington DC, Boston, Philadelphia, and New York all saw winter storms and massive

snowfall, which prompted the closure of some schools. Similarly, districts in Minnesota, North and South Dakota, and Missouri closed due to heavy snow and winds.

Though the cold wind eventually receded, a sequel to the polar vortex is feared, as snow began to fall again in the northeast. Experts predict that a new storm could lead to as much as 12 inches of snow in New York and Philadelphia, and even more in Boston. Due to the weather shifts, thousands of flights have been canceled, and the threat of wind chills has prompted authorities to issue warnings. (Sources: LA Times, NY Times)



ILLUSTRATING THE WEATHER: The polar vortex has affected the East Coast and Midwest.

## Maryland shooting kills two

by Jonathan Friedland  
National Editor/Businessman

On Jan. 25, yet another fatal shooting occurred, killing two and injuring five inside a Maryland mall. Darion Marcus Aguilar, a 19-year-old Delaware resident, fired six to nine shots before turning the gun on himself.

Aguilar murdered 21-year-old Brianna Benlolo and 25-year-old Tyler Johnson. Benlolo's close friend, Evelyn McDonald, described Benlolo as "full of energy, nice, and just an amazing artist and just an amazing person inside and out." Both individuals were employees at Zumiez, a corporate skate shop chain where the shooting took place.

Aguilar purchased the twelve gauge shotgun legally and arrived at the mall an hour before the shooting rampage via taxi cab. In addition, to the firearm, according to several police reports, Aguilar also had a primitive form of explosives which he was not able to detonate. According to the Howard County Police Chief, Bill McMahon "these were homemade devices consisting of flash powder and household items, so they're not very sophisticated."

Maryland police are still uncertain as to the exact motive of the shooting. However, through a recently executed search warrant, police retrieved Aguilar's journal that according to McMahon, "expresses some general unhappiness with his life.

The shooting coincides with a rampant spree of murders

and attempted murders nationwide at South Carolina State University, the University of Oklahoma, and the University of Purdue.

(Sources: CNN, Chicago Tribune, New York Post)



IDENTITY REVEALED: Aguilar's mugshot was revealed by police on Sunday.

## Diplomat apprehended

by Setareh Raygani  
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In India, Diplomat Deyvani Khobragade advocated for women's rights. But in New York, she was a "slave driver," according to the family of Khobragade's housekeeper.

On Dec. 12, India's deputy consul general in New York City was arrested while dropping her daughter off at school. Khobragade is accused of submitting false documents on a visa application for her housekeeper to live and work in the U.S. and for not paying the housekeeper a minimum wage. If providing fraudulent information was not enough, Khobragade surreptitiously began paying Richards, the housekeeper, 3.31 dollars an hour, breaking US labor laws.

Khobragade has insinuated that she was mistreated by authorities and underwent a cavity search; the US attorney came out to denounce that this is all "misinformation." Khobragade was in fact strip-searched, given two hours to make phone calls, placed in a cell with female inmates,

and she was even brought coffee. Nonetheless, Indians have flocked the streets and have been protesting near the US embassy in New Delhi. These actions have been sparked by the jingoist news reports that only cover Khobragade's arrest and say nothing about the housekeeper's working conditions.

While only 900 Indian Foreign Service officers occupy positions of great power in Indian society, the millions of housekeepers in India work in anonymity. According to the Global Slavery Index, India has the highest number of slaves in the world at 14 million. Unfortunately, India believes there is only "one victim here," and the housekeeper has been deported to never return to the land of the free.

India feels as though the US attorney's actions is invading its sovereignty—a sovereignty, that after decades of protest and the loss of millions of lives, is considered fully sacrosanct. (Source: The Diplomat)

## Bridgetate scandal embarrasses Christie administration

by Aidan Adams-Campeau  
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New Jersey governor Chris Christie has been battered the last few weeks over a recent scandal that has been dubbed Bridgetate. After months of investigations, documents have emerged that implicate Christie's administration in a suspicious traffic jam that took place on Sept. 9 on the George Washington Bridge, the world's busiest bridge for motorists, that connects Fort Lee, New Jersey to Manhattan.

An email conversation between Christie's former deputy



SPEAKING OUT: Chris Christie addresses his supporters at a townhall meeting.

chief of staff, Bridget Kelly, and a Port Authority official and Christie appointee, David Wildstein, has triggered massive media scrutiny. In an attempt to punish Fort Lee's Democratic mayor for his refusal to endorse Christie during his reelection campaign, Kelly sent an email to Wildstein, which read, "Time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee." Following this email, two lanes on the bridge were closed for a previously unscheduled traffic study, delaying thousands of motorists, including students being bused in for their first week of school.

Governor Christie spoke about the scandal at a Jan. 9 press conference, which lasted over two hours as the governor fielded dozens of questions from curious journalists. Christie claimed that the staffers responsible for the lane closure acted without his permission and lied to him in the aftermath. Regarding Bridget Kelly, Christie stated: "I've terminated her employment because she lied to me." The governor announced that he had no prior knowledge of his staff's involvement in the scandal until the day before the press conference. "Let me tell you, everybody," Christie said, "I was blindsided yesterday morning... That was the first time I knew about this."

Governor Christie has largely avoided blame for the Bridgetate scandal due to his denial of any knowledge of or compliance with the actions of his staff. However, his story could easily unravel if any evidence directly linking him with prior knowledge of the scandal surfaces. Already, the scandal threatens to derail his presumed 2016 presidential bid, as citizens become increasingly skeptical of the governor's behavior. A recent poll shows that Christie now trails Hillary Clinton, his probable presidential rival, 46 percent to 38, a sharp decline from a recent December poll that showed a virtual tie between the two candidates.

The story will likely develop further as investigations into Bridgetate continue. The findings will have important implications for Christie's political future. (Sources: CBS News, NBC News, Washington Post, Politico)



LANES CLOSED: Christie has denied any involvement in the lane closure scandal.