



Forum file photo

Fargo police gather information Oct. 26, 2009, at the home of Philip Gattuso at 2536 S. University Drive in Fargo.

## Betrayal and fear

Moorhead man's family trying to survive Turkish invasion of Syria

President Donald Trump's betrayal of the Kurds is so cruel and so unwarranted that it defies comprehension. The Kurds are our friends. They fought alongside the U.S. to defeat Islamic State militants, with 11,000 brave Kurdish soldiers killed in the process. To abandon our friends and let Turkey come in and slaughter them is inexcusable. The Islamic State will be strengthened to renew its terrorism around the world, and the U.S. will never be trusted again.



JIM SHAW  
Fargo

This is not just a global story, but a human one. Jamal Tmr, 35, of Moorhead, is Kurdish and has close family members who are caught in the middle of this nightmare in Syria. His mother, brother, three sisters and two nieces are all under attack from Turkey. I listened to a phone call between Tmr and his family. They are frightened, hungry and desperate. I could

hear the chilling sound of bombs and gunfire in the background.

"I'm very worried," Tmr said. "My whole family is scared. I'm afraid they will be killed. They're not targeting troops. They are targeting civilians."

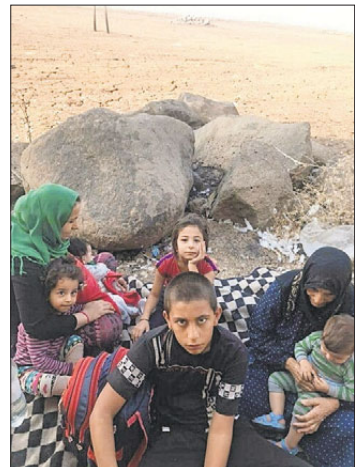
Tmr came to Fargo-Moorhead three years ago, with his wife and seven children. They were North Dakota's first Syrian refugees. They escaped bombings near the family home in Dayrik, Syria, in 2013, and an Islamic State attack that left several people dead.

His sister-in-law was killed by an Islamic State suicide car bomber. Tmr and his family will never forget those frightening images. He knew there was no future for them in Syria, and their only hope was to try to get out. After fleeing across the border to Iraq and spending three years in

SYRIA: Page A9



Tmr



Special to The Forum  
Moorhead resident Jamal Tmr is worried about his Kurdish relatives, seen in this photo, as they try to survive the Turkish invasion of Syria that was launched Oct. 9.

# 'The dark side'

Gattuso murder-for-hire stunned community 10 years ago

*Editor's note: This is the first of four stories looking back on the murder-for-hire plot that led to Philip Gattuso's death in 2009.*

By Kim Hyatt  
khyatt@forumcomm.com

**FARGO** contractual killing 10 years ago is still on the mind of one prosecutor here who says he thinks about the murder of Fargo dentist Philip Gattuso weekly.

Cass County State's Attorney Birch Burdick said every Tuesday on his way to Kiwanis Club meetings, he drives by the condo where Gattuso was beaten to death with a hammer after dropping his only daughter, Kennedy, off at day care.

In the span of seven months, the 3-year-old lost her mother, Valerie, 37, to complications from heart surgery, then her widowed 49-year-old father was brutally killed by hitman Michael Nakvinda at the request of the girl's grandfather, Gene Kirkpatrick.

"She was the ultimate victim of all of this," Burdick said.

Oct. 26, 2009, Nakvinda entered the condo at 2536 S.



Kim Hyatt / The Forum

Judge Frank Racek looks through a folder of old newspaper clippings he kept from the 2009 murder-for-hire case.



Special to The Forum

Philip Mario Gattuso and his daughter, Kennedy.

University Drive, killed Gattuso and ransacked the home. He took cash, computers and anything of value before loading Gattuso's 1999 Porsche onto a rented U-Haul trailer he parked at

The Bowler parking lot, 2630 S. University Drive, down the street.

Surveillance footage from the bowling alley played a vital role early on in the investigation, as did vigilant citizens. Police said locating

the missing Porsche was key in solving the homicide, and several people reported seeing it on a flatbed trailer heading south.

At a rest stop in South Dakota, others reported seeing the trailer with a tarp covering the stolen vehicle. That location was also full of cameras, and police were able to get a solid look at Nakvinda, as well as a license plate number of the rented trailer traced back to him.

Detectives' work was so quick that Nakvinda hadn't even disposed of the bloody hammer inside the Porsche by the time authorities tracked him down in Oklahoma on Oct. 31. Kirkpatrick's arrest soon followed on Nov. 2.

Initially, law enforcement thought it was a burglary gone wrong. But it turned out to be far more calculated, and commissioned.

It was a case that not only stunned Fargo, but also sent out shock waves back in Oklahoma, where the Kirkpatrick family lived

GATTUSO: Page A6

Classifieds .....	G
Comics .....	Z
Crosswords .....	B3
Obituaries ... C3-4, 8-10	
Opinion .....	C6-7
Sports .....	D1-6
Variety .....	B1-6

### Today's weather



Showers & wind  
Details, D6



\$2.50  
(Suggested retail price)  
Copyright 2019 The Forum

## A 'land of extremes'

Region's drastic swings from wet to dry behind 2 projects totaling nearly \$4B

By Patrick Springer  
pspringer@forumcomm.com

FARGO — A pair of cloudbursts the summer of 1976 produced the worst summer flood ever recorded here.

The first thunderstorm dumped more than 4 inches of rain over a wide area that included Fargo-Moorhead in late June that year. Rainy weather lingered for several days, depositing more than 10 inches in some areas.

Streets flooded in low-lying areas. The Red River crested at 33.26 feet

on July 4. But just a year after sandbagging, a drought settled in, requiring Fargo to tap the Sheyenne River because the Red River flows were inadequate to meet the demand for water.

"Things change here very quickly," said meteorologist Daryl Ritchison, addressing a conference on the status of the planned \$1.19 billion Red River Water Supply Project to provide a backup water

EXTREMES: Page A8

## FARMLAND FOR SALE

SALE PENDING: Richland County Farmland 156.99+ acres of excellent land SE of Mooreton, ND.

FOR SALE: Wilkin County MN Farmland 80 acres, West Campbell Township, SE of Fairmount, ND. Excellent quality.

FOR SALE: Traill County ND Land near Portland ND. 135 acres combination Great Hunting Land along the wooded Goose River along with high productive tillable Land.



www.johnsonauctionandrealty.com  
40 years of agricultural experience in North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota



Phone: 701-799-5213  
Steven Johnson  
steve@johnsonauctionandrealty.com  
R.E. Broker Auctioneer Lic# 976

GATTUSO

From Page A1

and Nakvinda worked as their handyman.

He did repair work and had a background in carpentry. But Kirkpatrick also knew of Nakvinda's criminal history — and so came the sinister request to kill his son-in-law.

The motivation behind the murder-for-hire, according to Burdick, was that Kirkpatrick essentially blamed his daughter's death on Gattuso.

"It appeared that he was clearly very angry at Philip and held him responsible for a number of bad things that had happened in their family with the death of his daughter and bringing the child back to Fargo," he said. "And he wanted to do something about it."

Burdick said Fargo has never before nor since dealt with a murder-for-hire scheme like this. Premeditated murder? Yes, but a down payment of \$3,000 to drive nearly 900 miles north to Fargo to kill a man? That was unheard of.

Kirkpatrick went so far as to provide a videotape of Gattuso's home along with the down payment.

Judge Frank Raczek said it was an unusual case with an unusual set of circumstances. He said the Nakvinda jury trial was one of the most lengthy jury trials of his 30-year career.

That was mostly due to the large number of witnesses and evidence. More than 30 people took the stand and 300 pieces of evidence were included in the case.

The trial lasted eight days, with the verdict coming in on the ninth.

When sentencing Nakvinda in January 2011, Raczek told the courtroom that Nakvinda "attacked Dr. Kirkpatrick in his home, mortally beat him, stole his watch and pilfered his house as he was dying" and he "acted without empathy for his victim or remorse for his actions and as such poses a significant danger to society."

In October 2011, two years after Gattuso's murder, his father-in-law Kirkpatrick was sentenced to life in prison.

Judge Steven Marquart said at Kirkpatrick's sentencing that neither he nor the jury were swayed by letters and witnesses upholding Kirkpatrick's character.

"Your friends and family do not know the dark side of you," Marquart said of Kirkpatrick. "The dark side that the jury saw, the dark side that conspired with Mr. Nakvinda to send him



Gene Kirkpatrick, convicted of conspiring to have his son-in-law killed for custody of his 3-year-old granddaughter, as seen in this file photo from August 2014 at the Cass County Courthouse in Fargo.



Tammy Lynk, evidence manager for the Fargo Police Department, displays a hammer stained with blood, which authorities say was the murder weapon that killed Fargo dentist Philip Gattuso in 2009.

some 900 miles to this community of Fargo to bludgeon Mr. Gattuso to his death, all for your misguided ends."

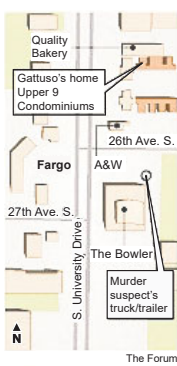
He continued: "Mr. Nakvinda had no reason of his own to travel here to kill Dr. Gattuso. It was you who planned this scheme. It was you who gave Mr. Nakvinda what he needed to accomplish the scheme with money, pictures, calendars and directions. And why? It was your misguided and selfish effort to gain custody of your granddaughter."

Nakvinda, 51, remains in custody at the North Dakota State Penitentiary in Bismarck. Kirkpatrick, 73, is serving his sentence in South Dakota for conspiring to murder Gattuso, despite multiple failed appeal attempts. Both were sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

AJ and Larry Dahlstrom were the first family to move into Gattuso's condo in 2012.

They said it sat vacant for a few years before they moved in without hesitation. Of course they knew of the murder from the news and that it occurred there. But they fell in love with the four-bedroom condo featuring a hot tub in the backyard and a sauna in the basement.

Right off the kitchen on the main floor is the master suite, where Gattuso's body was found that fateful day. He didn't show up to pick up his daughter from day care, so a friend went into the home that evening, prompting the



The Forum

investigation. The Dahlstroms said they don't get eerie feelings or caught up in the notorious details of the place they've called home the past seven years.

"It had all kind of blown over. It didn't bother us," she said. "It's very comfortable, very livable." After they first moved in, she said the murder was a common dinner table conversation with curious guests. But she's always said, matter-of-factly, "no ghost of Gattuso here."

What is there, though, is a loving family. Kind and quiet neighbors. New memories. AJ said she can't help but think of Kennedy, who is now 13 years old. "I often do think about Kennedy and how she is doing," she said. "What a horrible thing to have happened."

Forum reporter Robin Huebner contributed to this report.

BRIEF

New African lion exhibit opens at Minot zoo

MINOT, N.D. — Visitors to Minot's Roosevelt Park Zoo now can view the new habitat for African lions. Severson Ahart African Lion Savanna, the new home for the zoo's two African lions, Kiota and Jassira, opened late last month, Minot Daily News reported.

Severson Ahart African Lion Savanna is part of a \$5.8 million project for the zoo's lions and tigers, according to the zoo.

Habitat for the lions has been increased from 1,200 square feet to 15,947 square feet, zoo officials said. It includes heated floors and rocks for colder weather, additional safety features and a day room for increased winter space for the lions and winter viewing for zoo visitors.

The lions' new habitat is named for Clint Severson and his wife Conni Ahart who donated a million dollars to the zoo's centennial capital campaign and gave



A young girl gets an up close look at an African lion in the Severson Ahart African Lion Savanna at Roosevelt Park Zoo in Minot. The new home of the zoo's two African lions opened Thursday, Sept. 26.

them naming rights to the lions' exhibit. Severson is a native of Minot.

The new habitat for the tigers, the Amur Tiger River Valley exhibit, is still under construction.

The zoo's "New Habitat for a New Century" cen-

tennial capital campaign will continue to raise an additional \$2 million to renovate the former big cat habitat for the zoo's two leopard species. That project is anticipated to be complete in the zoo's centennial year in 2021.

Pifer's AUCTION & REALTY and Land Management

Are You Interested in Buying or Selling Land, Equipment or in Need of Land Management Services?

Contact Kevin Pifer today with all your land or equipment questions or for a FREE CONSULTATION!



Kevin Pifer 701.238.5810 kpifer@pifers.com



1506 29th Ave S • Moorhead, MN 56560

877.700.4099



www.pifers.com



WEATHER KIDS WITH HUTCH JOHNSON

WEATHER KIDS

Sponsored by Luther Family Ford

This week's winner:

Orion Brown



Stop in to Luther Family Ford and register to be the next Weather Kid!



1-701-282-2350 1-800-307-4813 3302 36th St. SW (I-29 & 32nd Ave. SW)

www.lutherfamilyford.com

STORE HOURS: Mon-Thurs 8am-8pm, Fri. 8am-6pm, Sat. 9am-6pm PARTS/QUICK LUBE HOURS: M-Th 7am-7pm, Fri 7am-6pm, Sat 8am-5pm SERVICE HOURS: Mon-Fri 7am-6pm, Sat 8am-5pm



Advertisement for Grow Bolder and Eventide Senior Living Communities. Includes text: "Growing Bolder means living life your way and Eventide is the perfect place to do it." and "EVENTIDE Senior Living Communities 218-291-2200 eventide.org Moorhead | Fargo | West Fargo | Jamestown | Devils Lake".