

GOP puts pressure on Gonzales

Rep acknowledges he had affair with staffer

By Nancy M. Preyor-Johnson and Bayliss Wagner

STAFF WRITERS

After dodging questions about it for months, U.S. Rep. Tony Gonzales on Wednesday acknowledged having an affair with Regina Ann Santos-Aviles, a member of his congressional staff who later took her own life.

"I made a mistake, and I had a lapse in judgment and there was a lack of faith," Gonzales said on "The Joe Pags Show," a nationally syndicated San Antonio-based talk show hosted by conservative commentator Joe Pagliarulo. "I take full responsibility for those actions."

The admission comes as Gonzales seeks a fourth term representing Texas' 23rd Congressional District. He finished

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U.S. Rep. Tony Gonzales, R-San Antonio, appears on "The Joe Pags Show," where he said he "had a lapse in judgment" in having an affair with an aide, Regina Ann Santos-Aviles, who later killed herself.

House leaders seek end to reelection bid

By Bayliss Wagner and Nancy M. Preyor-Johnson

STAFF WRITERS

U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson and other Republican leaders called on Rep. Tony Gonzales to abandon his bid for reelection on Thursday, an extraordinary step that came a day after the San Antonio Republican admitted having an affair with a staffer.

In the statement, Johnson, R-La., and the party's majority leader, whip and caucus chair called allegations of sexual misconduct and preferential treatment of a staffer "very serious" and cited the House Ethics Committee's announcement Wednesday that it would investigate Gonzales.

"We have encouraged him to address these very serious allegations directly with

Gonzales continues on A7

Attorney says some owners of camp fled July 4 flood



Photos by Jay Janner/Austin American-Statesman

Alli Naylor, left, and Malorie Lytal, who both lost daughters in the July 4 flood, attend a hearing on a suit against Camp Mystic.

Mystic's policy for guests to shelter in cabins proved disastrous

By Peggy O'Hare

STAFF WRITER

AUSTIN — Several members of the family who owns Camp Mystic evacuated their own homes at the Hill Country retreat and fled to higher ground while young campers and counselors were told to stay in their cabins as high waters engulfed the property during a deadly flash flood on July 4, an attorney for one victim's parents told a judge.

The camp's policy for guests to shelter in place during a flood proved to be catastrophic as 25 children and two counselors were swept away and killed, the attorney said.

Some victims' parents gasped and wept quietly when they heard the attorney's claims in court Wednesday.

Will and CiCi Steward of Austin have sued Camp Mystic,



Will and CiCi Steward of Austin have sued Camp Mystic, related entities and members of the family who own or operate the retreat. The couple's daughter died in the flood.

related entities and several members of the Eastland family who own or operate the retreat. The couple's 8-year-old daughter,

ter, Cile, was among the campers killed in the disaster.

She is the only Camp Mystic flooding victim whose remains

have never been found. Searches are continuing eight months later.

The Stewards raised claims of negligence, gross negligence, premises liability and intentional infliction of emotional distress. Their case is one of five such lawsuits filed.

They asked State District Judge Maya Guerra Gamble to stop Camp Mystic's plans to reopen this summer. They also asked the judge to halt any more repairs or renovations until after their lawsuit is resolved.

The judge approved part of the Stewards' request. She told Camp Mystic and the Eastlands to immediately stop using any part of the original site — Camp Mystic Guadalupe River, where the 27 victims were killed — until she rules otherwise. The Eastlands had been making repairs, remodeling and clearing

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Noem ousted at DHS as criticism mounts

Oklahoma senator picked to replace her

By Michelle L. Price and Rebecca Santana

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Thursday fired his embattled Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, after mounting criticism over her leadership of the department, including the handling of the administration's immigration crackdown and disaster response.

Trump, who said he would nominate Oklahoma Republican Sen. Markwayne Mullin in her place, made the announcement on social media after Noem faced a two-day grilling on Capitol Hill this week from GOP members as well as Democrats.

Noem's departure marks a stunning turnaround for a close ally to the president who was tasked with steering his centerpiece policy of mass deportations. But she appeared to increasingly become a liability for Trump, with questions arising over her spending at her department and over her conduct in the aftermath of the shooting deaths of two protesters in Minneapolis earlier this year.

Trump said Noem "has served us well, and has had numerous and spectacular results (especially on the Border!)." He said he was making her a "Special Envoy for The Shield of the Americas," a new security initiative that he said would focus on the Western Hemisphere.

Noem, who appeared at a law enforcement event in Nashville, Tenn., moments after Trump's announcement, did not address

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INSIDE

Trump wants to help pick Iran's next leader. **A6**



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