VOA NEWS

October 18, 2017

From Washington, this is VOA news. Hello, I'm Steve Miller.

The White House is reacting furiously to a federal judge blocking President Donald Trump's latest order restricting travel, which was to go into effect at 12:01 a.m. Wednesday.

A White House statement said, "Today's dangerously flawed district court order undercuts the president's efforts to keep the American people safe and enforce minimum security standards for the entry to the United States."

Katherine Gypson has more on that ruling.

The ruling by Judge Derrick Watson prohibits restrictions on travelers from six countries that the Trump administration said cannot provide enough information to meet U.S. security standards.

The countries were Chad, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen.

The Justice Department calls the ruling incorrect and says it will appeal the decision "in an expeditious manner."

Life started to return to normal in the northern oil-rich city of Kirkuk Tuesday, one day after a lightning government advance to take the towns and countryside from forces of the Kurdish autonomous region.

Streets were full of cars and markets were busy with shoppers who went about their normal daily business.

The Baghdad government recaptured territory from Kurds across the breadth of northern Iraq on Tuesday, making startlingly rapid gains in a sudden campaign that has shifted the balance of power in the country almost overnight.

U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces said they seized the last remaining areas of Raqqa, Syria, from Islamic State militants and the American-led coalition fighting. They said the city was "on the verge of liberation."

A spokesman for the SDF told reporters the fighting in Raqqa was over.

This is VOA news.

Arrest of two pro-independence leaders has sparked protests in Spain's autonomous region of Catalonia. Lucy Fielder has the story.

Behind bars on Tuesday, the leaders of Catalonia's two main separatist groups pending trial for sedition, a Spain's west political crisis in decades deepens.

the jailing Monday night sparkling protests and government walk-out on Tuesday.

Catalonia is refusing to renounce its symbolic declaration of independence. Madrid has given Catalan leaders until Thursday to do so.

It looks ever more likely that Spain will impose direct rule on the autonomous region. The Catalan government accusing Madrid of taking political prisoners - a reminder of life under dictator general Franco when Catalan culture was suppressed.

That was reporter Lucy Fielder.

U.S. law enforcement officials announced the indictments of two Chinese nationals and several American and Canadian associates charged with manufacturing and shipping fentanyl and other deadly opioids directly from China to the United States.

U.S. Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein said the charges against Xiaobing Yan and Jian Zhang represented the first ever indictments brought against designated Chinese manufacturers of fentanyl and other opiate substances.

Drug Enforcement [agency] Administration spokesman Rusty Payne said it was important to hold individuals accountable "whether it's historic indictments or it's global operations with our Mexican friends or presenting evidence and intelligence to the Chinese to get them act on some of these folks in country."

Acting DEA Administrator Robert Patterson said targeting criminal organizations distributing opioids in the United States is one of the agency's top priorities.

American author George Sanders won the prestigious Man Booker prize for fiction Tuesday for *Lincoln in the Bardo*, a polyphonic symphony of a novel about restless souls adrift in the afterlife. ???Miguel Maya has the details.

It is the second year in a row an American has won the $66,000 prize, which was opened to U.S. authors in 2014.

The book is based on a real visit President Abraham Lincoln made in 1862 to the body of his 11-year-old son Willie at a Washington cemetery.

The book is narrated by a chorus of characters who are all dead, but unwilling or unable to go on with life.

Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro is rejecting opposition claims that regional elections for governors were shrouded in fraud.

In a three-hour news conference Tuesday, Maduro defended Venezuela's voting system as one of the most secure in the world.

Opposition leaders are disputing the official vote count that says the ruling socialist party won most of the 23 governorships elected on Sunday.

From Washington, I'm Steve Miller.

That's the latest world news from VOA.