VOA NEWS

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From Washington, this is VOA news. I'm Liz Parker reporting.

New military cooperation between Egypt and Russia. Arab media is reporting that Egypt and Russia are on the verge of signing a military cooperation agreement that would allow each side to use the other's air space and air bases for a period of five years. Russian media reported the prime minister has endorsed the draft agreement crafted by the Defense Ministry.

Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu applauded the warming relations between both countries during his visit to Cairo earlier this week.

The improved military ties between the countries comes after a spate of terror attacks in Egypt, including a gruesome massacre of worshipers in a North Sinai mosque last Friday, which left more than 300 people dead.

U.S. President Donald Trump's former national security adviser, Michael Flynn, pleaded guilty Friday to lying to federal investigators over his contacts with Russia's ambassador to the U.S.

Flynn's guilty plea on Friday is yet another indication of former aide is cooperating with a special counsel investigation into Russia's 2016 presidential election meddling and possible collusion with the Trump campaign.

In a statement, Flynn said "through my faith in God, I am working to set things right."

U.S. Senator Jeff Flake now says he will vote for the Republicans' massive $1.5 trillion tax bill. In return for his "yes" vote, he says he has obtained a commitment to pass legislation that would safeguard almost 800,000 undocumented young people who were brought to the U.S. as children.

Flake's vote has helped put the tax bill on track for passage.

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell told reporters "We have the votes."

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Zimbabwe's newly installed president, Emmerson Mnangagwa, has appointed senior military officials to top posts in his cabinet. The announcement was made late Thursday on state-run television.

Despite a promise to reach out to the opposition, President Mnangagwa only appointed "loyalists," according to Lovemore Madhuku, a University of Zimbabwe law professor.

Madhuku worries the new president appointed more than the limit of five non-parliamentarians allowed under the constitution.

"It's unconstitutional. He is breaching the constitution. The constitution is very clear: you have a maximum of five people that are not from parliament. As long as a person is a minister and they will draw salary from the public purse, they are appointed by the president, that person must be from parliament. Now we have seen that there are eight or 10. What is more disturbing is why that will be done, because the provision is very clear. It has never been breached before."

Former President Robert Mugabe, who ruled the southern African country for 37 years, resigned under pressure last week after he was removed from power by the military and lost support of lawmakers.

An attack in northwestern Pakistan has left nine people dead and more than 35 others injured.

Pakistani police said a group of heavily armed suicide assailants stormed a government agriculture research center and an adjoining university hospital in Peshawar.

Police in counter-terrorism units began a rescue operation and the gunfight with terrorists lasted several hours and killed three militants.

Many of the victims of Friday's attack were students, according to doctors.

More news related to Pakistan, U.S. Pentagon chief Jim Mattis is expected to pressure Pakistan to end its alleged ties to militant groups when he visits the country as part of a four-nation tour that begins Friday. Pakistan denies sheltering the militants.

Terrorism also will be a main focus of Mattis' stop in Egypt. Mattis' trip also includes stops in Kuwait and Jordan.

Pope Francis asked for forgiveness from Rohingya Muslim refugees for all their suffering Friday.

He is saying "Now I appeal to your large hearts to give us the forgiveness that we are asking."

The pontiff, who was on a tour of Asia, has been in Bangladesh since Thursday.

He has been criticized by human rights activists for not specifically mentioning the Rohingyas while previously in Myanmar.

That changed Friday when the pope greeted and blessed a group of Rohingya refugees during an emotional meeting in Dhaka, in which he held their hands and listened to their stories. He was asking them for forgiveness on behalf of those who persecuted and hurt them.

I'm Liz Parker in Washington.

That's the latest world news from VOA.