VOA NEWS

December 23, 2017

From Washington, this is VOA news. I'm Tommie McNeil reporting.

The U.N. Security Council members say that they will continue to crack down on North Korea if its nuclear and ballistic missile testing continues. This, after a Friday vote in which the council approved a resolution that sharply cuts limits on North Korea's imports of refined oil, forces all North Koreans working overseas to return home within 12 months and cracks down on the shipping to and from the country.

Robert Smart is the U.K. ambassador to the U.N. "Though the adoption of this resolution, we are showing the regime that our will is strong and that these provocative actions have severe consequences."

(the U.K. ambassador to the U.N. is correctly Matthew Rycroft)

Afghan officials say a suicide bombing in southern Kandahar province Friday killed an area commander hours after U.S. Vice President Mike Pence made a surprise trip to Afghanistan's Bagram Airfield where he addressed American troops.

During his visit, Pence met with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah to discuss the U.S. strategy and bilateral cooperation in the fight against the Taliban.

Later while addressing the U.S. troops at Bagram, Pence said that the new Afghan strategy President Donald Trump announced in August is making progress on the ground.

"And this Commander-in-Chief has empowered our battlefield commanders with the freedom and flexibility you need to win. Bureaucrats don't win battles; soldiers do. And under this president, we will never allow bureaucracy to stand in the way of victory."

Meanwhile, the Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack in Kandahar province where a bomber rammed an explosives-filled truck into a police station in the district. Regional police say the massive blast inflicted damages to the facility and nearby houses.

This is VOA news.

A U.S. jury has convicted two South American former soccer officials on charges of corruption, the first trial verdicts in a U.S. investigation into world soccer's governing body, FIFA.

The federal jury in New York deliberated for a week before Friday's verdict and will continue deliberations next week for a third soccer official.

The jurors convicted José Maria Marin, former head of Brazil's soccer confederation, and Juan Ángel Napout, that's the former head of the Paraguayan soccer, of racketeering conspiracy charges, the top charge against the men. Marin was convicted of six of seven counts and Napout on three of five.

The jurors have not yet reached a consensus on the former president of Peru's soccer federation, Manuel Burga, who faces one count of racketeering conspiracy.

The U.S. government has imposed a new round of sanctions against one of Russia's oldest organized criminal gangs, known as "Thieves-in-Law."

The U.S. Treasury Department targeted 10 alleged members of the group as well as designated the entire network as a transnational criminal organization.

The new U.S. designation means that the U.S. individuals and firms are banned from doing business with Thieves-in-Law or with people linked to the group.

U.S. President Donald Trump is in a celebratory mood Friday after signing a $1.5 trillion overhaul into law, tax overhaul.

Mr. Trump said he wanted to fulfill a pledge to sign the "biggest tax cuts and reform in the country" by Christmas.

He slammed congressional Democrats for not embracing the bill after they said the bill benefits the rich.

"I think the Democrats will really regret, the Democrats already regret it. You know, they have their typical thing - 'It's for the rich.' They know that's not true. And they've been called out on it by the media, actually."

The president also signed a short-term funding bill that will keep the government functioning through holidays and until the New Year.

The U.N. refugee agency reports thousands of people are fleeing from a fresh wave of intercommunal violence this week in the Democratic Republic of Congo's Ituri region.

The U.N. refugee agency reports that more than 2,650 refugees, mostly women and children, have fled to Uganda in search of safety this week.

A U.S. lawmaker wants an investigation into the treatment of 92 Somalis who were allegedly chained to their seats for nearly two days during a botched attempt to deport them to their home country.

Some of the Somalis allegedly had to urinate on themselves because they were not allowed to get up during an excursion that took them from the U.S. to Dakar.

I'm Tommie McNeil in Washington.

That's the latest world news from VOA.