VOA NEWS

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From Washington, this is VOA news. I'm Steve Karesh reporting.

Russia and China each signaled on Monday a desire for a peaceful resolution to the tensions surrounding North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile activity. Jim Bertel has more.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told state-run media Monday that no one wants to see war on the Korean Peninsula and he hopes the United States is not planning a military approach to resolving the situation.

In China, a Foreign Ministry spokeswoman said all countries should "exercise restraint."

The sanctions resolution that the Security Council passed unanimously Friday puts more limits on imports that support North Korea's missile and nuclear programs.

Nikki Haley is the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. "This resolution ratchets up the pressure on North Korea even further, building on our last resolution, which included the strongest sanctions ever imposed on them."

North Korea is calling the latest sanctions an "act of war."

I'm Jim Bertel, VOA news.

Pope Francis called for peace in Jerusalem and "mutual trust" on the Korean peninsula in his traditional Christmas Day address.

Francis spoke of "growing tensions between Israelis and Palestinians," expressing hope that "dialogue may prevail between the parties and a negotiated solution" might be reached.

A home in Goma belonging to Democratic Republic of Congo President Joseph Kabila has been attacked and a policeman died in the incident.

Kabila was not at the property during the attack.

It's not immediately known who was responsible for the raid.

Congo is embroiled in a political crisis linked to Kabila's refusal to step down as president when his mandate expired a year ago.

From Washington, his is VOA news.

On Sunday, Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny claimed to have qualified to participate in the upcoming presidential election. On Monday, he was barred. Scarlett Cvitanovich has the story.

Outspoken Vladimir Putin critic Alexei Navalny has been barred from running in Russia's presidential election. The country's central election commission voted on the decision on Monday, deciding the opposition leader was ineligible because of a past criminal conviction, which the 41-year-old says was trumped up.

Navalny has been jailed three times this year and charged with breaking the law by repeatedly organizing public meetings and rallies.

Following Monday's decision, Navalny immediately called for his supporters to boycott the election and said he would appeal the verdict ruling him out of the run at the presidency.

Scarlett Cvitanovich reporting.

Afghan officials say a suicide blast early Monday in Kabul killed two intelligence officers and four civilians while injuring two other people.

An Interior Ministry spokesman says the bomber apparently wanted to target Afghan security forces but instead hit a civilian car.

The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for the blast.

Christians around the world are celebrating Christmas. But in the Holy Land, political tensions have put a damper on some of the festivities. Robert Berger has more.

Bells at the Church of the Nativity summoned the faithful to celebrate Christmas at the traditional birthplace of Jesus in the West Bank town of Bethlehem. But turnout was sparse in the wake of three weeks of Palestinian protests against U.S. President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Some tourists cancelled their trips to Bethlehem, but others were not deterred.

"I wasn't afraid to come. I'm not afraid being here at all. I'm pleased to see the security."

Many pilgrims waited a lifetime to visit Bethlehem, but the Palestinians who live here are still waiting for better times.

Robert Berger, for VOA news, Bethlehem.

Lawyers and politicians in Turkey are warning that a new emergency decree that grants immunity to civilians who acted to stop an attempted coup in July, 2016, could incite violence and encourage formation of vigilante groups.

The new law was passed on Sunday.

Al-Shabaab militants in Somalia have publicly executed five people, including a 16-year-old boy, who they accuse of spying for Kenyan, U.S. and Somali government forces.

The judge in the case did not release evidence of the accusations against the victims.

Reporting from Washington, I'm Steve Karesh. This is VOA news.

That's the latest world news from VOA.