VOA NEWS

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From Washington, this is VOA news. I'm Jonathan Jones reporting.

Florida high school students says they will not let state lawmakers' rejection of a bill to ban assault rifles stop them from bringing their fight to the state capitol.

With the gallery filled with students, the Republican-led Florida House tuned down a Democratic proposal to ban the guns. Republicans accused the Democrats of forcing the issue after 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz allegedly used an AR-15 to massacre 17 people at a high school in Parkland, Florida, last week.

One student called the legislature's vote "heartbreaking," but she said, "We're not going to stop."

The Trump administration is looking to tighten some regulations involving guns. President Trump has formally recommended the banning of devices that turn firearms into more lethal weapons.

The White House is also saying age restrictions will be considered for the most popular [semi-autic rif...] semi-automatic rifles in the country.

The administration indicated it is open to universal background checks for gun owners.

A lawyer based in London pleaded guilty Tuesday to lying to American investigators about his contacts with Rick Gates, a former campaign aide to President Trump, as part of the widening probe of Russian interference in the 2016 election.

The office of Special Counsel Robert Mueller disclosed [the alle...] the accusations, that is, against attorney Alex Van der Zwaan early Tuesday, and the attorney pleaded guilty later in the day in a Washington court. He is the son-in-law of a Russian billionaire.

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A Syrian war monitor says pro-government strikes Tuesday in the rebel-held Damascus suburb of eastern Ghouta have killed more than 100 people.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said at least 250 people have been killed since late Sunday. That's the highest 48-hour death toll in the Syria conflict since a chemical attack on the suburb in 2013.

Africa is losing tens of billions of dollars a year in illegal financial flows -- more money, in fact, than it receives in official development assistance.

Now a new report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development offers a bigger look at the illegal economy behind it and how African and richer nations can fight it.

Correspondent Lisa Bryant has more for VOA from Paris.

Ambassador Según Apata of Nigeria is a member of a United Nations high-level panel looking into illicit financial flows from Africa. He says some African governments are beginning to tackle the problem, but they don't always have the capacity to do so.

"We have not made giant strides yet. We are still at the elementary, at the mundane level of implementation."

Ambassador Apata says if the $50 billion in losses from illegal activities were actually channeled into development in West Africa, it could help to check the illegal migration that European countries worry about.

Lisa Bryant, for VOA news, Paris.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is calling for an international peace conference to be convened by the middle of this year to try to break the impasse in the Middle East peace process. He spoke to the monthly meeting Tuesday of the U.N. Security Council on the Israeli-Palestinian issue.

He expressed his support for broad regional and international participation at such a conference, and he laid out his vision of a "peace plan." His speech was the first time he has addressed the 15-nation council since 2009.

And, Russia's Olympic Committee has confirmed that a Russian athlete at the Pyeongchang Winter Games has tested positive for the banned substance meldonium.

Following a second test, the Russian delegation apologized. It said the test results indicate curler Alexander Krushelnitsky only consumed meldonium once.

It noted that it would be "useless" if the intent was to enhance performance.

He won a bronze medal in mixed doubles curling.

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That's the latest world news from VOA.