VOA NEWS

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

U.S. reacts to Russia.

The Pentagon downplayed Russian President Vladimir Putin's announcement of new nuclear weapons on Thursday. A Pentagon spokeswoman says Moscow's weaponry was long under development and had already been factored into U.S. assessments.

Here is Dana White. "We're not surprised by the statements and the American people should rest assured that we are fully prepared."

In his annual state-of-the-nation address earlier on Thursday, Putin boasted about his military's newfound capabilities, including "invincible" nuclear weapons that cannot be intercepted.

The Russian leader emphasized that the development of new weapons that have no equivalent in the West came in response to the U.S. withdrawal from a Cold War-era treaty banning missile defenses and U.S. efforts to develop a missile defense system.

Here is more from White. "Our missile defense has never been about them. We need to ensure we have a credible nuclear deterrent and we are confident that we are prepared to do and we are prepared to defend this nation no matter what."

The U.S. State Department has approved the possible sale of Javelin missiles and launch units to Ukraine. It would comment an estimated cost of $47 million, the Pentagon said on Thursday.

A statement read the Javelin system would help Ukraine build its long-term defense capacity.

More than 10,000 people have been killed since 2014 in a conflict that pits Ukrainian forces against Russian-back separatists in eastern Ukraine.

We have much more on this story, especially that one involving Russia, on voanews.com. This is VOA news.

This is the third and possibly last day of a Russia-ordered five-hour "humanitarian pause" in the fighting in the Eastern Ghouta area of Syria. However, no civilians have used the route to leave the rebel-held suburbs.

Meanwhile, the Union of Medical Care and Relief Organizations members say the fighting has worsened. This since the U.N. Security Council 30-day cease-fire resolution that was adopted on Saturday.

Lisa Schlein reports for VOA from Geneva.

The chairman of the organization, Ghanem Tayara, says the resolution has been completely ignored.

"There have been more than 90 person(s) killed. There have been so many frequent attacks on medical facilities, on hospitals, airstrikes, shelling, bombing."

Additionally, Tayara says one child has died and 19 other people sickened from a chlorine gas chemical attack by Syrian government forces.

Lisa Schlein, for VOA news, Geneva.

Tayara says Syrian airstrikes and ground attacks have killed 4,600 people and injured 12,000 during the last month.

Bangladesh has requested that Myanmar withdraw its security forces from their common border.

The Foreign Affairs Ministry said Myanmar's ambassador was told the troop build-up will "create confusion within Bangladesh and escalate tensions on the border."

The build-up is near a camp where thousands of Rohingya Muslim refugees have been living since fleeing Myanmar in August.

President Donald Trump says the United States will impose tariffs on steel and aluminum imports next week.

"People have no idea how badly our country has been treated by other countries, by people representing us that didn't have a clue. Or if they did, then they should be ashamed of themselves because they've destroyed the steel industry."

He spoke at a meeting Thursday with top executives from U.S. steel and aluminum companies.

The Trump administration has shown its desire to impose tariffs on various metal imports since last year.

South Korea plans to send a special envoy to North Korea in response to an invitation from leader Kim Jong Un.

The news came via statement from the South Korean presidential office, saying that South Korean Moon Jae-in told his U.S. counterpart, Donald Trump, about the decision in a phone call on Thursday. The statement said Moon and Trump agreed to continue to make efforts to head toward Korean Peninsula's denuclearization by maintaining the momentum of the South-North dialogue.

More on all these stories, we covered on voanews.com. I'm Liz Parker reporting from Washington.

That's the latest world news from VOA.