VOA NEWS

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

International chemical weapons experts are heading to the Syrian town of Douma to investigate a suspected poison gas attack that reportedly killed dozens of people near Damascus.

While people throughout Syria are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance and protection, U.N. agencies say they are particularly concerned about tens of thousands of civilians trapped in Douma, a town inside eastern Ghouta in the suburbs of Damascus.

The U.N. refugee agency reports more than 133,000 people have fled eastern Ghouta during the past four weeks.

Lisa Schlein, for VOA news, Geneva.

Tuesday, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg testified before a U.S. Senate committee about the way his company handled data from millions of users.

U.S. Senator Bill Nelson said current social media policies similar to Facebook's threaten personal privacy.

"... and why didn't Facebook notify 87 million users that their personally identifiable information had been taken?"

Zuckerberg said regarding privacy legislation could be an act to explain what's been done with data.

"It's hard to say that people fully understand something when it's only written out in a long legal document. This stuff needs to be implemented in a way where people can actually understand it, where consumers can -- can understand it, but that can also capture all the nuances of how these services work in a way that doesn't -- that's not overly restrictive on --on providing the services."

Zuckerberg is to testify before a House committee Wednesday.

U.S. President Donald Trump's top Homeland Security adviser, Tom Bossert, abruptly resigned Tuesday. It is the latest in a long line of senior officials to leave the Trump administration.

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U.S. President Donald Trump once again said that the FBI raids on his personal lawyer Michael Cohen's New York office and a hotel where he had been staying are "a total witch hunt."

When asked about the raid and investigation Tuesday, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders echoed the president's sentiment and deflected reporters' questions.

"We've spoken about this at length, at nauseam, and frankly think that it's a big distraction that the media has spent every single day for the last year focused on this instead of some of the biggest issues of our day, and some of the biggest issues that the president is dealing with like Syria, like North Korea, like deregulation, tax cuts, defeating ISIS. Those are the ... that's the focus of this administration, and frankly that's what you guys should be spending a little bit more time...."

Federal Bureau of Investigation agents executed search warrants Monday and seized financial documents and other records possibly related to Mr. Trump's contacts with Cohen, who paid $130,000 to an adult film actress shortly before Mr. Trump's 2016 election. That was to keep her quiet about the 2006 one-night affair she alleges to have had with the president. The president has said he had no knowledge of that payment.

The White House says that President Trump will no longer be traveling to Latin America later this week because he wants to "oversee the U.S. [responsible] response to Syria."

U.S. Senator [Marc Rubio] Marco Rubio said that he understands the president's decision.

The two day summit in Peru begins April 13.

China's President Xi Jinping did not mention U.S. President Trump by name or speak directly about rising trade frictions with Washington during a closely watched speech from China's version of Davos for Asia.

But the pledges Xi made to press forward with economic reforms had everything to do with the trade dispute and President Trump's threats to levy heavy tariffs on Chinese goods.

In his speech, Xi mentioned the phrase "opening up" 42 times. One of the key messages of his speech was that China was open for business.

Afghanistan officials say that cross-border shelling by Pakistan has killed at least one civilian in the eastern province of Kunar.

A provincial government spokesman told VOA Pakistani forces in the past 24 hours have fired hundreds of artillery shells on two Afghan border districts of Sarkano and Dangam.

I'm Tommie McNeil, VOA news.

That's the latest world news from VOA.