VOA NEWS

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From Washington, this is VOA news. I'm Christopher Cruise reporting.

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani on Sunday threatened the U.S. if it withdraws from its nuclear agreement.

Reuters correspondent David Doyle reports.

In an interview with Germany's *Der Spiegel*, French President Emmanuel Macron said war could ensue from the ashes of the Iran deal.

France, along with Germany and Britain, remains committed to the nuclear deal, which Iran agreed to curb its nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief.

But Trump has said unless his European allies can rectify what he sees as "flaws" in the accord, then he will refuse to extend such sanctions relief.

In an effort to keep Washington on side, the European powers want to open talks on subjects, including Iran's ballistic missile program. That was something Rouhani rejected on Sunday, saying Iran will not negotiate with anyone about its weapons and defenses.

Reuters correspondent David Doyle.

And a tough new warning from Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Sunday is raising fears of war in the Middle East.

Correspondent Robert Berger reports for VOA from Jerusalem.

In an Israel Radio interview, former general Yisrael Zeev said Netanyahu appears to be preparing the nation for war.

He said Israel may have to launch a preemptive strike against Iranian assets in Syria, prompting Iran and its ally Hezbollah in Lebanon to fire missiles into Israel.

Netanyahu will visit Moscow on Wednesday to discuss the situation with Russian President Vladimir Putin, the main power broker in Syria.

Robert Berger, for VOA news, Jerusalem.

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North Korea has warned the United States not to misread its overtures of peace as a sign of weakness.

State media reported that a Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Sunday, "The U.S. is deliberately provoking North Korea at the time when the situation on the Korean Peninsula is moving towards peace and reconciliation."

The official was referring to American claims that Trump's policy of maximum political pressure and sanctions are what drove the North to the negotiating table.

He said Sunday that movement of American military assets in the region and talk of human rights violations have hurt the peace process.

President Trump's choice to lead the Central Intelligence Agency reportedly decided to withdraw her nomination in the past few days. But Associated Press correspondent Ben Thomas reports she has changed her mind.

Two top administration officials say Gina Haspel offered to step aside Friday when White House said it's preparing for her confirmation hearings this week, asked for details of her involvement in the CIA's post-9/11 interrogation program for terror suspects.

Critics noted Haspel was the Chief of Base at a covert detention site in Thailand where two suspects were subjected to water boarding.

But the officials say White House says it reassured Haspel that a nomination remains on track and that she has the president's backing.

Haspel is the first career operations officer to be nominated to lead the CIA in decades. She served almost entirely under cover and much of her record is classified.

Ben Thomas, Washington.

President Trump's new lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, has told ABC news that the president would not have to obey an order from the special counsel investigating Russian interference in the 2016 election to answer questions.

Giuliani also said on Sunday that Trump might use his constitutional right against self-incrimination if he is forced to testify.

Trump has often said he would like to answer the special counsel's questions. But Giuliani voiced opposition to Trump doing so. Mr. Trump often exaggerates or tells outright falsehoods, testifying about his campaign's links to Russia and whether he obstructed justice by trying to thwart the investigation.

Polls have closed across Lebanon 12 hours after voting began in the country's first national election in nine years.

Turnout was low throughout the day even though President Michel Aoun appealed to voters in a televised address an hour before the polls closed to cast their ballots.

He said, "If you want change, you should exercise your right" to vote. The message was also published on Twitter at the same time.

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That's the latest world news from VOA.