VOA NEWS

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

The Trump administration said Wednesday that conversations underway this week in Panmunjom, Singapore and New York City are all focused on denuclearization of North Korea.

The conversations are taking place in advance of a planned June 12 summit between President Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

But White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders told reporters Wednesday that the denuclearization discussions do not extend to American weapons systems.

A flare-up of violence along the Israel-Gaza border subsided Wednesday as Palestinian officials said an Egyptian-mediated cease-fire had been reached with Israel.

Israeli officials did not confirm an agreement had been reached, but they said if mortar and rocket fire from militants in Gaza stopped, then Israel would halt its response attacks.

Correspondent Robert Berger reports for VOA from Jerusalem.

Israel has not formally agreed to the cease-fire on grounds that it does not negotiate with terrorist organizations. Cabinet Minister Tzachi Hanegbi says Israel's Gaza policy is based on deterrence.

He warned that those who attack Israel will face a harsh military response.

Israeli officials say the formula is simple: Quiet will be met with quiet, and fire with fire.

Robert Berger, for VOA news, Jerusalem.

The Islamic State terrorist group claims the man who killed four people in the Belgian city of Liege on Tuesday was a "soldier of the caliphate."

This is VOA news.

Disgraced Hollywood movie producer Harvey Weinstein was indicted Wednesday on rape and criminal sex charges.

The district attorney said the indictment brings Weinstein "another step closer to accountability."

A statement issued through a Weinstein spokesman said the 66-year-old film producer, who has denied the allegations, learned of the specific charges and the accusers' identities only after turning himself in on Friday.

The Trump administration on Wednesday imposed new sanctions on three Iranian organizations and six Iranians whom it says have committed serious human rights abuses on behalf of Iran.

The U.S. military in Afghanistan said Wednesday it has killed more than 70 senior Taliban leaders this month in a series of "precision" strikes, dealing a major blow to the insurgency.

The United Nations Children's Fund says hundreds of thousands of severely malnourished children in Mali are at risk of dying because the security situation in the country is worsening.

Correspondent Lisa Schlein reports for VOA from Geneva.

The United Nations reports that attacks by extremists and criminals in northern and central Mali are rising at an alarming rate, with many civilians being deliberately targeted.

UNICEF spokesman Christophe Boulierac says more than a million children are going hungry because of severe food shortages.

"More than 850,000 children under the age of 5 are at risk of global acute malnutrition this year, including 274,000 children facing severe malnutrition and at imminent risk of death."

Lisa Schlein, for VOA news, Geneva.

President Trump has signed a bill to help terminally ill patients try experimental treatments.

AP correspondent Warren Levinson reports.

Surrounded by people with Lou Gehrig's disease and other grave illnesses, the president signed the so-called Right to Try bill that passed Congress last week. It will allow people with life-threatening diseases to get unproven treatments without first seeking the approval of the Food and Drug Administration.

Its backers say it offers hope to thousands of sufferers. Skeptics maintain it will open the door for ineffective treatments and unscrupulous positions offering patients false hope.

In his State of the Union address, Trump said terminally ill people should not have to travel from country to country in search of a cure.

I'm Warren Levinson.

Patients will only be able to take advantage of the law if they have exhausted their treatment options, using drugs already approved by American regulators.

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That's the latest world news from VOA.