VOA NEWS

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From Washington, this is VOA news. I'm David Byrd reporting.

Canada's finance minister says he hopes the threat of retaliation will persuade the Trump administration to reverse course on new tariffs on steel and aluminum.

At the G7 finance ministers' meeting Saturday, Canadian Minister Bill Morneau said he hoped U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin would take the message back to President Donald Trump.

"We said that we were collectively hoping that he would bring the message back, the message of, of regret and disappointment at the American actions and concern that they are not constructive. And my sense is that he is going take that message back to Washington."

French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said the United States had only a few days to avoid a trade war.

Earlier, Britain's Trade Minister Liam Fox said his country would not sign any trade agreement with the United States that is not in the UK's best interests.

Fox's comments came after European Union officials filed a complaint with the World Trade Organization over stiff U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum imports.

Trade tensions escalated when the U.S. imposed a 25 percent tariff on steel and a 10 percent tariff on aluminum imports from the European Union, Canada and Mexico.

Thousands of Palestinians, including hundreds of medical workers in white uniforms, took part Saturday in the funeral procession of a young female medic who was shot dead by Israeli troops Friday along the Israel-Gaza border.

Relatives say 21-year-old Razan al-Najjar was a volunteer paramedic.

Later, Israel said Palestinian militants had fired rockets along the border and Israel launched air raids [to] against militant targets in Gaza.

Local sources say the raids caused damage but no injuries.

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A leading Chinese general dismissed U.S. comments that Beijing's deployments in the South China Sea intimidate its neighbors as "irresponsible."

Speaking at the Shangri-La security conference in Singapore Saturday, General He Lei said that China had the right to deploy weapons on what he called its "own territory." He said China's deployments were for national defense and are to avoid being invaded by other countries.

Earlier, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said that China's actions are not in keeping with previous statements made by President Xi Jinping.

"China's militarization of the Spratlys is also in direct contradiction to President Xi's 2015 public assurances in the White House Rose Garden that they would not do this."

Six nations have claims on the South China Sea, a key shipping route through which trillions of dollars of cargo flows each year.

Beijing has been building military bases, airfields and missile sites on several islands in that body of water.

Opposition Socialist leader Pedro Sanchez was sworn in Saturday as Spain's new prime minister, taking over the premiership from former Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, who lost a parliamentary confidence vote Friday.

Reuters correspondent Scarlett Cvitanovich has details.

Coinciding with Sanchez's rise to power, Catalan authorities swore on the new cabinet on Saturday, automatically ending seven months of being under Madrid ... Catalonia, which led Madrid to impose direct rule on the region.

Finding a way out of the crisis will be one of Sanchez's main challenges. He has promised to talks with the Catalans, but has said he will not give the region independence vote.

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New head Quim Torra says he is committed to [move] moving Catalonia towards independence.

That's Reuters correspondent Scarlett Cvitanovich.

Somalia's Puntland state says that it killed 41 al-Shabab fighters in response to an attack on a military base in the semi-autonomous region in northeastern Somalia.

At least four Somali soldiers were killed and more than 10 others were wounded when al-Shabab militants stormed the Bali-Khadar base late Friday.

Witnesses said Saturday the militants began the raid around midnight near the Galgala mountains in the Bari region. Sources said the Puntland soldiers stationed there were forced to retreat but later recaptured the base.

The Puntland regional government has accused the breakaway area of Somaliland of being involved in the attack. Somaliland has denied the charge.

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That's the latest world news from VOA.