VOA NEWS

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

President Trump's attorney Rudy Giuliani said Sunday he is leaning toward not allowing the president to answer questions from prosecutors who are investigating Russian meddling in the 2016 election.

"We'll say, 'Hey, you got everything you need, you got 1.4 million documents, you have 28 witnesses.' President -- the president's given every explanation and, and, and corrected some that were misimpressions. You've got everything you need, what -- what do you need us for?'"

Trump has long said he wants to answer questions from special counsel Robert Mueller. Giuliani told ABC News that the president is telling the truth when he says there was no collusion with Russia to help him win and he did not obstruct justice.

U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis at a meeting of defense ministers in Singapore on Sunday clarified whether international sanctions on North Korea will be lifted.

"As defense ministers we must maintain a strong collaborative defensive stance so we enable our diplomats to negotiate from a calm position of strength in this critical time. Especially now we must remain vigilant, and we will continue to implement all U.N. Security Council resolutions on North Korea. North Korea will receive relief only when it demonstrates verifiable and irreversible steps to denuclearization."

U.S. and North Korean officials continued to lay the groundwork in advance of the expected summit between President Trump and North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un.

A major U.S.-led military exercise with [18] 18,000 soldiers from 19 countries has begun in the eastern part of NATO, including Poland and three Baltic states.

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North Korea('s) state media on Sunday reported that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad will visit North Korea.

More now on that from Reuters correspondent David Doyle.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad confirms that he plans to visit the North Korean leader. It's likely to be the first meeting between Kim and another head of state actually in Pyongyang.

The meeting was reported by North Korea's KCNA news agency.

There has been no immediate comment from the Syrian president's office.

Assad reportedly announced the plans as he received the credentials of North Korean Ambassador Mun Jong Nam.

Pyongyang and Damascus have historically maintained good relations.

Reuters correspondent David Doyle.

The United States being singled out by its allies over the Trump administration's tariffs on steel and aluminum. At the G7 finance ministers' meeting in Canada Sunday, they expressed their concern and disappointment over the tariffs.

Reaction from U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin: "There is a lot of issues that are going on. The president has been personally involved in our trade update. We meet with him almost every week on these issues. And again I'm sure he will be addressing with the other leaders the trade issues."

Mnuchin referring to a G7 meeting in Quebec this week, which President Trump will attend.

Iran's foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, on Sunday called the U.S. pullout from the 2015 nuclear deal illegal and urged other nations to reject the American withdrawal.

Three people were killed when a building collapsed in Huruma, a low income residential area of the Kenyan capital Nairobi. The five-story residential building collapsed early Sunday.

Building collapses have become common in Nairobi, where 4 million people live in low income areas or slums.

The International Organization for Migration says it has repatriated 150 Somali migrants stranded in Libya this past week.

Correspondent Lisa Schlein reports for VOA from IOM headquarters in Geneva.

IOM spokesman Joel Millman says the organization's voluntary repatriation program has saved thousands of migrants of different nationalities.

"We believe that these flights and other activities that IOM is doing in Libya is assisting in getting people home and that is reducing the risk and the actual fatalities of some of the world's most vulnerable migrants from this route across the Mediterranean."

Data show nearly 30,000 Somali migrants and refugees have left Libya by sea for Italy since 2014.

Lisa Schlein, for VOA news, Geneva.

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That's the latest world news from VOA.