VOA NEWS

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

Some tense moments on Capitol Hill Thursday as Russia's role in the 2016 U.S. election took center stage.

Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein and FBI director Christopher Wray testified to the House Judiciary Committee.

The hearing was Rosenstein's first appearance before Congress since an internal Justice Department report criticized the FBI's handling of the Hillary Clinton email investigation and revealed new disparaging text messages among FBI officials about President Donald Trump.

Republican Congressman Trey Gowdy of South Carolina chided Rosenstein for delaying of special counselor Robert Mueller's investigation into the 2016 vote.

"There's an old saying that justice delayed is justice denied. I think right now all of us are being denied. Whatever you got, finish it the hell up because this country is being torn apart."

Rosenstein defended [the balance of] the Justice Department probe, that is, saying he was doing his best to balance congressional oversight with the need to preserve the integrity of ongoing investigations.

"... that there's been no allegation made by Department of Justice or the special counsel other than what's reflected in those documents that are filed publicly to charge folks, and nobody should draw any conclusions beyond those charges."

Critics say that Republicans on the committee are not interested in finding the truth, but instead want to get those friendly to the president in positions of power.

U.S. President Donald Trump will meet with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, July 16 in Helsinki. The talks are occurring at a difficult time between the two nations.

The U.S. is still holding sanctions against Russia while special counsel Robert Mueller is investigating Russia's interference in the 2016 vote.

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Hundreds of protesters were arrested after staging a sit-in at the U.S. Senate office building in Washington to protest the Trump administration's immigration policy.

U.S. Capitol Police arrested 575 activists, mostly women, decrying President Trump's "zero-tolerance" policy on undocumented immigrants.

They chanted "What do we want? Free families!" and "This is what democracy looks like" as they sat in the Hart Office Building's atrium.

Protesters wrapped themselves in Mylar blankets like the ones handed out to children separated from their families at the southern U.S. border when they are detained.

First lady Melania Trump visited Border Patrol facilities holding immigrant children in Arizona on Thursday.

AP's Sagar Meghani reports the first lady assured the children of her support.

After visiting Texas last week, the first lady today went to a Border Patrol facility holding migrant minors in Tucson, Arizona, about an hour from the Mexico border.

"I'm here to support you and give my help, whatever I can for behalf of children and the families."

Later giving the same message to officials at a Phoenix facility.

Her attire did not draw the same controversy as the Texas visit when she wore a jacket with the message "I really don't care, do u?" on the back. This time, she was in a black sweater and white slacks.

Sagar Meghani, at the White House.

At least five people are dead after a gunman opened fire at the offices of a newspaper in Annapolis, Maryland.

Witnesses said the gunman shot through a glass door at *The Capital Gazette* around 3:00 p.m. local time, and then proceeded to shoot at employees in the news room.

Gavin Buckley is the mayor of Annapolis, Maryland. "A week ago, we practiced an active shooter training, thing we did not expect something like this to happen in our community, but we were ready and I don't think we could have put any more resources if you look behind you of what's been done here was a tremendous response."

Police are interrogating the suspect but his motive is not known.

The U.N. senior adviser of the special envoy for Syria, Jan Egeland, is mainly appealing to Russia, the United States and Jordan to use their influence to put an end to the fighting in southwestern Syria, which erupted ten days ago.

Last year, those countries helped persuade the Syrian government and rebels to create a so-called de-escalation zone in provinces along the Jordanian border.

The U.N. says that some 50,000 people have been displaced by the latest fighting though Egeland says that authorities put that figure at about 70,000.

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