VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. I'm Tommie McNeil.

U.S. President Donald Trump touted the economy's strong second quarter performance Friday, saying "we're on track to hit the highest annual average growth rate in over 13 years."

The economy grew at a 4.1 percent annualized rate in the second quarter, the fastest pace in nearly four years.

Mr. Trump, as VOA's Steve Miller reports, has optimism that goes beyond this report.

Trump also predicted even higher growth as he renegotiates the nation's trade deals.

"As the trade deals come in one by one, we're going to go a lot higher than these numbers."

Trump, who has repeatedly attacked the economic record of his predecessor's administration, pledged during the 2016 campaign to double growth to 4 percent or better. And he has been trying to highlight economic gains ahead of the midterm elections.

Steve Miller, VOA news.

U.S. President Trump expressed gratitude to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un for returning to U.S. authorities what are believed to be remains of 55 U.S. service members who were killed in the Korean War more than six decades ago.

"I want to thank Chairman Kim for keeping his word. We have many others coming. But I want to thank Chairman Kim in front of the media for fulfilling a promise that he made to me."

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis says the U.S. will work closely with North Korea on returning the war remains.

"It was a coordination effort over the last month, that we determined where they would deliver the remains to, where our plane would fly in, where they would be taken to for the initial review. So all of that went well."

And this is a marking at the 65th anniversary of the signing of the armistice that ended the 1950 to 1953 war that split the Communist north and the democratic south.

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A delegation of the Kurdish-backed Syrian Democratic Council and U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Force is in Syria to talk with Syrian government officials.

The delegation arrived in Damascus two days ago.

This is the first SDC declared visit to Syria's capital, which indicates the interest of Kurdish authorities to open channels of communication with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad as they seek a political accord to preserves their region's autonomy within Syria.

The meetings are expected to primarily discuss services in the Kurdish-controlled areas, but (a) spokesperson said that the delegation had set no agenda and the talks might expand to include political and security issues.

The court-ordered deadline has passed for U.S. officials to reunite all eligible children who were separated from their parents after entering the country.

VOA's Philip Alexiou reports.

U.S. officials said they expected to reunite all eligible children who had been separated from their parents after entering the country illegally by Thursday's court-ordered deadline.

However, it was not immediately clear if that goal was met.

In a court filing Thursday, the Justice Department said that more than 1,400 children, five years and older, had been reunited so far.

Another 378 were released in what it calls "appropriate circumstances," meaning they were turned over to sponsors who can properly care for them.

Seven hundred children are still in government custody and their fates remain uncertain.

Philip Alexiou, VOA news.

A deadly wildfire has ravaged through Northern California this Friday, forcing thousands of residents to leave their homes. It killed two people working to contain the blaze.

It is taking everything down its path, according to Scott McLean, a spokesman for crews battling the fires.

That inferno has been named the Carr Fire, reached the city of Redding. That is home to more than 90,000 people.

The fire has scorched upward of 17,000 hectares of land. That's according to the state Forestry and Fire Protection department.

Pakistan's Election Commission said Friday that former sports-celebrity-turned politician, Imran Khan, is the winner of the parliamentary election, but his party failed to win enough votes for an outright majority and will have to form a coalition government.

The announcement came hours after Khan had declared his Pakistan party the winner Thursday.

A senior U.S. official said Washington is confident that a detained American pastor in Turkey will be free soon as tensions deepen between the two countries.

Andrew Brunson is an evangelical pastor from North Carolina. He has been jailed in Turkey for nearly two years on terrorism and espionage charges.

I'm Tommie McNeil, VOA news.