VOA NEWS

August 24, 2018

VOA news. I'm David Byrd in Washington.

U.S. Secretary of [Stake] State Mike Pompeo, that is, has named Ford Motor Company Vice President Stephen Biegun as a special representative to North Korea.

Pompeo told reporters it was a timely moment for Biegun to join the State Department and that they would be traveling together to North Korea next week.

"Steve is taking the reins of a great team effort. The State Department has already done excellent work in implementing and sustaining the pressure campaign, putting together the first-ever leader-level summit in Singapore, and laying the groundwork to hold North Korea accountable to the promises that Chairman Kim has made."

At Ford Motor Company, Biegun oversees the carmaker's international government relations. He also brings extensive government experience, with an appointment to the National Security Council during the administration of former President George W. Bush. Before joining the White House, Biegun served 14 years as a foreign policy adviser to members of both the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate.

U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton says he warned his Russian counterpart not to interfere in the U.S. mid-term elections in November.

Bolton made the comments during a news conference in Geneva, where he met Thursday with Russian national Security Council director Nikolai Patrushev.

"And we talked about it in a variety of ways in the area of cyber and information technology exchanges, which we had stopped between the United States and Russia earlier this year, and I said at this point, I didn't really see the circumstances were right to resume them again."

Thursday's meeting was the first high-level meeting since U.S. President Donald Trump met his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Helsinki.

The U.S. has already imposed economic sanctions against Russia over its interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

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U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions has hit back at President Donald Trump after the president criticized his running of the Justice Department in an television interview.

AP's Sagar Meghani has the details.

Sessions has long been a Trump target and this morning on "Fox & Friends," the president all but said Sessions has been a disappointment since the beginning.

"I put in an attorney general that never took control of the Justice Department, Jeff Sessions."

He says Sessions only got the job because the president felt loyalty to him as an original supporter.

Sessions responded he took control of the Justice Department the day he was sworn in and its actions will not be improperly influenced by political considerations.

Sagar Meghani, at the White House.

Hurricane Lane soaked Hawaii's Big Island on Thursday, dumping 30 centimeters of rain [in 20] in 12 hours as residents stocked up on supplies and tried to protect their homes ahead of the state's first hurricane since 1992.

The National Weather Service has warned that some areas could see up to 76 centimeters of rain before the system passes.

Steve Goldstein is a meteorologist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

"It will pass very close to the Hawaiian islands and is expected to have major impact(s). You do not need a direct strike to have major impacts from a hurricane this strong."

Lane was not projected to make a direct hit on Hawaii, but officials warned that even a lesser blow could do significant harm.

U.S. and Chinese officials ended two days of talks on Thursday with not major breakthrough as their trade war escalated with the activation of another round of dueling tariffs on $16 billion worth of each country's goods.

The U.S. announced earlier this month it would impose 25 percent tariffs on $16 billion worth of Chinese goods. That's on top of the 25 percent tariffs it imposed on $34 billion worth of goods from China in early July.

Beijing has followed suit in each case with an identical percentage of tariffs in retaliation.

David Dollar is an economic and foreign policy expert with the Brookings Institution.

"The Trump administration puts a big emphasis on the trade balance. The U.S. has a large overall deficit. It's getting bigger this year, especially with Europe but also with China and other partners. So they are not really meeting their objective in terms of reducing the trade deficit."

A White House statement Thursday night said the two sides had concluded two days of discussions with counterparts from China and exchanged views on how to achieve fairness, balance and reciprocity in their economic relationship.

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