VOA NEWS

September1, 2018

This is VOA news. I'm David Byrd in Washington.

U.S. Vice President Mike Pence joined the nation in paying tribute Friday to the late Senator John McCain, saying the longtime lawmaker and war hero served a cause greater than himself.

But as AP's Sagar Meghani reports, one person was missing from the tribute. President Donald Trump was not invited. "The president asked me to be here..."

Vice President Mike Pence told the crowd in the Capitol Rotunda the president respected McCain's service to the nation. "John McCain served his country honorably."

People close to the White House and McCain's family say the president was asked to stay away from the Capitol service. His absence was hard to miss. Other members of his administration were there, including Attorney General Jeff Sessions, a former McCain Senate colleague, and Pentagon chief Jim Mattis, who'll be an honorary pallbearer when McCain is buried Sunday.

Sagar Meghani, Washington.

Dignitaries from the world of entertainment, politics and civil rights gathered to pay a final tribute to the late Aretha Franklin Friday.

AP's Warren Levinson reports on the funeral for the Queen of Soul.

Former President Bill Clinton called himself "Aretha Franklin groupie."

"We started out not as a president and first lady, a senator and secretary of state. We started out as, like, Aretha groupies or something."

Ex-Attorney General Eric Holder said she may have been a queen but it was a title she earned.

"She was born a princess. Her family made her so. But it was through her talent, determination and care for others that she became a Queen."

A long list of luminaries paid tribute at Detroit's Greater Grace Temple. Smokey Robinson, Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, Faith Hill and Ariana Grande were among those who sang in a service filled with soul, gospel and rock 'n' roll.

I'm Warren Levinson.

And This is VOA news.

The U.S. State Department says the United States will no longer fund the U.N. Relief and [Work Agenc...] Works Agency, that is, which helps Palestinian refugees.

As AP's Mike Gracia reports, the move ended decades of support for the organization.

The decision means the agency that helps Palestinian refugees will lose nearly $300 million of planned support. The U.S. supplies nearly 30 percent of the agency's total budget.

In a statement announcing the decision, the State Department said the U.S. plans dialogue with the United Nations, host governments and international stakeholders about new models and new approaches to help the Palestinians.

Mike Gracia, Washington.

Talks between the United States and Canada on a new North American Free Trade Agreement ended on Friday without a resolution

Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland says the U.S. and Candida will continue to engage in trade talks.

Speaking in Washington after a day of negotiations, Freeland says her goal is to reach a good deal with the United States and Mexico.

"We're continuing to work very hard and we're making progress, but we're not there yet. This is a very complex agreement and we're going to continue working at it."

U.S. President Donald Trump said at a fundraiser in North Carolina that Canada's tariffs are too high, particularly on dairy products.

"But they have taken advantage of us, as has virtually every country in the world. In fact, when they haven't, I say, 'What's wrong with you?' But I can't find any, so I haven't been able to say that yet."

The talks were intended to bring Canada into a new trade accord that would replace the North American Free Trade Agreement.

The Trump administration had insisted it wanted a deal done by Friday, beginning a 90-day countdown that would let Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto sign the pact before he leaves office December 1.

The talks with Canada will resume on Wednesday.

U.S. President Donald Trump will skip a meeting of the Association of South East Asian Nations in November, traveling instead to France to mark the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I.

The White House says that Trump will send Vice President Mike Pence in his place.

The president had been invited to attend the U.S.-ASEAN summit and the East Asia summit in Singapore and also the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in Papua New Guinea.

While in Europe, Trump also plans to travel to Ireland, according to the White House.

Later in November, Trump will visit the G 20 summit in Buenos Aires and will also travel to Colombia for talks with Colombian leaders about security, counter-narcotics and regional affairs.

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