VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. I'm Tommie McNeil.

U.S. President Donald Trump held a meeting at the White House for American pastor Andrew Brunson, who returned to the U.S. after being detained in Turkey for two years.

Brunson at one point prayed with the president.

"Lord God, I ask that you pour out your holy spirit on President Trump, that you give him supernatural wisdom to accomplish all of the plans that we have for this country and for him. I ask that you give him wisdom and now to lead this country into righteousness."

The president thanked Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan for the return of Brunson, who was freed Friday by a Turkish court. Mr. Trump noted the U.S. did not negotiate an agreement with Turkey for Brunson's release.

That release marked the end of a bitter diplomatic dispute between Washington and Ankara. Brunson was facing 35 years in jail if he had been convicted on terrorism and espionage charges, allegations Washington called baseless.

During the same meeting, President Trump was asked about what actions he will take now that Turkey has implicated the Saudi government in the disappearance of Saudi Arabian journalist Jamal Khashoggi, especially if it's determined that he was murdered.

"We're looking into it very seriously. Turkey is looking into at a very high level, at the highest level, and so is Saudi Arabia. I mean that they are gonna get back and they have been getting back. And I know Mike's been dealing with them, John's been dealing with them. But in terms of the order of $110 billion - think of that, $110 billion - all they're gonna do is give it to other countries and I think that would be very foolish of our country. But there are other things we can do that will be very severe."

Saudi officials have denied any involvement in Khashoggi's disappearance. A group of 15 men had reportedly flown to Istanbul the day that he went to the consulate. Media reports say they left but he did not.

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At least 13 people were killed and 21 others wounded in an attack on an election rally in northeastern Afghanistan Saturday afternoon.

Officials in Takhar province say [most say] that most of the victims were civilians, except two policemen, one person from the Afghan intelligence agency NDS, as well.

So far no group has claimed responsibility for the attack. However, the Afghan Taliban has called these elections "fake and a conspiracy to deceive the people and achieve the malicious interests of foreigners." They've asked their followers to disrupt the process.

The United States and the Taliban held a new round of direct talks this week in Qatar, where the two sides agreed to continue the dialogue process to promote a negotiated settlement to the 17-year-old war in Afghanistan.

A Taliban spokesman, while announcing details of Friday's meeting, the second in less than three months, said that a U.S. special envoy for Afghan peace led his delegation and another a six-member team in talks.

Taliban representatives told the American delegation that the presence of foreign forces in Afghanistan is a "major" obstacle to a way of finding the "real" peace.

Two blasts in a Somali town have killed at least 15 people, injured more than 30 others.

The al-Qaeda-linked al-Shabab group, which controlled between 2009 and 2012 before being driven out by the Ethiopian-backed government forces, claimed responsibility for the attacks.

A survivor told VOA's Somali service a suicide bomber threw a grenade at a busy restaurant, killing at least five people and injuring several others.

Minutes after that attack, another suicide bomber rammed a vehicle into a hotel nearby, killing at least seven.

And the assaults come as that city prepares for an election next month.

A United Nations employee in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo has tested positive for Ebola, the first such incident during the current outbreak.

This is after health officials warned about a troubling rise in new Ebola cases.

Tarik Jasarevic is with the World Health Organization. "... so this really indicates a shift where the outbreak epicenter ??? is from Mangina to the city of Beni that basically has seen a three quarters of all cases in ???."

The new Ebola toll stands at 125 out of 201 reported cases. Political unrest is said to be hindering control efforts.

The search continued in Florida Saturday for people who may have been killed or trapped by Hurricane Michael, while survivors of the powerful storm sought food, water and other essential goods.

The death toll from that storm is at least 17 after a body was found Friday in the rubble, but there are experts who say that the expected number to rise.

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