VOA NEWS

November 9, 2018

VOA news. I'm Christopher Cruise reporting.

Police now say 28 year-old Ian Long shot and killed 12 people late Wednesday during an attack at a bar and dance club in southern California. The shooting happened after Long entered the Borderline Bar & Grill in the city of Thousand Oaks.

Police say they still don't know the motive for the shooting.

The U.S. Marine Corps said Long had been a corporal and served nearly five years in the Marine, including seven months in Afghanistan.

Among the victims was a sheriff who'd been in the force for 29 years and was close to retirement.

This is Gavin Newsom, the governor-elect of California. "This is America. It's gotta change. This doesn't happen anywhere else on planet Earth, and we can't let folks forget that. We can't lose sight of that. We can't allow this to be normalized."

The United States has announced additional sanctions against a number of Russian and Ukrainian entities led to Russia's actions in neighboring Ukraine. The Trump administration announced the sanctions Thursday.

They affect two Ukrainians, one Russian and nine organizations in Ukraine and Russia. The U.S. Treasury Department said the sanctions affect two people and one group engaged in "serious human rights abuses in parts of Ukraine."

A federal appeals court has blocked President Trump's efforts to end the program that shields hundreds of thousands of young immigrants from deportation.

The three judge-panel in San Francisco ruled Thursday that the plaintiffs were likely to succeed in challenging the decision to phase out the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA.

The court said Trump's decision was "arbitrary, capricious or otherwise not in accordance with law."

Two lower courts had also blocked Trump.

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Now that U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions has been fired, there are questions about what is next for the deputy attorney general who's been overseeing the special counsel's Russia investigation.

Associated Press correspondent Jackie Quinn reports.

Rod Rosenstein, the number two official at the Justice Department, took control of Robert Mueller's investigation into election interference because Jeff Sessions recused himself.

President Trump has blasted the probe as a "witch hunt" and said, "I could fire everybody right now, but I don't want to stop."

The president has placed an acting attorney general, Matthew Whitaker, at the helm of the Justice Department instead of elevating Rosenstein, who was at the White House Wednesday where adviser Kellyanne Conway was asked about that meeting.

"He is a deputy attorney genial so he has a lot of business at the White House. I think he'll be back tomorrow for a different meeting."

No clue on Rosenstein's future at the justice Department. Acting AG Whitaker has called for limiting the Russia investigation.

Australia says it will increase its diplomatic and defense presence in the South Pacific because of concerns that China is building its influence in the region.

Correspondent Phil Mercer reports for VOA from Sydney.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said Canberra will set up a multi-billion-dollar infrastructure bank to fund telecommunications, energy, transport and water projects in the South Pacific. There will be new diplomatic posts in Palau, the Marshall Islands, French Polynesia, Niue and the Cook Islands. Australia is also promising to boost defense cooperation in the region.

The prime minister's announcement in a speech to soldiers in Queensland state is seen by analysts as an attempt to counter Chinese influence in the South Pacific.

The United States and the Taliban are both set to attend for the first time a multilateral conference that Russia will host Friday in Moscow. They'll be discussing how to achieve peace and national reconciliation in Afghanistan.

A State Department spokesman confirmed on Wednesday that in coordination with the Afghan government, the U.S. embassy in Moscow "will send a representative to the working level to observe the discussions."

A fiery protest in Tibet left a 23-year-old man named Dobo dead on November 4.

Tibetan exiles say this is the 153rd instance of self-immolation since 2009, protesting China's rule of the restive province. Most of the people who have set themselves on fire have died.

The protesters have called for autonomy and freedom for Tibet. They also demanded the return of Tibet's spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, from exile in India.

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