VOA NEWS

November 15, 2018

I'm Christopher Cruise reporting.

Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman has resigned in protest. He opposed the Egyptian-brokered cease-fire between Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas.

Correspondent Linda Gradstein reports for VOA from Jerusalem.

Lieberman's resignation significantly weakens Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's ruling coalition government and could bring about an early Israeli election.

The defense minister says the cease-fire reached with Gaza's Hamas rulers is "surrender to terrorism." He had demanded a far stronger Israeli response to the most intense round of rocket fire against Israel since a 50-day war in 2014.

Lieberman's resignation will go into effect in 48 hours. Netanyahu will take over on an interim basis.

Associated Press correspondent Charles De Ledesma.

U.S. Vice President Mike Pence took a hardline Wednesday with the de facto leader of Myanmar, Aung San Suu Kyi, at the ASEAN conference in Singapore. Pence told her there is no excuse for the tragedy that has befallen the Rohingya Muslims.

"This is a tragedy that has touched the hearts of millions of Americans. The violence and persecution by military and vigilantes that resulted in driving 700,000 Rohingya into Bangladesh is without excuse. And the arrest and jailing of two journalists last fall was deeply troubling to millions of Americans, and I look forward to speaking with you about the premium that we place on a free and independent press."

Diplomatic efforts said to be underway to bring an end to the fighting for control of Yemen's Red Sea port city of Hodeidah at this hour.

This is VOA news.

The United Nations warned Wednesday that days of heavy fighting in parts of central-eastern Afghanistan has worsened humanitarian conditions there. It urged warring parties to ensure safe passages for civilians attempting to leave the affected districts.

The U.N. Security Council voted unanimously Wednesday to lift sanctions against Eritrea.

The sanctions that blocked arms sales to and from the country had been in place for more on than a decade. They also placed travel restrictions on senior government and military officials.

U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Homeland Security [Secretary] Kirstjen Nielsen visited the U.S. southern border Wednesday, where thousands of American troops have been deployed to support border patrol agents.

Associated Press correspondent Sagar Meghani reports.

Critics call it a political stunt, but as he traveled to south Texas, the Pentagon chief said the deployment of some 5,800 troops for the border mission represents good training for future missions.

"It's actually, I believe, so far improving our readiness for deployments."

At a camp in Donna, Texas, Mattis and Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen met with some of the troops.

"The eyes of the world right now and certainly all of the Americans are on you."

Mattis earlier said all the troops will have accomplished what Nielsen's department asked of them within ten days, but noted they will likely get more tasks and he won't say when the mission might end nor how much it will cost.

The soldiers assigned to help with border security have been helping with barriers, fencing and aerial support. They are legally prohibited from engaging in domestic law enforcement, such as arresting migrants crossing the border.

The death toll from the devastating wildfires in California stands at nearly 50, most of them in the northern part of the state. But 200 more people are still unaccounted for.

Thousands of homes and businesses have been destroyed by the flames.

A congressional advisory panel said on Wednesday that the purchase of Internet-linked devices manufactured in China leaves the United States vulnerable to security breaches that could put critical infrastructure at risk.

The U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission issued the warning in a report focused on the increasing use of the Internet in household appliances. It says China's push to dominate the so-called Internet of things creates "enormous' privacy and security risks to the United States.

The U.S. has had concerns about China's cyber theft of corporate secrets, something that China agreed to stop in 2015.

You can find more on these and other late breaking and developing stories, from around the world, around the clock, at voanews.com and on the VOA news mobile app. I'm Christopher Cruise, VOA news.