VOA NEWS

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VOA news. I'm Christopher Cruise reporting.

Afghan officials say at least 50 people were killed, 83 wounded, in a suicide bomb blast at a gathering of religious scholars in the capital, Kabul, on Tuesday.

The attacker detonated his explosives-filled vest as the scholars gathered to mark the Prophet Mohammad's birthday at a local wedding hall.

Witnesses told reporters there were around 1,000 people inside the hall, including prominent religious scholars.

Abandoning Saudi Arabia, despite its responsibility for killing a U.S.-based journalist, "would be a terrible mistake," President Trump told reporters on Tuesday.

"The CIA has looked at it. They've studied it a lot. They have nothing definitive. And the fact is maybe he did, maybe he didn't."

The president there was asked about a reported conclusion by the Central Intelligence Agency that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman likely knew about or ordered the plot to kill dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in early October.

The president denied that his decision to avoid harshly punishing the Saudis for the killing has anything to do with his personal business interests.

A federal judge in Detroit says regulating female genital mutilation is up to the states. U.S. District Judge Bernard Friedman said Congress had no authority to pass a law in 1996 banning it.

He dismissed mutilation and conspiracy charges Tuesday against two doctors and others involved in the procedure on nine girls at a suburban Detroit clinic.

Jumana Nagarwala says she performed a religious custom on girls from her Muslim sect. Others are accused of assisting her.

A spokeswoman says the U.S. attorney's office is reviewing the ruling.

This is VOA news.

A federal judge on Tuesday temporarily barred the Trump administration from refusing to grant asylum to immigrants who crosses the southern border illegally.

Associated Press correspondent Julie Walker reports.

The ruling comes as a migrant caravan of 3,000 has made their way across South America to Tijuana just across the border between Mexico and California.

President Trump issued a proclamation November 9 denying asylum to most border crossers as a response to the caravans which he has repeatedly said are not getting into the country illegally.

The administration directed asylum seekers to enter at one of the 26 official border crossings with Mexico. Legal groups sued, arguing the law clearly allows someone to seek asylum regardless of how they enter the U.S.

Trump used the same powers he used last year to impose a travel ban that was ultimately upheld by the Supreme Court.

Three men have been arrested on suspicion of plotting a "mass killing" terror attack in Australia's second biggest city, Melbourne.

The men aged between 21 and 30 were detained in counter-terrorism raids on Tuesday.

Correspondent Phil Mercer reports for VOA from Sydney.

The counter-terrorism raids came as thousands of people prepared to attend a state funeral for a restaurant owner who was stabbed by an Islamic State-inspired attacker in Melbourne on November 9. The suspect died after being shot by police.

Earlier this month, three men were found guilty of conspiring to carry out a terror attack in Melbourne during Christmas festivities in 2016.

Federal agencies say 90 people have been charged in connection with 40 counter-terrorism investigations across Australia since September 2014.

The national terror threat level remains at "probable."

Marijuana smokers in the eastern state of Massachusetts can now legally buy marijuana for recreational use.

Associated Press correspondent Ben Thomas reports.

"I was here for twenty ...."

More than two years after Massachusetts voters approved the recreational use of marijuana, it's now available for purchase.

Dennis Defoe ??? a shop in Northampton. "... and because I was one of first sent people, I got ???a fair buff." He spoke to WHTH as the store's first customer.

Northampton's mayor David Narkewicz. He says people have been buying and selling marijuana for centuries and legalizing it is a good thing.

"This has a label on it. This has no ingredients. It's been tested."

Massachusetts other legal marijuana shop is in Leicester. They are the first two shops on the entire East Coast.

The United States has imposed sanctions on six people and three entities for their involvement in oil shipments to Syria.

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