VOA NEWS

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VOA news. I'm Christopher Cruise reporting.

Britain says it reached agreement during overnight talks with the European Commission on the draft text of a political declaration that lays out the terms for Britain's "smooth and orderly" exit from the European Union.

Prime Minister Theresa May said she had briefed her cabinet on the agreement that would make a statement to the House of Commons.

Associated Press correspondent Charles De Ledesma reports.

Following a round of talks with European leaders, May says the draft political declaration on future relations after Brexit lays the groundwork for a trade agreement with the bloc as well as allowing Britain to forge deals with other countries.

She says the draft under consideration represents the right deal for Britain. But she faces an uphill struggle with lawmakers.

Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn says the deal "represents the worst of all worlds" and that Britain will have "no say" over EU rules. It's unlikely Theresa May could rely on Labour lawmakers' support.

May said the deal delivers on the will of the British people and brings back control of her country's borders, money and laws.

President Trump is threatening to close the U.S. border with Mexico.

Associated Press correspondent Ed Donahue reports.

Migrants are camping out in Tijuana, Mexico, at the border. They have traveled there from Central America.

"They have records, some very substantial criminal, some very bad criminal records."

The president says it's a really bad situation there.

"... fistfights all over the streets. It's starting fistfights. They said these are not like normal, innocent people."

And if it's determined Mexico can control it, the president says the U.S. will shut down the border.

"the whole border, I mean, the whole border."

And how far will the military go, "If they have to, they're going to use lethal force. I've given the OK. If they have to -- I hope they don't have to."

The president says he has no choice because "you are dealing with rough people."

This is VOA news.

Chinese state media say at least five people were killed and 18 injured Thursday when a car ploughed into a crowd of children outside a primary school in the northeastern city of Huludao in Liaoning province.

Americans on Thursday celebrated the holiday of Thanksgiving. But it was a difficult day for thousands of Californians affected by the worst wildfires in the state's history.

The biggest fire destroyed more than 13,000 homes. It's 85 percent contained. At least 83 people are confirmed dead. But hundreds of people are still unaccounted for.

Associated Press correspondent Jackie Quinn reports, heavy rains are expected to make search and recovery efforts difficult because of the danger of flash floods and mudslides.

Rain is hampering the slow process of sifting through ash in the community of Paradise, where just two more victims' remains were found yesterday.

"... bringing the total number of fatalities today to 83."

Butte County Sheriff Kory Honea says more than 800 searchers will work as long as they can and they are not taking a holiday.

"All of those individuals understand the importance of that mission," also guarding against looting which has become a problem.

Paradise town manager Lauren Gill says they're hosting a holiday meal for the community and hopes the displaced, the grieving and the overwhelmed can cling to hope for the future.

"We will build a better, stronger community and even more beautiful Paradise."

Zimbabwe's finance minister has released the country's 2019 budget. Officials hope it will help restore the economy of the country after years of recession.

Correspondent Columbus Mavhunga reports for VOA from Harare.

Finance Minister Mthuli Ncube said the budget marked a step toward Zimbabwe attaining its vision of an "upper middle income country by 2030."

He said Zimbabwe was working toward retiring its ever ballooning debt, which now stands at about $10 billion.

Independent economic analyst Trust Chikohora commended Ncube for removing the tax on sanitary items, removing the duty on goods used by physically disabled people, and raising the tax threshold for workers.

Kenneth Ward, the U.S. ambassador to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, said Thursday that Iran has not declared all of its chemical weapons capabilities to the watchdog in breach of international agreements.

Ward told the organization that Iran has failed to declare a production facility for the filling of aerial bombs and maintains a program to obtain banned toxic munitions.

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