VOA NEWS

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VOA news. I'm Christopher Cruise reporting.

Afghan officials say a suicide car bombing on Tuesday hit a security forces' convoy in the capital, Kabul, killing at least 13 people and injuring nine others. The convoy was reportedly transporting operatives of the National Directorate for Security.

The Taliban quickly took responsibility, saying the attack was aimed at a joint convoy of American military trainers and their Afghan partners.

Democratic leaders and President Trump publicly clashed on Tuesday with the president threatening to shut down the government if Congress does not provide adequate funding for his promised wall along the border with Mexico.

White House correspondent Steve Herman reports.

It was an acrimonious scene that rarely plays out with reporters present. A president threatening he will shut down government if Congress does not approve a budget with enough money for a project he has promised and deems essential.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and Trump repeatedly interrupted each other as the senator requested the president support solutions that could get immediate approval in both chambers of Congress.

"If we can't come to an agreement, we have solutions that will pass the House and Senate right now and will not shut down the government, and that's what we're urging you to do, not threaten to shut down the government."

"But you don't want to shut down the government, Chuck"

"Because you can't get your way."

"The last time you shut it down you got killed."

"Yes, let me say something, Mr. President. You just say, my way or we'll shut down the government."

The top Democrat in the House, Nancy Pelosi, and Trump also had an extended argument over the requisite votes to approve a budget and border security after she cautioned that "a shutdown is not worth anything."

A gunman opened fire inside a cathedral in Campinas, Brazil, Tuesday, killing four people and wounding four others before killing himself.

Campinas is about 100 kilometers north of São Paulo.

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Both sides in the peace talks on Yemen agreed to swap more than 15,000 prisoners by mid-January. The International Committee of the Red Cross will oversee the prisoner swap.

Representatives of the Saudi-backed Yemeni government and the Iranian-supported Houthi rebels traded lists of prisoners they say the other side is holding, a step U.N. officials call "very impressive."

A former Canadian diplomat has been detained in China amid rising tensions between the two countries over Canada's arrest at the request of the United States of a Chinese technology executive.

Michael Kovrig is a former Canadian envoy to Beijing, Hong Kong and elsewhere from 2000 to 2016. He was apprehended earlier this week for undisclosed reasons.

Top European officials on Tuesday ruled out any renegotiation of the divorce agreement with Britain, as Prime Minister Theresa May fought to save her Brexit deal by lobbying leaders in Europe's capitals.

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker warned that [it] cannot be opened, the agreement, that is, for negotiation at a summit of EU leaders on Thursday.

"I will see Mrs. May this evening and I have to say here in the Parliament, as I did say before in this Parliament, the deal we have achieved is the best deal possible, it's the only deal possible. And so, we cannot ... for this, no room whatsoever for renegotiation."

The U.N. is appealing for $5.5 billion to support millions of Syrian refugees and the neighboring countries hosting them in the coming years.

Correspondent Lisa Schlein reports for VOA from Geneva.

The U.N. agencies say the appeal will provide the refugees with health, water, sanitation, food, education, psycho-social support, community services and other essential relief. Assistance also will be given to nearly 4 million people in the communities hosting them.

They say those communities are under great strain. Humanitarian operations, they say, will be geared toward assisting them through livelihoods and economic opportunities, as well as basic services and support to help local institutions and municipalities function better.

The U.S. State Department is authorizing "the voluntary departure of U.S. direct-hire government personnel and their family members" who are at the U.S. embassy in Haiti.

A spokesperson for the State Department's Western Hemisphere Affairs Department said the department had made the decision because of the increased security unrest that have crippled Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince.

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