VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. I'm David Byrd in Washington.

A partial government shutdown is in its seventh day with no end to the impasse in sight.

As AP's Sagar Meghani reports, President Donald Trump has threatened to close the border with Mexico if he doesn't get $5 billion to build a wall along that same border.

The White House says it expects the shutdown to last a while and is squarely blaming Democrats.

"Chuck Schumer says we're very far apart. The reason for that is they've left the table all together. So of course, we are far apart."

Trump's spokeswoman Sarah Sanders on CBS This Morning not long before incoming acting chief of staff Mick Mulvaney said Democrats told him last night they're done negotiating over the border wall money the president's demanding.

"The discussions have broken down. We do expect this to go on for a while."

The president raised the stakes this morning, reissuing an old threat to close the southern border if he doesn't get money for the wall.

The shutdown's nearly a week old, affecting about 800,000 federal workers.

Sagar Meghani, Washington.

A suspected illegal immigrant accused of shooting to death a California police officer was arrested on Friday after a two-day manhunt that President Donald Trump cited in his push for building a wall on the border with Mexico.

Kern County Sheriff Donny Youngblood says the suspect was arrested in Bakersfield about 320 kilometers south of Newman where the officer was shot early Wednesday.

"As the SWAT team was circling the house and setting up and getting ready to hit the house, our suspect, Gustavo Perez Arriaga, exited the residence with his hands up and surrendered to the officers that were on scene."

Thirty-three-year-old Ronil Singh, a native of Fiji who immigrated to the United States to become a police officer, was shot and killed after pulling over the suspect on suspicion of driving under the influence.

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Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has reportedly expressed anger over the Syrian army's announcement that it entered the Kurdish-controlled town of Manbij.

Edward Yeranian reports from Cairo.

The Syrian government's military spokesman said in a declaration broadcast on state TV that the army was fulfilling its duty to its citizens exerting its legitimate authority over all parts of the country and responding to demands from residents of the region.

He added that the army had entered Manbij and raised its flag over the city.

Rami Abdurrahman who heads the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights told Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya TV that the Syrian military's claim was not true and that government forces control only outskirts of the city.

The international coalition to defeat Islamic State in Syria also tweeted it had seen no indication that Syrian government forces were in Manbij.

Edward Yeranian, for VOA news, Cairo.

The Democratic Republic of Congo hurtles towards contentious, repeatedly delayed elections on Sunday. But many observers say they're worried about chaos and violence ahead of, during and after the polls.

VOA's Anita Powell reports from Johannesburg.

Congo analyst Stephanie Wolters of the Institute for Security Studies says she is less concerned about the result of the poll than about the dangerous environment that more than 40 million voters may face.

"And we're just very concerned about the technical legitimacy of this, about the potential for chaos, and the potential for violence."

The poll was originally set for 2016, but officials delayed it repeatedly, allowing longtime President Joseph Kabila to stay in office two years past the end of his term.

Anita Powell, VOA news, Johannesburg.

There is a low threat level and a massive police presence planned for New York City's New Year's Eve celebration in Times Square. We get the details from AP correspondent Warren Levinson.

New York police say there are no credible threats to the city's annual New Year's Eve celebration. Deputy Commissioner John Miller says police have access to 1,225 cameras to watch over the crowd, plus for the first time an NYPD drone, and the FBI is bringing counter-drone technology.

"We've deployed this at most of the major special events from the fall on and we'll be using it again."

Miller was understandably spilling with the details about how that works.

The city is expected to draw more than a million people to Times Square for Monday's midnight BallDrop.

Warren Levinson, New York.

A seesaw day on Wall Street, with markets starting positive and then losing ground in Friday's trading. Major indices moved in and out of positive territory all day.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average finished down one third of one percent, the S&P 500 index was off point one two percent, the NASDAQ was up but only slightly.

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