VOA NEWS

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

The White House has announced that a second summit between U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un will be held at the end of February.

The announcement was made after Trump met in the Oval Office for 90 minutes Friday with Kim Yong Chol, a former spymaster in North Korea's top nuclear envoy.

Press Secretary Sarah Sanders said the administration is continuing "to make progress" on this front.

"We continue to make progress. We're continuing to have conversations. The United States is going to continue to keep pressure and sanctions on North Korea until we see full and verified denuclearization. We've had very good steps and good faith from the North Koreans in releasing the hostages and other moves. And so we're going to continue those conversations. The president looks forward to the next meeting."

The first summit produced a vague commitment by Kim to work towards the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, but Pyongyang has yet to take what Washington sees as concrete steps in that direction.

A partial government shutdown ground through its 28th day Friday with no end in sight.

AP's Sagar Meghani reports.

"We're stuck."

On the Senate floor, Republican Rob Portman said he is more discouraged now than in any time over the past 28 days because both sides are refusing to make progress to end it.

"That makes this shutdown particularly stupid."

Outside Washington, Virginia Senator Mark Warner was visiting furloughed workers and said fellow Democrats are willing to talk about border security.

"Absolutely, how many times can we save?"

But it will only happen once the government reopens.

He says Democrats will not cave to President Trump's border wall demands before then.

"You don't reward a bully."

Sagar Meghani, at the White House.

Late Friday, President Trump tweeted he would be making what he called "a major announcement" about the crisis on our southern border and the shutdown on Saturday afternoon.

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The White House is denying a BuzzFeed report that President Trump ordered his former lawyer Michael Cohen to lie to Congress about a Russian real estate deal in 2016.

The report cited two unnamed law enforcement officers and says that Trump directed Cohen to lie to Congress and that Cohen regularly briefed Trump and his family on the Moscow project even as Trump said he had no business dealings with Russia.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said the report was, in her words, "absolutely ridiculous."

Cohen pleaded guilty in November to lying to Congress in 2017 to cover up that he was negotiating the real estate deal in Moscow on Trump's behalf during the heat of the presidential campaign.

Cohen has recently been sentenced to three years in prison after pleading guilty to tax crimes, bank fraud and campaign violations.

The U.N. human rights office said Friday that it has documented 34 deaths, 59 people wounded and 241 "arbitrary arrests" in the Democratic Republic of Congo since provisional election results were announced a week ago.

Ravina Shamdasani is a spokeswoman for the U.N. high commissioner for human rights. "So we are very concerned about this, and we call on all sides to seek to resolve this situation through dialogue, and not to resort to violence."

The second-place finisher, Martin Fayulu, has contested the result based on his camp's tallies. He said that the official winner, opposition leader Felix Tshisekedi, struck a deal with outgoing President Joseph Kabila.

Tshisekedi and Kabila both denied that.

The December 30th vote was intended to lead to Congo's first democratic handover of power since independence from Belgium in 1960.

Tens of thousands of protesters gathered here in Washington for the annual March for Life.

AP's Matt Small has details.

Dreary weather in a partial government shutdown ???warm enough to keep anti-abortion supporters coming at the National Mall.

"I say pro. You say? Pro?"

Vice President Pence told the thousands of protesters their voices are being heard despite Roe v. Wade remaining the law of the land.

Life is winning in America once again."

In videotaped remarks, President Trump assured the crowd that they have a "champion in the White House."

"As President, I will always defend the first right in our Declaration of Independence, the right to life."

Matt Small, Washington.

Wall Street ended the week on a high note, with all three major indices closing in positive territory. The Dow was up 1.38 percent. The S&P 500 gained 1.32 percent. The NASDAQ Composite added 1.03 percent.

European and Asian markets also ended Friday's trading higher.

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