VOA NEWS

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

Venezuela's opposition leader Juan Guaidó says that security forces showed up at his wife's Caracas apartment on Thursday in an effort to intimidate him.

Guaidó said the agents from a feared police unit arrived at the unit Thursday, asking for his wife, Fabiana.

He said, "To the functionaries who believe that they can cross the red line, to the functionaries who believe they can act cowardly, involving themselves with the family, because there are all types of codes in all kinds of events. Politics, sports, including the mafia, has codes. One is that family is sacred. Children are sacred. Wives are sacred."

Guaidó, the president of the opposition-controlled National Assembly, declared himself interim president last week after the Assembly said that embattled President Nicholás Maduro's re-election was illegitimate. The United States has recognized Guaidó as the interim leader.

U.S. President Donald Trump expressed optimism Thursday on reaching a large trade deal with China. Speaking at the White House, the president said he is very confident of reaching an historic deal with Beijing.

"I think that probably the final deal will be made - if it's made, will be made between myself and President Xi. But we're certainly talking about theft. We're talking about every aspect of trade with the country."

The president met with a Chinese delegation led by Vice Premier Liu He at the White House Thursday.

An interpreter read out a letter to Trump from Chinese President Xi Jinping, which said relations are at a critically important stage. Xi said in the letter that he hoped the two countries will continue to act in the spirit of mutual respect.

Those comments come on the last day of the second round of negotiations aimed at resolving a trade war between the two countries.

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While President Trump might be negotiating with the Chinese, he doesn't appear to be making much progress with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue are digging in on their positions about a southern border wall, leading to more doubts about the possibility of avoiding another government shutdown.

AP Washington correspondent Sagar Meghani has details.

On Capitol Hill, "there will be no 'wall money' in the legislation," and at the White House, "If there's no wall, it doesn't work. She's just playing games."

Their comments came just hours after the president appeared to sour on the bipartisan talks that just began yesterday.

Democrats had signaled some flexibility on border security funding but unveiled a plan today with no wall money.

The president says if that's what the committee's final product shows in about two weeks, "I don't even want to waste my time reading what they have," and repeated his threat to declare a national emergency to build a wall himself.

Sagar Meghani, Washington.

Europe has set up a mechanism to maintain trade with Iran despite U.S. sanctions and pressures on its allies.

But as Reuters correspondent Lucy Fielder reports, those sanctions are so all-encompassing that diplomats are saying only small, mostly humanitarian transactions will get through.

The EU has set up a workaround that skirts U.S. sanctions and allow some trade with Iran despite U.S. pressure on its European allies to cease all such business. The move could also help keep alive the flailing joint 2015 nuclear deal.

France, Germany and Britain were key negotiators to what was seen as a huge EU foreign policy achievement. They oppose to U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to pull out last year, but that hasn't stopped EU relations with Tehran worsening.

This moth, it slapped its first sanctions on Iran since the nuclear pact was signed after Iranian missile tests and after alleged assassination plots were uncovered on European soil.

Lucy Fielder of Reuters.

Nearly 50 percent of U.S. adults have some form of heart or blood vessel disease.

AP's Mike Hempen tells us why.

That figure is mainly due to changes in guidelines that increased the number of people with high blood pressure.

The American Heart Association says more than 121 million adults had cardiovascular disease in 2016. Of that number, 24 million had other forms of heart disease, such as heart failure, or clogged arteries, while the rest had high blood pressure, which is now considered to be a reading above 130 over 80. It raises the risk for heart attacks, strokes and many other problems.

I'm Mike Hempen.

And officials say as many as 12 people in the United States have died this week due to record low winter temperatures that have made even quick trips outside dangerous.

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