VOA NEWS

February 5, 2019

I'm Christopher Cruise reporting.

Venezuelan opposition leader and self-declared interim president Juan Guaidó said Monday that President Nicholás Maduro is trying to transfer up to $1.2 billion to a bank in Uruguay.

Speaking on national television after over a dozen European countries recognized him as Venezuela's leader, Guaidó claimed, without presenting evidence, that Maduro was moving the money from the state development bank to a financial entity in Uruguay.

Maduro, meanwhile, remained defiant on Monday in the face of pressure from the European Union to resign.

Associated Press correspondent Charles De Ledesma reports.

Nicholás Maduro has told a Spanish TV channel that he accepts ultimatums from nobody amid demands by some EU countries that opposition leader Juan Guaidó takes over.

The Trump administration has also backed Guaidó after he declared himself the interim president of Venezuela on January 23.

Maduro has also said the military option is on U.S. President Donald Trump's table, accusing Washington of wanting to return to the 20th century of military coups, subordinate public governments and looting of resources.

The Islamist militant group al-Shabab has claimed responsibility for two deadly attacks in Somalia. At least nine people were killed in a car bombing in downtown Mogadishu Monday. Another man was shot dead at a port in the country's semi-autonomous region of Puntland.

The French military said it has helped to repel a column of 40 pickup trucks that were trying to enter northern Chad from Libya.

The French Defense Ministry said Monday that it had used Mirage 2000 fighter jets to launch airstrikes on the armed group in the trucks on Sunday.

The military said the intervention in response to a request from Chadian authorities helped hinder the hostile progression.

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British lawmakers have been debating new proposals on the European Union Withdrawal Agreement this week.

Prime Minister Theresa May hopes to negotiate changes in meetings with the EU in the coming days. The EU has flatly rejected the idea of reopening the talks.

Taliban representatives will meet influential Afghan opposition leaders in Moscow for two days of peace building discussions starting Tuesday, but envoys from the Afghan government will not be in attendance.

The controversial gathering underscores a deepening political divide in Afghanistan and could further weaken President Ashraf Ghani's National Unity government.

After hearing nearly three months of testimony, a jury in New York is set to begin deliberations in the drug-smuggling case against the infamous Mexican drug lord, Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman.

The judge was to have given the jury their final instructions before they begin considering the case.

One of El Chapo's attorney's was questioned by reporters as he entered the courthouse. He was asked when the verdict will come down, he said, "I think it will probably take a few days for something to come down from the jury. But we have no idea. It's up to them."

Virginia Governor Ralph Northam engulfed in days of controversy over a racist photo in his 1984 medical yearbook sought advice from key aides Monday about whether to resign.

Associated Press correspondent Ben Thomas reports.

"I think he's been completely dishonest ...."

The sharpest call came from the chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus, Karen Bass, who told NBC's "Meet the Press" "he needs to resign immediately ..." to uphold a Saturday news conference in which Northam tried to walk back his apparent acknowledgement that he was one of the two people in a photo on his medical school yearbook page.

"It is definitely not me" neither the person in Ku Klux Klan garb nor the one in blackface.

But he wanted to say at the same time he did put shoe polish on his face.

"I don't know if anybody's ever tried that, but you cannot get shoe polish off" to imitate Michael Jackson "a dance contest."

Northam said he would not resign because it would be the easy way out.

Pope Francis calling for an end to wars in the Middle East.

The leader of the world's Roman Catholics at an inter-faith meeting in the United Arab Emirates on Monday said, "Human fraternity requires of us as representatives of the world's religions the duty to reject every nuance of approval from the word 'war.' Let us return it to its miserable crudeness."

In Italian, he said, "I am thinking in particular of Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Libya."

The pope spoke alongside the grand imam of Egypt's Al-Azhar.

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