VOA NEWS

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

With one tweet, President Donald Trump again has signaled a significant shift in U.S. foreign policy.

As VOA's Steve Herman reports, Trump tweeted Thursday it's time for the U.S. to recognize the authority of Israel over the disputed Golan Heights.

On his personal Twitter account, Trump tweeted Thursday that it is time for the United States to recognize the authority of Israel over the disputed Golan Heights, which the Israelis seized from Syria during the 1967 war.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu quickly expressed his appreciation on Twitter for Trump's decision.

Netanyahu, who is in a tough battle for re-election, is to make an official visit here next week and hold talks with the U.S. president.

Steve Herman, VOA news, at the White House.

At least 83 people drowned Thursday when a tour boat overturned in the swollen Tigris River in Iraq.

Edward Yeranian reports.

Amateur video showed passengers of the overturned tour boat being rapidly carried away by the swift current of the swollen Tigris River near Mosul.

Bystanders along the river say most of the passengers were women and children celebrating Nowruz and that few survivors were rescued.

General Saad Maan, Iraqi Interior Ministry spokesman, tried to downplay the number of casualties and refused to give a precise figure for casualties.

He says most of the victims were women and children going on a pleasure cruise to celebrate the spring Nowruz holiday near a well-known island outside Mosul.

He says that rescue operations are ongoing so it's impossible to give an exact figure yet for the number of dead.

Edward Yeranian, for VOA news, Cairo.

A positive day on Wall Street, with all three major indices ending the day in good territory. It came after the Federal Reserve said on Wednesday it would not raise interest rates this year.

This is VOA news.

A series of airstrikes slammed into two pockets of Islamic State fighters taking aim at fighters trying to cling to the last scraps of land that are part of the terror group's self-declared caliphate.

The strikes late Thursday followed nearly two days of clearing operations in the northeastern Syrian town of Baghuz, where hundreds of IS fighters surrendered earlier this week to U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces.

Earlier in the day, SDF fighters had been sweeping through the rubble in what was left of the IS enclave.

Sources close to SDF leadership told VOA that almost all of the area above ground has been cleared, but that the U.S.-backed troops were searching for additional Islamic State fighters who might still be lurking in trenches and in a complex system of caves and tunnels.

One week after Cyclone Idai hit Mozambique, aid workers are racing against time to save people who remain cut off from food and medical aid.

Mohammed Yusuf reports.

The government says its priority will be to provide food and medical assistance to those affected by the floods.

Forecasters predict torrential rains are expected through Thursday and flood waters are still rising.

The U.N. World Food Program said it was transporting enough aid for 600,000 people and the U.N. has allocated $20 million to respond to the crisis.

Mohammed Yusuf, for VOA news, Nairobi.

The state of Mississippi has passed one of the most restrictive abortion laws in the United States.

AP's Jennifer King explains.

The governor of Mississippi, Phil Bryant, has signed a bill that outlaws most abortions in the state once a fetal heartbeat can be detected. It's about six weeks into pregnancy.

The bill allows for abortions if a pregnancy endangers a woman's life but not in the case of rape or incest.

The Center for Reproductive Rights says they'll sue Mississippi to try and block the law from taking effect on July 1.

Governor Bryant tweeted in response, saying "We will all answer to the good Lord one day. I will say in this instance, 'I fought for the lives of innocent babies, even under the threat of legal action.'"

Kentucky passed a similar bill in March, which was blocked by a federal judge after a challenge by the American Civil Liberties Union.

I'm Jennifer King.

Facebook says it left millions of user passwords out in the open for employees.

AP's Warren Levinson reports.

Facebook acknowledged it stored millions of users' passwords in plain text for years in violation of basic computer security practices. It's standard to scramble passwords and other sensitive information but Facebook's actions left passwords clearly readable by its employees.

The company admitted to the practice after it was pointed out by security blocks.

There is no evidence Facebook staff abused the information but the revelations raise questions about the vulnerability of passwords during breaches like the one uncovered in September when hackers gained entry of some 29 million, Facebook's more than 2 billion accounts.

I'm Warren Levinson.

For more, visit our website voanews.com. I'm David Byrd in Washington.