VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. I'm David Byrd.

President Donald Trump on Wednesday signed an executive order declaring a national emergency and barring U.S. companies from using telecommunications equipment made by firms that pose a national security risk. The order paves the way for a ban on doing business with China's Huawei Technologies Company.

The executive order invokes the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, which gives the president the authority to regulate commerce in response to a national emergency that threatens the United States.

The order directs the Commerce Department, working with other government agencies, to draw up a plan for enforcement within 150 days.

Washington believes that equipment made by Huawei could be used by the Chinese state to spy on the United States.

The U.S. government on Wednesday ordered its non-emergency employees to leave Iraq as American lawmakers worried openly about a potential march to war with Iran.

The drawdown of personnel at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and America's consulate in Irbil comes as the Trump administration warns of potential threats against American forces in the Middle East from Iranian or Iranian-backed proxies.

The move sparked some sharp reactions [on Chap...] on Capitol Hill, that is.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York demanded more transparency from the White House.

"President Trump, what is your strategy? Where are you headed? And why aren't you talking to Congress about it?"

The move comes after Iran's supreme leader issued a veiled threat on Tuesday, saying it wouldn't be difficult for the Islamic republic to enrich uranium to weapons grade levels.

An up day on Wall Street, with all three major indices finishing trading in positive territory.

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Alabama's governor has signed a controversial bill aimed at making almost all abortions illegal in the state.

As AP's Rita Foley reports, the measure is aimed at overturning Roe versus Wade at the Supreme Court.

State Senator Bobby Singleton, a Democrat, apologized after lawmakers voted to ban nearly all abortions.

"I would just like to say to all the women of the state of Alabama: I'm sorry."

Republican Senator Clyde Chambliss says this is a challenge to Roe versus Wade, a law, he says, has ended the lives of millions of children.

"What this bill is designed to do is to go to the Supreme Court and challenge that particular precedence."

The bill would make it a felony to perform an abortion at any stage with almost no exceptions.

I'm Rita Foley.

The number of babies born in the United States has reached a 32-year low.

We get details from AP's Mike Hempen.

A government report says there were just under 3.8 million births last year, the fourth straight year the number is falling and the lowest total since 1986.

The fertility rate of 1.7 births per U.S. woman also fell 2 percent. That means the current generation is not producing enough babies to replace itself.

It's not known if the United States women postponing motherhood or forgoing it entirely. But if the trend continues, experts say there will be labor shortages, including in elder care when aging baby boomers need the most support.

I'm Mike Hempen.

President Donald Trump is expected to lay out another immigration plan on Thursday. We get the details from AP's Mike Gracia.

The Trump administration is set to propose changes to legal immigration policies. President Donald Trump will unveil a new immigration plan in a speech Thursday, making argument to the American people that the current system needs to be overhauled.

The overhaul proposal is being led by Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser Jared Kushner.

The plan would make changes to the current green card system favoring people with high-level skills, degrees and job offers over people with relatives already in the United States.

Mike Gracia of AP.

The White House's top lawyer has harshly criticized a House probe into President Trump.

AP's Sagar Meghani reports.

In a letter to the House Judiciary Committee, counsel Pat Cipollone's rejecting the panel's sweeping document requests. He's suggesting Democrats are seeking a duel over the special counsel's Russia probe and wonders whether the House investigation is a legitimate exercise of Congress's oversight authority.

The panel's voted to hold Attorney General Bill Barr in contempt of Congress for refusing a subpoena to provide the special counsel's entire, unredacted report.

Cipollone says the White House will resist the panel's overbroad demands.

Sagar Meghani, Washington.

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