VOA NEWS

May 22, 2019

This is VOA news. I'm Marissa Melton.

U.S. defense officials held a closed-door session with members of Congress Tuesday to brief them on the latest tensions with Iran.

Acting U.S. Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan said steps taken to bolster U.S. defenses in the Persian Gulf have deterred Iran from future aggression, such as the recent attacks on four oil tankers in the Persian Gulf that President Trump believes were Iran's doing.

[He told] Shanahan told reporters that the United States response to those attacks has been prudent and said it gave Iran time to recalculate its actions.

"... the threat remains high and our job is to make sure that there is no miscalculation by the Iranians."

But at least one Democratic representative, Adam Smith, said the briefing focused too much on Iran's misdeeds and not enough on U.S. policy to counter them.

"[He argued] Here are all the terrible things that Iran has done, and he spent about 10 minutes until I cut him off. And as every member who stood up has said, 'We know Iran is bad. O.K. What is the policy going forward? There wasn't enough information on that.'"

Senator Lindsey Graham, a close ally with the president, told reporters the United States is resetting its boundaries with Iran in hopes of deterring future conflict.

Huawei founder Ren Zhengfei said Tuesday that recent measures by the United States government won't affect the Chinese company's most advanced technology, including 5G.

Ren spoke in a series of interviews on state run television news outlets.

Last week, the U.S. Commerce Department added Huawei and 68 entities to an export blacklist that would make it nearly impossible for the telecommunications company to purchase goods made in the U.S.

(The) Chinese firm is at the center of ongoing trade disputes between Washington and Beijing.

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Former White House Counsel Donald McGahn defied a subpoena Tuesday to appear before the U.S. House Judiciary Committee.

McGahn was [a key s...] a key figure in special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation.

McGahn is a key eyewitness to how the president handled the Russia probe and refused to show up at a hearing this morning.

Chairman Jerrold Nadler's threatening to hold McGahn in contempt and enforce the subpoena.

"We will not allow the president to prevent the American people from hearing from this witness."

Democrats are debating how to handle the president's stonewalling. Some are pushing for impeachment hearings, while Speaker Nancy Pelosi and others want a more methodical approach.

Either way, Republicans like Doug Collins say Democrats need to give up.

"There is nothing here."

Sagar Meghani, at the White House.

Dozens of protests supporting abortion rights took place across the United States Tuesday in response to several new anti-abortion laws that have been passed by conservative state legislatures. One of the protests took place right outside the U.S. Supreme Court building in Washington DC.

U.S. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer spoke at that rally. He accused conservative politicians of secretly supporting a restrictive new Alabama abortion law in hopes of overturning the Supreme Court case that legalized abortion nationwide more than 40 years ago.

"With one hand, they say 'Oh no, I don't like the Alabama law.' With the other, they say 'Give me judges that are for the Alabama law and we will undo law.' Is that hypocrisy?" "No." "Are we gonna expose them?" "Yeah."

Conservatives pushing for more restrictions on abortion have been emboldened by President Trump's appointment of two conservative justices to the Supreme Court. They could join with three other conservative justices on the court to overturn the landmark Roe v. Wade decision of 1973.

Authorities in New Zealand have charged the self-avowed white supremacist who killed 51 worshippers at two Christchurch mosques back in March with terrorism.

It's the first time such a charge has been brought in the country's history.

AP's Charles De Ledesma has more.

The new charge comes with a maximum penalty of life imprisonment upon conviction and will be a test case for New Zealand's terrorism law, which came onto the books in 2002 following the terrorist attacks in the U.S. on September 11, 2001.

Just before the March 15 attacks this year, Brenton Harrison Tarrant had emailed New Zealand's prime minister a manifesto outlining his white supremacist beliefs and his detailed plans for the shooting.

That's AP's Charles De Ledesma reporting.

And British Prime Minister Theresa May has offered lawmakers the chance to vote on a new referendum on Britain's departure from the European Union, but only if they support her proposal for the deal.

Marissa Melton, VOA news.