VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. I'm David Byrd.

U.S. Attorney General William Barr said special counsel Robert Mueller, who led a probe into Russian interference in the 2016 election, could have reached a decision on whether President Donald Trump obstructed justice but chose not to. Barr made the statement in an interview with the CBS This Morning program.

Meanwhile, President Trump is going off on Mueller one day after the special counsel rebuffed claims that the Russian probe exonerated the president.

AP's Sagar Meghani reports.

The president's saying nearly every day the investigation fully cleared him of criminal activity including this morning.

"There's no obstruction. There's no collusion. There's no nothing."

That's not what Mueller said yesterday, emphasizing Justice Department rules meant charging the president with a crime was not an option. That led to an eruption on the White House driveway.

"Mueller is a true never Trumper."

The president falsely claiming Mueller's conflicted because he wanted to be FBI director again and was rejected. He adds Mueller never should have even been named special counsel though it was the Trump Justice Department that chose him.

Sagar Meghani, at the White House.

Acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan said Thursday he had nothing to do or was not even aware of a White House tactic to have the U.S. navy warship, USS John S. McCain out of sight when President Trump visited Japan.

"I never authorized or never approved any action around the movement of activity regarding that ship."

An email seen by VOA shows the White House military office asking an officer with U.S. Navy 7th Fleet to make sure the McCain was out of sight ahead of the president's trip.

President Trump said he had nothing to do with moving or covering the ship.

"Somebody did it because they thought I didn't like him, OK, and they were well-meaning, I will say. I didn't know anything about it. I would never have done that."

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Israel is in political turmoil after its parliament voted to dissolve itself one month after it was sworn in.

Robert Berger has details from Jerusalem.

The Knesset, Israel's parliament, voted for new elections in September after Netanyahu failed to form a coalition government amid infighting and high demands from smaller parties. Netanyahu, a right-wing conservative who has been in power for a decade, is furious.

The developments are a shock because two elections in the same year are unprecedented even in Israel's volatile political landscape.

Robert Berger, for VOA news, Jerusalem.

Police in Hungary on Thursday arrested the captain of a cruise ship involved in a fatal collision on the Danube that left at least seven people dead.

In a tweet published Thursday evening, Hungarian police confirmed they had interviewed and initiated the arrest of the Ukrainian captain of the hotel ship, the 135-meter-long Viking Sigyn.

They said its investigation yielded evidence that raised personal responsibility so it questioned Viking Sigyn's captain, a 64-year-old Ukrainian. It later moved to take him into custody for reckless misconduct in water-borne traffic leading to mass casualties.

During a rainstorm on Wednesday evening, a boat carrying 33 South Korean tourists and tour guides and two Hungarian crew capsized and sank after it collided with a larger luxury passenger boat on the Danube in Budapest.

At least seven people were killed and 21 are missing. Authorities say there is little hope of finding any more survivors.

President Donald Trump said Thursday that he still believes China "would love to make" a new trade deal with the United States and might now regret backtracking on some agreements that negotiators for the two countries had reached.

"I think we're doing very well with China. We'll see what happens. But I can tell you China very much wants to make a deal."

Trump contended that the tariffs he has imposed on hundreds of billions of dollars worth of Chinese imports has prompted some manufacturers in China to move their production to other countries.

Meanwhile, China's Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Hanhui accused the U.S. of engaging in what he called "naked economic terrorism" in the trade war.

Trade talks between officials of the world's two largest economies broke off recently. U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has said he likely will travel to Beijing "in the near future" to continue negotiations.

The trade war kept gains low on Wall Street, with all three major indices posting only slight gains.

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