VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. I'm Joe Parker.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has accused House Democrats of trying to intimidate the State Department by scheduling depositions from agency officials in connection with President Donald Trump's phone call with his Ukrainian counterpart.

In a letter today in response to the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Pompeo accused Democrats of attempting to intimidate and bully State Department employees.

Pompeo's letter was sent as *The Wall Street Journal* reported that he was among those who actually listened to the July 25th call between President Trump and President Zelenskiy of Ukraine, drawing the State Department more closely into the impeachment inquiry.

"We're trying to find out about a whistleblower. When you have a whistleblower that reports things that were incorrect ....": President Trump yesterday in the Oval Office.

The president has been threatening both the whistleblower who outlined a detailed complaint about Trump's actions as well as the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee who's now leading the impeachment inquiry.

White House correspondent Patsy Widakuswara reports about the whistleblower law.

The law allows whistleblowers to report what they believe to be inappropriate behavior while protecting their identity and without fear of retaliation.

John Hudak is a researcher of presidential power at Brookings Institution, a left-leaning thinktank.

"To try to penalize and criticize someone for following the law because of accusations that the president has not followed the law, it is once again something that is... been in the office of the president something that Americans expect better."

Meanwhile, Democrats continue to investigate the whistleblower's allegation that Trump sought Zelenskiy's help in digging up incriminating information about his political rival, former Vice President Joe Biden.

Patsy Widakuswara, VOA news, at the White House.

The whistleblower's expected to testify to lawmakers about his complaint against Trump's actions on Ukraine but no date has been set.

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Iran's judiciary says it has sentenced a man to death for spying for the CIA amid rising tensions between Tehran and the U.S.

Judiciary spokesman Gholamhhossein Esmaili said Tuesday two other people were sentenced to 10 years in prison for the same crime and a fourth received a 10-year sentence for spying for Britain.

Esmaili said the individual who received the death sentence has appealed and that a final decision will be made by the country's appeals court.

The verdicts came as the tensions between Iran and the U.S. continue to heighten after President Trump withdrew from Iran's 2015 nuclear agreement with world powers.

The U.N. refugee agency is urging Tanzania's government not to forcibly deport tens of thousands of Burundian political refugees to their home country, where it says their lives could be at risk.

Lisa Schlein reports for VOA from UNHCR headquarters in Geneva.

Media reports indicate the Tanzanian government is ready to start deporting refugees to Burundi on Thursday. This is in line with a bilateral agreement the country signed in August to send the refugees home by the end of the year.

UNHCR spokesman Babar Baloch tells VOA his agency hopes Tanzania and Burundi will not pressure or push refugees who fled persecution.

"So, we hope that Tanzania will not put refugee lives at risk by putting pressure on them to return back home."

In 2015, Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza triggered widespread protests when he declared his intention to run for a third term.

Lisa Schlein, for VOA news, Geneva.

Over the past two years, more than 74,000 refugees have returned to Burundi reportedly because of bad conditions in the camps and pressure from the Tanzanian government.

Police (are) firing tear gas canisters in Hong Kong on Tuesday as the government hosted a ceremony marking the 70th anniversary of the People's Republic of China.

A Hong Kong police warned of the potential for protesters in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory to engage in violence during this week's National Day events.

Peru has been plunged into a political crisis after President Martín Vizcarra dissolved Congress on Monday.

President Vizcarra announced his decision in a televised speech Monday evening, citing (an) effort by the legislature to appoint a new member of the Constitutional Tribunal.

At least six nominees for the seven-member tribunal had been accused of various criminal charges. Vizcarran Congress (is) controlled by the opposition Popular Force party.

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