VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. I'm Liz Parker.

Turkey stepped up its air and artillery strikes on Kurdish militia in northeast Syria on Friday. The move escalating an offensive that has drawn warnings of humanitarian catastrophe.

Reuters Anna Bevan reports.

Clouds of smoke billowed towards the sky as Turkish warplanes and artillery continued to hit Kurdish militia targets in northeast Syria on Friday.

Day three of an offensive that has already killed hundreds of people forced tens of thousands to flee and turned even some Washington allies against U.S. President Donald Trump.

On Thursday, Trump said on Twitter that the U.S. had three choices: send in thousands of troops, hit Turkey with sanctions or mediate a deal between Turkey and the Kurds.

Speaking to reporters shortly after, he said he hoped to do the latter.

"I hope we can mediate, John, I hope we can mediate."

Turkey's offensive against the Syrian Democratic Forces led by Kurdish YPG militia began days after Trump pulled the remaining small number of U.S. troops out of Syria.

That was Reuters Anna Bevan reporting.

This year's Nobel Peace Prize recipient has been announced.

"The Norwegian Nobel Committee has decided to award the Nobel Peace Prize for 2019 to Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali."

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali was named for his initiatives to end his country's conflict with Eritrea within months of his coming to office in 2018.

A cargo plane carrying presidential staff crashed in eastern Congo on Thursday. A presidential adviser says all eight passengers and crew were killed. More on voanews.com.

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Iranian officials say two missiles struck an Iranian tanker in the Red Sea off the coast of Saudi Arabia Friday.

Iran's state news IRNA said in a statement the Sabiti oil tanker was hit 130 kilometers southwest of Jeddah.

President Donald Trump and Democrats in the U.S. House of Representatives are now engaged in a constitutional standoff over the issue of impeachment.

VOA national correspondent Jim Malone has more from Washington.

The standoff escalated in recent days as the Trump White House sent Congress a letter dismissing the impeachment probe as a partisan witch hunt and refused to cooperate.

Democrats by Congressman Adam Schiff are determined to move forward.

"The failure to produce this witness, the failure to produce these documents we consider yet additional strong evidence of obstruction of the constitutional functions of Congress - a co-equal branch of government."

Trump supporters like Florida Congressman Matt Gaetz are ready to battle on the president's behalf.

"What we see in this impeachment is a kangaroo court, and Chairman Schiff is acting like a malicious Captain Kangaroo."

Jim Malone, VOA news, Washington.

President Trump's decision not to cooperate with Congress echoes the stance taken by President Richard Nixon during the Watergate scandal in 1974. Eventually the Supreme Court ordered Nixon to release incriminating audio tapes that led to his resignation.

President Trump unleashed a barrage of attacks on Democrats Thursday night in the U.S. city of Minneapolis. It was his first campaign rally since the Democratic-controlled House launched an impeachment inquiry over his dealing with Ukraine.

Lawmakers are looking into whether President Trump broke the law by urging Ukraine to investigate Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden and his son, Hunter.

"... so the president of Ukraine reiterated today at a major news conference on other subjects that he was under absolutely no pressure, he doesn't even know what they're talking about and used the word 'there was no blackmail during this call.'"

Congressional committee members want to know if President Trump withheld military aid to Ukraine unless its president agreed to investigate the Bidens.

The U.S. president meets with Chinese Vice Premier Liu He at the White House Friday amid anticipation of at least a partial trade deal between the U.S. and China.

President Trump said the U.S. had a very, very good negotiation with China's Liu and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer on Thursday.

I'm Liz Parker, VOA news.