VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. I'm David Byrd.

Turkey has agreed to a five-day cease-fire to allow for the withdrawal of Kurdish forces from northeastern Syria.

U.S. Vice President Mike Pence made the announcement at a news conference Thursday after more than four hours of talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

"All military operations under Operation Peace Spring will be paused, and Operation Peace Spring will be halted entirely on completion of the withdrawal."

Speaking in Texas, President Donald Trump called the cease-fire a "great day" for all involved.

"This is a situation where everybody is happy and I'm happy because there's no fighting. We can bring certainly most of our people back home for the first time in many years."

Turkey began its attack on Kurdish forces when President Trump ordered U.S. troops pulled out of the area.

Turkey's foreign minister said the country's military was only pausing operations so that Kurdish forces could leave a buffer zone.

A top Kurdish politician said he welcomed a halt to the fighting but the group would defend itself if subjected to an assault.

Next year's Group of 7 leaders summit will be held at one of U.S. President Donald Trump's properties in the state of Florida.

In making the announcement on Thursday, acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney defended the site selection process from immediate criticism that Trump would personally benefit from hosting the major event at one of his resorts.

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerry Nadler is calling the selection of Trump's personal property "exploiting of his office and making official U.S. government decisions for his personal financial gain. The Emoluments Clauses of the Constitution exist to prevent exactly this kind of corruption."

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The White House on Thursday did confirm that President Donald Trump ordered diplomats to work with his personal attorney, Rudy Giuliani, to get Ukraine to open investigations that would help Trump politically and liked them to military aid to Ukraine.

We get more from AP's Sagar Meghani.

Acting chief of staff Mick Mulvaney says President Trump wanted Ukraine to look into whether the Democratic National Committee servers were in Ukraine during the race.

"That's why we held up the money."

Asked if that was a quid pro quo, "We do that all the time with foreign policy."

Mulvaney told White House reporters there is nothing wrong with that.

Democrats like House Intelligence Committee Chair Adam Schiff see it as a guilty plea.

"... things have just gone from very, very bad to much, much worse."

Separately, the president's hand-picked envoy to the European Union distanced himself today, telling lawmakers he disagreed with the president ordering him and others to work with personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani on Ukraine.

Sagar Meghani, Washington.

Later, Mick Mulvaney reversed his earlier comments and said the White House had never required Ukraine to investigate anything in exchange for hundreds of millions of dollars of military aid.

Britain and the European Union announced a breakthrough deal after days of nail-biting negotiations on Thursday. But as AP's Karen Chammas reports, Prime Minister Boris Johnson and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker hailed the deal but others were no so enthusiastic.

Johnson's political rivals and even a crucial ally almost immediately rejected the Brexit agreement, putting it into doubt.

Juncker and Johnson stood together at a joint news conference in Brussels to proclaim the deal as the British prime minister said the deal will give the British people what they voted for.

"For us in the UK, it means that we can deliver a real Brexit that achieves our objectives."

Juncker ruled out any new delay, leaving British lawmakers with a simple choice: deal or no deal.

"(And this deal means) that there is no need for any kind of prolongation. This is a fair and balanced agreement. It is testament to our commitment to finding solutions."

Johnson needs all the support he can get to push any Brexit deal past a deeply divided Parliament.

Karen Chammas, London.

And longtime congressman Elijah Cummings of Maryland died Thursday. AP's Mike Hempen reports.

Cummings' congressional office says the congressman died early this morning at Johns Hopkins Hospital due to complications from longstanding health issues.

As chairman of the House Oversight and Reform Committee, Cummings led several investigations into President Trump's governmental dealings. He played a key role in the congressional inquiry into the president's attempts to pressure Ukraine's president into investigating Joe Biden.

Cummings was 68 years old.

That's Mike Hempen.

And I'm David Byrd, VOA news.