VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. I'm Marissa Melton.

The top U.S. diplomat in Ukraine told impeachment investigators targeting U.S. President Donald Trump that it was his "clear understanding" that Kyiv would not get military assistance President Trump was withholding earlier this year unless it launched investigations that would help the president politically.

But Bill Taylor, the top American envoy in Ukraine, said in a transcript of his testimony, which was released Wednesday, that Gordon Sondland, the U.S. ambassador to the European Union, had repeatedly told him that Trump did not view the reciprocal deal as a quid pro quo.

Next week public testimony begins. AP's Sagar Meghani has more.

After weeks of closed depositions, public hearings will start next week, with House Intelligence Chairman Adam Schiff saying the American people will get to gauge for themselves the credibility of the witnesses and testimony.

"... but also to learn firsthand about the facts of the president's misconduct."

Schiff says the most important facts are largely not contested. GOP Congressman Jim Jordan agrees, kind of.

"... the facts have never changed, they will never change," insisting there is no quid pro quo with Ukraine over military aid.

Three State Department officials who testified in private will appear publicly next week: William Taylor and Marie Yvanovich, who both served as the top American diplomat in Ukraine, and career department official George Kent.

Sagar Meghani, Washington.

Votes are still being counted from Tuesday's U.S. elections, notably in the state of Kentucky, where the Democratic candidate Andy Beshear has declared victory in the race for governor over the Republican incumbent Matt Bevin, who had the express support of the president Donald Trump.

Bevin has called for a recount of the vote.

Two Iraqi protesters were reportedly killed overnight in renewed street clashes in the Shiite holy city of Karbala.

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Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has arrived in Germany for a visit marking three decades since the fall of the Berlin Wall. He is expected to underscore what United States officials say is the need for continuing a strengthened transatlantic partnership.

Pompeo is under scrutiny at home for his role in the events that led to an impeachment inquiry into U.S. President Donald Trump. Transcripts of testimony from a senior diplomat indicate Pompeo ignored pleas for help and provided no support to career diplomats facing pressure from the Trump administration.

An attacker has stabbed four visitors at a popular Jordanian tourist site. AP correspondent Charles De Ledesma has more.

Jordanian officials say the attacker knifed a number of tourists and their tour guide at the ancient city of Jerash, a popular archaeological site in northern Jordan.

The country's public security director says the attacker also stabbed a policeman who tried to stop him.

The wounded were taken to hospital and the attacker arrested.

A national newspaper reports the tourists were Mexican and suffered serious wounds.

I'm Charles De Ledesma.

The U.N. Children's Fund reports more than 855,000 children in Cameroon's northwest and southwest Anglophone regions are out of school, putting their future and the stability of the country at stake.

Lisa Schlein reports for VOA from Geneva.

What began as a political crisis between Cameroon's Anglophone and Francophone communities three years ago has deteriorated into a full-blown humanitarian emergency. And children are the major losers in this political, linguistic conflict.

Separatists in North-West and South-West Cameroon have put a ban on education in the region to protest government discrimination against English speakers. In the past three years, the U.N. Children's Fund reports at least 70 schools have been destroyed and pupils and teachers have been kidnapped.

UNICEF spokeswoman Marixie Mercado says the separatists' ongoing no-school policy is having a devastating impact on the children and their communities.

That's Lisa Schlein reporting from Geneva.

A federal judge has rejected a health care rule affecting abortions. AP correspondent Walter Ratliff.

A federal judge has struck down a new rule letting health care clinicians refuse to participate in abortions and other services on moral or religious grounds.

The decision came after 19 states as well as local governments and other organizations filed suits over the rule.

The rule emerged after President Donald Trump signed an executive order in 2017 on the interpretation of religious liberty protections in federal law.

Plaintiffs have argued that the law would be discriminatory and stall access to health care.

The judge wrote that existing laws already define the duties of employers with respect to religious objections.

I'm Walter Ratliff.

I'm Marissa Melton. You're listening to VOA news.