VOA NEWS

November 14, 2019

This is VOA news. I'm David Byrd.

It was the first day of public testimony in the impeachment inquiry on Capitol Hill Wednesday and a witness said the president Donald Trump was more concerned about investigations than he was about the country of Ukraine.

We get more from AP's Ed Donahue.

The highest-ranking American diplomat in Ukraine, William Taylor, revealed an aide overheard a phone conversation. President Trump was asking EU ambassador Gordon Sondland about the investigations.

Taylor says the aide asked Sondland what President Trump thought about Ukraine.

"... Sondland responded that President Trump cares more about the investigations of Biden ...."

At the White House, President Trump says he doesn't recall the phone conversation.

"I know nothing about that, first time I've heard it."

Republicans like Jim Jordan say Democrats have no more than second and third hand knowledge.

"The American people see through all this - they understand the facts support this president, they understand the process is unfair and they see through the whole darn sham."

Chair Adam Schiff says the inquiry will affect the future of the presidency.

"... what kind of conduct or misconduct the American people may come to expect from their commander-in-chief."

Ed Donahue, Washington.

Meanwhile, President Donald Trump welcomed Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to the White House Wednesday for a second time.

As VOA's Steve Herman reports, it came at a low ebb in relations between Washington and Ankara.

The elephant in the room as Trump acknowledged was Turkey's purchase of a Russian missile defense system, which compelled Washington to kick out Ankara from the F-35 fighter jet program.

"Turkey's acquisition of sophisticated Russian military equipment, such as the S-400, creates some very serious challenges for us ...."

Erdoğan responded we can only surmount the hurdles that we experience through dialogue.

Officials of both countries say more high-level talks are planned.

Steve Herman, VOA news, at the White House.

This is VOA news.

Israeli aircraft struck Islamic Jihad targets throughout the Gaza Strip in the early hours Thursday while the militant group rained scores of rockets into Israel for a second straight day.

The death toll rose to at least 26 Palestinians, including a 7-year-old boy and two other minors.

The U.N.'s Mideast envoy rushed to Cairo to work with Egyptian mediators on arranging a truce.

Islamic Jihad's leader said in an interview late Wednesday his group was ready for a cease-fire if Israel accepted conditions, including a halt to targeting killings of Palestinian militant leaders.

The fighting erupted early Tuesday after Israel killed a senior commander in the Islamic Jihad militant group, Bahaa Abu el-Atta along with his wife, as they slept in their Gaza home.

At least seven people were killed and ten others wounded Wednesday when a car bomb exploded in the Afghan capital, Kabul.

An Interior Ministry spokesman said the early morning blast targeted a foreign private security company vehicle. He said four foreign employees of the company were among those injured but he gave no further details.

There were no immediate claims of responsibility for the bombing.

Taliban insurgents and militants linked to the Afghan branch of the Islamic State group often claim credit for such attacks.

The U.S. Justice Department is ruling out a new law enforcement program to reduce gun violence. AP's Jennifer King reports.

U.S. Attorney General William Barr was in Memphis to announce a new program called Project Guardian to address gun violence and violent crime.

This operational initiative from the Justice Department emphasizes better enforcement of gun background checks, coordinating state and federal gun cases and pushes prosecutors to update databases in more timely fashion when a defendant can't possess a firearm because of mental health issues.

He says the program will strengthen efforts to reduce gun violence by targeting offenders who use guns in crimes and those who try to buy guns illegally.

Barr says the operational initiative has the full support of the president but says legislative aspects of gun control have been sidetracked by the impeachment process on Capitol Hill.

I'm Jennifer King.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says more Americans are coming down with infections but ???fewer to dying from them. AP Shelley Adler has more.

The Centers for Disease Control says about 36,000 Americans died from drug-resistant infections in 2017. But that's down 18 percent since 2013.

Officials credited an intense effort in hospitals to control the spread of extremely dangerous infections. But while deaths are going down, the report says infections overall are up, and while superbugs mainly have been considered a hospital problem, they are appearing much more often elsewhere.

Shelley Adler, Washington

For more, visit our website voanews.com. I'm David Byrd, VOA news.