VOA NEWS

November 16, 2019

This is VOA news. I'm David Byrd.

President Donald Trump says he was not trying to intimidate a witness who was testifying in the House impeachment inquiry with his tweet about her.

But as AP's Julie Walker reports, former Ukraine Ambassador Yovanovitch says it was intimidating.

Tweeting from the White House during the hearing, Trump said everywhere former U.S. ambassador to [the] Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch served "turned bad."

Asked at the hearing about the tweet, she said, "It's very intimidating."

The president says for the first time he watched some of the hearings and he was not trying to intimidate.

"I have the right to speak. I have freedom of speech."

But House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff says it's part of a pattern to intimidate witnesses and obstruct justice and could be used as evidence against the president.

"We need to view the president's actions today as part of a broader and incriminating pattern of conduct."

I'm Julie Walker.

Twitter is detailing its ban on political adds. The AP's Ed Donahue has details.

Admitting this is not perfect, Twitter says appeals for votes, solicitations for campaigns contributions and any political content will be untweeted. The ban also covers all adds, even non-political ones from candidates, political parties and elected or appointed government officials.

What will be allowed is adds connected to political causes: gun control, abortion, climate change are examples.

News organizations will be exempt so they can promote stories that cover political issues.

Twitter is taking a stricter approach compared to Facebook, which says it will not intervene when politicians speak no matter what they're saying.

I'm Ed Donahue.

Wall Street's main stock indices closed at record levels Friday fueled by fresh optimism over a potential calming of the U.S.-China trade tensions. The Dow was up eight-tenths of a percent. The S&P added point seven seven. The NASDAQ was up point seven three.

This is VOA news.

Longtime Trump ally and self-proclaimed dirty trickster Roger Stone was found guilty of witness tampering and lying to Congress about his attempts to contact WikiLeaks.

His trial highlighted how Trump campaign associates were eager to gather information about Russian-hacked emails damaging to Hillary Clinton's 2016 election bid.

President Trump tweeted about the conviction, "A double standard like never seen before in the history of our Country?"

Stone is the sixth Trump aide or adviser to be convicted of charges brought as part of special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation. He could face up to 20 years in prison.

The mayor of Venice, Italy, has closed St. Mark's Square because flood waters were too high to be safe as the high tide peaked at 154 centimeters.

Francesca Lynagh of Reuters has details.

The floods known as "acqua alta" are at the highest level (in more than) 50 years, threatening irreparable damage to historic treasures. The Saint Mark's Byzantine Basilica was flooded for the sixth time in 1,200 years, but the fourth in the last 20.

The national government allocated an initial 20 million euros to address the immediate damage on Thursday and Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte said on Friday the government will hold a meeting on November 26 to discuss "governance and the structural problems of the city."

That's Francesca Lynagh of Reuters.

Protests continued in Hong Kong Friday, with flash mobs once again flooding the city's financial center and activists blocking roads in parts of the city causing traffic snarls and forcing schools to close.

AP's Patrick Quirk has more.

Hundreds of protesters are barricaded inside at least two university campuses, refusing to leave or open highways and tunnels connecting Hong Kong Island with Kowloon under Victoria Harbor.

Police have appealed for the protesters to leave the campuses, have said that they have been disrupting traffic. Mass transit has been interrupted in many parts of the city of seven and a half million and protesters and police have continuously faced off outside these barricaded campuses where students were equipped with hundreds of gasoline bombs, makeshift barricades, bows and arrows and catapults.

Meanwhile, Hong Kong announced Friday that its economy has officially fallen into recession, in part because of [five minute] five months, that is, of student protests.

Financial officials said that the territory's gross domestic product contracted 3.2 percent in the quarter ending in September.

For more, long on to our website voanews.com. I'm David Byrd, VOA news.