VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. I'm Marissa Melton.

AP sources say State Department officials were told in May that Ukraine's president was feeling pressured by U.S. officials. AP correspondent Mike Gracia has more.

At a joint news conference with President Donald Trump in September, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy addressed their July call that is now sent for the impeachment proceedings against Trump, "I think, and you read it, that nobody pushed it, pushed me, yes." "In other words, no pressure."

But two people with knowledge of the matter tell the Associated Press in May officials at the U.S. embassy in Kyiv were told Zelenskiy was seeking advice on how to deal with pressure from U.S. officials to investigate former Vice President Joe Biden and his son, Hunter.

The information came from Amos Hochstein, an American businessman and former diplomat who attended the meeting on May 7 with Zelenskiy.

Mike Gracia, Washington.

The Trump administration is abandoning a 40-year-old U.S. policy that declared Israeli Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank inconsistent with international law.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced the move on Monday.

"The Trump administration is reversing the Obama administration's approach towards Israeli settlements. U.S. public statements on settlement activities in the West Bank have been inconsistent over decades."

Pompeo said Monday's reversal does not mean the United States is making up its mind at this time about the status of the West Bank, saying that question is part of a final peace deal.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu welcomed the U.S. announcement while Palestinian officials called the U.S. move irresponsible behavior that "contradicts totally with international law."

North Korea is responding to a tweet by President Trump that hinted at another summit with North Korean Kim Jong Un. Pyongyang says it has no interest in giving Mr. Trump further meetings to brag about unless it gets something in return.

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Iranian state media says Iran's Revolutionary Guard is warning anti-government protesters of "decisive" action if unrest over gasoline price hikes continues. Protests spread across the country since Friday.

There has been a delay in a battle over President Trump's taxes. AP correspondent Shelley Adler.

Chief Justice John Roberts is ordering an indefinite delay in the House of Representatives' demand for President Trump's financial records that gives the Supreme Court time to figure out how to handle the high-stakes dispute.

The order contain(s) no hint about what the court ultimately will do.

The delay could last a matter of days or weeks if the court is willing to let an appeals court ruling in favor of the House remain in place without granting full review of the case. But the delay could extend for months if the justices decide they need to hear arguments and issue a written opinion.

Shelley Adler, Washington.

Protesters have once again blocked the entrance to Iraq's port near Basra. Reuters Emily ???has more.

Protesters once again blocked the entrance to Iraq's Umm Qasr commodities port near Basra. The standoff is preventing employees and tankers from entering and has brought operations down by 50 percent.

One source told Reuters if it continues, operations will come to a complete halt by the end of the day.

Since anti-government protests began early October, the port has been blocked twice before.

The protesters who were demanding the overthrow of a political class seen as corrupt and beholden to foreign interests have shown no sign of backing down despite the fact more than 300 people have been killed around the country since the unrest began.

That's Reuters Emily ??? reporting.

Ukraine's military is confirming that Russia is returning three Ukrainian naval ships that it captured a year ago. Reuters Francis Maguire reports.

Ukraine's military has confirmed Russia is returning three Ukrainian naval ships that it captured last year. The vessels were seized in the Kerch Strait in November 2018.

Two gunboats and a tug were taken in the narrow strip of water between mainland Russia and Crimea.

Ukraine has pushed for their return as a goodwill gesture from Russia ahead of a four-way peace summit on eastern Ukraine next month in Paris.

Russia and Ukraine will be joined by France and Germany in the talks.

Reuters Francis Maguire reporting.

The United States is expressing grave concern at the unrest in Hong Kong after tensions escalated between police and protesters over the weekend.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Monday that the Hong Kong government bears primary responsibility for bringing calm to Hong Kong, calling violence on either side unacceptable.

But after a few days, Hong Kong police have threatened to fire live bullets if demonstrators did not stop using weapons during protests.

Marissa Melton, VOA news.