VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. I'm Marissa Melton.

Chinese state media say the death toll from coronavirus has now topped 1,000.

Chinese President Xi Jinping made a rare visit to a hospital in Beijing Monday to talk with medical staff about the number of deaths from coronavirus as that total continues to rise.

Four members of the Chinese military have been charged with hacking into the credit reporting agency Equifax and getting personal information for nearly half of all Americans back in 2017. AP correspondent Julie Walker has more.

Attorney General William Barr says China is consistently stealing from the U.S. whether its technology, trade secrets or something else.

"For years, we have witnessed China's voracious appetite for the personal data of Americans."

The hackers are part of the People's Liberation Army, an arm of the Chinese military.

FBI Deputy Director David Lance Bowdich acknowledges there is little chance of them coming to the U.S. for trial.

"But one day these criminals will slip up and when they do we will be there."

The hackers got names, birthdates and social security numbers of nearly 150 million Americans and driver's licenses of about 10 million.

I'm Julie Walker.

U.S. Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer is asking the Defense Department watchdog to investigate what he says is illegal retaliation by President Trump against a witness who testified against him in last year's impeachment hearings.

The president dismissed Army Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Vindman as a Ukraine expert at the National Security Council in the White House on Friday.

Turkish officials have told a visiting Russian delegation that attacks on Turkish observation posts in northwestern Syria must stop immediately. Earlier, Ankara said Russia-backed Syrian government forces had killed five Turkish soldiers.

The troops are in Syria to help stem a Syrian offensive to retake the last rebel-held area.

From Washington D.C., you're listening to VOA news.

The Solar Orbiter built by NASA and the European Space Agency set off on an unprecedented mission to the sun, expected to yield insight into how solar radiant energy affects the Earth. Soraya Ali reports.

A new space probe has blasted off from Earth to begin a blazingly hot journey to the sun.

The Solar Orbiter built by NASA and the European Space Agency is on a 10-year-voyage with the aim of taking a close up look at the sun's poles.

The minivan-sized spacecraft lifted off from Cape Canaveral in Florida and is expected to reach as close as 26 million miles from the sun's surface.

The mission also hopes to learn more about how to protect astronauts from radiation in space.

That's Reuters' Soraya Ali reporting.

New York state is suing the Trump administration for blocking state residents from taking part in programs that allow travelers to avoid long lines at borders and airports. AP correspondent Tim McGuire.

New York Attorney General Letitia James is suing the Department of Homeland Security, claiming it's punishing the state by dropping residents from the preferred travelers program in response to green light law allowing people to get state driver's licenses without legal residency.

Acting Department of Homeland Security Secretary Ken Cuccinelli says the law endangers the public and federal agents who can't quickly confirm someone's identity, check for warrants or see if a person has a criminal record.

James says that information is available from other sources and she accuses President Trump of trying to coerce the state government to change its policies to comply with his federal policies.

I'm Tim McGuire.

Storm Ciara has been named one of northern Europe's most violent storms in years, with at least five people dead, roads flooded and many areas left without power.

On Monday, the British national weather service described Ciara as "the storm of the century" due to the scale of destruction it's caused.

Northern Austria has seen 35,000 households without power. On Monday, 90,000 homes in France were without power.

Flooding has disrupted traffic in Luxembourg and Belgium and the storm has grounded hundreds of flights across Germany and the Netherlands. Rail and ferry services were also affected in Germany, Britain and France.

Authorities in northern Thailand have begun releasing bodies to relatives Monday after security forces cornered and killed a soldier who carried out the country's worst mass shooting.

The gunman killed 29 people in a tragedy that ended on Sunday morning when security forces shot him.

And a Ugandan official says the country there is spraying swarms of locusts that invaded over the weekend causing a major threat to key crops, such as coffee.

The plague of locusts has caused extensive damage in Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya.

Marissa Melton VOA news.