VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. I'm Marissa Melton.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas appealed to the United Nations Security Council Tuesday not to accept a peace proposal put forward by U.S. President Donald Trump. But he left the door open to negotiations with Israel.

In an impassioned 35-minute address to a packed Security Council chamber, Abbas expressed his anger at the land proposed for a future Palestinian state. He held up a map and said it looked like "Swiss cheese."

Under the plan, President Trump said the Palestinians would give up about one-third of the West Bank to Israel in exchange for two separate pieces of land in the Negev desert.

Israel's U.N. envoy, Danny Danon, accused [Abbas] Abbas of paying "lip service" to peace talks and called for Abbas to step down.

U.S. envoy Kelly Craft defended President Trump's proposal as "realistic." She also said it is an "opening offer" and not set in stone.

"Rather than respond directly to today's fiery rhetoric, now is the time to set the table for a new conversation - a conversation in which we do not talk at each other, but with each other."

U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper says dissolving the bilateral agreement with the Philippines that covers visiting U.S. military forces there "would be a move in the wrong direction."

Filipino President Rodrigo Duterte gave formal notice to the United States of his decision to scrap the Visiting Forces Agreement late on Monday after repeated threats to downgrade the two countries' military alliance. The 1998 agreement provides legal permission for thousands of U.S. troops who rotate into the Philippines for dozens of military and humanitarian assistance exercises each year.

And Turkey's president is threatening to escalate fighting against Syrian government forces following Monday's killing of five Turkish soldiers. The warning comes in the face of calls for restraint from Moscow.

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U.S. attorneys involved in the prosecution of President Donald Trump's longtime confidant Roger Stone resigned after the Justice Department withdrew their sentencing recommendation. AP correspondent Tim McGuire has more.

Several of the prosecutors who convicted roger Stone of lying to Congress, obstruction of Congress and witness tampering have resigned from the team after the Department of Justice withdrew their sentence recommendation, a 7 to 9 years in prison, for President Trump's close confidant.

The department insisted they would withdraw the recommendation to the judge shortly after it was offered Monday night. President Trump slammed the sentence in a tweet early Tuesday morning and later at the White House.

"I thought the recommendation was ridiculous. I thought the whole prosecution was ridiculous."

Trump also denied having anything to do with the Justice Department's action.

Tim McGuire, Washington.

As votes are counted in the New Hampshire primary tonight, former Vice President Joe Biden is shifting ahead to South Carolina, where success is critical to his campaign as a Democratic candidate for the U.S. presidency. AP correspondent Julie Walker has more.

Surrounded by reporters with microphones outside a polling site, Biden was asked if he is giving up on New Hampshire.

"I'm not giving up on New Hampshire! And don't poke that in my face, OK buddy?"

But he'll be at a "launch" party tonight in South Carolina instead of at the Biden party in New Hampshire.

Meanwhile, Bernie Sanders has being campaigning hard in the state supporters the one he represents.

"I hope very much that we're going to win here."

Amy Klobuchar is already a winner in two tiny towns that voted at midnight. She continues to crisscross the state today, visiting polling sites as does Pete Buttigieg and Elizabeth Warren.

I'm Julie Walker.

Leaders in Afghanistan say the United States has made "notable progress" in ongoing peace talks with representatives of the Taliban that are taking pace in the Gulf state of Qatar.

President Ashraf Ghani tweeted late Tuesday he received a call from U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, sharing with him the latest developments in the turbulent U.S.-Taliban peace process aimed at ending the 18-year-old Afghan war.

The defense has rested its case in former movie mogul Harvey Weinstein's rape trial. AP's [co...] Margie Szaroleta has more.

Harvey Weinstein's defense rested its case without Weinstein taking the witness stand, thereby avoiding cross-examination by prosecutors. He met with his lawyers for half an hour before announcing the decision in a New York courtroom.

Weinstein is accused of rape and sexual assault in two separate incidents. He has said the encounters were consensual.

The court takes a holiday on Wednesday. Then jurors are expected to hear defense closing arguments on Thursday.

The prosecution will likely give its closing arguments Friday. Jury deliberations are scheduled to begin next Tuesday.

I'm Margie Szaroleta.

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