VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. I'm Marissa Melton.

Pete Buttigieg, the first openly gay major candidate for the U.S. presidency, has suspended his campaign after big loses in South Carolina's Democratic primary yesterday.

And aide to Buttigieg announced the development today Sunday.

Buttigieg is a veteran and a former mayor of South Bend, Indiana. He won the Democratic caucuses in the neighboring state of Iowa early last month and came in a strong second place in New Hampshire and then in the primary that followed. But he failed to draw the interest of minority voters.

He came in a distant third in Nevada caucuses where there is a significant Latino population and fourth place in South Carolina where African-Americans make up more than a quarter of the population.

Former Vice President Joe Biden won the South Carolina primary, his first outright win since the Democratic qualifying contest started, and along with his fellow Democratic hopefuls, he is campaigning hard this week for Super Tuesday vote in 14 states on Tuesday.

Biden and frontrunner Bernie Sanders appeared today on Sunday morning talk shows to discuss their plans. AP's Shelley Adler has more.

Former Vice President Joe Biden says not only can he beat President Trump, he is the one, not Bernie Sanders, who can help the Democrats in Congress.

"... he'll have great trouble bringing along other senators, keeping the House of Representatives, winning back the Senate and down-ballot initiatives."

But Sanders who came in second in South Carolina says he's got the only message that can get the most people to the polls.

" ... we are gonna to need the largest voter turnout in the history of this country. And I don't think you can do that unless you have a message that appeals to the working class and the middle class in this country, who have been ignored too long by the political establishment, of which Joe Biden is part of."

Both Sanders and Biden appeared on ABC's "This Week."

Shelley Adler, Washington.

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The World Health Organization is warning travel bans could backfire and lead to a worsening of the coronavirus [epide...] epidemic worldwide.

Latest reports put the number of confirmed cases at nearly 12,000. Lisa Schlein reports for VOA from Geneva.

A WHO emergency committee declared the coronavirus a global public health threat on Thursday, triggering a series of recommendations aimed at limiting the spread of the deadly disease.

WHO does not recommend any restrictions on travel and trade despite the rapid acceleration of the disease inside China and its steady, but relentless growth worldwide. More than 100 cases are reported in 22 other countries.

In response, some airlines have stopped flying to mainland China. The United States, which has declared the coronavirus a public health emergency, says it will deny entry to foreigners who recently visited China.

Lisa Schlein, for VOA news, Geneva.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said Sunday his government has made no commitment to release 5,000 Taliban prisoners as part of a landmark peace deal the United States signed with the Islamist insurgent group on Saturday. VOA's Tommie McNeil has more.

Ghani's comments come against the backdrop of the difficulties U.S. negotiators face in shepherding the Afghan government and Taliban towards intra-Afghan negotiations, according to Western diplomats.

The accord said the United States and the Taliban were committed to work expeditiously to release combat and political prisoners as a confidence-building measure with the coordination and approval of all relevant sides.

It said that up to 5,000 jailed Taliban would be released in exchange for up to 1,000 Afghan government captives by March 10.

Tommie McNeil, VOA news, Washington.

Greece is placing its borders on a maximum security footing today after hundreds of migrants used porous crossing points to enter the country from Turkey. Thousands more are seeking entry after Ankara relaxed curbs on their movement.

Meanwhile, Syria's military says two of its warplanes were shot down by Turkish forces inside Syria on Sunday amid a military escalation that's led to growing direct clashes between the two countries.

Pope Francis says he will not be taking part in a planned six-day spiritual retreat after coming down with a "cold."

The [ei...] 83-year-old pontiff [suffering two cough] suffering two coughing spells Sunday that forced him to turn away from the crowd on Saint Peter's Square.

Italy is suffering with a coronavirus outbreak but ??? show indication this time that the pope [has] has come into contact with that.

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