VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. I'm David Byrd.

Russia and Turkey have agreed to a cease-fire deal in Syria's Idlib region after talks between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey in Moscow. We get more from Reuters' Matthew Larotonda.

As part of the cease-fire agreement, Russian and Turkish troops will conduct joint patrols together in Idlib but this isn't the first time they've done joint patrols there nor is it the first cease-fire. Syria has gone through several cease-fires. All have collapsed.

While Putin has expressed his condolences for the deaths of Turkish troops, both sides have blamed each other in the past for failure to coordinate and avert such events.

Turkish President Tayyip Erdoğan says his country reserves the right to respond to any attack by forces loyal to Syria's president, Bashar al-Assad.

In the meantime, he says Turkey and Russia will work together to supply humanitarian aid. The civilian toll has been profound.

The United Nations believes the fighting in Idlib has sparked what may be the worst humanitarian disaster of the nine-year war.

That's Matthew Larotonda.

Late Thursday, Turkey reported that it had killed 21 members of the Syrian government armed forces and destroyed two artillery pieces and two missile launchers after two Turkish soldiers were killed earlier in the day.

Another Democratic presidential candidate bowed up. This time, it's Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren. AP's Shelley Adler reports.

"I am suspending my campaign for president."

Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren who was then asked who will you endorse?

"Let's take a deep breath and spend a little time on that. We don't have to decide that this minute."

Warren never finished higher than third in the first four states and was routed on Super Tuesday. She fell to win any of the 14 states voting and finished third in Massachusetts behind Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders.

Shelley Adler, Washington.

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Countries around the world continued to take increasingly stringent measures to combat the spread of the coronavirus as the number of new cases in China begins to wane.

Palestinian authorities announced a 30-day state of emergency and closed the town of Bethlehem and its Church of the Nativity just weeks ahead of the busy Easter holiday.

Japan said that visitors from China and South Korea face a two-week quarantine and would be barred from public transportation.

The World Health Organization's Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said Thursday countries need to be prepared for the impact of the virus.

"Countries have been planning for scenarios like this for decades. Now is the time to act on those plans."

In the United States, with more than 150 confirmed cases of the virus and 12 deaths, the Senate Thursday followed the House in approving $8.3 billion in emergency spending to combat the outbreak. The bill now goes to President Trump for his signature.

The coronavirus could cause significant losses in the airline industry between 63 and 113 billion dollars in revenue for passenger traffic globally could be lost.

Brian Pearce is the chief economist with the International Air Transport Association. "That's a serious chock. It's double what we have been expecting for just the Asia-Pacific region as now this situation affects airlines globally."

Pearce said that the last time the industry faced a revenue shock of this magnitude was in 2009 during the global financial crisis.

The International Criminal Court has given a go-ahead for prosecutors to open a probe targeting the Taliban, Afghan forces and U.S. military and CIA personnel for war crimes and crimes against humanity. AP's Charles De Ledesma reports.

After a preliminary probe that lasted more than a decade, Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda asked judges in November, 2017, to authorize a far-reaching investigation.

She said there is information that members of the U.S. military and intelligence agencies "committed illegal acts, principally in the 2003-2004 period."

Today's decision gives Bensouda the green light.

Washington has long rejected the court's jurisdiction and refuses to cooperate with it.

I'm Charles De Ledesma.

On Wall Street, fears about the impact of the coronavirus on the world economy dropped stock prices lower again Thursday. The Dow was down 3.58 percent while the S&P lost 3.39 percent. The NASDAQ fell by 3.1 percent.

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