VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. Reporting via remote, I'm David Byrd.

U.S. President Donald Trump said Friday the United States would produce 100,000 ventilators in 100 days and that he had named White House aide Peter Navarro as the coordinator of the Defense Production Act.

Speaking at a White House news conference, the president said that he invoked the act because of reluctance on the part of some American companies, including General Motors, to produce the ventilators needed to meet the coronavirus pandemic.

"We thought that we had a deal with, as an example, General Motors and I guess they thought otherwise. They didn't agree, and now they do."

Trump said there was a great chance the United States would not need so many ventilators to fight the coronavirus outbreak and would then help other countries in need.

The president had come under criticism from some state governors, including New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, for not invoking the Defense Production Act earlier.

The U.S. House of Representatives on Friday approved a $2.2 trillion aid package - the largest in American history - to help people and businesses cope with the economic downturn inflicted by the coronavirus pandemic.

"A quorum is present. The motion is adopted."

The massive bill rushes billions of dollars to medical providers on the frontlines of the outbreak.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said that members from both parties were able to put aside their differences to do what is best for the country.

"We are so pleased, today, to have been able to have passed on the Floor, practically unanimously, this important bill, CARES. And we wanna demonstrate that we do care for the American people in every way."

President Donald Trump signed the legislation late Friday.

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British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has tested positive for the new coronavirus. AP's Ben Thomas has details.

"I've developed mild symptoms of the coronavirus, that's to say ...."

In video posted on Twitter, Prime Minister Boris Johnson says he was tested for COVID-19 on the advice of Britain's chief medical officer and that test came out positive.

"I am working from home, ..."

But Johnson says he will be able to continue with his responsibilities. If Johnson does become unable to work, the government says Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab will replace him.

I'm Ben Thomas.

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South Africans woke up under lockdown Friday, struggling to adapt to some of the toughest restrictions in the world, as the country recorded its first coronavirus deaths and confirmed cases rose above 1,000. Reuters' Emer McCarthy reports.

South Africans woke to a 21-day lockdown on Friday - some of the toughest measures in the world - as the country recorded its first coronavirus deaths and confirmed cases rose above 1,000.

But the results are mixed and underlines the difficulty other countries in the region may face if the disease takes real hold.

The streets of Johannesburg are practically deserted, for example, while military and traffic police have been removing homeless people from the streets and forcing them into shelters.

But not far away, in Alexandra and other poorer townships, large crowds are still gathering.

And the cramped conditions in those places go against social distancing rules and act as a breeding ground for the virus among people reliant on the country's ailing public health system.

The restrictions confines people to their homes for most activities, including exercise, only permitting trips outside for specific purposes like buying food or for health emergencies.

South Africa's first two deaths from the virus both occurred in Western Cape, more than 600 miles from Johannesburg.

The head of the International Monetary Fund said Friday that countries around the world must respond with very massive resources to economic disruptions stemming from the coronavirus pandemic to lay the groundwork for a strong recovery.

IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said the pandemic has already plunged the world into recession and it will be worse than during the last crisis, which caused a seven-tenths of one percent drop in global output in 2009.

Georgieva said she was particularly concerned about emerging markets in developing countries, which had seen $83 billion in capital outflows. She predicted they would need more than $2.5 trillion in financial resources to recover from virus-related disruptions.

Reporting via remote, I'm David Byrd, VOA news.