VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. Via remote, I'm Marissa Melton.

Hundreds more U.S. troops are now manning dozens of new surveillance sites at the country's southern border, according to the commander of U.S. Northern Command [at the] as the U.S. mainland continues to battle the coronavirus pandemic that has killed more than 40,000 Americans.

NORTHCOM's General Terrence O'Shaughnessy told reporters Tuesday that about 540 newly deployed troops are providing surveillance at 60 additional mobile sites used to inform Customs and Border Patrol officers about border crossings.

O'Shaughnessy added there are no plans to deploy additional troops to the border right now. He said earlier this month that the latest deployment was to help seal off the nation from [public] potentially infected migrants.

The troops increase brings the total number of U.S. military forces deployed to the border to about 5,000.

The U.S. Senate passed $484 billion in additional funding for small businesses and hospitals Tuesday. It's the latest in a series of congressional efforts to address the historic economic and public health crises caused by the coronavirus.

U.S. President Donald Trump tweeted his support for the measure that replenishes funding for parts of the largest [re pa...] relief package in U.S. history, the $2 trillion CARES Act that lawmakers passed last month.

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer told reporters Tuesday that House lawmakers are being asked to return to Washington, D.C., by Thursday to pass the legislation. Trump would then be able to sign the measure into law.

The majority of the funding will be targeted at small businesses that missed out on an earlier pool of rescue money. Hoyer said the $320 billion in new funding for the Paycheck Protection Program includes assistance specifically directed to women and minority-owned businesses, as well as individuals who do not have access to banks.

More on this story at voanews.com. From Washington, this is VOA news.

U.S. markets closed lower on Tuesday for a second day in a row driven by an unprecedented negative [uh] price on oil futures.

At the closing bell, the Dow Jones Industrial Average stood at 23,019.71 points. That was down 2.7 percent. The S&P 500 dropped 3.1 percent. The Nasdaq was down 3.5 percent.

President Trump says he will suspend immigration to the United States during the coronavirus outbreak.

In a tweet late Monday, Trump called the outbreak "the attack from the Invisible Enemy," and he cited a "need to protect the jobs of our GREAT American Citizens."

On Tuesday during a news conference, he said the suspension will last 60 days and was mainly motivated by a desire to protect the economy.

He said after that 60 days, he'll assess the economy to see whether to extend the suspension or not.

Halting immigration to the United States could affect hundreds of thousands of visa holders and people hoping to apply for permanent resident "green cards."

The United States has nearly one-third of all reported COVID-19 cases in the world. That's according to the Johns Hopkins University, which is tracking cases, and restricting immigration has been a top priority for Trump, who's been roundly criticized for his initial reaction to the coronavirus pandemic.

Governors of at least five U.S. states, all conservative Republicans supportive of President Trump's push to jump-start the national economy, are moving quickly to reopen some businesses in their states.

The leaders of the five southern states -[geora] Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas, all southern states, have said in recent days that certain businesses can reopen now or within the next week or so.

But people [must retai...] must in part retain two-meter physical distancing restrictions between customers and shopkeepers.

First-term Georgia Governor Brian Kemp said on Monday [uh] he is issuing the most sweeping new directive for opening businesses. He drew immediate pushback from several city mayors and public health experts in Georgia who said the state still has too many coronavirus cases to safely resume normal commerce.

British Health Secretary Matt Hancock announced Tuesday two separate British research teams are making significant progress on a COVID-19 vaccine, with one of them planning to run trials on people as soon as Thursday.

At a news briefing in London, Hancock said researchers at both the Imperial College of London and Oxford University are moving into the trial stage with their potential vaccines.

And 23 people are now confirmed dead after Canada's worst mass shooting in its history this weekend in the eastern province of Nova Scotia. The new death toll came in a news conference Tuesday by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Via remote, I'm Marissa Melton. From Washington D.C., you're listening to VOA news.