VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. Via remote, I'm Diane Roberts.

The White House says it's putting finishing touches on proposals to reform the police following George Floyd's death while in police custody two weeks ago.

The White House press secretary says (quote) "The president has spent the last 10 days quietly and diligently working on proposals to address the issues that the protesters raised across the country, legitimate issues." (end quote) She ruled out presidential support for efforts to reduce police immunity.

Still grieving, George Floyd's brother testified in front of U.S. lawmakers Wednesday, saying he doesn't want his brother's death to be in vain, adding (quote) "He didn't deserve to die over 20 dollars." (end quote)

Philonise Floyd asked House Judiciary Committee members to make the necessary change so law enforcement can be the solution, not the problem.

Floyd, an African-American man, died May 25 in the Midwestern city of Minneapolis, Minnesota, after a white policeman knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes.

His death has sparked a surge of anti-racism activism in the U.S. as well as discussion on potential police reform and accountability.

Protesters are expected to continue Wednesday all over the United States.

The National Association for Stock Car Racing, or NASCAR, banned the Confederate flag from all events and properties Wednesday.

NASCAR says the Confederate flag (quote) "runs contrary to our commitment to providing a welcoming and inclusive environment for all fans, our competitors and our industry." (end quote)

The move formally distances NASCAR from what for many is a symbol of slavery and racism. It comes amid social [arrest] unrest around the globe following Floyd's death. Protests have roiled the nation for days and Confederate monuments are being taken down across the southern U.S. - the traditional fan base for NASCAR.

From Washington, this is VOA news.

U.S. President Donald Trump said Wednesday he will launch rallies soon in four states, including the battleground of Florida, signaling a rapid restart to his election campaign after it was stalled by the coronavirus pandemic.

President Trump said he'll start in Oklahoma before heading to Florida, Arizona and North Carolina.

He hopes his base will turn out in big numbers on the election day, November 3. He currently lags in the polls behind Democrat Joe Biden.

Wednesday, the Federal Reserve kept the benchmark U.S. interest rate at zero, saying it will remain there until recovery from the crisis triggered by the coronavirus pandemic is under way.

After conclusion of its two-day meeting, members of the Fed's policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee, or FOMC, released their economic projections. They expect the economy to contract by 6.5 percent this year, with unemployment falling to 9.3 percent from the current 13.3 percent.

The FOMC says (quote) "The coronavirus outbreak is causing tremendous human and economic hardship across the United States and around the world." (end quote)

Globally, coronavirus cases continue to amount, with more than 7.3 million confirmed infections. Very, very close to two million have died in the hardest-hit country, the United States.

The U.S. has the most deaths to more than 112,000. There are upwards of 415,000 around the world. The figures come from Johns Hopkins University.

The European Commission will recommend EU member states begin to reopen their external frontiers to travelers from outside the bloc starting July 1, the diplomatic chief says.

Germany announces it is extending its travel ban for countries outside the European Union until August 31 in a blow to top summer destinations like Turkey.

France's economy minister says the country will lose 800,000 jobs in the coming months because of the economic crisis provoked by the pandemic.

And Japan's powerful Lower House of parliament approves an emergency budget worth nearly $300 billion, doubling the scale of measures to pep up the world's third biggest economy after the pandemic tipped it into recession.

Friday, the European Parliament will urge Britain "to urgently revise its negotiating position" to avoid a breakdown in post-Brexit trade talks, according to a draft resolution seen by AFP.

The draft says London must agree future UK-EU ties be governed by (quote) "a single, comprehensive and horizontal governance mechanism" (end quote) to oversee compliance with a (quote) "level playing field" of economic regulations.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson is due to hold a video conference with the European Commission president later this month to review progress.

Via remote, I'm (Diane Roberts.)