VOA NEWS

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

Confirmed coronavirus cases are going up in 80 percent of states in the United States. AP Washington correspondent Sagar Meghani reports.

In data compiled by the COVID Tracking Project, all but ten states showing a rise in newly reported cases the past two weeks.

Johns Hopkins University's numbers revealed the number of confirmed cases each day in the U.S. hit another all-time high, close to 51,000, nearly doubling the daily total over the past month.

The president's calling the spikes "flames" that are being put out.

"The crisis is being handled."

Opponent Joe Biden says the president's ignoring reality.

"We're months into this crisis. Still, that's still his best answer?"

Sagar Meghani, Washington.

Congressional leaders on Thursday received a briefing from intelligence experts on Russian bounties offered to the Taliban to kill Americans. AP's Ed Donahue reports.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer was briefed on assessments Russia offered bounties to kill U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

"I believe that the president is not close to tough enough on Vladimir Putin."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi responded to the White House insistence President Trump wasn't briefed because the assessments weren't verified.

"The White House put on a con, that if you don't have 100 percent consensus on intelligence that it shouldn't be, it shouldn't rise to a certain level."

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said this was handled incredibly well.

"We took this seriously. We handled it appropriately."

President Trump has called news reports a "hoax."

Ed Donahue, Washington.

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A British socialite who has been accused by many women of helping procure underage sex partners for the late financier Jeffrey Epstein has been arrested in New Hampshire.

Ghislaine Maxwell, the daughter of the late media tycoon Robert Maxwell, was taken into custody Thursday on charges she helped procure underage sex partners for Epstein.

Audrey Strauss is the acting U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York.

"Maxwell enticed minor girls, got them to trust her, then delivered them into the trap that she and Epstein had set."

At a brief hearing Thursday, a magistrate judge ordered Maxwell to remain in custody while she is transferred to New York for a detention hearing there.

Maxwell has repeatedly denied wrongdoing and called some of the claims against her "absolute rubbish."

Epstein killed himself in a federal detention center in New York last year while awaiting trial on sex trafficking charges.

A fire and an explosion struck a building above an underground nuclear enrichment facility in Iran Thursday. AP's Karen Chammas reports.

The site has been identified by U.S.-based analysts as a new centrifuge production plant.

Iran's Atomic Energy Organization downplayed the fire, calling it an "incident" that only affected what they described as an under-construction "shed." However, Iranian nuclear chief Ali Akbar Salehi rushed after the fire to Natanz, which has been targeted in sabotage campaigns in the past.

A photograph later released by the atomic energy agency showed a brick building with scorch marks and its roof apparently destroyed.

I'm Karen Chammas.

Scores of people were killed in a landslide at a jade mine in northern Myanmar, with more feared dead.

As Emer McCarthy reports, it happened after a heap of mining waste collapsed into a lake, triggering a wave of mud and water that buried many workers.

The miners were collecting stones in the Hpakant area of Kachin state when the muddy wave crashed onto them after heavy rain, the fire service department said in a Facebook post.

Video obtained by Reuters shows body bags lined up as people wait to identify the dead.

Deadly landslides and other accidents are common in the poorly regulated mines of Hpakant, which draw poor workers from across the country. About 100 people were killed in a collapse in 2015, which strengthened calls to regulate the industry.

That's Reuters Emer McCarthy.

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