VOA NEWS

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

U.S. President Donald Trump has canceled segments of the Republican National Political Convention, scheduled to be held next month in Jacksonville, Florida, because of the increasing number of coronavirus cases.

At a White House briefing Thursday evening, Trump said he did not think it was the right time to told the convention with an outbreak of coronavirus in that state.

"... the timing for this event is not right, it's just not right with what's happened recently, the flare-up in Florida. To have a big convention, it's not the right time."

Trump said that the delegate meetings in Charlotte, North Carolina, would continue and the nomination would be put forth there.

He said other evens would be done with tele-rallies and that he still plans to do a convention speech although in a different form.

The convention had moved to Jacksonville, Florida, after North Carolina's governor said a safe convention could not be held in Charlotte, North Carolina, because of that state's battle with the coronavirus pandemic.

The president's announcement came on a day that the United States passed more than four million confirmed infections with coronavirus and 144,000 deaths.

The number of people filing for unemployment benefits pushed higher last week. AP's Ben Thomas reports.

The Labor Department reports more than 1.4 million Americans applied for unemployment benefits, the first increase since March. It's the 18th straight week claims have topped one million.

Before the pandemic, the number of weekly applications had never exceeded 700,000. All told, roughly 32 million people are receiving jobless aid though that figure could include some double counting, and economists say the actual figure may be closer to 25 million.

The increase comes with a $600 weekly federal aid payment for the jobless set to expire at the end of the week.

Ben Thomas, Washington.

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The United States has charged four Chinese nationals with visa fraud for allegedly lying about their membership in China's armed forces.

As Reuters Matthew Larotonda reports, three of the four are in custody but the fourth is said to be in China's San Francisco consulate.

The FBI says it believes that a woman, Juan Tang, had served in the Chinese military but claimed she didn't on her visa application, which they say is fraud.

There are espionage concerns. Juan worked at the University of California.

The news comes just a day after the U.S. ordered China's Houston consulate to close, quote, "to protect American intellectual property" and private information, without giving specifics.

Senator Marco Rubio, the acting chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, is saying that the Houston consulate was a central node of the Chinese Communist Party's espionage and influence operations.

China's state media said in editorials on Thursday that the order to shut the Houston consulate is an attempt to blame Beijing for White House failures ahead of the November presidential election.

That's Reuters Matthew Larotonda.

A hospital in the southern French city of Lyon is testing patients with a new machine that enables them to breathe into a tube to see whether they have COVID-19 in a matter of seconds. Reuters Emer McCarthy reports.

The machine is entering a second trial phase after three months of tests on dozens of people. Unlike the sometimes uncomfortable standard tests, it is not invasive and provides an immediate result.

Jean-Christophe Richard is the head of intensive care medicine at Hospital Croix-Rousse.

"With this type of rapid test, we'll have the results immediately and can then move the patient to the right area of the hospital. The second benefit is that as we now have a few effective treatments, the quicker we can diagnose the quicker we can carry out the treatment."

Richard says he hopes to have the machine fully operational by the end of the year.

Bruno Lina, an independent virus expert who has been consulted on the machine, said at this stage, it is too expensive for widespread distribution in hospitals.

That's Reuters Emer McCarthy.

New York Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's outrage over a Republican lawmaker's verbal assault on her expanded Thursday as she and other Democrats took to the House floor.

In an incident witnessed by a reporter, the Florida representative, Ted Yoho, a Republican, angrily confronted Ocasio-Cortez this week and profanely insulted her.

Representative Yoho expressed some contrition for the incident this week but Ocasio-Cortez has rejected it as insufficient.

Reporting by remote, I'm David Byrd.