VOA NEWS

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

At least 100,000 Belarusians took to the streets in the capital of Minsk on Sunday in one of the biggest protests yet against President Alexander Lukashenko after he claimed victory in a disputed election last month that his opponents say was rigged.

Police said they detained more than 400 protesters in Minsk, with arrests continuing into the evening.

With public outrage building against Lukashenko, who has ruled the former Soviet bloc nation for 26 years, Russia said it [would join] would support him by sending paratroopers to Belarus for so-called "Slavic Brotherhood" joint drills.

Lukashenko has rejected claims the election was rigged and contends that foreign powers are behind the protests.

The Interfax Russian news agency reported that shots were fired into the air to keep protesters away from an area of Minsk where the Belarusian leadership lives.

The unrest came as Lukashenko prepared to travel to Russia on Monday for talks with President Vladimir Putin.

Moscow has expressed support (for) Belarus, potentially restructuring its debt and offering to send in Russian riot police if needed.

Seven weeks ahead of the U.S. national elections, President Donald Trump is contending he's done, in his words, an "incredible job" dealing with the coronavirus pandemic .

Even as about 35,000 new infections and 1,000 deaths a day are being recorded in the United States, Mr. Trump wrote on Twitter Sunday, "Deaths and hospitalizations way down."

Trump's Democratic challenger, former Vice President Joe Biden, last week in a speech in Michigan, called the president's moves "a life-and-death betrayal of the American people."

Last week [Bob journalist] journalist Bob Woodward released audio tapes the president privately acknowledging he was aware of the seriousness of the virus but downplaying in public.

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Warring sides in Afghanistan have accused each other of staging fresh battlefield attacks as their representatives held a second day of historic, U.S.-brokered peace talks Sunday away from home in Qatar.

Clashes between Afghan security forces and Taliban insurgents during the past 24 hours reportedly killed scores of people, including combatants from both sides and civilians.

The violence remains a major challenge for the long-awaited dialogue ongoing in the [Qata...] Qatari capital of Doha, involving the high-powered negotiating teams of the Taliban and the Kabul government.

U.S. officials have said the discussions between the Afghan rivals would focus on seeking a "comprehensive cease-fire" and a political deal aimed at permanently ending four decades of hostilities in the South Asian nation.

The talks officially known as intra-Afghan negotiations began Saturday just hours after an opening ceremony in Doha that was attended by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

Authorities on the Greek island of Lesbos have moved more than 300 homeless migrants and refugees into temporary facilities after a rash of fires razed the notoriously overcrowded Moria camp. The fires left more than 12,000 asylum seekers without shelter. It's the biggest humanitarian crisis to grip the country in five years.

The cause of the fires remains under investigation, but authorities contacted by VOA have pointed to arson, suggesting they were part of an organized bid by refugees angered by quarantine orders imposed after 35 people tested positive for COVID-19.

On Saturday, thousands of the refugees took to the streets, banging plastic bottles and demanding that [bey] they be allowed to continue their journeys to the heart of Europe, rather than be moved to a different facility.

The Moria [faculty] facility was built to house some 2,300 refugees. Since then, rising tides of illegal migration have forced authorities to squeeze in 10,000 additional people. The move has drawn fierce criticism from international aid organizations and the United Nations.

And wildfires continued to rage across parts of the Western United States on Sunday, with massive clouds of smoke enveloping the region.

In all, throughout the Western United States, there were 24 fires in California, 15 in Washington state, 14 in Oregon, 12 in Idaho.

The blazes have killed at least 10 people in Oregon and 22 people in California.

Officials throughout the region urged residents to stay indoors unless necessary.

Visibility was less than a half kilometer in some places. That's according to the National Weather Service.

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