VOA NEWS

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

President Donald Trump is intensifying efforts to appeal to his core base of white voters by downplaying the historical legacy of slavery in the United States and blasting efforts to address systemic racism as divisive.

Speaking at the National Archives Thursday to commemorate the 233rd anniversary of the signing of the Constitution, Trump denounced Democrats, the media and others he accused of trying to indoctrinate children and shame their parents.

"Critical race theory, the 1619 Project, and the crusade against American history is toxic propaganda, ideological poison that, if not removed, will dissolve the civic bonds that tie us together."

The president did not mention the 246 years of slavery in America, including 89 years it was allowed to continue after the colonies declared independence from England. He also did not acknowledged the ongoing fight against racial injustice and police brutality, which has prompted months of protests this year.

A former adviser to Vice President Mike Pence has joined a chorus of former Trump administration officials urging voters to deny him a second term. Olivia Troye was Pence's former Homeland Security adviser and served as a member of the White House's coronavirus task force.

She said in a new video released Thursday by the group Republican Voters Against Trump that the president was more concerned about his reelection chances than the virus. She also claims that Trump once suggested the coronavirus might be a good thing because it would stop him from having to shake hands with what he called, quote, "disgusting people." The White House has adamantly denied it.

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U.S. FBI Director Christopher Wray on Thursday warned that Russia is interfering in the 2020 U.S. presidential elections with a steady stream of misinformation aimed at Democrat Joe Biden as well as sapping Americans' confidence in the election process.

Speaking to the House of Representatives' Homeland Security Committee, Wray said that Moscow is attempting to undercut what it sees as an anti-Russian U.S. establishment.

"... an effort to both sow divisiveness and discord, and I think the intelligence community has assessed this publicly, to primarily to denigrate Vice President Biden in what the Russians see as a kind anti-Russian establishment."

The FBI director's testimony follows an August 7 warning by the director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center that Russia, China and Iran were all trying to interfere in the November 3 election.

The United States has gone ahead with a three-day visit of a senior State Department official to Taiwan despite stern warnings from China to abandon the meeting. AP's Karen Chammas reports.

U.S. Undersecretary of State Keith Krach is scheduled to meet Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen and other senior officials

Earlier in the week, China's Foreign Ministry warned of "serious damage" to China-U.S. relations if the meeting went ahead.

Krach, who holds the portfolio for economic growth, energy and the environment, is the highest-level official from the State Department to visit the island in decades.

His visit follows the high-profile visit in August by U.S. Health Secretary Alex Azar and just a day beefer Krach's arrival, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Kelly Craft, had lunch with Taiwan's top official in New York, a meeting she called "historic.'

I'm Karen Chammas.

The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits remains high nine months after the nation's first confirmed coronavirus case. AP's Sagar Meghani has more.

Some 860,000 people applied for jobless aid last week, down roughly 25,000 from a week prior, but still historically high.

The Labor Department says about 12.5 million are now collecting traditional unemployment benefits, up from 1.7 million a year ago. It's a sign the economic recovery remains fragile, with virus infections continuing as schools reopen and Congress failing to deliver another economic aid package.

Sagar Meghani, Washington.

The U.S. has sanctioned entities and individuals associated with Iran's intelligence and security ministry for allegedly engaging in a malware campaign targeting "Iranian dissidents, journalists and international companies in the travel sector."

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