

Wires 10/5/20

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Pence, Harris to Be Separated by Plexiglass Barrier During Debate - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - The US Commission on Presidential Debates adopted a plan of using a plexiglass barrier to separate US Vice President Mike Pence and his rival Kamala Harris during their upcoming debate on October 7, Politico reported on Monday. The decision came after US President Donald Trumps announced on Friday that he and First lady Melania Trump tested positive for novel coronavirus.

Plexiglass should be used as a barrier between the two debate participants as well as the debate moderator Susan Page, the report said.

The Commission also decided to nearly double the distance between the participants from seven to 13 feet, the report added.

Earlier on Monday, Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden said he is ready to engage US President Donald Trump in a second debate despite concerns about the possibility of contracting the novel coronavirus.

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Canada Failed Healthcare Workers, Mismanaged Pandemic by Ignoring SARS Lessons – Report

TORONTO, October 5 (Sputnik) - Canadian officials failed healthcare workers and mismanaged the novel coronavirus pandemic response by ignoring lessons learned during the SARS pandemic in the early 2000s, the Canadian Federation of Nurses said in a report unveiled on Monday.

“In COVID-19, Canada is witnessing a systemic preventable failure to learn from the 2003 SARS outbreak. It is a failure to both adequately prepare and to urgently respond in a manner that is commensurate with the gravest public health emergency in a century,” the report said.

The report says that Canadian officials did not respond to the pandemic according to the precautionary principle - erring on the side of caution in the early stages of a novel pathogen when it comes to measures like border closures and public masking as well as prioritizing the safety of frontline healthcare workers.

According to the report’s author, Mario Possamai, government and officials failed to abide by the precautionary principle, refusing to test contacts of confirmed positive cases – an approach countries like China and South Korea used to stem the progress of the pandemic, with many asymptomatic carriers spreading the disease – and having inadequate supplies of personal protective equipment. Earlier this summer and months after the onset of the pandemic, a nurse

in the Canadian province of Ontario told Sputnik personal protective equipment in their hospital is scarce and kept for regulatory purposes.

The result, the report says, is that healthcare workers represented 20 percent of all COVID-19 infections, with the official data indicating 12 virus-related fatalities among frontline workers - unions say the real death toll is at least 16 - and that Canada's infection tally and death toll surpassed that of China, Hong Kong and Taiwan combined.

The report also notes that officials from various levels of government and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) froze frontline workers and unions out of PHAC's COVID-19 health care infection prevention and workplace safety guidance development, input that both parties provided during the H1N1 outbreak in 2008 and Ebola in 2013-2014.

Last month, Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, co-chair of the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board and former WHO chief, similarly pointed to the lack of preparedness for this pandemic.

"There was not a lack of warning - it was not only us warning people and leaders last year, it has been warned again and again over the last 10 years since SARS, H1N1, MERS and then, of course, Ebola. And we should have been better prepared," she said.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Canadian Health Minister Patty Hajdu and Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Theresa Tam have faced plenty of criticism for failing to shut borders and introduce public masking guidance much earlier.

The number of COVID-19 cases in Canada is approaching 168,000 with at least 9,480 deaths reported, government data revealed on Monday. A combined 1,857 new cases in Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba pushed Canada's tally to 168,013, according to data released by provincial health agencies. There are 16,432 active cases throughout the country, Canada's public health agency says.

At the end of September, Trudeau said that the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic is "already underway" in Canada and urged vigilance.

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Trump Intends to Participate in Next US Presidential Debate - Campaign Spokesperson

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump plans to participate in the next presidential debate scheduled on October 15 in Miami, Florida, Trump Campaign communications director Tim Murtaugh said on Monday.

"It is the President's intention to debate," Murtaugh said when asked by CNN about debate plans.

Earlier on Monday, White House physician Sean Conley said Trump has met all the criteria to be discharged from the hospital following his COVID-19 diagnosis and that his conditions have improved in the last 72 hours.

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US Senate Panel to Start Nomination Hearing for US Supreme Court Pick Barrett October 12

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - The US Senate Judiciary Committee will begin the hearing for Supreme Court nominee Amy Coney Barrett on October 12, a notice revealed on Monday.

"The Senate Committee on the Judiciary has scheduled a hearing on the nomination of the Honorable Amy Coney Barrett to be an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States to begin Monday, October 12, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. and continue through Thursday, October 15, 2020 in Room 216 of the Hart Senate Office Building," the notice said.

President Donald Trump nominated Barrett last month to replace the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

After the Supreme Court announcement, Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden released a statement urging the Senate not to approve Barrett's nomination before the November 3 presidential election.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said earlier this month that a vote on Barrett's nomination would take place regardless of criticism and obstruction by Democrats. The Republicans hold a 53-47 majority in the Senate.

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Trump's Physician Says US President Not Entirely Out of Woods Yet' But Able to Go Home

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - White House physician Sean Conley told reporters on Monday that President Donald Trump has not entirely recovered from the novel coronavirus, but is well enough to leave the hospital.

"Though he may not entirely be out of the woods yet, the team and I agree that all our evaluations, and most importantly his clinical status, support the president's safe return home," Conley said.

Other members of Trump's medical staff said 72 hours have passed since Trump had fever. The medical team said Trump's oxygen levels, kidney and liver functions are normal. In addition, they said Trump will receive his fourth dose of the remdesivir antiviral treatment later this evening and a fifth dose later this week at the White House.

Conley refused to reveal when Trump last tested negative for the presence of the novel coronavirus or the findings from X-ray scans of the president's lungs.

Prior to the press conference, Trump said he was feeling well and would be returning to the White House on Monday afternoon.

On Friday, Trump was taken to the Walter Reed Military Medical Center for treatment after announcing that he and First Lady Melania Trump tested positive for the novel coronavirus.

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US COVID-19-Related Deaths Exceed 210,000 - Johns Hopkins University

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - The number of deaths in the United States due to the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has exceeded 210,000 as of Monday afternoon, the Johns Hopkins University revealed in its latest data.

At least 210,013 people have died from COVID-19 in the United States, according to the university's tally. The data also shows the United States has reported more than 7.4 million cases of COVID-19.

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Trump Says Leaving Hospital Today, Tells US Public Not to Be Afraid of COVID-19

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump in a statement on Monday said he will be leaving the Walter Reed Medical Center this afternoon because he is feeling better and urged the public not to be afraid of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19). "I will be leaving the great Walter Reed Medical Center today at 6:30 P.M. [10:30 p.m. GT]," Trump said via Twitter. "Feeling really good! Don't be afraid of Covid. Don't let it dominate your life. We have developed, under the Trump Administration, some really great drugs & knowledge. I feel better than I did 20 years ago!" Trump announced on Thursday that he and First Lady Melania Trump contracted COVID-19. The US president was taken to the hospital on Friday for treatment. Trump was treated with the remdesivir antiviral treatment, an 8 gram dose of Regeneron's polyclonal antibody cocktail, and the steroid drug dexamethasone. The United States has reported more than 7.4 million cases and nearly 210,000 virus-related deaths as of mid-day Monday, according to data compiled by John Hopkins University.

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Two More White House Press Officers Test Positive for COVID-19 - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - Two more White House press officers tested positive for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), CNN reported Monday, citing two sources. Earlier in the day, White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany said she tested positive for COVID-19, but so far has experienced no symptoms. Principal Assistant White House Press Secretary Chad Gilmartin tested positive within the past 24 hours while Assistant Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt did several days ago, the report said. Last week, White House aide Hope Hicks tested positive for the novel coronavirus, prompting tests that showed President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump also contracted the virus. On Friday, Trump was taken to Walter Reed Military Medical Center for treatment. Other individuals who are part of Trump's inner circle tested positive over the weekend, including the president's campaign manager Bill Stepien, former White House adviser Kellyanne Conway and aide Nick Luna, among others.

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Canada Suspends Export Permits to Turkey Amid Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict - Foreign Minister

TORONTO, October 5 (Sputnik) - Ottawa has suspended export permits to Turkey amid allegations Canadian military equipment is being used in the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute

between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Foreign Affairs Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne said in a statement on Monday.

Last week, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said that Global Affairs Canada is looking into allegations that Azerbaijan forces are using Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 drones equipped with Canadian-made L3Harris WESCAM target acquisition sensors.

"In line with Canada's robust export control regime and due to the ongoing hostilities, I have suspended the relevant export permits to Turkey, so as to allow time to further assess the situation," Champagne said.

Canada's top diplomat again called for an immediate halt to hostilities in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region and urged the warring sides to come to the negotiating table. In the meantime, Ottawa will probe whether Canadian-made equipment is being used to commit human rights violations, a breach of Canada's contractual terms when selling military equipment abroad.

Canada suspended the issuance of new military equipment export permits to its NATO ally last year, citing violations committed during its military campaign in northeastern Syria, according to the 2019 Exports of Military Goods report. The report also made no mention of sales to Azerbaijan, which some experts have said suggests similar sanctions against Baku.

Armenian officials have accused Turkey of injecting itself into the conflict. An Armenian Defense Ministry spokesman alleged that Azerbaijan had transferred the air control of the offensive operation against Karabakh to the Turkish Air Force. Yerevan has also claimed that Ankara deployed mercenaries from Syria to fight alongside Azerbaijani troops in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Ankara has denied all of Yerevan's claims, with the vice president of the security and intelligence committee in the Turkish parliament, Mehmet Altay, telling Sputnik that claims of Turkish-backed mercenaries operating in the disputed region are "unfounded."

Since 1991, Armenia and Azerbaijan have been engaged in a conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, an Armenian-majority region that proclaimed independence from what was the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan.

On Sunday morning, clashes occurred in Nagorno Karabakh with both sides accusing the other of carrying out provocations. Armenia declared martial law and general mobilization, while Azerbaijan declared partial martial law and partial mobilization. Azerbaijan has closed its airports to all international air traffic except from Turkey, which has pledged support to Baku.

On Friday, the leaders of Russia, the United States and France - the co-chairing countries of the OSCE Minsk Group - called for an immediate cessation of hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh. The presidents expressed their condolences to the families of those killed and wounded. The leaders called on Yerevan and Baku to pledge to resume negotiations without preconditions.

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Growing US Oil Sales to China Make Mideast Suppliers Find New Markets - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - The increasing US oil exports to China has forced Middle Eastern suppliers to search for other markets, The Wall Street Journal reported on Monday. The US crude sales to China have grown from 0.4% in January to 7% through mid-September, the report said citing London-based market intelligence firm Vortexa Ltd. The newspaper also said market share for China's biggest traditional supplier - Saudi Arabia - dropped from 19 percent to 15 percent over the same period of time.

Saudi Arabia recently reduced prices for its crude oil for Asian buyers while exports from other Middle Eastern producers are also being affected, the report added.

China agreed to increase purchases of US energy products by \$52 billion in the next two years, text of the Phase One trade deal revealed in January. The US energy products will be part of the total \$200 billion worth of US goods that China will import through 2021, according to the agreement signed by US President Donald Trump and Chinese Vice Premier Liu He at the White House.

The agreement listed the US energy products that China will be buying as crude oil, liquefied natural gas, refined petroleum and coal.

China is the world's largest buyer of oil and the United States is the largest producer of the commodity.

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CDC Says Coronavirus Can Sometimes Spread Through Airborne Transmission - Updated Guidance

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Monday issued an updated guidance saying the novel coronavirus can sometimes spread through airborne transmission.

"Some infections can be spread by exposure to the virus in small droplets and particles that can linger in the air for minutes to hours," the statement said. "These viruses may be able to infect

people who are further than six feet away from the person who is infected or after that person has left the space."

The CDC said airborne transmission is particularly more likely to happen in enclosed spaces with inadequate ventilation.

The United States has reported more than 7.4 million cases and nearly 210,000 virus-related deaths as of mid-day Monday, according to data compiled by John Hopkins University.

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US Urges Azerbaijani, Armenian Foreign Ministers to Reach Ceasefire at Once - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - US Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun told the top diplomats of Armenia and Azerbaijan to immediately agree to a ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh, State Department Spokesperson Morgan Ortagus said in a readout on Monday.

"Deputy Secretary of State Stephen E. Biegun spoke separately today with Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jehun Bayramov and Armenian Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan to express deep concern over reports of the escalation of military action and expanding theater of operations in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict," Ortagus said. "Deputy Secretary Biegun urged the sides to agree to a ceasefire immediately and resume negotiations under the auspices of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs to find a durable resolution to the conflict."

Biegun underscored to both ministers that there is no military solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Ortagus added.

The frozen conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh burst into a fresh cycle of armed escalation on September 27. Azerbaijan launched what it called a "counteroffensive" against the Armenian occupation of the Armenian-majority breakaway region, while Nagorno-Karabakh accused Baku of unilaterally violating the 1994 OSCE-mediated ceasefire and opening fire against its civilians and civilian infrastructure.

The present escalation stands out by Turkey's suspected involvement in the military action, specifically by the deployment of contracted mercenaries from the northern Syrian territories under its control.

The international community, including the co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group - France, Russia and the United States - have urged the warring sides to cease hostilities and engage in a dialogue without preconditions.

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Trump's Physician to Provide Update on President's Health at 3:00 p.m. - Spokesman

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - White House physician Sean Conley will provide an update on President Donald Trump's health at 3:00 p.m. local time, Deputy Press Secretary Judd Deere said in a statement on Monday.

"Dr. Sean Conley, Physician to the President, is expected to provide an update on the President's condition in the 3 p.m. hour at Walter Reed," Deere said in the statement.

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Trudeau Says He Tested Negative for COVID-19 After Developing a 'Raspy Voice' in September

TORONTO, October 5 (Sputnik) - Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told reporters on Monday that he tested negative for the novel coronavirus after developing a "raspy voice" in September.

"Earlier in September, I had a bit of a throat tickle, a bit of a raspy throat, so I checked with my doctor and he recommended I get tested. I got tested, it was negative, and I went back to work a few days later when the doctor told me I was cleared to do it" Trudeau said.

The test was not reported at the time and this marks the first time the Prime Minister has publicly acknowledged being tested for the novel coronavirus.

Trudeau said that in accordance with public health advice at the time, he was not tested after his spouse Sophie Gregoire tested positive for the virus in March.

A number of heads of state and government have contracted the novel coronavirus, including Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and, most recently, US President Donald Trump.

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Libyan Political Talks May Take Place Before End of October - UN Acting Special Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, October 5 (Sputnik) - UN Acting Special Representative for Libya Stephanie Williams said on Monday that in the coming days she expects to announce news on the holding of intra-Libyan political talks that could be relaunched before the end of October.

Earlier in the day, Williams participated in a ministerial event on Libya co-hosted by the United Nations and Germany seeking to reach a lasting settlement in the country.

"I'm working on internal traps right now, and I really should have some news in the coming days," Williams said when asked when the talks could be relaunched. "I would like to do this as soon as possible. Preferably, before the end of this month."

Williams said that when it comes to the timeline for holding such talks, she is mindful of the decision announced by the Libya Government of National Accord (GNA) Prime Minister Fayez al Sarraj to step down by the end of this month.

Williams also said that the ongoing novel coronavirus pandemic had created extra challenges to hold this large-scale dialogue, and the health and safety of everyone participating in the future negotiations is an utmost priority.

After the ouster and assassination of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, the country plunged into a brutal conflict. Libya today is divided between two centers of power - an elected parliament in the country's east, supported by the Libyan National Army, and the GNA in the west, assisted by Turkey.

On January 19, the international conference on Libya took place in Berlin, Germany, including Russia, the United States, the European Union, Turkey and Egypt as participants. The sides agreed to a ceasefire and the noninvolvement of third parties in the conflict.

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Ontario, Quebec Record Highest-Ever Number of New COVID-19 Cases in Recent Days - Trudeau

TORONTO, October 5 (Sputnik) - The Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec recorded their highest-ever daily tallies of new COVID-19 infections in recent days, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told reporters on Monday.

"In the last few days, Ontario and Quebec have had their highest-ever numbers of [COVID-19] cases," Trudeau said.

The Prime Minister noted that the number of infections is rising across the country, including in long-term care facilities, a setting where the vast majority of Canadian virus-related fatalities have occurred and sparked national outrage.

The country's Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Theresa Tam added that over 500 people diagnosed with the deadly disease lie in hospitals at any given time over past week and that the average daily death toll has risen to 14.

The number of COVID-19 cases in Canada is approaching 168,000 with at least 9,480 deaths reported, government data revealed on Monday. A combined 1,806 new cases in Ontario and Quebec pushed Canada's tally to 167,962, according to data released by provincial health agencies. There are 16,432 active cases throughout the country, Canada's public health agency says.

Quebec has seen over 1,000 new infections for four straight days, while Ontario saw 732 new cases on Friday and currently has a backlog of nearly 70,000 outstanding tests.

At the end of September, Trudeau said that the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic is "already underway" in Canada and urged vigilance.

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Pelosi, Mnuchin Continue to Negotiate COVID-19 Relief, More Talks Planned - Statement

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin continued negotiating a COVID-19 stimulus relief package on Monday and have planned more talks ahead, the speaker's Chief of Staff Drew Hammill said in a statement on Monday.

"Speaker Pelosi and Secretary Mnuchin spoke by phone today at 11:30 a.m. for approximately one hour," Hammill said in the statement. "The two discussed the justifications for various numbers and plan to exchange paper today in preparation for another phone call tomorrow."

Pelosi has been trying to get Republicans to agree with the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act, which the Democrats originally proposed at \$3 trillion before reducing to \$2.2 trillion and agreeing to further revisions in recent weeks.

The legislation passed the House of Representatives last week and is now pending in the Senate.

Congress passed four packages of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act in the second quarter of this year, dispensing roughly \$3 trillion to disburse as loans and grants to businesses, paycheck protection for workers and personal aid to qualifying US citizens and residents.

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Biden Says He Stands Ready for Second Presidential Debate With Trump

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden said on Monday that he is ready to engage US President Donald Trump in a second debate despite concerns about the possibility of contracting the novel coronavirus.

"If the scientists say that it is safe... I think that is fine. I will do whatever experts say is the appropriate thing to do," Biden told reporters.

The second of three presidential debates between Trump and Biden is scheduled on October 15.

On Friday, Trump announced that he and his wife Melania had tested positive for the novel coronavirus. The US president was taken to the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Maryland later on that day and is expected to be released on Monday.

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Trump Permits Energy Company to Transport More Petroleum Products Across US-Mexico Border

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - President Donald Trump on Monday approved a permit that will allow NuStar Logistics to transport more petroleum products through a pipeline that runs under the Rio Grande between the United States and Mexico.

In 2003, the US granted the company, a subsidiary of Nustar Energy, permission to transport up to 32,400 bpd of LPG through the Dos Laredos Pipeline on the US-Mexico border. In 2017, NuStar was allowed to ship another 24,000 bpd of refined petroleum products.

"Permission is hereby granted to the permittee [NuStar Logistics] to operate and maintain existing pipeline Border facilities... near Laredo, Texas for the transport between the United States and Mexico of all hydrocarbons and petroleum products of every description, refined or unrefined," the release said.

The new permit allows the company to transport crude oil, naphtha, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), natural gas liquids, jet fuel, gasoline, kerosene, and diesel, but not natural gas. The Dos Laredos Pipeline connects the NuStar terminal in Laredo, Texas with a terminal in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico. The US side consists of approximately 10.6 miles of pipeline while the Mexican portion includes approximately 0.93 miles of pipeline, according to the US State Department.

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UN Very Concerned By 'Extension of Hostilities' in Nagorno-Karabakh - Spokesman

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - The United Nations is very troubled by the continuation of hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh and the reported targeting of civilian areas, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in a statement on Monday.

"Despite... repeated calls from the international community to immediately stop the fighting, we are very concerned about what we are seeing as kind of an extension of hostilities and especially what we are seeing, which is reportedly a targeting of civilian areas," Dujarric said. The UN spokesperson pointed out that the Secretary General Antonio Guterres has very directly condemned the escalation of violence in the conflict zone.

"There is no military solution to this conflict," Dujarric said. "It is important that all the parties immediately cease military operations and all relevant regional and international actors need to actively exercise their influence accordingly to achieve an urgent end to the fighting and return to negotiations under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs."

The present escalation came about amid Turkey's suspected involvement in the military action, specifically by the deployment of contracted mercenaries from the northern Syrian territories under its control.

The international community, including the co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group - France, Russia and the United States - have urged the warring sides to cease fire and engage in a dialogue without preconditions.

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White House Press Secretary Says Tested Positive for Coronavirus, Experiencing No Symptoms

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany said in a statement on Monday that she has tested positive for the novel coronavirus, but is experiencing no symptoms at present.

"After testing negative consistently, including every day since Thursday, I tested positive for COVID-19 on Monday morning while experiencing no symptoms," McEnany said.

McEnany said no members of the media have been listed as close contacts by the White House medical unit.

McEnany also said she will quarantine, but will continue to work.

Last week, White House aide Hope Hicks tested positive for the novel coronavirus, prompting tests that showed President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump also contracted the virus.

On Friday, Trump was taken to Walter Reed Military Medical Center for treatment.

Other individuals who are part of Trump's inner circle tested positive over the weekend, including the president's campaign manager Bill Stepien, former White House adviser Kellyanne Conway and aide Nick Luna, among others.

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UN Chief Urges Countries to Provide More Resettlement for Refugees Detained in Libya

UNITED NATIONS, October 5 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said during a high-level meeting on Libya on Monday that he calls on countries to provide more places of resettlement and evacuation for refugees who have been stranded in detention in Libya.

"Refugees and migrants held in detention in inhumane conditions should be released and provided with safe shelter," Guterres said. "In this regard, I urge member states to provide more resettlement and evacuation places for refugees and asylum seekers stranded in Libya."

Guterres explained that such efforts would prevent future dangerous movements of refugees through the central Mediterranean and stop unsafe returns to Libya.

The UN Secretary-General also called for the immediate dismantling of human trafficking networks operating across Libya.

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Trump Grants Canadian Energy Giant Permission to Maintain, Operate Cross-Border Pipeline

TORONTO, October 5 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump granted an energy company authorization to operate the existing pipeline system between the United States and Canada on Monday.

"I hereby grant this Presidential permit, subject to the conditions herein set forth, to Express Pipeline LLC... to operate and maintain existing pipeline Border facilities, as described herein, at the international border of the United States and Canada near Wild Horse, Montana, for the transport between the United States and Canada of all hydrocarbons and petroleum products of every description, refined or unrefined," the presidential permit said.

The permit allows Express Pipeline, owned by Canadian energy giant Enbridge, to transport crude oil, liquefied petroleum gas and other energy products, with the exception of liquefied natural gas (LNG) as subject to section 3 of the Natural Gas Act.

This presidential permit replaces the one issued on July 9, 2015.

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UN Chief Calls for Immediate, Permanent Lifting of Libya Oil Blockade

UNITED NATIONS, October 5 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said during a high-level meeting on Libya on Monday that he is urging permanently lifting the oil blockade imposed on the country in addition to establishing an immediate ceasefire.

Guterres, along with German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, co-hosted earlier on Monday the ministerial meeting aimed at promoting a ceasefire in Libya.

"We must also see the immediate, permanent and unconditional lifting of the blockade on the country's oil production and exports, which has had a crippling impact on the economy," Guterres said.

Last week, the National Oil Corporation (NOC) announced the resumption of oil production and export after the Libyan National Army (LNA) reached an agreement with the authorities in the western part of the country and tribal factions to conditionally lift the blockade from oilfields and terminals for a period of one month during talks between the warring parties.

The blockade was initially introduced by the LNA in January amid an escalation in violence between Libya's warring parties. According to the NOC, the suspension of oil output has produced losses to Libya's budget in the amount \$9.8 billion.

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White House Press Secretary Says Tested Positive for Coronavirus, Experiencing No Symptoms

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany said in a statement on Monday that she has tested positive for the novel coronavirus, but is experiencing no symptoms at present.

"After testing negative consistently, including every day since Thursday, I tested positive for COVID-19 on Monday morning while experiencing no symptoms," McEnany said.

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Melania Trump Says 'Feeling Good' After Testing Positive for Coronavirus Last Week

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - US First Lady Melania Trump said on Monday that she is feeling well after testing positive for the novel coronavirus last week.

"I am feeling good and will continue to rest at home," she said via Twitter.

The First Lady expressed gratitude to all well wishers after the outpouring of support to her and US president Donald Trump, and thanked the medical staff who are assisting them fight the novel coronavirus.

"My continued prayers for those who are ill or have a family member impacted by the virus," she said.

On Friday, US President Donald Trump was admitted to the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Maryland after announcing that he and his wife had tested positive for the novel coronavirus.

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Ottawa to Repatriate Orphaned Canadian Child Stranded in Syria - Foreign Minister

TORONTO, October 5 (Sputnik) - Ottawa will repatriate an orphaned Canadian child stranded in northeastern Syria after her family was killed while fighting for the Islamic State terror group (banned in Russia), Foreign Affairs Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne said in a statement on Monday.

The family of the child filed a lawsuit against the Canadian government earlier this year for allegedly stalling the repatriation process despite her relatives' best efforts to bring her home.

"I am pleased that this Canadian child orphaned in Syria will soon be united with her extended family in Canada," Champagne said.

Champagne added that Global Affairs Canada will work to protect the identity of the child and thanked the Department of National Defense and the Canadian Armed Forces for their efforts in the endeavor.

Global Affairs Canada had cited the detainees' location as being in a remote and volatile region in Syria that is far too dangerous for Canadian officials to visit as the roadblock for her repatriation.

However, Human Rights Watch contrasted Canada's repatriation efforts of nationals from around world amid the novel coronavirus pandemic, including 29 from Syria. The organization said Canada is effectively withholding consular assistance to the detainee.

The child, known only as Amira, was born in Syria to Canadian parents who went to join the Islamic State. She was previously identified by Human Rights Watch as one of 47 Canadians - of which 26 children - detained in Syria for alleged links to the terror group. Amira was orphaned after her Canadian parents and three siblings were killed in an airstrike in northeastern Syria in 2019.

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US Voters Say Economy Most Important Issue in Presidential Election - Poll

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - The economy will be the most important issue for US voters as they cast their ballots in the November 3 presidential election, a new Gallup poll showed on Monday.

Nearly 99 percent of US voters said the economy was a primary concern, with 44 percent saying the issue was "extremely" important and 45 percent calling it "very" important, according to the poll.

The candidates' approach to terrorism and national security ranked as the second-biggest concern for US voters, with 83 percent of respondents saying this issue was either extremely or very important.

Other key issues for US voters include education (82 percent), healthcare (80 percent) crime (79 percent), the response to the coronavirus (77 percent) and race relations (76 percent).

The US economy shrank at its fastest pace in history in the second quarter of 2020, contracting by 31.4 percent amid widespread lockdowns due to the COVID-19. While economic data has been encouraging in recent months, recovery from the pandemic itself has remained spotty.

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COVID-19 to Potentially Increase Child Mortality in Developing Countries By 45% - Malpass

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - The novel coronavirus pandemic will likely drive up child mortality rates in developing countries by slightly less than a half of the current rate, World Bank President David Malpass said on Monday.

"Our early estimates suggest a potential increase of up to 45 percent in child mortality because of health service shortfalls and reduction in access to food," Malpass said during a virtual discussion ahead of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund annual meetings next week.

Malpass said the World Bank estimates the increases in child mortality to persist in the coming years.

The World Bank president also said the difficulties in administering education amid pandemic can lead to significant issues for the developing countries in the future.

"Since the outbreak, more than 1.6 billion children in developing countries have been out of school because of COVID-19, implying a potential loss of as much as \$10 trillion in lifetime earning for these students," Malpass said.

The World Bank is doing everything possible to bolster the health and education capabilities of countries in need, Malpass added.

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White House 'Optimistic' Trump Can Leave Hospital Later on Monday - Chief of Staff

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - The White House expects that President Donald Trump will be able to leave the hospital and return to his residence later in the day now that his health has improved following several days of treatment for COVID-19, Chief of Staff Mark Meadows said.

"Spoke to the president this morning," Meadows told Fox News. "He continued to improve overnight and is ready to get back to a normal working schedule ... We are still optimistic that he will be able to return to the White House later today, with his medical professionals making that determination later today."

Meadows added that Trump would meet with his doctors this morning to make further assessments on his progress toward recovery.

The White House official said Trump could be discharged from the hospital "at the earliest this afternoon."

Meadows also noted that Trump is eager to get back "to a normal working schedule."

Trump was admitted to the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Maryland on Friday, after announcing on Twitter that he and First Lady Melania had tested positive for the coronavirus.

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RPT: REVIEW - Biden Expands Lead in Polls After Debate, Trump COVID-19 Diagnosis

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - Democratic presidential challenger Joe Biden expanded his lead both nationally and in two critical swing states less than one month before election day, largely due to last week's chaotic first presidential debate and President Donald Trump testing positive for COVID-19.

POST-DEBATE/COVID-19 BUMP

According to an NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll released on Sunday, Biden's lead nationally has nearly doubled since Tuesday's presidential debate, growing from 8 to 14 percent, surpassing the previous high of 11 points in July. The former vice president is now leading 53% to 39%, the poll revealed, in the wake of a debate in which Trump continually interrupted his rival.

One of the pollsters who conducted the survey, Hart Research's Jeff Horwitt, said the presidential debate clearly damaged Trump's standing against Biden, at least in the short term. 49% of voters said Biden won the debate compared to 24% for Trump with 17% who called it a tie.

Trump lost ground to seniors and suburban women, who now back Biden by 27% and 25% respectively. Trump's 1-point pre-debate lead among men over 50 has turned into a 13-percent advantage for Biden, according to the survey.

Biden's lead grew a couple points to 10% in a Reuters-Ipsos poll released on Sunday, which was taken after Trump announced that he tested positive for COVID-19. About 65% of respondents said if Trump had taken the pandemic more seriously he probably would not have been infected, including 90 percent of Democrats and 50 percent of Republicans.

On October 2, Trump announced via Twitter that he and his wife tested positive for the coronavirus, after which he checked into the Walter Reed hospital just outside the US capital in the state of Maryland. Trump's doctors on Sunday said the president is doing well, although he began a steroid treatment after his oxygen dropped twice.

BIG PICTURE TRENDS

Based on the average of the ten most recent surveys posted on Realclearpolitics (RCP), as of Sunday evening, Biden leads Trump by 8.1 percent nationally, a 1.1-point bump from last week's RCP average.

Moreover, Biden has expanded his lead in a couple crucial so-called "swing" states, which is even more important because the Electoral College format requires candidates to win statewide votes, not national popular vote.

Biden now leads in nine of the top 10 largest of these battleground states, the sum of which account for nearly 70% of the 270 electoral votes needed to win the race (538 electoral votes are apportioned across 50 states).

The three biggest prizes include Texas (38 electoral votes), Florida (29), and Pennsylvania (20). Trump has a 3.2% lead in Texas, down by less than a point from last week, while Biden's edge in Florida slightly expanded to 2 percent.

Biden's lead grew by nearly two points in Pennsylvania, where the former vice president now leads by 6.5%. Biden has "flipped" the state of Georgia slightly into his favor within the past week, where Trump's 1.3% lead in the RCP average has turned into a 0.3% edge for the former vice president.

Biden's lead has remained relatively flat in Ohio, where he is up 2.5%, as well as Michigan (+5.5%), North Carolina (+0.5%), Arizona (+0.3%), and Minnesota (9.4%).

The only good news for Trump is in the state of Wisconsin, where he narrowed Biden's lead by 1.5 points to 5.5 percent.

It is important to note that Biden's lead in five of these states is less than five percent. So, a path to victory certainly exists for Trump especially given wildcard factors such as the potential for chaos due to a massive influx of mail-in ballots amid the pandemic. Not to mention, the risk of undercounting Trump voters who are less likely to participate in polls, which happened in 2016 in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Michigan.

CONGRESSIONAL RACES

If the election were held today, the Democrats would end up with a 51 to 49 majority in the Senate, where the Republicans currently control 53 seats, the same scenario as last week. Eight of the 35 Senate races up for grabs on the November 3 ballot are in the "toss-up" category, seven of which involve Republican incumbents.

In South Carolina, Senator Lindsey Graham is now tied after leading by a point last week, according to the RCP. In Arizona, Democratic challenger Mark Kelly has grown his lead over Republican incumbent Martha McSally by nearly a point to 6 percent. North Carolina's Thom Tillis has seen his deficit grow by two points, with challenger Cal Cunningham now ahead by 8%.

Republican Joni Ernst in Iowa saw her deficit nearly double to 5% since last week, while Oregon Senator Susan Collins remains 6.5 points behind. Two other Republican senators have maintained tight leads including Georgia's David Perdue (+2.8%) and Montana's Steve Daines (1.6%). Michigan incumbent Democrat Gary Peters saw his lead narrow by one point to 3.8%. Meanwhile, the Democrats appear to be in a good position to maintain control of the 435-member House of Representatives, where they have a 36-seat edge. All 435 seats will be on the November 3 ballot.

The Democrats have a solid lead in 214 races to 190 for the Republicans with 31 in the toss-up category, according to RCP, the same tally as last week. The Democrats need to win at least 218 seats to maintain majority control. If the election were held today they would secure 233 seats, according to the RCP's "no toss-up" map.

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