

**Wires 10/6/20**

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**US Stocks Down More Than 1% After Trump Calls Off COVID-19 Stimulus Talks With Democrats**

NEW YORK, October 6 (Sputnik) - Stocks on Wall Street fell more than 1 percent at Tuesday's close after President Donald Trump called off talks between the White House and the Democrat in Congress on a new economic stimulus package for the novel coronavirus pandemic.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average, the broadest stock indicator on the New York Stock Exchange, closed down 1.3 percent.

The S&P, a barometer for the top 500 US stocks on the NYSE, declined 1.4 percent.

The technology-laced Nasdaq Composite Index, which lists industry giants such as Facebook, Apple, Apple, Netflix and Google, settled down 1.6 percent.

Earlier on Tuesday, Trump said in a series of tweets that he was rejecting the Democrats' demands for a relief package to go forward and said he was looking to the future of the United States. Trump said he had told his representatives to stop negotiating until after the November 3 election.

The negotiations between Republicans and Democrats have dragged in Congress since May after almost \$3 trillion in COVID-19 relief packages passed with bipartisan support.

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**White House Staff Wearing Full Preventive Gear After Trump Tested Positive - Statement**

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - All staff in the White House have been required to wear full personal protective equipment (PPE) since President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump tested positive for the novel coronavirus, the White House said in a statement on Tuesday.

"With the recent positive results of the President and First Lady, staff wear full PPE and continue to take all necessary precautions, which include updated procedures to protect against cross contamination," the statement said.

The White House said staff who are in direct contact with the First Family are tested daily, with support staff tested every 48 hours.

In addition, independent health consultants have been hired and are available to check on staff and their families, facilitating ancillary testing as needed, the White House said.

"Since March, the Residence has adopted hospital-grade disinfection policies, had White House Medical Unit lead coronavirus workshops so staff could have their concerns addressed," the statement said.

Additional sanitary and filtration systems throughout the Executive Mansion, have been installed, the White House added.

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US Jobs Openings Down By About 200,000 in August to 6.5Mln - Labor Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - The number of job openings in the United States decreased by about 200,000 to reach 6.5 million in August from 6.7 million in July, the US Labor Department said in its monthly Job Openings and Labor Turnover Summary (JOLTS) on Tuesday.

"On the last business day of August, the number and rate of job openings were little changed at 6.5 million and 4.4 percent, respectively," the report said. "Over the month, the number of job openings edged down for total private (-242,000) and was little changed for (the) government." The United States gained 661,000 jobs in September, less than half than in August, as labor market recovery from the novel coronavirus pandemic slowed.

The US economy lost more than 21 million jobs for all of March and April at the height of lockdowns amid the novel coronavirus pandemic. However, the economy experienced a strong rebound of 2.5 million jobs in May and 4.8 million in June.

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Trump Asks Senate Majority Leader to Focus Full Time on Approving Supreme Court Pick

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump said in a statement on Tuesday that he asked Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to focus on approving Supreme Court nominee Amy Coney Barrett and to set aside negotiations with Democrats to pass a new COVID-19 relief bill.

"I have instructed my representatives to stop negotiating until after the election when, immediately after I win, we will pass a major Stimulus Bill that focuses on hardworking Americans and Small Business," Trump said. "I have asked @senatemajldr Mitch McConnell not to delay, but to instead focus full time on approving my outstanding nominee to the United States Supreme Court, Amy Coney Barrett."

Trump said he is rejecting congressional Democrats' request for a \$2.4 trillion COVID-19 relief bill, which he claims would be used to bailout Democrat states with high crime.

US Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin held talks Monday and Tuesday regarding a new COVID-19 relief bill.

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.

The US Dow Jones industrial average stock index plunged after Trump's tweet rejecting the \$2.4 trillion COVID-19 relief bill. As of around 3:20 p.m. EST (7:20p.m. GMT), the Dow was down 360 points (-1.28%), about 30 minutes after the tweet.

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US Must Accept Dialogue Will Not Work With China - White House National Security Adviser

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - US National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien said on Tuesday that it is time to recognize that a dialogue will not convince China to change its behavior and demonstrations of strength are safer than weaknesses.

"The time has come to accept that dialogue and agreements will not persuade or compel The People's Republic of China to change. There is nothing to be gained by looking the other way or turning the other cheek. We have been doing it for too long," O'Brien said at the Stewart Security Summit.

Describing China as an existential and generational challenge, he praised US President Donald Trump for standing up to the Chinese, protecting "the American people, the American homeland and our way of life."

"We must promote American prosperity, practice peace through strength and advance American influence in the world. Under President Trump's leadership that's exactly what we have done," O'Brien said.

He expressed certainty that an approach based on strength and efforts to protect national interests will not lead to a confrontation with China, unlike a path of weakness which, according to O'Brien, will only invite "further encroachments on our national interest potentially leading to conflict."

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US Granted Oil Companies Relief on Royalty Rates Without Determining if Needed - Watchdog

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - The US Department of the Interior gave oil companies in the United States relief on royalty rates for using public lands without determining if it was needed due to disruptions caused by the novel coronavirus pandemic, the Government Accountability Office said in a report on Tuesday.

"During March through June 2020, BLM [Bureau of Land Management] gave companies the opportunity to apply for a reduction in the royalty rates for certain oil and gas leases on federal lands. BLM approved reductions from 12.5 percent of total revenue on oil and gas sold from those leases to an average of less than 1 percent for a period of 60 days," the release said. "However, BLM did not establish in advance that royalty relief was needed to keep applicants' wells operating, according to BLM officials."

The reduction in royalty rates was intended to help struggling oil companies keep oil and gas wells open in order to prevent permanent losses of recoverable oil and gas, the report said. However, the report pointed out that the Bureau of Land Management never assessed the extent to which the policy kept oil and gas companies from shutting down their wells or the amount of royalty revenues waived by the US federal government.

Earlier on Tuesday, the Energy Information Administration said in a statement that US crude oil production is expected to slow to 11.5 million barrels daily in 2020 and 11.1 million in 2021, from 12.2 million in 2019, due to disruptions caused by the novel coronavirus pandemic.

US crude oil production hit a record high of 13.1 million barrels daily in mid-March just before the novel coronavirus pandemic peaked.

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Pence Not in Close Contact With Trump, White House Staff Who Tested Positive - Physician

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - US Vice President Mike Pence has not been in close contact with President Donald Trump or other White House personnel who tested positive for the novel coronavirus, White House Physician Jesse Schonau said in the memorandum on Tuesday.

"Vice President Mike Pence is not in close contact with any individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19, including President Donald J. Trump and senior members of the White House administration, according to the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)," Schonau

said. "Vice President Mike Pence is encouraged to go about his normal activities and does not need to quarantine."

On Monday, White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany said she tested positive for the novel coronavirus, but so far has experienced no symptoms.

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.

On Friday, Trump was admitted to the Walter Reed Medical Center for treatment after reporting that he tested positive for the novel coronavirus, but was discharged from the hospital and returned to the White House yesterday.

Trump said earlier in the day that he looks forward to participating in the debate with Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden in Miami, Florida, on October 15.

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**US Extends Venezuela Sanctions Again to Block Creditors From Seizing CITGO - Treasury**

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - The United States has again delayed a measure preventing bondholders of seizing majority ownership of the US-based petroleum refiner and marketer CITGO, which was pledged as collateral in a earlier bond sale by Venezuela's state owned oil company PDVSA, the US Treasury Department announced in a notice on Wednesday.

"All transactions related to, the provision of financing for, and other dealings in the Petr6leos de Venezuela, S.A. 2020 8.5 Percent Bond that would be prohibited by Subsection I(a)(iii) of Executive Order (E.O.) 13835 of May 21, 2018," the notice said.

PDVSA defaulted on an 8.5 percent bond that had been secured with a majority stake in CITGO, prompting the Treasury Department to impose sanctions that block bondholders from gaining majority ownership of CITGO. The sanctions were originally set to expire this month. Venezuelan President Nicholas Maduro, which the United States has sought to remove from office, claims Washington is trying to steal CITGO.

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**UN Chief Concerned by Reopening of Varosha, Warns Against Unilateral Steps - Spokesman**

UNITED NATIONS, October 6 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres expressed concern over the opening of the coastline area in the town of Varosha and warned against unilateral actions that could trigger tensions between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in a statement on Tuesday.

Earlier in the day, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced that the partially-recognized Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) is reopening the coastline of Varosha, abandoned since the Turkish invasion in 1974.

"The Secretary-General is concerned by the announcement made today on the opening of the beach/coastline of Varosha," Dujarric said. "The Secretary-General stresses the need to avoid any unilateral actions that could trigger tensions on the island and undermine the return to dialogue or the future success of talks."

Guterres recalled that the UN position on Varosha remains unchanged and is guided by relevant UN Security Council resolutions stating that attempts to settle Varosha by people other than its inhabitants are inadmissible, Dujarric said.

The UN chief also called on all parties to resolve their differences through dialogue and reaffirmed his readiness to bring them together, the spokesman added.

After Turkey sent its forces in 1974 to allegedly protect the Turkish Cypriot population, the island has been de facto split into two parts, with the Turkish one being recognized solely by Ankara. One of the many casualties of that arrangement is Famagusta's Varosha, a once-popular resort that has turned into a ghost town.

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Russians Not US Friends, But Areas Exist for Cooperation - White House Security Adviser

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - While Russia is not a friend of the United States there are areas where the two nations can collaborate, US National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien said on Tuesday.

"They [Russians] are not our friends but there are areas where we can cooperate with the Russians," O'Brien said at a security summit. "We'd like to get an arms control deal with them." Last week, O'Brien met with Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev in Geneva to discuss a number of issues, including arms control, cybersecurity, elections non-interference, counterterrorism, the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, Syria, Afghanistan among others. O'Brien said he delivered a strong message to his Russian counterpart on election interference. He said China, Iran and other countries are also looking to influence the US elections. "When it comes to our elections, we are going to keep a close eye on it," he said. "I think we are going to do fine come November 3 but it's something we have to keep an eye on."

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US, Russia to Suspend Probe Into Russian Uranium Imports for 20 Years - Commerce Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - The United States and Russia have extended a deal to suspend antidumping investigation into Russian uranium imports for another 20 years and at the

same time reduce US reliance on Russian uranium, the Commerce Department said in a statement on Tuesday.

"The US Department of Commerce and the State Atomic Energy Corporation Rosatom, on behalf of the Government of the Russian Federation, have signed a final amendment to the Agreement Suspending the Antidumping Investigation on Uranium from the Russian Federation. This amendment extends the Agreement through 2040 and reduces US reliance on uranium from Russia during that time period," the statement said.

The antidumping investigation was originally suspended with a 1992 agreement that set a 20 percent limit on Russian-supplied uranium to the United States. That agreement was to have expired on December 31, 2020.

The Commerce Department said the 20-year extension announced on Tuesday will drop the amount of Russian imports to 15 percent of the US supply in 2028.

In addition, US companies will be allowed to honor pre-existing contracts to purchase uranium from Russian companies, it added.

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#### US Places Restrictions on Companies Hiring Foreign Workers With H-1B Visas - DHS

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - The Trump administration has placed restrictions on companies in the United States hiring foreign workers with H-1B visas in order to protect US workers, the Department of Homeland Security said in a press release on Tuesday.

"Today the US Department of Homeland Security announced an interim final rule (IFR) that strengthens the H-1B nonimmigrant visa program to protect US workers, restores integrity to the H-1B program and better guarantees that H-1B petitions are approved only for qualified beneficiaries and petitioners," the release said.

The H-1B visa allows US employers to hire temporary foreign workers in specialty occupations. The release said the US government will close loopholes that permitted employers to hire foreign workers for lower wages instead of Americans.

Moreover, the release said the new rule will also ensure US employers are in compliance through worksite inspections.

The new rule will go into effect in two months, the release said.

The Trump administration believes the H-1B visa has displaced US workers and led to reduced wages in a number of industries in the US labor market, the release added.

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#### US Oil Output Seen Slowing to 11.1Mln Barrels Daily by 2021 - Energy Agency

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - US crude oil production is expected to slow to 11.5 million barrels daily in 2020 and 11.1 million in 2021, from 12.2 million in 2019, from disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the Energy Information Administration said on Tuesday.

"The Short-Term Energy Outlook remains subject to heightened levels of uncertainty because mitigation and reopening efforts related to COVID-19 continue to evolve," the agency said in a statement. "On an annual average basis, EIA expects US crude oil production to fall from 12.2 million b/d in 2019 to 11.5 million b/d in 2020 and 11.1 million b/d in 2021."

US crude oil production hit a record high of 13.1 million barrels daily in mid-March just before the coronavirus outbreak peaked. In separate data issued at the end last month, the EIA estimated output at 10.7 million barrels daily for the week ended September 25.

The COVID-19 pandemic and concerns of oversupply has upended the US and global oil industry since the first quarter, driving crude prices down 35 percent on the year.

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Canada's Trade Deficit Narrowed in August as Int'l Trade Slowed - Statistics Agency

TORONTO, October 6 (Sputnik) - Canada's trade deficit narrowed to \$1.81 billion from \$1.88 after international merchandise trade recovery slowed during the month of August, Statistics Canada said in a statement on Monday.

By comparison, Canadian merchandise imports and exports grew by double digits in June and July.

"After two months of strong growth, Canadian merchandise exports and imports stabilized in August. Imports fell 1.2 percent, while exports were down 1.0 percent. As a result, Canada's merchandise trade deficit with the world narrowed slightly, from \$2.5 billion [\$1.81 billion USD] in July to \$2.4 billion [\$1.88 billion USD] in August," the statement said.

Imports remain 5.1 percent below pre-pandemic levels, while exports are down 7 percent from February's figures.

The decline in imports was driven by a reduced demand for aircraft and other transportation equipment and parts – down 25.3 percent - as well metal and non-metallic mineral products, in particular gold, silver and platinum.

Meanwhile, a 9.5 percent drop in the exports of passenger cars and light trucks and a 14.5 percent drop in aircraft and other transportation equipment and parts deliveries, predominantly to Saudi Arabia contributed to the 1 percent drop in exports.

Economists have pointed to increasing number of signs that Canada's economic recovery has been stalling, with retail sales significantly slowing in July following a report that 56,296 businesses closed in June.

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Brent Oil to Average \$41 in 2020, \$47 in 2021 as COVID-19 Depresses Markets - Energy Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 4 (Sputnik) - Average spot prices for Brent oil will likely average \$41.19 for all of 2020, revised downward from the \$41.9 price forecast in September, according to the Short Term Energy Outlook published by the Energy Information Administration (EIA) on Tuesday.

"EIA forecasts monthly Brent spot prices will average \$42/b during the fourth quarter of 2020 and will rise to an average of \$47/b in 2021," the report said.

Last month's report predicted an average 2021 price of \$49.

The downward revisions reflected depressed economic activity due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which the latest report said will likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

The report also predicted US oil output would decline for the second consecutive year in 2021.

On an annual average basis, EIA expects US crude oil production to fall from 12.2 million barrels per day (b/d) in 2019 to 11.5 million b/d in 2020 and 11.1 million b/d in 2021, the report said.

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Syria's Food Prices at Record High Levels, More Than Tripled Over Past Year - UN Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, October 6 (Sputnik) - The United Nations expressed concern about the record increase in food prices in Syria that have more than tripled over the last year, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in a press briefing on Tuesday.

"We are increasingly concerned by the impact of the ongoing economic downturn in the country, including rising food prices," Dujarric said. "Basic food items are now out of reach for many families with food prices at record levels after more than tripling in the past year."

Dujarric said that in some areas of the country, where 11 million people are already in urgent need of aid, families have to wait in lines for hours to purchase subsidized necessities, such as bread and fuel.

In addition, at a time when the novel coronavirus cases in Syria are on the rise, the prices of protective masks and gloves have increased by 300 percent, and sanitizer prices have gone up by over 200 percent, the spokesman said.

He added that while a record 9.3 million people are already food insecure in the country, more than 2 million more people could be pushed further into hunger without future support.

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US Homeland Security Says Russia, China Pose Major Threats to US Security

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) – The United States considers Russia, China and White supremacists among major threats to its national security, the Department of Homeland Security said in a new report published on Tuesday.

"China, Russia, and Iran may seek to use cyber capabilities to compromise or disrupt critical infrastructure used to support the 2020 elections and may also use influence measures in an attempt to sway the preferences and perceptions of US voters," the report said, adding that white supremacists remain the greatest domestic threat.

DHS warned that Russia can disrupt or damage US critical infrastructure networks via cyber-attacks.

"Russian state-affiliated actors will continue targeting US industry and all levels of government with intrusive cyber espionage to access economic, policy, and national security information to further the Kremlin's strategic interests," it added.

Moscow can use a range of capabilities including social engineering, publicly known software and hardware vulnerabilities, poorly configured networks, the report noted.

The United States is set to hold a presidential election on November 3. The US government has accused Russia of meddling in the United States' political process during the 2016 presidential election and to a lesser extent in the 2020 election. Russia has repeatedly denied the allegations, saying they were invented to excuse the election loss of Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton and to deflect public attention from actual instances of election fraud and corruption.

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Senior US Military Leaders Quarantining After Coast Guard Vice Chief Infected - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - Several senior US military leaders are self-quarantining after meeting with the vice commander of the Coast Guard, who recently tested positive for the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), Pentagon spokesperson Jonathan Hoffman said in a statement on Tuesday.

"We are aware that Vice Commandant [Charles] Ray has tested positive for COVID-19 and that he was at the Pentagon last week for meetings with other senior military leaders," Hoffman said in the release. "Some meeting attendees included other Service Chiefs ... Out of an abundance of caution, all potential close contacts from these meetings are self-quarantining and have been tested this morning."

The release said no Pentagon officials who were in contact with Ray have shown COVID-19 symptoms, and no other senior leaders in the Defense Department have until now tested positive for the disease.

CNN, citing several US defense officials, reported that Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mark Milley, Chief of Staff of the US Air Force Charles Brown, Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Michael Gilday, and Chief of Space Operations General John Raymon are among those required to self-quarantine after being exposed to Ray.

Earlier on Tuesday, the Coast Guard said in a press release that the vice commander tested positive for COVID-19 on Monday after he had experienced mild symptoms over the weekend. He is currently quarantining from home, the release said.

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US Needs to Worry About Avoiding Recession, Not Debt - Fed Chairman Powell

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - US policymakers cannot unduly worry about the unsustainable federal debt because a further slowdown due to COVID-19 could spark recessionary dynamics, Federal Reserve Chairman Jay Powell said.

"Having the debt grow faster than the economy is sort of by definition unsustainable in the long run," Powell said during a live-streamed speech to the National Association for Business Economics. "I would also say this is not the time to give priority to those concerns. The time to do that is when the economy is strong and unemployment is low. A second risk is that a prolonged slowing in the pace of improvement over time could trigger typical recessionary dynamics, as weakness feeds on weakness."

The US economy shrank at its fastest pace in history in the second quarter of 2020, contracting by 31.4 percent amid widespread lockdowns triggered by the pandemic. While economic data has been encouraging in recent months, recovery from the pandemic itself has remained spotty. The Congressional Budget Office has forecast that US debt will reach 19 percent of gross domestic product in 2050, up from 98 percent this year and 79 percent in 2019. That compares with the prior 2050 forecast of 180 percent from January, before the coronavirus pandemic struck the nation and spurred Congress to pass about \$3 trillion of stimulus.

Powell said US recovery from the pandemic had a long way to go, suggesting indirectly for more economic stimulus.

"At this early stage, I would argue that the risks of policy intervention are still asymmetric. Too little support would lead to a weak recovery, creating unnecessary hardship for households and businesses," he said. Over time, household insolvencies and business bankruptcies would rise, harming the productive capacity of the economy, and holding back wage growth. By contrast, the risks of overdoing it seem, for now, to be smaller. Even if policy actions ultimately prove to be greater than needed, they will not go to waste. The recovery will be stronger and move faster if monetary policy and fiscal policy continue to work side by side to provide support to the economy until it is clearly out of the woods."

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.

Republicans aligned with President Donald Trump and their Democrat rivals in Congress have been locked in a stalemate since on a successive package to the CARES, arguing over the size of the next relief, as thousands of Americans, particularly those in the airlines sector, risk losing their jobs without further aid.

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#### UN Chief Follows Protests in Kyrgyzstan, Calls For Utmost Restraint - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, October 6 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres closely follows the protests in Kyrgyzstan and urges all actors to show the utmost restraint and avoid violence, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in a statement on Tuesday.

The protests in the country erupted on Monday, in the wake of the October 4 parliamentary elections, leaving one person dead and over 600 injured.

"The Secretary-General is closely monitoring the situation in the Kyrgyz Republic," Dujarric said. "The Secretary-General regrets the loss of life and urges all involved to exercise the utmost restraint and refrain from violence.

Guterres has also called on all Kyrgyz actors to engage in dialogue and agree on a settlement within the constitutional framework, Dujarric said.

The United Nations is ready to assist toward a peaceful resolution of the crisis, including through its Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, the spokesman added.

On Monday, about 2,000 supporters of parties that did not make it to the republic's parliament in Bishkek gathered on the central Ala-Too square. They demanded that election results be canceled and a repeat vote be held. In the evening, clashes between protesters and security officials began.

Overnight to Tuesday, protesters broke into the White House building, which hosts the parliament and presidential office. Then they moved towards the State Committee for National Security, where the former leader of the country, Almazbek Atambayev, was in custody, and freed him.

According to the preliminary voting results, after processing ballots from 98 percent of polling stations, four parties make it to the parliament: Birimdik (Unity, pro-government party) with 24.52% of the vote, Mekenim Kyrgyzstan (Native Kyrgyzstan, pro-government party) with 23.89%, Kyrgyzstan (centrist party) with 8.73% and Butun Kyrgyzstan (United Kyrgyzstan, centrist party) with 7.11%.

The remaining parties did not overcome the 7 percent threshold.

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#### UNICEF Says 4 Kids Reportedly Killed, 7 Wounded in Nagorno-Karabakh Fighting

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) said in a statement on Tuesday that it is aware of reports of four children killed and seven more injured during hostilities in the area of Nagorno-Karabakh.

"It is now 10 days since violence escalated dramatically in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone. There are already reports of four children killed and seven injured, and without an end to the fighting, these figures will tragically increase," UNICEF said.

It urged all parties to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure from further harm, in line with international and humanitarian law. "An immediate cessation of hostilities is in the best interest of every child," UNICEF added.

The situation in Nagorno-Karabakh escalated on September 27 when Azerbaijan launched a "counteroffensive" against what it calls is Armenian occupation of the region. Nagorno-Karabakh has accused Azerbaijan of unilaterally violating the 1994 OSCE-mediated ceasefire and attacking civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Turkey has been suspected of inflaming the situation by deploying mercenaries from territories in the northern Syria under its control.

The international community, including the OSCE Minsk Group - Russia, the United States and France- have urged the warring sides to cease hostilities and engage in a dialogue without preconditions.

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WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - Several senior US military leaders are self-quarantining after meeting with the vice commander of the Coast Guard, who recently tested positive for the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), Pentagon spokesperson Jonathan Hoffman said in a statement on Tuesday.

"We are aware that Vice Commandant [Charles] Ray has tested positive for COVID-19 and that he was at the Pentagon last week for meetings with other senior military leaders," Hoffman said

in the release. "Some meeting attendees included other Service Chiefs ... Out of an abundance of caution, all potential close contacts from these meetings are self-quarantining and have been tested this morning."

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#### US Coast Guard Vice Commander Tests Positive for COVID-19 - Statement

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - US Coast Guard Vice Commander Charles Ray has tested positive for the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the Coast Guard said in a statement on Tuesday.

"On Monday, the Vice Commandant of the Coast Guard, Admiral Charles Ray, tested positive for COVID-19. He was tested the same day, after feeling mild symptoms over the weekend," the statement said.

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#### Trump's Physician Says US President Reported 'No Symptoms' on Tuesday - White House

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - White House physician Sean Conley said in a memorandum on Tuesday that President Donald Trump has no symptoms from the infection with the novel coronavirus.

"This morning the President's team of physicians met with him in the Residence," Conley said.

"He had a restful first night at home and today he report no symptoms."

Conley said Trump's vital signs and physical exam remain stable, adding that the US president is doing "extremely well."

On Friday, Trump was admitted to the Walter Reed Medical Center for treatment after reporting that he tested positive for the novel coronavirus, but was discharged from the hospital and returned to the White House on Monday.

Trump said earlier in the day that he looks forward to participating in the October 15 debate with Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden in Miami, Florida.

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#### China Should Immediately Allow UN Commissioner Access in Xinjiang Camps - Statement

UNITED NATIONS, October 6 (Sputnik) - China must immediately allow UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michele Bachelet to visit detention sites in Xinjiang to examine reports of

alleged violations against Uighurs and other religious minorities, a statement issued on behalf of 39 countries at the UN General Assembly Third Committee said on Tuesday.

"We are gravely concerned about the human rights situation in Xinjiang," the statement said.

"We call on China to allow immediate, meaningful and unfettered access to Xinjiang for independent observers including the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and her Office, and relevant special procedure mandate holders."

According to Germany's Ambassador to the United Nations Christoph Heusgen, UN member states have on multiple occasions asked the Chinese authorities to receive Bachelet in Xinjiang.

"What we are asking for is that the Human Rights Commissioner can go to Xinjiang and see all the places she chooses to see and [give] them a neutral, objective look," Heusgen told reporters. "The fact that China is not allowing this speaks for itself."

The international community has levied accusations against the Chinese authorities of oppression of ethnic Uyghurs. The US House of Representatives on September 22 passed legislation to ban imports of products made with what it called "forced labor" in Xinjiang amid accusations that Uyghurs are being held in detention camps.

The Chinese government has denied the charges, saying that the camps are to provide vocational and Chinese language training for Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities.

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US Congress Must Pass Laws to Fight Fake News, Social Media Ploys - Colorado Official

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - Congress should draft and debate new laws to fight fake news, election and misinformation coordinated by foreign governments and other entities, Colorado Secretary of State Jena Griswold said in written testimony to the US House of Representatives on Tuesday.

"Congress should consider legislation, like we are doing in Colorado, to combat deep fakes, election misinformation, and foreign coordination," Griswold told the US House Administration Subcommittee on Elections.

Griswold, a Democrat, also urged Congress to strip social media companies of the protections from prosecution they have enjoyed for nearly a quarter of a century in order to make them more responsible in monitoring third party content on their web sites.

"I also call on Congress to act to remove the artificial protections afforded to social media companies by ... 1996 Communications Decency Act. Social media companies are not neutral platforms and third-party content posted on their sites can promote ill-intentioned foreign activity. They should no longer be shielded from accountability," Griswold said.

While social media could be a tool for good, adversaries could also use it to their advantage with a precision never seen before, Griswold added.

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### Trump's Physician Says President Reported 'No Symptoms' on Tuesday - White House

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - White House physician Sean Conley in a memorandum on Tuesday said President Donald Trump has no symptoms of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

"This morning the President's team of physicians met with him in the Residence," Conley said. "He had a restful first night at home and today he report no symptoms."

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### COVID-19 Fears Swell Biden Lead to 12 Points in US State of Pennsylvania - Poll

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - Former Vice President Joe Biden's lead over incumbent President Donald Trump swelled to 12 points, triple last month's margin, as more voters trust Biden's ability to manage the novel coronavirus crisis, according to a Monmouth University Poll on Tuesday.

"Among all registered voters in Pennsylvania, the race for president stands at 54 percent for Biden and 42 percent for Trump. The results show a wider gap than Monmouth's poll one month ago, when Biden held a 49 percent to 45 percent lead among registered voters," a press release summarizing the poll said.

When asked about the pandemic, 52 percent of Pennsylvania voters said they trust Biden over Trump, who garnered just 32 percent support, the poll added.

Pennsylvania is one of a handful of US battleground states that Trump won by a slim margin in 2016 and needs to win again to remain in the White House, analysts say.

The poll found little differentiation in vote preferences before and after the president revealed he had contracted the novel coronavirus. Half of the poll's interviews were conducted on each side of Trump's early Friday morning announcement that he had tested positive.

"If any recent event moved the needle it was more likely last week's debate than the president's COVID-19 diagnosis," Monmouth Polling Institute Director Patrick Murray said in the release.

Before the president's diagnosis was made public, 52 percent trusted Biden more and 34 percent trusted Trump. After the news broke, it was 52 percent for Biden and 29 percent for Trump, the release said.

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### Nearly 40 Countries Call on China to Close Xinjiang 'Detention Camps' - German Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, October 6 (Sputnik) - A total of 39 countries at the UN General Assembly Third Committee called on China to close re-education camps in Xinjiang, German Ambassador to the United Nations Christoph Heusgen told reporters on Tuesday.

Earlier in the day, the United States, Canada, France, Italy, Japan and Spain, among others, issued a statement expressing concern about the human rights situation of Uighurs and other minorities in "a large network" of detention camps in Xinjiang.

"We request that China close the detention camps in Xinjiang, that China stops tearing down mosques, religious sites, that China stops forced labor, and that China also stops forced birth control," Heusgen said on behalf of the 39 UN member states.

More than a million people have been arbitrarily detained in Xinjiang camps and face severe restrictions on the freedoms of religion, movement and expression, as well as Uighur culture, the statement said.

In addition, an increasing number of reports suggest that authorities practice forced labor and forced birth control, including, sterilization, in the camps, the statement added and called on China to respect human rights and the rights of individuals belonging to religious and ethnic minorities.

China has denied the charges, saying the camps it built for Uighurs and other minorities were for vocational and Chinese language training.

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White House Staff to Be Protected Further After Trump's Infection- Communications Director

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - Essential staff around President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump will be protected further after the first couple reported to have tested positive for the novel coronavirus, White House Communications Director Alyssa Farah said on Tuesday.

"I could say at the White House, we always take precautions at the events we host, and I certainly think in light of the President's positive test and the First Lady, we're going to take even more for the time being to protect essential staff around him," Farah said during an appearance on Fox News.

On Friday, Trump was admitted to the Walter Reed Medical Center for treatment after reporting that he tested positive for the novel coronavirus, but was discharged from the hospital and returned to the White House yesterday. The First Lady said she quarantined at the White House and is exhibiting mild symptoms.

Trump said earlier in the day that looks forward to participating in the October 15 debate with Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden.

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### Twitter Flags Trump Post Claiming COVID-19 Less Lethal Than Seasonal Flu

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - Twitter flagged a post from President Donald Trump on Tuesday that claims the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is less lethal than the seasonal flu.

Twitter warns users that Trump's post violated the company's policy about spreading misinformation on COVID-19 that may be harmful.

"Flu season is coming up! Many people every year, sometimes over 100,000, and despite the Vaccine, die from the Flu. Are we going to close down our Country? No, we have learned to live with it, just like we are learning to live with COVID, in most populations far less lethal!!!" Trump said in his tweet.

Facebook removed the same post from its platform because it is company policy to remove what it calls COVID-19 related misinformation that may result in imminent physical harm.

On Thursday, Trump announced he tested positive for the novel coronavirus. The US president was treated and discharged from the Walter Reed Medical Center on Monday and continues to recover at the White House.

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### Biden Urges Turkey to Reverse Decision on Hagia Sophia, Return to Its Status as Museum

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - US Democratic Presidential candidate Joe Biden on Tuesday called on Turkey to reverse its decision to convert Hagia Sophia from museum to a mosque and return the national treasure to its former status as a museum.

"I...call on Turkish President Erdogan to reverse his recent decision to convert the Hagia Sophia to a mosque and to return this treasure to its former status as a museum, ensuring equal access for all, including the Orthodox faithful," Biden said in a statement.

The Trump administration should also must press Turkey to refrain from any further provocative actions in the region against Greece, he added.

The Chora Church, or Hagia Sophia, was originally built as a Christian church in the fourth century and is one of the oldest buildings in Istanbul.

The church was converted into a mosque in 1511 during the Ottoman Empire, but modern Turkey re-opened it as a museum in 1958.

The Turkish government again converted the church into a mosque in July. Many countries have criticized Turkey for its move, but Ankara said it views the matter as an internal affair.

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### Global Airlines Need Gov't Aid to Survive Prolonged COVID-19 Slump - Trade Group

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - Fading recovery prospects for air travel this winter threatens global airlines with a severe cash crunch and further downsizing, unless governments step in to help the industry survive the novel coronavirus pandemic intact, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) warned in a press release on Tuesday.

"Historically, cash generated during the peak summer season helps to support airlines through the leaner winter months," IATA Director Alexandre de Juniac said in the release. "And with no timetable for governments to reopen borders without travel-killing quarantines, we cannot rely on a year-end holiday season bounce to provide a bit of extra cash to tide us over until the spring."

Existing aid valued at \$160 billion is beginning to run out and airlines have already cut costs 50 percent and burned through \$51 billion in cash with revenues down nearly 80 percent, the release said.

With the crisis "deeper and longer than any of us could have imagined," IATA predicted airlines will burn through an additional \$77 billion in the second half of 2020 and a further \$60-70 billion in 2021.

Without additional government aid, IATA said fallout from industry downsizing could threaten 46 million jobs and global economic losses of \$1.8 trillion as the measures to contain the pandemic unleashes an "unforgiving cycle" of further downsizings.

The IATA predicted that airlines would not achieve a positive cash flow until 2022 at the earliest, depending on the course of the pandemic.

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**Biden Expresses Support for NATO Efforts to 'Defuse Tensions in Eastern Mediterranean'**

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - Democratic Presidential nominee Joe Biden on Tuesday expressed support for the efforts by NATO to ease tensions in the eastern Mediterranean and avoid conflict between alliance members Greece and Turkey.

"I support the efforts of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and our European allies, as well as the United States, to defuse tensions in the eastern Mediterranean and avoid a conflict from emerging within NATO," Biden said in a statement.

Regional tensions flared up as Turkish vessels conduct seismic exploration surveys in waters that both Greece and Cyprus claim to be part of their respective exclusive economic zones. Biden said he urges resolving the disagreement peacefully while respecting and protecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries.

The agreement on a military deconfliction mechanism and the resumption of diplomatic talks between Greece and Turkey are welcome steps in the right direction, Biden added.

On Monday, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg visited Turkey for talks with the country's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu. Stoltenberg praised Turkey's contributions to NATO and reiterated the alliance's commitment to defusing the tensions in the region.

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Trump Improving Dramatically, Quickly But Not Out of Woods Yet - White House

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump is recovering "dramatically and quickly" from his coronavirus infection although he is "not out of the woods yet," White House Communications Director Alyssa Farah said on Tuesday.

"The president is improving dramatically and quickly but listen, we understand he's not out of the woods. He's continuing to be monitored by his doctor and medical team here," Farah told Fox News. Trump was admitted to Washington's Walter Reed military hospital on Friday after being declared COVID-19 positive and returned to the White House on Monday. He said he plans to return to the campaign trail and participate in a October 15 debate with his Democratic challenger Joe Biden for November's presidential election.

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Trump Says 'Looking Forward' to October 15 Debate With Democratic Nominee Biden

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that he looks forward to participating in the October 15 presidential debate with Democratic nominee Joe Biden, and added that he feels great after being treated for the novel coronavirus and released from hospital.

"I am looking forward to the debate on the evening of Thursday, October 15th in Miami. It will be great!," Trump said. "FEELING GREAT!"

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US Counselor Brechbuhl Visiting Mexico, Panama to Discuss Commerce, Migration- State Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 5 (Sputnik) - US Department of State Counselor Ulrich Brechbuhl is visiting Mexico, Panama and Uruguay October 6-9 to discuss commercial relations, immigration and the response to the novel coronavirus pandemic, a US State Department announced in a release on Tuesday.

"In Mexico, Counselor Brechbuhl will meet with Foreign Minister Ebrard to discuss Mexico's continued commitment to addressing irregular migration, economic integration, and the need for Mexico to comply with its water treaty obligations," the release said. "The Counselor will also discuss combating transnational crime."

The State Department said Brechbuhl will then head to Panama to meet with a number of officials to address US-Panama cooperation on COVID-19 assistance, investment and efforts to combat money laundering.

"Counselor Brechbuhl will also preside over a donation of 50 additional ventilators from the United States Agency for International Development to the people of Panama," the release said. During his final stop in Uruguay, Brechbuhl will meet with Foreign Minister Francisco Bustillo to talk about opportunities to boost commercial ties and security collaboration, the release said. "The Counselor will also discuss the Foreign Minister's upcoming trip to Washington," the release added.

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UK, Canada Issue Joint Appeal for Peace, Comprehensive Political Solution in Karabakh

TORONTO, October 6 (Sputnik) - Canada's Foreign Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne and his British counterpart Dominic Raab on Tuesday issued a joint statement calling for an end to hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh and a search for a comprehensive political solution to the conflict there.

"Canada and the United Kingdom reiterate the urgent need to end the continuing military action in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone. We are particularly concerned by reports of shelling of civilian areas and wish to express our condolences to the families of those who have tragically lost their lives. The parties to the conflict must stop the violence and respect the ceasefire agreement," the statement said.

The two officials supported the statements made by the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group - Russia, the United States and France - and urged all external stakeholders to redouble their efforts in support of an end to hostilities and to refrain from taking actions that risk exacerbating the crisis.

"A comprehensive resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is overdue. That can only be delivered through a negotiated settlement and not through military action. All parties must urgently return to the negotiating table to work toward this aim without preconditions," the statement said.

The situation in Nagorno-Karabakh escalated on September 27 when Azerbaijan launched a "counteroffensive" against what it calls is Armenian occupation of the region. Nagorno-Karabakh has accused Azerbaijan of unilaterally violating the 1994 OSCE-mediated ceasefire and attacking civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Turkey has been suspected of inflaming the situation by deploying mercenaries from territories in the northern Syria under its control.

The international community, including the OSCE Minsk Group have urged the warring sides to cease hostilities and engage in a dialogue without preconditions.

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#### Pompeo Presses Quad Countries to Step up Collaboration Against China

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Tuesday urged Washington's East Asian allies Japan, Australia and India to step up collaboration in response to China's activities in the region.

"I also look forward to resolving – to renewing our resolve to protect our precious freedoms and the sovereignty of the diverse nations of the region," Pompeo said at the start of a meeting of the so-called Quad group of countries, or Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) in Tokyo. "As partners in this Quad, it is more critical now than ever that we collaborate to protect our people and partners from the CCP's exploitation, corruption, and coercion."

Pompeo cited China's activities in the East China Sea, the Mekong, the Himalayas and the Taiwan Straits as "examples" of the country's malign behavior.

The United States has been concerned over China's activity in the South China Sea, the Arctic region, and its Belt and Road Initiative to gain an economic influence around the world.

Moreover, relations between the United States and China have significantly deteriorated under the current Trump administration following accusations Beijing engaged in unfair trade practices and made a poor effort to contain the COVID-19 outbreak.

In June, US President Donald Trump signed into law the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act that allows the US government to impose sanctions over alleged human rights violations of the Muslim Uyghur minority in China.

The Quad is an informal consultative mechanism to oppose the aspiration of China to establish control over strategic routes throughout the East Asian region and the South China Sea in particular.

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#### US Goods and Services Deficit Worsens By \$3.7Bln to \$67.1Bln in Aug - Commerce Dept

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - The US goods and services deficit rose by \$3.7 billion to \$67.1 billion in August, a bureau within the Commerce Department said Tuesday, as economic recovery remained spotty amid a new wave of coronavirus infections.

"The goods and services deficit was \$67.1 billion in August, up \$3.7 billion from \$63.4 billion in July," the Census Bureau said in a news release. "August exports were \$171.9 billion, \$3.6 billion more than July exports. August imports were \$239.0 billion, \$7.4 billion more than July imports."

The data came amid a steady wave of new US coronavirus cases after the March-May peak, with President Donald Trump and a string of White House staffers among the latest infected.

More than 7 million Americans had contracted the COVID-19 this year and over 200,000 had died as a result.

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

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#### Global Economy Faces 'Difficult Climb' Toward Recovery – IMF Chief

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - The global economy has fared better than expected during the coronavirus pandemic but faces a steep upward path toward full recovery, International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said on Tuesday during a virtual event hosted by the London School of Economics.

"We now estimate that developments in the second and third quarters were somewhat better than expected, allowing for a small upward revision to our global forecast for 2020," Georgieva said. "The global economy is coming back from the depths of the crisis. But this calamity is far from over. All countries are now facing what I would call 'The Long Ascent' — a difficult climb that will be long, uneven, and uncertain. And prone to setbacks."

Despite some improvements, key downside risks remain and the IMF continues to project a partial and uneven recovery for 2021, Georgieva said.

"We estimate that global public debt will reach a record-high of about 100 percent of GDP in 2020," she said.

The IMF and the World Bank Group will conduct annual meetings in a virtual format next week.

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#### Pompeo Expects to Reach Cost-Sharing Deal With Japan on US Troop Presence

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in an interview with Japan's NHK broadcaster on Tuesday that he anticipates the United States will reach a cost-sharing deal with Japan on the presence of US troops in the country.

When asked how much Washington would ask Japan to pay to support the US troops presence in the country, Pompeo said, "There's no number that I'm prepared to talk about or share today. We will come to an arrangement where each of our two countries exhibits the – its goodwill, and I am confident that to be good partners and work alongside each other, to get the outcomes that our two countries need – we will share this tax. We will share this burden in a way that I think each country will find fair and equitable. I'm highly confident that we'll resolve this."

Pompeo added that the issue would not be resolved today, but rather during the course of "serious conversations" that will be held over the coming weeks and months.

The United States under President Donald Trump has ramped up pressure on nations hosting US bases to share a larger part of the financial burden, specifically South Korea and Japan. In June last year, John Bolton visited the two allies while still serving as national security adviser, with reports claiming he demanded leadership of both countries to increase spending by up to 500 percent.

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#### Pompeo Presses Asian Allies to 'Be Forceful' in Response to China's Military Operations

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo during a visit to Asia on Tuesday called on Washington's allies in the region to build deeper collaboration and be more "forceful" toward China in response to the country's military operations in the South China Sea.

"Weakness provokes bullies, that is appeasement rewards those who act in ways that are coercive and use military might as opposed to diplomatic tools to resolve conflict," Pompeo told NHK in an interview in Tokyo, when asked about China's recent military operations in the South China Sea. "The answer to that is to be forceful in our response, to be direct about our expectations, and to work with like-minded nations all across the world to oppose those who want to use military power or coercion."

China claims the South China Sea as sovereign territory and has built military bases on artificial islands. The United States views the sea as an international waterway and routinely defies China with patrols by US and allied warships in so-called freedom of navigation exercises. Pompeo met earlier in Tuesday in Tokyo with Japan's Prime Minister Suga and other senior officials before joining a meeting of the so-called Quad countries - the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue comprising the US, India, Japan and Australia.

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#### 2020 US Election

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump left the hospital after three days of COVID-19 treatment and defiantly called on Americans not to be afraid of the virus, while Democratic candidate Joe Biden's lead in the polls widened.

#### 'DON'T FEAR THE VIRUS'

Trump left the Walter Reed hospital Monday evening and returned to the White House, where he took off his protective mask and posed for photos from the second-floor Truman balcony. "Don't let it dominate you. Don't be afraid of it," Trump said in a video clip he posted on Twitter less than two hours after being released from the hospital. "You are going to beat it. We have the best medical equipment and the best medicines."

White House physician Sean Conley told reporters earlier that Trump has not entirely recovered yet, but 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.

White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany said she tested positive for COVID-19, but so far has experienced no symptoms. Two other White House press officers also tested positive for the disease, CNN reported Monday, citing two sources.

#### TRUMP TO PARTICIPATE IN NEXT DEBATE

Despite contracting COVID-19, 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.

Last Tuesday's first presidential debate was widely criticized for being chaotic and negative.

Trump interrupted his rival Biden several times during the event.

#### BIDEN WIDENS POLL LEAD

Biden's lead over Trump nationally has surpassed the 8-percent mark, a FiveThirtyEight news site poll revealed on Monday.

FiveThirtyEight gave Biden 50.9 percent support compared to only 42.7 percent for Trump. The results marked a small but clear increase in support for Biden of around one percent since last Tuesday's debate.

US voters say the economy will be the most important issue as they cast their ballots in the November 3 presidential election, a new Gallup poll showed on Monday.

#### BIDEN CAMPAIGNS IN FLORIDA

Biden criticized Trump's record in failing to protect the 40-million strong Hispanic American community from a disproportionate impact and death toll in the COVID-19 pandemic and for the failure of his policies on Cuba in a speech in the Little Havana section of Miami.

Biden said Hispanic Americans were contracting COVID-19 at three times the national average and that their deaths from the virus were also disproportionately high.

He also criticized Trump's tough isolating policies on Cuba saying they had failed to force the Havana government to become more moderate.

The Cuban-American community in Florida overwhelmingly supported Trump when he narrowly won the state in the 2016 presidential election. Biden leads in Florida by two percent, according to poll aggregator Realclearpolitics.com.

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#### UPDATE 3 - Trump Leaves Walter Reed Hospital to Return to White House

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump has left Walter Reed Medical Center and is on his way to the White House where he will continue to recover from the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

Trump walked out of the hospital Monday afternoon with a face mask on and waved at the media.

Trump was later seen at the White house pulling off his protective mask as he posed for photos atop the Truman Balcony, NBC News reported.

In a video message less than 2 hours after being released from the hospital Trump said Americans should not be afraid because the US has the best medical equipment and medicines in the world.

He also said that vaccines to fight the disease will be coming "momentarily."

"We're going back to work," Trump said and vowed that they were going to "beat" COVID-19.

Trump said he had to "stand out front" as the country's leader despite the risks.

"And now I'm better. Maybe I am immune. I don't know," Trump said.

Trump, repeating what he said in a tweet earlier in the day, said he feels better than he did 20 years ago.

Earlier on Monday, Trump's medical team told reporters that the president has met all the criteria to be discharged from the hospital and that his condition has improved since he was diagnosed late Thursday.

Trump in a tweet posted about 20 minutes before leaving the hospital said he will be back on the campaign trail "soon."

The president is also expected to participate in the next presidential debate scheduled on October 15 in Miami, Florida, according to the Trump campaign communications director Tim Murtaugh.

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#### IMF Approves 6-Month Debt Relief Extension for 28 Low-Income Countries - Statement

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said in a statement that it has approved a six-month debt relief extension for 28 low-income countries.

"The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved on October 2, 2020 a second six-month tranche of debt service relief for 28 member countries under the Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust (CCRT)," the release said on Monday.

The release said the debt relief will help these countries free up limited financial resources for crucial emergency medical needs and other relief efforts.

The CCRT needs about \$1.4 billion to provide debt relief services for a maximum of two years, but has only received one-third of the amount from several donor countries.

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#### UPDATE 2 - Trump Leaves Walter Reed Hospital to Return to White House

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump has left Walter Reed Medical Center and is on his way to the White House where he will continue to recover from the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

Trump walked out of the hospital Monday afternoon with a face mask on and waved at the media.

Trump was later seen at the White house pulling off his protective mask as he posed for photos atop the Truman Balcony, NBC News reported.

Earlier on Monday, Trump's medical team told reporters that the president has met all the criteria to be discharged from the hospital and that his condition has improved since he was diagnosed late Thursday.

Trump in a tweet posted about 20 minutes before leaving the hospital said he will be back on the campaign trail "soon."

The president is also expected to participate in the next presidential debate scheduled on October 15 in Miami, Florida, according to the Trump campaign communications director Tim Murtaugh.

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IMF Adds 6-Month Extension of Higher Access Limits Amid Pandemic Disruptions - Statement

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund will provide a six-month extension of high access limits for financial support during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the institution said in a press release.

"They supported the proposal for a six-month extension of higher access limits under the regular window of the RFI [Rapid Financing Instrument] and the exogenous shocks window of the RCF [Rapid Credit Facility], with annual and cumulative access limits remaining at 100 percent of quota and 150 percent of quota, respectively, through April 6, 2021," the release said on Monday.

The release added there was broad agreement on the executive board that the extension was justified to provide the IMF with flexibility to support urgent balance of payments needs due to pandemic-related economic disruptions.

The release said that as of August 31, 69 members have received financial support through the IMF's emergency financing instruments since the beginning of the pandemic. Three-quarters of the member states received support at the higher levels made possible by the increase in the access limits, the release said.

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**Nebenzia Says West Uses OPCW as Instrument of Political Pressure on 'Undesirable' States**

UNITED NATIONS, October 6 (Sputnik) - Western countries increasingly use the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to exert political pressure on "undesirable" countries, such as in the case of Russia over allegations opposition figure Alexey Navalny was poisoned, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said.

"The [OPCW] Technical Secretary is becoming more and more an instrument of the West in its information and political pressure on undesirable countries," Nebenzia said on Monday. "This conclusion reinforces the [OPCW Technical] Secretariat's involvement in the anti-Russian campaigns. We saw this earlier in the case of the Skripals, questions about which are still in the air and have remained unanswered. Today, the same is unfolding before our very eyes around the alleged poisoning of Navalny in Russia."

Nebenzia pointed out that at the first call for technical assistance from Western countries, the OPCW Technical Secretariat "obediently launches an investigation in the way in which political conclusions have already been drawn regarding the presence of some irrefutable evidence."

Earlier on Monday, Belgium, France, Germany, Estonia, the United Kingdom and the United States objected to OPCW first Director-General Jose Bustani participating in the UN Security Council meeting. Russia invited Bustani to brief the UN Security Council on the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Bustani, a Brazilian diplomat, led the OPCW from 1997 to 2002 and served as the organization's first director-general. His early departure from the OPCW was on the initiative of the United States.

Bustani said the United States expressed dissatisfaction with his work after he had invited Iraq to join the OPCW given that membership would prevent US plans to overthrow Saddam Hussein.

Nebenzia presides over the UN Security Council during the month of October.

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RPT - IMF Projects Brazil's Economy Will Shrink by 5.8% in 2020 - Statement

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - Brazil's economy is projected to shrink by 5.8 percent this year due to the restrictive measures in response to the novel coronavirus pandemic, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said in a press release.

"The economy is projected to shrink by 5.8 percent in 2020," the release said on Monday.

The IMF further projects that Brazil will then experience a partial recovery of up to 2.8 percent in 2021, the release added.

Nearly 12 million people in Brazil have lost their jobs between February and July, according to the release.

The Brazilian authorities have reported more than 4.8 million coronavirus cases and more than 140,000 virus-related deaths.

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Biden Courts Florida Hispanic Community, Hits Trump Record on COVID-19 - Speech

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik) - Hispanic Americans were dying at three times the national average from the novel coronavirus disease (COVID -19) as a consequence of President Donald Trump's policies in response to the pandemic, while his actions on Cuba had only left the government there stronger and more repressive, Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden said in a speech in Miami.

"The infection rate among Hispanics is almost three times higher [than the national average]. More than 40,000 Hispanics have died from COVID-19," Biden said in his speech on Monday. Biden was speaking in the Little Havana district of Miami. The Cuban-American community in Florida overwhelmingly supported Trump when he narrowly won the state in the 2016 presidential election.

Biden also slammed the president's policies on Cuba saying they had failed for four years.

"The administration's policy is not working. There are more political prisoners [in Cuba] than there were four years ago. Russia is an increasing presence in Miami. ... It is unconscionable to send Cubans back to Cuba. Almost 10,000 Cuban refugees are languishing on the Mexican border because the administration is not processing visas," Biden said.

Florida, with 29 Electoral College votes, is one of the four most populous states in the United States and a must-win for Trump in his plans to be re-elected on November 3.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, October 6 (Sputnik)

TRUMP RELEASED FROM HOSPITAL

\* US President Donald Trump said in a statement that he will be leaving the Walter Reed Medical Center on Monday afternoon because he is feeling better and urged the public not to be afraid of the novel coronavirus.

\* White House physician Sean Conley told reporters that Trump has not entirely recovered yet, but is well enough to leave the hospital.

\* White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany said in a statement that she has tested positive for the novel coronavirus, but is experiencing no symptoms at present.

#### NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT

\* Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Monday held a telephone conversation with his Azerbaijani counterpart Jeyhun Bayramov and expressed concern over the ongoing hostilities on the contact line in Nagorno-Karabakh and the increase in civilian casualties.

\* The foreign ministers from Russia, France and the United States that comprise the OSCE's Minsk Group issued a joint statement condemning the unprecedented violence in Nagorno-Karabakh.

\* 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.

\* Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan urged conscripts, who had been demobilized over the past year, to re-enroll in the army due to the escalation of tensions in Karabakh.

\* Pashinyan called Russian President Vladimir Putin, the two leaders discussed the escalation of the conflict in Karabakh, which has become large-scale and led to casualties among civilians, the Kremlin said.

#### US-RUSSIA ARMS CONTROL TALKS

\* Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov and US Special Envoy for Arms Control Marshall Billingslea discussed prospects for bilateral cooperation on arms control, the Russian Foreign Ministry said on Monday.

\* Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov noted that Washington was not interested in any conventions and new regulations related to cybersecurity and the Internet.

#### PROTESTS IN BISHKEK

\* Kyrgyz party Birimdik ("Unity"), which is leading in the parliamentary election, has expressed its readiness for re-voting, according to the party's spokesman Adilet Sultanaliyev said on Monday.

\* The dispersal of protesters began in Bishkek and the police are using stun grenades and tear gas, a Sputnik correspondent reported from the scene.

\* The number of people injured in clashes between security officials and protesters in Bishkek has exceeded 120, the Kyrgyz Health Ministry told Sputnik.