

Wires 10/7/20

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Eleven Caribbean Nations Join US, Brazil as 'Intense' COVID-19 Spreaders - Health Agency

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - Eleven countries and territories in the Caribbean have moved in the past two months from moderate to intense sources of novel coronavirus cases in the Americas, Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Director Carissa Etienne said in a press release on Wednesday.

"While Brazil and the US remain significant drivers of new cases in our region, we're concerned by spikes in cases - including in places that had effectively managed outbreaks, like Cuba and Jamaica," Etienne said.

Over the past 60 days, 11 countries and territories in the Caribbean have moved from moderate to intense transmission, which is a concerning development as countries reopen airspace, the release said.

PAHO attributed much of the increase to younger people who have mild or no symptoms and are unaware they are infected.

Several groups remain at particular risk of spreading the disease throughout the region, particularly those "with limited access to prevention and care, including black, Hispanic and Native American populations in the United States, which "are nearly three times as likely to contact COVID as their white counterparts," the release said.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, up to 50 percent of older populations in some low- and middle-income countries lacked access to some essential health services - an issue that the pandemic has only exacerbated, the release added.

More than 17 million novel coronavirus cases have been reported in the Americas, with more than 574,000 deaths, representing half of all cases worldwide and more than half of all deaths, according to the release.

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Over 500 Domestic Violence Cases in 2020 Involve Guns - US Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - The US authorities charged more than 500 suspects in domestic violence cases with illegal possession of firearms in fiscal year 2020, the Justice Department said in a press release on Wednesday.

"The statistics are clear that when domestic violence offenders have access to guns, their partners and their families are at much greater risk of falling victim to gun violence. In fact, in some communities across America, roughly half of the homicides are related to domestic violence," US Attorney General William Barr said in the release.

In the fiscal year that ended September 30, US Attorneys' Offices nationwide brought 337 domestic violence felon-in-possession charges, 54 possession while subject to a protective order charges and 142 possession by a prohibited person charges, the release said. Federal law prohibits individuals with domestic violence misdemeanor or felony convictions, as well as individuals subject to domestic violence protective orders, from possessing or owning guns. Domestic violence abusers with a gun in the home are five times more likely to kill their partners than those living in gun-free homes, the release said. About 40 percent of Americans say that they or someone in their household has a gun, according to multiple public opinion surveys.

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Senators Urge US to Sanction Turkey Amid Reports Ankara Activated S-400 to Detect F-16s

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - Two US senators on Wednesday urged the Trump administration to impose sanctions on Ankara over reports Turkey activated the Russian-made S-400 air defense system to detect F-16 fighter jets flown by NATO.

"We write concerning public reports that Turkey has activated the radars of its Russian-made S400 anti-aircraft system, in order to detect US-made F-16 fighter jets returning from the Eunomia exercise conducted by France, Italy, Greece and Cyprus in late August in response to Turkey's unwarranted aggression in the Eastern Mediterranean... Given this information, we again urge you to impose sanctions on Turkey as required by law," Senators Chris Van Hollen and James Lankford said in a letter to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

The lawmakers have requested Pompeo provide information by October 14 on whether Turkey did activate the S-400 to detect F-16 fighter jets returning from the Eunomia exercise and if it also integrated the Link 16, NATO's tactical data link, into the S-400 system, which they said could enable Russia to gather information on NATO allies.

Earlier in the day, the Sputnik Turkey news agency reported that Ankara had deployed S-400 air defense systems to the Black Sea province of Samsun - probably for testing. The Turkish authorities have not made any official statements on this yet.

A State Department spokesperson told Sputnik that the United States was aware of these reports and is deeply concerned, adding that the S-400 transaction puts Turkey at risk for potential sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).

In 2017, Russia agreed to supply S-400s to Ankara, provoking outrage among Turkey's NATO allies, especially the United States.

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White House Fears Foreign Hackers Could Change Vote Totals - Security Adviser

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - The Trump administration is concerned foreign hackers will attack local US government websites to change vote totals during the November 3 election, White House National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien said on Wednesday.

"My biggest concern on something that can happen on the Election Day - hackers hacking to the Secretary of State website to change vote totals," O'Brien said at the University of Nevada's William Boyd School of Law.

Russia, Iran and China are "leading influencers" on the US election, he added.

In early September, Microsoft released a report, accusing hackers from Russia, Iran and China of launching cyberattacks on individuals and organizations linked to the US election.

Tehran called these accusations untrue. Moscow and Beijing have both consistently refuted Washington's accusations of interference.

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Trump Says He Was Briefed on Hurricane Delta, Spoke With Governors of Texas, Louisiana

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump on Wednesday returned to the Oval Office for the first time since his COVID-19 diagnosis to receive briefings on Hurricane Delta and the ongoing negotiations over a new economic stimulus bill.

"Was just briefed on Hurricane Delta," Trump said via Twitter, adding that he spoke with Texas Governor Greg Abbott and Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards, whose states lie in storm's projected pathway.

The National Hurricane Center said via Twitter earlier on Wednesday that the storm expected to grow in size as it nears the US coast, "increasing the threat for life-threatening surge."

A White House pool report quoted Deputy Press Secretary Brian Morgenstern as saying Trump was also briefed in the Oval Office on ongoing efforts to agree on a new stimulus package to cope with the fallout of the pandemic.

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. 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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Trump to Speak to American People 'Soon' - White House

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump will speak to the American people shortly but no exact time or method has been yet established, White House spokesperson Brian Morgenstern told reporters on Wednesday.

"He [Trump] wants to speak to the American people. He will do so soon," Morgenstern said. "I don't have an exact time or a definite way he'll do that."

The spokesman said they are always considering tweeting videos clips, which have been effective.

Earlier in the day, Trump's physician said the president has been symptom-free of the novel coronavirus disease for more than 24 hours and shows detectable levels of antibodies.

On Friday, Trump was admitted to the Walter Reed Medical Center after testing positive for COVID-19. Trump's doctors said over the weekend he had a high fever and his blood oxygen levels dropped a couple times.

After being discharged from the hospital on Monday, Trump in a video message said he feels better than he has felt in 20 years and called on Americans to not fear COVID-19.

Trump has said he looks forward to participating in the second presidential debate next week.

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US Federal Reserve Backs Another COVID-19 Stimulus - Minutes

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - Most Federal Reserve bankers at their September meeting backed US Congress in issuing a new coronavirus stimulus relief, saying without it economic recovery from the pandemic would likely drag further, minutes of the meeting released Wednesday showed.

"The staff's forecast assumed the enactment of some additional fiscal policy support this year; without that additional policy action, the pace of the economic recovery would likely be slower," the minutes said. "In addition, the staff projection assumed that monetary policy would be even more accommodative than in the previous forecast in order to more fully reflect the revised consensus statement."

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. On the labor front, more than 21 million jobs were lost for all of March and April, at the height of lockdowns forced by the COVID-19. The labor market posted a strong rebound of 2.5 million jobs in May and 4.8 million in June, before the recovery began slowing.

The Fed said although real gross domestic product growth was projected to exceed potential output growth, the unemployment rate was expected to decline considerably further, and inflation was forecast to pick back up in 2021 through 2023.

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The White House and its 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, risked losing their jobs without further aid. President Donald Trump, who stands for reelection in November, has accused US House Speaker and Democrat leader Pelosi of playing football over the issue. Pelosi says any stimulus deal should be to the advantage of Americans, not for Trump's political expediency.

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Russia Sees No Breakthroughs in Relations With US Regardless of Election Outcome - Antonov

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - Russia does not anticipate any significant breakthroughs in its relations with the United States regardless of the outcome of the November presidential election, and believes only minor progress is possible, Ambassador Anatoly Antonov said on Wednesday.

"I have to admit we should not expect any serious breakthroughs on the US-Russia track regardless of today's administration in the White House or the one that will be there after November 3," Antonov said. "We have to be ready that it will require a lot of time to stabilize US-Russia relations, to straighten these ties. And only then can we talk about a period of improvement in US-Russia relations... If we manage to achieve anything, these, of course, will be small but positive steps."

Antonov underscored that the talks between the countries' presidents play a vital role in the stabilization of US-Russian relations.

"Recently, there have been seven telephone talks during which the issues were being solved and some concrete problems have been solved which allowed us here on the ground to implement presidents' agreements including in energy area, and providing assistance to each other during the fight against the pandemic," the ambassador said.

Antonov said there is no morning that goes by in Washington without waking up to articles mentioning the name Russian President Vladimir Putin and disagreements between Washington and Moscow.

The ambassador also said both US parties are using the topic of Russia to get votes in the upcoming elections.

US President Donald Trump has repeatedly said that he would like US-Russia relations to be normalized and has expressed his intention to develop cooperation in various spheres of mutual interests. However, relations between the two countries have hit an all-time low during the Trump administration.

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US Voters' Views of VP Candidates Pence, Harris Mostly Negative Ahead of Debate - Poll

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - Vice President Mike Pence and the Democratic candidate for his office, Senator Kamala Harris, head into Wednesday night's debate with public opinion largely negative against both, a new PEW Research Center poll revealed on Wednesday. "Around half of registered voters (51 percent) give Pence 'cold' ratings, while slightly more than a third (36 percent) give him 'warm' ratings and 12 percent have neutral feelings," a press release explaining the poll said. "For Harris, 48 percent express cold feelings, 39 percent have warm feelings and 13 percent give her neutral ratings."

The PEW Research Center bases its ratings on a "feeling thermometer" in which voters are asked to rate each on a scale of 100. Ratings above 50 are considered warm, ratings below 50 are considered cold and ratings of 50 are neutral, the release said.

As with nearly every poll ahead of the November 3 election, partisanship largely explains survey results. Both candidates draw higher cold ratings among voters in the opposing party than warm ratings among members of their own party, the release added.

About seven-in-ten Republican and Republican-leaning registered voters (71 percent) have warm feelings for Pence, while an even larger share of Republican voters (85 percent) give cold ratings to Harris.

Harris's ratings among partisans are nearly the mirror image of Pence's. While 71 percent of Democratic and Democratic leaning voters give Harris warm ratings, 86 percent feel coldly toward Pence, according to the release.

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Canada to Phase Out Single-Use Plastics by End of 2021 - Environment Minister

TORONTO, October 7 (Sputnik) - The Canadian government is planning to phase out single-use plastics, including checkout bags, straws and disposable cutlery by the end of 2021, Environment and Climate Change Minister Jonathan Wilkinson said on Monday.

"Our government will ban plastic bags, plastic stir sticks, plastic cutlery, plastic straws and plastic six-pack rings," Wilkinson said in video posted on Twitter.

The plan is part of the government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's pledge to achieve zero plastic waste by 2030.

According to Environment and Climate Change Canada, single-use plastics make up most of plastic litter found in the country's freshwater environments and up to 15 billion plastic bags are used annually.

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Wisconsin to Open Field Hospital to Cope With Record Surges of COVID-19 Cases - Governor

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - The US State of Wisconsin will open a field hospital to treat COVID-19 patients due to a record uptick in hospitalizations, Governor Tony Evers said in a release on Wednesday.

"Due to increased COVID-19 hospitalizations and at the request of hospital systems, Gov. Tony Evers announced today the Alternate Care Facility (ACF) at Wisconsin State Fair Park will begin accepting COVID-19 patients within the next week," the release said.

The announcement comes as the Wisconsin health systems experience rising pressure to manage record surges in COVID-19 patient hospitalizations, the release said.

"As of yesterday, there were 853 COVID-19 hospitalizations, an increase of 71 over the day before," the release added.

Wisconsin is divided into seven healthcare emergency readiness coalition (HERC) regions that how public health, healthcare institutions and first responder agencies respond to health emergencies and catastrophic events.

"As of today, 7 HERC regions (Fox Valley Area, North Central, Northeast, Northwest, South Central, Southeast, Western) exhibit 'High' or 'Very High' activity," the release said, adding that hospitals across the state are concurrently facing critical staffing shortages.

The new field facility is not a hospital in the traditional sense and will not accept walk-in patients, but will coordinate with healthcare systems admitting patients who still need care but are not seriously ill in need of hospital-level care, the release explained.

"It will serve as a transitional facility to offer oxygen and medical care for COVID-19 patients who still need support in their recovery. The goal of this facility is to transition COVID-19 patients who are less ill out of hospitals and reserve hospital beds for patients who are more ill and in need of hospital-level care," the release said.

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US Arrests Over 100 Immigrants Set Free by State of California - Homeland Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) – A weeklong roundup of illegal immigrants that were released by the state of California netted nearly 125 at-large aliens with criminal convictions or pending criminal charges, the Department of Homeland Security [DHS] said in a press release on Wednesday.

"The ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement division of DHS] actions, which took place Sept. 18 to Oct 3, targeted aliens subject to removal who were arrested for crimes but were released by state or local law enforcement agencies, despite having active immigration

detainers in place. Over 95% percent of those [125] aliens arrested, had criminal convictions or pending criminal charges at the time of arrest," the release said.

California is among several US states with so-called sanctuary policies, which generally prohibit state and local law enforcement agencies from cooperating with ICE and other federal immigration police, the release said.

Nearly 100 of the arrests took place in Southern California's Los Angeles area, where detainees had criminal histories that include homicide, sexual assault, sex crimes involving children, assault, robbery, domestic violence and drunk driving, the release added.

In most cases, local authorities released detainees with ICE detainers, which request that suspects be held until federal police can take custody.

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Over 1 in 5 Gun-Ownning US Households Buy Extra Gun Since Anti-Police Protests Begin - Poll

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - More than one-fifth of US households with at least one gun have purchased an extra gun since the onset of anti-police protests in late May, a new Rasmussen Reports poll revealed on Wednesday.

"Forty-three percent (43 percent) of American adults say they or someone in their household owns a gun," a press release summarizing the poll said. "Of these Americans, 22 percent say they or someone in their household has purchased a gun since the violent anti-police protests began."

Nationwide protests, often resulting in violent attacks on police and federal buildings, erupted following the May 25 death of African-American suspect George Floyd while handcuffed and pinned to the ground by a white police officer.

Of those who have added a gun in the last four months, 90 percent say they feel more safe due to the extra firepower, the release said.

For all gun-owning households, 54 percent of adults say they are safer because of the presence of firearms.

During the first half of 2020, gun shop owners reported sales so brisk that they have difficulty maintaining inventory stockpiles, with customers especially interested tactical shotguns and semi-automatic rifles, according to media reports.

In addition, applications for gun-owner permits have become so brisk that the FBI has reported difficulty keeping up with a flood of requests for background checks.

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White House Physician Says Trump Free of Covid-19 Symptoms for 24 Hours

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - President Donald Trump has been symptom-free of the novel coronavirus disease for more than 24 hours and shows detectable levels of antibodies, his physician Sean Conley said in a statement issued by the White House on Wednesday.

"He's now been fever-free for more than 4 days, symptom-free for over 24 hours, and has not needed nor received any supplemental oxygen since hospitalization," Conley said. "Of note today, the President's labs demonstrated detectable levels of SARS-CoV-2 IgG antibodies from labs drawn Monday, October 5th; initial IgG levels drawn late Thursday night were undetectable."

On Friday, Trump was admitted to the Walter Reed Medical Center for treatment after reporting that he tested positive for the novel coronavirus.

Trump's doctors initially reported the US president had high fever and his blood oxygen levels dropped on Friday and Saturday. Trump was discharged from the hospital on Monday and said he feels well after being treated for contracting the novel coronavirus.

Trump has said he looks forward to participating in the second presidential debate next week.

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Antonov Says Was Invited Twice to US State Department to Discuss Belarus

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - Russia's Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov said in a television interview on Wednesday that he has been invited twice to the US State Department to discuss the political crisis in Belarus and was warned that Russia should not interfere in the country's affairs.

"I have been invited twice to the State Department to discuss this topic. I was surprised by the Americans warning us not to interfere in the Belorussian affairs," Antonov told the Russia 1 TV

channel. "I said the same to our American colleagues: 'Let's give the Belarusian people an opportunity to determine themselves what they'll do, with whom they'll live, how they'll act, how they'll resolve the situation.'"

Antonov said Belarus was the issue of focus for US Deputy State Secretary Stephen Biegun during his visit to Moscow.

The Russian ambassador auctioned US officials against "excessive enthusiasm" over the developments in Belarus.

Antonov noted that Russian diplomats are in contact with their colleagues from the Belarusian Embassy in Washington and are ready to help them in the face of a mounting pressure from the West.

Belarus has been experiencing political turmoil after the August 9 presidential election in which President Alexander Lukashenko was reelected for a sixth term. The country's opposition did not accept the election result and has insisted its candidate Svetlana Tikhanovskaya won. Protests have since been taking place across the country.

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US Policeman Charged in Death of George Floyd Released on \$1Mln Bail - Court Document

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - A former US policeman facing charges in the killing of George Floyd has posted a \$1 million bond payment to secure his release from prison while he awaits trial, a court document showed on Wednesday.

The Hemphin County Sheriff's Office published a release notice indicating that Chauvin had paid the \$1 million bail and had left jail. The power of attorney document showed that Chauvin's bond was paid earlier on Wednesday by A-Affordable Bail Bonds, a company based in Brainerd, Minnesota.

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Antonov Says Russia Not Trying to 'Show Its Muscles' By Test-Launching 'Zircon' Missile

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - Russia is not trying to show its muscles by test-launching the hypersonic cruise missile "Zircon," Russian Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov said on Wednesday.

"With Zircon, Russia does not try to show its muscles or, better say rattle the sabre," Antonov said.

Earlier on Wednesday, Russia's Chief of General Staff Gen. Valery Gerasimov told President Vladimir Putin that the hypersonic cruise missile Zircon was launched from the White Sea and successfully hit a target in the Barents Sea at more than eight times the speed of sound.

Antonov pointed out that Russian officials find more comfortable when negotiating strategic stability and arms control treaties with the United States given that existing missiles have been tested.

The Russian ambassador also said Gerasimov recently confirmed Russia's proposals on relaxing tensions with NATO just as the current US-Russia agreement on preventing possible incidents on sea and on the ground does.

"All these suggestions of our General Staff remain on the negotiation table, we are ready to talk," Antonov said.

However, Antonov noted that US military jets are actively flying near Russian military installations in Syria, adding that Russia's planes "drive them out."

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UN Welcomes Libyan Parties' Agreements Reached on Sovereign Positions - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, October 7 (Sputnik) - The United Nations welcomes the agreements reached between Libya's internationally recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) based in Tripoli and the Tobruk-based House of Representatives on the criteria to select members at high-ranking positions, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in a statement on Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, the parties concluded the second round of intra-Libyan talks, which started in early October in the Moroccan city of Bouznika.

"We welcome the understandings reached between members of the Libyan House of Representatives and the High State Council in Bouznika, Morocco, regarding the requirements and the appointment mechanism of the sovereign positions in accordance with the Libyan Political Agreement," Dujarric said.

The United Nations believes that such negotiations pave the way for convening the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, facilitated by the UN Stabilization Mission in that country, planned to be held in the coming weeks, Dujarric added.

After the ouster and assassination of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 by US- and EU-sponsored Islamic extremists, Libya was engulfed in a brutal conflict. Libya remains divided between two centers of power - an elected parliament in the country's east, supported by the Libyan National Army (LNA), and the Tripoli-based GNA in the west.

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Republicans Lose Bid to Limit Early Voting in Texas - State Supreme Court Ruling

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - Republican officials have lost an attempt to limit early voting in the US state of Texas to only two weeks before the November 3 national elections, the state Supreme Court ruled on Wednesday.

"In re the State of Texas from Harris County; 14th Court of Appeals District motion to vacate stay order dismissed as moot, stay order issued September 15, 2020, lifted," the court announced in its decision.

Early voting in Texas will therefore start as originally scheduled on October 13, because of the Supreme Court ruling.

Texas has been a Republican stronghold in presidential elections in the majority of races of over the past 40 years, but is being closely contested in this year's race.

Texas is the second most populous state in the United States with the second largest number of votes in the Electoral College only behind California.

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UNHCR Concerned by Karabakh Conflict Impact on Civilian Populations - Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, October 7 (Sputnik) - The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is seriously concerned about the potential impact on civilian populations by the deadly clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and is closely monitoring the situation on the ground, UNHCR spokesperson Shabia Mantoo told Sputnik on Wednesday. "We are present in Armenia and Azerbaijan's capitals and we are coordinating closely with the UN/Resident Coordinators and monitoring the situation very closely," Mantoo said. "We are very concerned by the potential impact on civilian populations and the displacement that this conflict might cause."

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US Air Force Begins Random Coronavirus Testing of Asymptomatic Service Members

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - Active duty service members at four US military bases will be randomly tested for the novel coronavirus in an initial effort announced by the Air Force in a press release on Wednesday.

"The surveillance testing will begin with active-duty populations at four AFMC [Air Force Materiel Command] bases: Edwards Air Force Base, California; Eglin, Florida; Hanscom AFB, Massachusetts; and Hill AFB, Utah," the release said.

The Air Force explained in the release that tests of healthy, asymptomatic service members are intended to identify pockets of active virus transmission, hopefully before people begin getting sick.

Plans call for the testing protocol to be expanded to other bases, the release said.

The testing will be conducted in 14-day periods, eventually testing 100 total active-duty personnel at each location within the first two months, beginning with healthcare workers, followed by dorm residents, host wing personnel and installation workforce, the release added. At the end of the two month roll-out phase, and once the testing is further streamlined, the Air Force leadership will evaluate and possibly to begin an expansion of the surveillance testing to other bases and broader base populations, including civilian workers, according to the release.

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UN Humanitarian Office Releases \$40Mln in Aid for Syria - Resident Coordinator

UNITED NATIONS, October 7 (Sputnik) - The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) released \$40 million from the Syria Humanitarian Fund (SHF), its largest ever allocation, United Nations Resident Coordinator for Syria Imran Riza said in a press release on Wednesday.

"The devastating impacts of COVID-19 and recent economic deterioration have compounded deep and widespread humanitarian needs across Syria," Riza said. "This \$40 million allocation from the Syria Humanitarian Fund - our largest to date - will be critical to assist vulnerable communities, many who would otherwise have limited humanitarian support."

This SHF allocation has the broadest reach to date, supporting 62 projects across 93 sub-districts, including in areas of acute need in Rural Damascus, rural Aleppo, Homs, Dar'a, Hama, rural Lattakia, Ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor, some of which will benefit from SHF-supported projects for the first time, the release said.

Private aid agencies, including 19 national organizations and 21 international organizations will receive 61 percent of the funds, the release added.

Nearly \$15 million will support delivery of food vouchers, food baskets, and livelihood opportunities for farmers in rural areas. In addition, \$7.6 million of the current allocation will boost healthcare services, \$4 million will support students to return safely to school, and \$4 million will provide essential protection, according to the release.

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Two IS Militants to Appear in US Court for Killing 4 Americans in Syria - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - US Department of Justice said announced on Wednesday the beginning of court proceedings against two former British citizens on charges of torturing and beheading four Americans along with other individuals taken hostage by the Islamic State terror group (IS, banned in Russia) in Syria.

Alexandra Kotey, 36, and El Shafee Elsheikh, 32 - called "the Beatles" - are expected to make initial appearance in a US federal court in the state of Virginia on Wednesday afternoon.

"These charges are the product of many years of hard work in pursuit of justice for our citizens slain by ISIS [Islamic State]. Although we cannot bring them back, we can and will seek justice for them, their families, and for all Americans," US Attorney General William Barr said in a statement.

The suspects face eight counts of criminal indictment, each entailing a maximum penalty of life in prison. US prosecutors are not seeking the death penalty as a precondition for cooperation with their colleagues in the United Kingdom.

The indictment alleges that Kotey, Elsheikh, their deceased accomplice Mohamed Emwazi and another British citizen currently incarcerated in Turkey became Islamic State fighters and from 2012 to 2015 participated in the abduction of American and other hostages in Syria.

"The men also allegedly engaged in a prolonged pattern of physical and psychological violence against the hostages, including against American citizens James Wright Foley, Kayla Jean Mueller, Steven Joel Sotloff and Peter Edward Kassig," the Justice Department said.

In 2014, they released videos depicting Emwazi beheading Foley, Sotloff, and British citizens David Haines and Alan Henning.

The Islamic State also issued video in November of 2014 depicting the decapitated head of Kassig and issued images in January of 2015 of two dead Japanese citizens.

The Syrian Democratic Forces captured Kotey and Elsheikh in January of 2018 as they attempted to escape to Turkey. Emwazi was killed in a US airstrike conducted in November of 2015 in Syria.

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COVID-19 Pandemic to Push 150Mln People Into Extreme Poverty by 2021 - World Bank

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - More than 150 million people may fall into extreme poverty throughout the world by 2021 as a result of the economic contraction caused by the novel coronavirus pandemic, the World Bank said in a report on Wednesday.

"The COVID-19 pandemic is estimated to push an additional 88 million to 115 million people into extreme poverty this year, with the total rising to as many as 150 million by 2021, depending on the severity of the economic contraction," the report said.

The World Bank pointed out in the report that about 82 percent of the so-called "new poor" will be in the middle-income countries that already have high poverty rates.

Extreme poverty is defined as living on less than \$1.9 per day and it may affect about 9.1 percent to 9.4 percent of the population.

The World Bank noted that absent the pandemic, the extreme poverty rate was expected to be less than 8 percent.

"The pandemic and global recession may cause over 1.4 percent of the world's population to fall into extreme poverty," World Bank President David Malpass said.

Malpass urged countries to prepare for a different post-COVID-19 economy by allowing capital, labor, skills and innovation to move to new businesses and sectors.

"World Bank Group support... will help developing countries resume growth and respond to the health, social and economic impacts of COVID-19 as they work toward a sustainable and inclusive recovery," Malpass said.

The World Bank called on countries to cooperate with each other to ensure the results of the continuing efforts to reduce poverty levels.

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Fighting Corruption Effectively Can Net Over \$1 Trillion in Lost Tax Revenues - IMF Chief

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - Fighting corruption effectively can net \$1 trillion in lost tax revenues or more than 1 percent of global GDP, International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said on Wednesday.

"We can gain \$1 trillion in lost tax revenues. This is 1.25 percent of global GDP," Georgieva said.

The IMF chief said corruption has a significant impact on economies, especially in low-income countries, but noted that the least corrupt governments collect 4 percent of GDP more in taxes. Georgieva pointed out that that percentage in some countries equals the volume of total investments in their health systems, which is specifically important in the current conditions of the novel coronavirus pandemic.

An encouraging development is that some countries have made a lot of progress in fighting corruption, Georgieva added.

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Trump Loses Tax Returns Appeal, Wins Time for Supreme Court Challenge - Appellate Court

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - A US federal appellate court denied President Donald Trump's bid to protect his tax returns from a grand jury subpoena, but blocked enforcement of the order by New York City District Attorney Cyrus Vance pending an appeal to the Supreme Court.

"We have considered all of the President's remaining contentions on appeal and have found in them no basis for reversal," a three judge panel of the Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit said in a unanimous ruling.

Trump contended that an August 2019 Grand Jury subpoena seeking years of tax returns from the president's accounting firm, Mazars USA, was overly broad and issued in bad faith, but the appellate court ruling said "the claim of overbreadth is not plausibly alleged."

By upholding a lower court ruling, the decision marked the second rejection of a request by Trump to block access to his tax returns. Vance is seeking Trump's tax filings dating back to 2011.

The Supreme Court this summer rejected Trump's earlier request, claiming that his position as president did not shield him from complying with the subpoena.

In Wednesday's ruling, the court said, "should the President seek interim relief from the Supreme Court ... the District Attorney would 'forbear enforcement of the Mazars subpoena until a decision is issued by the Supreme Court.'"

Trump's lawyers plan to appeal the decision to the Supreme Court, according to media reports.

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Counterintelligence Chief Bill Evanina Says Russia, China Want US to 'Eat Itself'

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - US Counterintelligence chief Bill Evanina on Wednesday dismissed concerns about the vulnerability of the United States' election infrastructure to malign foreign interference, but accused China and Russia of amplifying social discord out of desire to see the county "eat itself."

"We are not worried about changing votes in scale, but we are worried about influence of the American voter and the ability of the American voter to understand where they should get real information," Evanina said in an interview on NBC News.

Evanina claimed that both China and Russia want to see "mass chaos" in the United States and some Americans make it easier for these countries to achieve their goal.

"[Russia's President] Vladimir Putin at the end of the day wants our country to eat itself. He wants mass chaos here in the United States as does China, but not from economic perspective. We see both of them exacerbating and amplifying social discord on both sides of the isle. We right now are helping him [Putin] facilitate getting him the smile everyday," Evanina said.

Russia has repeatedly denied intervening in the US political system. In addition, Putin reiterated in an interview with Russian television his position to cooperate with any elected president of the United States, but denounced the "quite harsh anti-Russia rhetoric" of the Democrats.

Evanina urged the Americans to vote in the November 3 elections to show the leaders of Russia, China as well as of Iran that the American people make the determination who their elected officials are.

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Eight in 10 Americans Plan to Wear Masks When Entering Indoor Spaces Outside of Home-Poll

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - An overwhelming majority of Americans now embraced the use of face masks, with 80 percent saying they would be highly likely to cover their faces if entering an indoor space outside their homes, a new Gallup poll revealed on Wednesday.

"Many mask-wearers likely feel they have little choice: 78 percent of Americans say their state or local government requires them to wear a mask in public. Among this group, 81 percent say they would be highly likely to wear a mask tomorrow if out of the house and in an indoor space. Even among those who do not live in states with such requirements, 78 percent say they would be highly likely to wear a mask," a press release explaining the poll said.

Results from the last Gallup survey offer evidence that the most important factor in Americans' decisions on whether to cover their faces is accurate information about the pandemic from sources they trust, the release said.

An ongoing debate "over the politicization of face mask use," continues to influence behavior, with 74 percent of Republicans saying they were highly likely to use a mask compared with 87 percent of Democrats and 78 percent of independents, the release added.

Mask use has also become prevalent among young adults, with 63 percent of Americans age 18 to 24 saying they would be "highly likely" to wear a mask with another 24 percent saying they would be somewhat likely to wear a mask tomorrow if outside their house and in an indoor space, another 24 percent say they would be "somewhat likely" to do so.

The poll prompted Gallup to recommend that public health officials focusing on countering false information about the novel coronavirus pandemic to help Americans distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources of information in addition to solely on reaching all Americans with information about the crisis, according to the release.

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Pelosi, Mnuchin Discuss Aid for US Airlines After Trump Halts COVID-19 Relief Talks

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - US Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin is trying to negotiate with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi a narrower COVID-19 stimulus deal to help struggling airlines, after President Donald canceled talks over a larger bill, Congress spokesperson Drew Hammill said Wednesday.

"Speaker Pelosi & Secretary Mnuchin spoke by phone at 9:33 a.m" Eastern US time, Hammill said via Twitter. "The Secretary inquired about a standalone airlines bill. The Speaker reminded him that Republicans blocked that bill on Friday & asked him to review the DeFazio bill so that they could have an informed conversation."

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US Strongly Condemns Deadly Terrorist Attack in Syria's Al Bab - State Department

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - The United States is deeply concerned over the rising number of terrorist attacks in Syria and strongly condemns this week's deadly car bombing in the Syrian town of Al Bab, State Department spokesperson Morgan Ortagus said in a statement on Wednesday.

"The United States strongly condemns the terrorist attack near a crowded traffic circle in al Bab yesterday, which according to initial reports killed more than 20 innocent people and injured scores more," Ortagus said. "We are deeply troubled by the rise in such terrorist attacks in recent months, and we again remind all parties that violence impedes the hope for a lasting political resolution to the conflict in Syria as called for by UNSCR 2254."

On Tuesday, the state-run SANA news agency reported that dozens of civilians were killed and wounded in the blast, which occurred on the territory controlled by Turkish-backed armed groups, in the northwestern province of Aleppo.

In her statement, Ortagus extended the deepest condolences of the US to the families of the victims of the "senseless tragedy." She also reiterated that the US strongly supports calls by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres for an immediate nationwide ceasefire, as well as the efforts of Special Envoy Geir Pedersen to broker a political solution to the conflict.

A local source told Sputnik on Tuesday that the death toll from the car bombing in Al Bab had grown to at least 17. More than 50 people were also wounded in the explosion.

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Top Hockey Agent Says COVID-19 Brings Assortment of New Challenges for Players

TORONTO, October 7 (Sputnik) - The novel coronavirus pandemic has turned the entire hockey world upside down and continues to present an assortment of challenges, the agent of three Russian Stanley Cup champions, Dan Milstein, told Sputnik.

Three of Milstein's clients - Nikita Kucherov, Andrei Vasilevskiy and Alexander "Sasha" Volkov - won the Stanley Cup with the Tampa Bay Lightning on September 26, concluding a season marred by shutdowns and with the NHL season concluding in a bubble format, in two host cities - Toronto and Edmonton.

The Russians in Tampa persevered through the lockdown, staying in game-shape at home, and months away from their families to win hockey's most coveted prize, although now bringing it home is complicated by international restrictions and league protocols, Milstein said.

When the NHL season was suspended on March 12, players faced a number of challenges, including where to spend the virus-induced shutdown and how to maintain peak physical shape, Milstein said.

Some of his clients took off to back their native Russia during this time, while the borders remained open, while others opted to stay.

The biggest struggle for players amid the shutdown was finding ways to stay on top of their game while rinks and team facilities were closed, Milstein said. Keeping players in prime physical condition and ready for any eventuality, according to Milstein, took an individual approach.

Milstein said that playoff scoring leader and last year's league MVP, Kucherov, fired hundreds of pucks every day in a makeshift home training facility, while using YouTube to hone new skills and keep up on the latest league trends. For players in Russia, Milstein says he arranged individual training sessions with top instructors and had his NHL clients provide tutelage in sometimes hours-long virtual meetings.

There were other sacrifices made by players, Milstein said. During the NHL playoff bubble – an arrangement where players and teams are concentrated in one or two cities throughout the duration of the tournament and players are largely confined to living quarters and sports facilities – players were separated from families for nearly two, which also contributed to the uneasiness.

Milstein says despite challenges the players were able to pull together to win, what he says is the hardest trophy to win in professional sports. He also dismisses any notion that this year's Stanley Cup champion will carry an asterisk, as has been suggested by some pundits.

"Well, Stanley Cup is the hardest to hardest to win in any of the sports. And unlike in regular years, there was an extra round added to it and [the players] were away from the families so long and there were a lot of sacrifices made," Milstein says. "This is this is the dream. This is this is your entire life... the Stanley Cup is the is the pinnacle of anybody's dreams and it's their career."

When asked about how excited the Russian trio was to win the hockey's most coveted prize, Milstein said that the fiery speech given by the normally reserved Kucherov at the victory parade in Tampa, Florida is all that needed to be said.

There do, however, remain a number of unanswered questions, including an undetermined start to the new season and whether the Russian Stanley Cup winners will be able, as per tradition, to bring the cup back to home, in light of global travel restrictions.

An NHL spokesperson said in a statement to Sputnik, that the start dates for both training camp and the 2020-21 regular season have not yet been set. Milstein says that he is advising his players be on standby, and ready, in every sense of the word, for any development.

Milstein says that he has been in touch with Russian Ice Hockey Federation through his clients, and that its stands ready to assist in the Stanley Cup visit to Russia. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not respond to a request for comment before the time of publication.

For Milstein, a banker by trade, who built his thriving mortgaging and finance firm Gold Star Mortgage Financial Group from the ground up, began his career as an agent began after being introduced to NHL legend Pavel Datsyuk during his years in Detroit playing for the city's Red Wings team, the logistical and scheduling nightmare has meant a complete revision of standard operating procedures.

"Last year, in 2019, I'd flown 13 times around the globe – if you added all of my trips – I was always on the go. I spent very little time in one place. This year, everything was done on Zoom," Milstein said. "Nothing ever replaces the human touch... sitting down with a new client or an existing client. There's something about able to sit in front of them, have a meal with them, talk to them, something a computer can never replace."

For the one of the game's top agents who maintains an extensive client base worldwide, the logistical chaos meant that he and his team had to jump through hoops to move players around the world, at a time when even visa procurement is a tall order. He recalled one NHL client had to drive nine hours to New York, spend two days at the airport, fly through multiple European capitals and then take a train to get back to his home in Russia.

Additionally, when the NHL made the decision to postpone the entry draft on March 25, Milstein says he had to shelve months-worth of preparations.

OFFSEASON PLANS

While the pandemic is clearly affecting the timing, otherwise, Milstein says, it is for now business as usual and there is certainly plenty of business to take care of during this unpredictable and likely shortened off-season.

The work begins on with the NHL draft on Tuesday, where Milstein say up to twelve of his clients could be selected, including Rodion Amirov, Vasili Ponomaryov and Mitchell Miller.

Milstein says to keep junior players draft-ready he enlisted the help of his NHL pro clients and, in one circumstance, Toronto Maple Leafs General Manager Kyle Dubas to give advice via video conference, adding that NHL teams were on top of things, hosting multiple events for prospective NHLers.

Milstein also dismissed the notion that the so-called "KHL effect" – there has been speculation of bias against Russian players in recent years because of fears they would choose to play in Russia, essentially resulting in a loss of a draft pick – would have an impact on his clients.

"Last year there were many Russians drafted, and the year before and the year before. In the early years of the KHL, maybe it was different, but right now... its about drafting the best players," Milstein said.

Then, according to Milstein, starting on October 9, when NHL free agency opens work begins on signing new contacts for a number of his players, including Columbus Blue Jackets defenseman Vladislav Gavrikov, Colorado Avalanche defenseman Nikita Zadorov, Lightning right-winger Volkov, Toronto Maple Leafs winger Ilya Mikheev and Vladislav Namestnikov who is

set to become an unrestricted free agent. Milstein declined to comment on where negotiations currently stand.

Milstein added that it is "too early to tell" how declining NHL revenue because of the pandemic, will impact player salaries and contract tenures.

While Milstein, who has bought over a number of NHL-ready players, said he wouldn't speculate on which of his clients could have a breakout year next, he sees Konstantin Akulov a forward with HC CSKA Moscow and SKA Saint Petersburg winger Andrei Kuzmenko as established professionals ready to make a splash in the NHL next season.

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FEATURE - Moscow Prepares to Choose US President

MOSCOW/SCRANTON, Pennsylvania, October 7 (Sputnik) - Moscow was one of those places which determined the fate of the US presidency in 2016. Four years later it once again emerges as a likely kingmaker. And, no, it is not a conspiracy theory.

Moscow borough lies in the woody hills of Pennsylvania's Lackawanna county which together with the neighboring Luzerne county shaved a staggering 24 points off a traditional Democratic margin to deprive Hillary Clinton of an overall state victory by a mere 44,000 votes. Without Pennsylvania's 20 electoral college delegates, a shortfall exacerbated by a loss in several other battleground states, she was defeated nationally by New York billionaire Donald Trump, despite mustering 3 million more popular endorsements.

Ahead of the 2020 election, pundits from the FiveThirtyEight website of political analytics single out Pennsylvania as "by far the likeliest state" to provide either Trump, the Republican incumbent, or his new Democratic rival Joe Biden with the decisive majority in the electoral college.

"In fact, Pennsylvania is so important that our model gives Trump an 84 percent chance of winning the presidency if he carries the state - and it gives Biden a 96 percent chance of winning if Pennsylvania goes blue," their recent calculations claim.

The ratio of pro-Trump and pro-Biden placards lavishly strewn upon well-kept lawns of Moscow's single-family cottages or diverging revelations of rare passers-by are hardly a sufficient gauge of public preferences, but still an eloquent testimony to a tumultuous nature of the key battleground - up for grabs - state.

MOSCOVITES DIVIDED

A study conducted in the mid-1980s found out that there are or have been at least 30 Moscows in the United States with just two of them actually named by Russian immigrants, including the one in Pennsylvania. Locals are mostly oblivious to the origins of their borough, now home to some 2,000 people, and get baffled when referred to as "Moscovites."

"No, [we call ourselves] Americans. You know, George and Sally, and our regular names. We don't go by whatever jurisdiction or part of the country we are from. We are all Americans," William Bocklett says.

The retired truck driver wears a Make America Great Again cap and a Trump 2020 face mask which he soon gets rid of. He planted eight placards urging to vote for Trump in front of his tidy house at the end of Moscow's main street.

"If the answer is Joe Biden, it must be a stupid question," one of them reads.

A barn across the road is also adorned with pro-incumbent posters interspersed with Halloween paraphernalia - an angry response to what Bocklett sees as a Democratic obstruction of Trump's policies.

"In 2016 you didn't see all these Trump signs, but now you do, because people are tired of the Democrats' way of trying to monopolize everything, trying to run everything their way or they are going to cry about it," he says.

Bocklett has his own explanation for Clinton's debacle - a deadly 2012 terrorist attack on a US diplomatic mission in Libya's Benghazi which happened under her watch as the State Secretary. "That was a big thing against her, because you have a lot of veterans. And once they heard that, this is - no way," he says.

Political allegiances broke Bocklett up with an old friend who lives up the street and happens to be a Biden supporter. They have not spoken for months, but as the sense of hospitality gets the better of him - it's Moscow after all! - he offers to accompany Russian journalists and officially introduce them.

"At least he didn't shoot me," he giggles when the contact is facilitated.

Bocklett hops in a car with a sticker depicting Trump urinating on liberals and off he goes.

David Partyka runs a small workshop on Moscow's main street. His family generations ago moved to Pennsylvania from Poland and worked hard in local coal mines. He defines himself as an independent, but in 2016 voted for Hillary Clinton. He is going to endorse Biden and believes that with him the Democrats stand a better chance in Pennsylvania.

"Even though I hate to admit it, a woman being president bothered a lot of people. And there were a lot of Democrats who didn't feel she represented them at the level they wanted," Partyka says. "I think Biden will bring the people together. Where Trump likes to divide, Biden feels he can represent everybody. He is a centrist by nature."

He sees Biden as a champion of common Americans.

"He generally thinks of the working guy. Once he gets the bills passed, they are going to benefit us the most. As a small business person we are barely recognizable. I am just looking for someone who is going to make the taxes fair not just for the wealthy and corporations," Partyka says.

He is speaking outside his workshop in front of a Biden placard, a hand drawn pacifist sign and a picture of his uncle - Edward Partyka, a US paratrooper, who fought the Nazis in many daring raids behind enemy lines.

Florance Gaffaney, another Moscovite, is undecided, but knows that the choice will be ultimately determined by her own bitter experiences of the coronavirus-induced restrictions and a resulting economic meltdown. A mother of two children and a sole provider of the family, she used to sew theatre costumes, but was forced to close down 75 percent of her business overnight and survives on stitching COVID-19 face masks.

"There was no support, there was no one you could call to get more information. It came very abruptly, we had less than 24 hours to take things out into consideration and to think out what to do next. It wasn't pleasant to business owners," Gaffaney says. "So I will be definitely taking it

into consideration when it is time to vote in November. For me personally, as a business owner, as a mom with two kids it's certainly impacting my decision."

She blames Pennsylvania's Democratic authorities, not the president, and suspects there is a covert political and electoral rationale behind their moves.

"Oh no, that was not the president, that was Pennsylvania. I agree that each state should make laws and decisions depending on their particular situation. And I don't think it was done in Pennsylvania. I think it was done out of a political stance and not what the people of the area need and want," Gaffaney says.

HOME, SWEET HOME

Moscow is a 20-minute drive away from Scranton, where Biden was born and raised. The Democratic nominee frequently mentions the city whenever he needs to emphasize that he is essentially from the people and knows life, unlike elitist Trump from Manhattan skyscrapers. Scranton is also and, perhaps, better known as home to a lovable cast of characters of the Office sitcom. Early in the morning, the downtown is almost empty and almost everyone out there has an electoral business to attend to.

Virginia McGregor goes canvassing accompanied by a daughter and a couple grandchildren, the youngest still in a stroller. A high-positioned Democratic party activist and an owner of a manufacturing business with a hundred of employees, she has been on the campaign trail for two years and is sure of the success.

"Hillary Clinton's family is from Scranton and so too is Joe Biden's. It is going to be an overwhelming victory. We are going to carry the county and we will probably carry Pennsylvania," McGregor says. "I am positive, because I am out there every day, working on the campaign, talking to people and we all have friends and family who have lost their lives and were affected by COVID."

Just beyond the corner two elderly gentlemen are unloading a truck full of Trump placards.

"First of all, Biden left when he was four years old. He continues to claim Scranton is his hometown. The only time he shows up is every four years when he needs votes. He has done absolutely nothing for this area. If I was a politician, I wouldn't tell people I am from Scranton because we have some of the most corrupt government officials in the country," Ernest Lemoncelli says.

Last Friday, former Scranton mayor Bill Courtright was sentenced to seven years in prison for extorting money in kickback schemes.

"So there you go," Lemoncelli says.

A former Republican candidate for the state House of Representatives, he now tries to convince local voters that Trump is a better choice for America.

"We talk about the policies and his accomplishments. He has been nominated for three Nobel peace prizes, he moved the embassy to Jerusalem as the last seven presidents had promised. He finally did it, he has taken out ISIS [Islamic State, a terrorist organization banned in Russia], he has done so much for the country. It's almost impossible to name them all, all the accomplishments," Lemoncelli says.

The latest poll released by CBS News on Sunday shows that Biden is backed by 51 percent of likely voters in Pennsylvania, a 7-point lead over Trump. The incumbent's supporters distrust the projections, mindful of pollsters' fiasco with Hillary Clinton, but are wary of a massive mail-in voting which is expected to reach 3 million across the state by November. Critics fear that the

practice propagated amid coronavirus fears would serve as a mobilization tool for the Democrats and allege it may be misused to tilt election returns in their favor. Local Republican and Democratic campaign headquarters in Scranton are just a few dozen feet away.

"We don't do foreign media. It's a policy. It's what my boss said," a Trump official welcomes journalists. "I really can't talk to you at all. Have a great rest of your day," a Biden representative smiles and out of an abundance of caution takes away pamphlets to prevent them from being filmed.

At least something both warring camps can agree on.

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2020 US Election

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - US federal regulators said the United States is unlikely to have a COVID-19 vaccine available before the November 3 election to the chagrin of President Donald Trump, who has come under more fire for shutting down talks with lawmakers on passing a multi-trillion pandemic relief package for Americans.

NO VACCINE BEFORE ELECTION

The US Food and Drug Administration has decided on a two month waiting period before approving its new COVID-19 vaccine for general use, ensuring it will not be available to the general public before the November 3 presidential election, The New York Times reported. The FDA has issued stronger guidelines for the introduction into general use of any vaccine to prevent COVID-19, an action the Trump administration had previously prevented. The report comes a day after Trump said a vaccine would be available "momentarily." Trump made the claim in a video message just hours after leaving Walter Reed hospital where he was treated for COVID-19. Trump's doctors on Tuesday said the president had no symptoms but another of his advisers got infected. Rival Joe Biden said he would not debate Trump on October 15 if the president had COVID-19.

BIDEN SURGES IN PENNSYLVANIA

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden's lead over incumbent Trump in the US state of Pennsylvania 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. Trump reacted to the recent polling numbers with disbelief on Tuesday.

"How does Biden lead in Pennsylvania Polls when he is against Fracking (JOBS!), 2nd Amendment and Religion? Fake Polls. I will win Pennsylvania!" Trump said in a tweet.

As of Tuesday evening, Biden is up by 9 points nationally in the Realclearpolitics.com (RCP) average of the most recent 10 major polls. The former vice president is leading in nine of the ten largest battleground states including Florida (+3.5%), Pennsylvania (6.3%), and Ohio (1.2%), according to RCP. However, Biden's lead in five of these swing states is within the margin of error. Trump, meanwhile, leads in Texas by 3.2%, the largest swing state.

FLORIDA EXTENDS DEADLINE

The state government of Florida has extended its deadline for voters to register for the November 3 national and presidential elections for a day until Tuesday evening after its web site crashed on Monday because of exceptionally heavy traffic, Governor Ron DeSantis said. "Today, I issued a directive to re-open Florida's voter registration deadline to participate in the November 3, General Election before 7 pm EST [Eastern Standard Time] for applications submitted online and by 7 pm local time for in-person registration, today, October 6," DeSantis said on Tuesday.

The new deadline to register was 7 pm. Tuesday, the governor said. In a statement, Florida Secretary of State Laurel Lee said the state's online registration portal had experienced "unprecedented volume and traffic" of 1.1 million requests an hour on Monday evening.

FAKE NEWS LAWS CALL

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 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 House Administration Subcommittee on Elections.

Congress should also 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, Griswold, a Democrat urged.

TRUMP POSTPONES COVID-19 RELIEF TALKS UNTIL AFTER ELECTION

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 until after the November 3 election. Trump said the \$2.4 trillion COVID-19 relief bill would be used to bailout Democrat states with high crime.

Trump has repeatedly said he thinks the election will be decided before the Supreme Court because of the likelihood of voter fraud from the record-level of mailed-in ballots expected. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Trump has shown contempt for health care professionals, first responders and the children of America. Trump remains committed to his proposed \$150 billion tax cut for the wealthiest people in America from the CARES Act, while he refused to give real help to poor children, the unemployed and America's hard working families, the speaker added.

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RPT: PREVIEW - Pence, Harris Meet for US Vice Presidential Debates After Trump's Illness

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - US Vice President Mike Pence and his rival Kamala Harris square off on Wednesday for their only round of televised pre-election debates eight days after their superiors, Donald Trump and Joe Biden, met on stage for the first time with unclear follow-up prospects.

The 90-minute event, which will be hosted by The University of Utah in Salt Lake City, gained an unexpected prominence after Trump's coronavirus infection raised concerns over the health and longevity of the presidential candidates - both the Republican incumbent, who is 74, and his 77-year-old Democratic opponent.

As an extra precaution organizers decided to install a plexiglass shield between the debaters and to nearly double the distance between them on stage - from seven to 13 feet.

The vice presidential debate will begin at 9:00 p.m EST (1:00 a.m. GMT on Thursday) and will run without commercial breaks. The contest will be moderated by Susan Page, Washington Bureau Chief of USA Today. The show will be divided into nine 10-minute segments each devoted to a specific topic.

Prior to the debate the White House Physician Jesse Schonau announced that Pence has not been in close contact with Trump or other administration personnel who tested positive for coronavirus. The vice president is encouraged to go about his normal activities and does not need to quarantine, he assured in a memorandum.

On Friday, Trump was admitted to the Walter Reed Medical Center but on Monday was discharged and returned to the White House. The President tweeted that he looks forward to participating in the debate with Biden in Miami, Florida, on October 15. The Democratic nominee said earlier that further debates are possible if approved by "the scientists." Trump and Biden also have the third debate round scheduled for October 22 in Nashville, Tennessee. Their first showdown, held last Tuesday in Cleveland, Ohio, was marred by insults and frequent mutual interruptions. The organizers promised to amend the rules to give a moderator more tools to enforce order.

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Senior White House Adviser Stephen Miller Tests Positive for COVID-19 - Statement

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - Senior White House adviser Stephen Miller said in a statement that he has tested positive for the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

"Over the last 5 days I have been working remotely and self-isolating, testing negative every day through yesterday. Today, I tested positive for COVID-19 and am in quarantine," Miller said in the statement on Tuesday.

Miller, who is known to be behind Trump's immigration policy, is the latest in a string of positive cases coming out of the White House recently, including Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany, assistant press secretaries Karoline Leavitt and Chad Gilmartin, Trump advisers Hope Hicks and Nicholas Luna, and First Lady Melania Trump, among others.

Others close to President Donald Trump have also tested positive, including Trump campaign manager Bill Stepien, former Trump adviser Kellyanne Conway, Republican National Convention Chairwoman Ronna McDaniel, former New Jersey governor Chris Christie, and Senators Thom Tillis and Mike Lee.

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. In a video message, Trump told Americans not to be afraid of the virus and that a vaccine would be available momentarily.

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US Awards Grants Worth \$1.8Bln to Aid Crime Victims - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - Programs to aid thousands of crime victims in US states will receive \$1.8 billion in grants announced in a press release by the Justice Department.

"Advocates, service providers and law enforcement agencies from around the country stand ready to help crime victims exercise their legal rights and reclaim their lives," Attorney General William Barr said in the release on Tuesday. "These new funding resources continue this administration's unprecedented commitment to providing the support necessary for victims of crimes to be able to heal and recover."

The vast majority of the over \$1.8 billion in victim assistance funding goes to local direct service programs, including children's advocacy centers, domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centers, human trafficking and elder abuse programs, civil legal services, crime victims' rights enforcement, as well as victim assistance positions in prosecutors' offices and law enforcement departments, the release said.

In addition, more than \$133 million of the total will supplement state funds that directly offset victims' financial burdens resulting from crime, helping to cover medical fees, lost income, dependent care, funeral expenses and other costs, the release added.

The grant program administered by the Justice Department's Office for Victims of Crime is funded by fines and penalties paid by convicted federal offenders and does not include tax dollars, according to the release.

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US House Panel Report Makes Case for Anti-Trust Action against Tech-Giants

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - The US House Judiciary Committee's Antitrust panel released the findings of its 16-month long probe that call for government's action to restore competition in the digital economy dominated by a handful of tech-giants.

"As they exist today, Apple, Amazon, Google, and Facebook each possess significant market power over large swaths of our economy... Our investigation leaves no doubt that there is a clear and compelling need for Congress and the antitrust enforcement agencies to take action that restores competition, improves innovation, and safeguards our democracy," Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler and Antitrust Subcommittee Chairman David Cicilline said in a joint statement on Tuesday.

The panel's recommendations include among other remedies structural separations to prohibit platforms from operating in lines of business that depend on or interoperate with the platform; prohibiting platforms from engaging in self-preferencing; requiring platforms to make its services compatible with competing networks to allow for interoperability and data portability.

The investigation report totals over 400 pages based on seven congressional hearings, the production of nearly 1.3 million internal documents and communications, submissions from 38 antitrust experts, and interviews with more than 240 market participants, former employees of the investigated platforms, and other individuals.

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US Wants to Increase Attack Submarine Fleet to 80 Vessels By 2045 - Esper

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of Defense Mark Esper has unveiled the Pentagon's plan for building up the Navy that proposes having up to 80 attack submarines in service by 2045.

"Under our proposal, Battle Force 45 will possess the following characteristics: first, a larger and more capable submarine force," Esper said on Tuesday. "The study reached a clear consensus on the need to rapidly increase [inaudible] of attack submarines, the most survivable strike platform in a future great power conflict, to the range of 70 to 80 in the fleet."

Esper added that the US Navy should at least begin building three Virginia-class submarines a year as soon as possible.

The proposal aims to have more than 500 manned and unmanned ships in the US Navy by 2045, including between eight to 11 nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and six light aircraft carriers in order to maintain a global presence during a high-end conflict, Esper said.

The plan also proposes having 60 to 70 smaller combatant ships by 2045, Esper also said. The 30-year plan, called "Battle Force 45," will be sent to Congress in the near future, Esper added.

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UN Human Rights Council Extends Fact-Finding Mission in Venezuela for 2 Years - Resolution

UNITED NATIONS, October 7 (Sputnik) - The UN Human Rights Council voted in favor of a resolution extending the mandate of its independent international fact-finding mission in Venezuela for two years to continue probing human rights abuses in the country.

The Human Rights Council "decides to extend the mandate of the independent international fact-finding mission for a period of two years, to enable the mission to continue to investigate gross violations of human rights, including extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, including those involving sexual and gender-based violence, committed since 2014," the text of the resolution said on Tuesday.

In September, following a year-long investigation in the country, the mission, formed in 2019, issued a report in which it said the government of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro is responsible for human rights violations that amount to crimes against humanity.

The adopted resolution strongly condemned all violations of international human rights law and "expressed profound alarm" about the findings of the fact-finding mission of crimes committed, including murder, torture, rape and enforced disappearance of persons.

It also called on the Venezuelan authorities to fully cooperate with the mission and grant them immediate, full and unfettered access to the entire country and ensure they can communicate with the United Nations and other human rights entities without fear of reprisal or attack.

The resolution, introduced by Peru, was supported by 22 member states, including Brazil, Chile, Germany, Italy, Japan, Poland and Ukraine. Eritrea, the Philippines and Venezuela were the three countries that voted against the adoption.

Afghanistan, Armenia, India, Libya, Mexico, Pakistan and Sudan were among the 22 member states who abstained from voting.

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Russian National Nikulin's Defense Team Files Appeal - Court Documents

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - The defense team for Russian national Yevgeniy Nikulin, convicted in the United States on cybercrimes, filed an appeal to contest his sentence, court documents revealed.

The appeal was filed on Tuesday with a federal court in San Francisco, where Nikulin was sentenced to 88 months in jail over cybercrimes last week.

Attorney at Law Valery Nechay told RIA Novosti after the sentencing that Nikulin has about two years left to serve because he has already served 48 months.

The US accused Nikulin of hacking into computers belonging to LinkedIn, Dropbox and Formspring's online services. Nikulin pleaded not guilty.

The Czech police detained the Russian national in October 2016 and extradited him to the United States in March 2018. The Russian authorities, who charged Nikulin with Internet fraud in 2009, requested his extradition on the same day as the United States, but the Czech Republic's Justice Ministry granted the US request.

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Facebook, Instagram Ban All QAnon-Linked Accounts - Statement

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - Facebook and Instagram will immediately begin removing all accounts linked to the QAnon conspiracy theory movement, the company said in a statement.

"We're strengthening our enforcement efforts against the QAnon conspiracy theory movement. Starting today, we will remove any Facebook Pages, Groups and Instagram accounts representing QAnon, even if they contain no violent content," the statement said on Tuesday. Facebook said it will take the company weeks to take down the QAnon accounts.

On August 19, Facebook implemented security measures designed to disrupt QAnon and other so-called militarized social movements from organizing on the platform.

Within the first month, the company said it removed more than 1,500 accounts linked to QAnon due to discussions of potential violence. Facebook also said that it has removed more than 6,500 accounts tied to more than 300 militarized social movements.

QAnon is often portrayed as a shadowy collection of individuals who claim President Donald Trump is secretly battling a network of pedophiles in the Democratic Party and the establishment. The FBI has warned that the group's online presence encourages extremists to commit violent criminal acts, according to lawmakers.

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Florida Extends Deadline for Voters to Register After Web Site Crashes - Governor

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - The Florida government has extended the deadline for voters to register for the November 3 US presidential and general elections for a day until Tuesday evening after its web site crashed a day earlier because of exceptionally heavy traffic for online applications, Governor Ron DeSantis said.

"Today, I issued a directive to re-open Florida's voter registration deadline to participate in the November 3, General Election before 7 pm EST for applications submitted online and by 7 pm local time for in-person registration, today, October 6," DeSantis said on Tuesday.

The Florida Secretary of State Laurel Lee issued a statement saying the state's online registration portal had experienced "unprecedented volume and traffic" of 1.1 million requests an hour on Monday evening.

Lee said his office is working with local Supervisors of Elections and the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles to ensure that all eligible registrants have the ability to submit a voter registration application by the new deadline on Tuesday evening.

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US Unlikely to Have Vaccine Before Election Due to New Regulations - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - The US Food and Drug Administration has decided on a two month waiting period before approving its new COVID-19 vaccine, The New York Times reported.

The FDA has issued stronger guidelines for the introduction into general use of any vaccine to prevent COVID-19, an action the Trump administration had previously prevented, the report said on Tuesday.

The FDA's action reduces to virtually zero any possibility that a new vaccine can be introduced before the presidential and national elections on November 3, the newspaper said.

President Donald Trump after being in the hospital for three days getting treated for COVID-19, in a message a Monday promised that the US would have a vaccine "momentarily."

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IMF Projects Mexico's Output Growth to Shrink 9% in 2020 - Statement

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has projected a 9-percent reduction of Mexico's output growth this year and a slow recovery in 2021.

"We project output growth at -9 percent in 2020, 3½ percent in 2021, and close to 2 percent thereafter," the IMF said in a statement.

The fund has predicted that employment, income and poverty will be able to reach pre-pandemic levels only in several years.

"Not only are the gains of the past decade in these areas being set back, Mexico's long-standing challenge of low growth appears set to worsen," the IMF said, warning about additional risks to the economic outlook.

The IMF called on Mexico government to implement more near-term fiscal support and credible medium-term reforms in order to support economic growth.

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White House Gift Shop Sells Souvenir Coin Showing 'Superhero' Trump Defeating COVID-19

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump achieved mythological status as a superhero who defeated COVID-19 in the latest commemorative coin about to go on sale in the White House gift shop, the creator Anthony Giannini said in announcing his latest addition to his coin collection that celebrates key moments in the Trump presidency.

"The new coin design features more than a hint of superhero qualities in history's most fascinating president," Gianni says in the opening salvo of an advertisement offering Trump fans an opportunity to pre-order the medallion for \$100.

Gianni continues to tease further potential buyers with a claim that Trump "occupies a mythological space" in the "Post-COVID Era," without offering viewers a peak at his latest creation. The actual image will be released later, he said.

Previous Gianni creations include at least 10 coins depicting key moments in the Trump presidency, with several illustrating meetings with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and at least one honoring a summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Even Trump appears to have embraced Gianni's superhero theme in a Twitter message following his discharge from Walter Reed Medical Center, where he spent three days after contracting the coronavirus.

"If the President bounces back onto the campaign trail, he will be an invincible hero, who not only survived every dirty trick the Democrats threw at him, but the Chinese virus as well. He will show America we no longer have to be afraid," the statement said.

Predictably, the caped crusader image attracted scorn from Democrats, who ridiculed Trump's latest advice that Americans to learn to live with the virus face the pandemic without fear.

"Don't be afraid of Covid' is an evil thing to say to those of us who lost our loved ones to Covid 19," Congresswoman Ilhan Omar, whose father died from the disease, tweeted. "This man is unfit to be President."

Former US Health Secretary Julian Castro urged Americans to ignore Trump's advice and protect themselves.

"Take this virus seriously. Wear a mask. Take precautions. And elect a new president who actually has a strong plan to get past this virus, get people back to work and bring our country together," Castro tweeted.

Public opinion polls consistently show Trump trailing former Vice President Joe Biden by double digits, with many surveys indicating most voters are uncomfortable with Trump's dismissive toward the virus and medical advice to stop the contagion.

More than 200,000 Americans have died from the virus and rates of infection have begun growing in many states as the election approaches.

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PREVIEW - Pence, Harris Meet for US Vice Presidential Debates After Trump's Illness

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - US Vice President Mike Pence and his rival Kamala Harris square off on Wednesday for their only round of televised pre-election debates eight days after their superiors, Donald Trump and Joe Biden, met on stage for the first time with unclear follow-up prospects.

The 90-minute event, which will be hosted by The University of Utah in Salt Lake City, gained an unexpected prominence after Trump's coronavirus infection raised concerns over the health and longevity of the presidential candidates - both the Republican incumbent, who is 74, and his 77-year-old Democratic opponent.

As an extra precaution organizers decided to install a plexiglass shield between the debaters and to nearly double the distance between them on stage - from seven to 13 feet.

The vice presidential debate will begin at 9:00 p.m EST (1:00 a.m. GMT on Thursday) and will run without commercial breaks. The contest will be moderated by Susan Page, Washington Bureau Chief of USA Today. The show will be divided into nine 10-minute segments each devoted to a specific topic.

Prior to the debate the White House Physician Jesse Schonau announced that Pence has not been in close contact with Trump or other administration personnel who tested positive for coronavirus. The vice president is encouraged to go about his normal activities and does not need to quarantine, he assured in a memorandum.

On Friday, Trump was admitted to the Walter Reed Medical Center but on Monday was discharged and returned to the White House. The President tweeted that he looks forward to participating in the debate with Biden in Miami, Florida, on October 15. The Democratic nominee said earlier that further debates are possible if approved by "the scientists." Trump and Biden also have the third debate round scheduled for October 22 in Nashville, Tennessee. Their first showdown, held last Tuesday in Cleveland, Ohio, was marred by insults and frequent mutual interruptions. The organizers promised to amend the rules to give a moderator more tools to enforce order.

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US, Georgian Military Discuss Bilateral Security Cooperation Priorities - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - The US Department of Defense said in a statement that it discussed with the Georgian Ministry of Defense security cooperation goals during their latest bilateral consultations.

"The purpose of the consultations was to discuss bilateral security cooperation priorities, share information on progress toward realizing shared security goals, and strengthen the US-Georgia strategic partnership," the statement said on Tuesday.

The consultations, held by video teleconference, were chaired by US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Laura Cooper and the Georgian First Deputy Minister of Defense Lela Chikovani.

Apart from discussing what the two sides termed were new security cooperation goals for the future, the delegations also discussed the Georgian and Afghan military modernization efforts, the statement said.

Both delegations reaffirmed their commitment to the US-Georgia strategic partnership, the statement added.

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Trump Shows Contempt for 'Our Heroes' By Leaving COVID-19 Relief Package Talks - Pelosi

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) - President Donald Trump has shown contempt for health care professionals, first responders and children as well as for science by pulling out of talks for a COVID-19 financial relief package while insisting on another huge tax cut, US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said.

"Walking away from coronavirus talks demonstrates that President Trump is unwilling to crush the virus, as is required by the Heroes Act. He shows his contempt for science, his disdain for our heroes - in health care, first responders, sanitation, transportation, food workers, teachers, teachers, teachers and others," Pelosi said on Tuesday.

The US House speaker pointed out that Trump remains committed to his proposed \$150 billion tax cut for the wealthiest people in the United States while refusing to provide much needed funds to workers.

"Today, once again, President Trump showed his true colors: putting himself first at the expense of the country, with the full complicity of the [Republican] Members of Congress. ... and he refuses to put money in workers' pockets, unless his name is printed on the check," Pelosi said. Trump's actions have revealed that the White House is in complete disarray and that it is rejecting the urgent warnings of Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell earlier in the day

that too little financial support would lead to a weak recovery, creating unnecessary hardship for US households and businesses, Pelosi added.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, October 7 (Sputnik) -

NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT

- * Armenia is ready to make concessions in the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh in case of similar readiness on the part of Azerbaijan, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said on Tuesday.
- * The European Court of Human Rights released a decision calling upon all countries directly or indirectly involved in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, including Turkey, to refrain from actions that can lead to violations of human rights of civilians.
- * Russia is very actively engaged in resolving the ongoing escalation between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh, Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.
- * German Chancellor Angela Merkel discussed the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan via video conference and called for a ceasefire and progress in negotiations within the OSCE Minsk Group, the German government said.

WHITE HOUSE CORONAVIRUS STATUS

- * White House physician Sean Conley said in a memorandum on Tuesday that President Donald Trump has no symptoms of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19).
- * Trump is recovering "dramatically and quickly" although he is "not out of the woods yet," White House Communications Director Alyssa Farah said.
- * All White House staff have been required to wear full personal protective equipment, the White House said in a statement.
- * US Vice President Mike Pence has not been in close contact with Trump or other White House personnel who tested positive for the novel coronavirus, White House Physician Jesse Schonau said.

GLOBAL ECONOMY

- * US policymakers cannot unduly worry about the United States' unsustainable federal debt because a further slowdown due to novel coronavirus could spark recessionary dynamics, Federal Reserve Chairman Jay Powell said on Tuesday.
- * 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).
- * 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 EIA said.

* Global GDP is expected to shrink by 4.8 percent in 2020 as a result of the ongoing coronavirus disease pandemic, the World Trade Organization said in a report.

US PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

* 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.

* Trump said 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.

KYRGYZSTAN DEVELOPMENTS

* The Kyrgyz Central Election Commission (CEC) should set repeat parliamentary elections within two weeks, the official news agency Kabar reported on Tuesday, citing CEC Deputy Chairman Abdyzhapar Bekmatov.

* The Kyrgyz government called on citizens to abide by the law, stressing that it continues operating amid the protests and makes effort to maintain the economic stability.

* The number of people injured in Kyrgyzstan in the clashes between protesters and law enforcement agents has grown to 686, and the death toll stands at one, the Health Ministry told Sputnik.

* The current parliament of Kyrgyzstan will perform its duties until a new one is elected, Former Prime Minister Temir Sariyev, a member of the coordination council of 13 parties formed amid the political turmoil in the country, said.