

Wires 10/9/20

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Trump to Hold First Rally Since COVID-19 Diagnosis On Monday in Florida - Campaign

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump will hold his first rally since his novel coronavirus (COVID-19) diagnosis on Monday in Sanford, Florida, his campaign announced in a statement on Friday.

"Donald J. Trump for President, Inc. announced that President Donald J. Trump will deliver remarks at a Make America Great Again event in Sanford, Florida on Monday, October 12th, 2020 at 7:00 PM EDT [11:00 p.m. GMT]," the campaign said.

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Pompeo Says More Disclosures Over Clinton Emails Will Occur Before November Election

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Friday that he will disclose more information before the November vote regarding the thousands of emails former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton exchanged via a private server during her time in office. "We got the emails, we're getting them out. We're going to get all this information out so the American people can see it... we're doing it as fast as we can, I certainly think there will be more to see before the election," Pompeo said in an interview with Fox News.

Pompeo said President Trump has the authority to order the declassification and release of Clinton's emails, adding that the administration will disclose information in a way that protects US intelligence sources.

Trump has recently sought the State Department to release Clinton's emails and other information related to the matter.

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US Stocks Increase as Trump, Democrats Revive Talks on Latest COVID-19 Relief Package

NEW YORK, October 9 (Sputnik) - Stocks increased on Friday with the technology stocks having a third straight weekly gain, after President Donald Trump said he wanted a bigger COVID-19 relief bill than previously negotiated with Democrats, reversing course on talks he canceled earlier this week.

The Nasdaq Composite Index, which lists US tech stock giants such as Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Netflix and Google, settled at 11,580, up 1.4 percent on the day. For the week, it rose 4.6 percent after to last week's 1.5 percent gain and the previous week's 1.1 percent increase. The Dow Jones Industrial Average, the broadest stock indicator on the New York Stock Exchange, closed at 28,587 or up 0.6 percent. For the week, the Dow rose 3.3 percent after last week's 1.9 percent gain.

The S&P, a barometer for the top 500 US stocks on the New York Stock Exchange, settled at 3,477, up 0.9 percent. For the week, it increased 3.5 percent, after last week's 1.9 percent gain. Trump said he wants a new and bigger coronavirus relief package approved for the American people than what was negotiated previously in Congress, an apparent U-turn from just days ago when he ordered such talks canceled.

"I'd like to see a bigger stimulus package than either the Republicans or Democrats are offering," the president told the Rush Limbaugh show referring to both his party as well as the opposition. "I'd like to see money going to the people."

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Canadian Foreign Minister to Meet With Tikhanovskaya, NATO Chief During Trip to Europe

TORONTO, October 9 (Sputnik) - Canadian Foreign Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne told reporters on Friday that he will meet with former Belarusian presidential candidate Svetlana Tikhanovskaya and other European officials, including NATO General-Secretary Jens Stoltenberg, during a trip next week to Europe.

"I will ... take the opportunity to meet with the leading [Belarusian] opposition candidate, in Vilnius, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya," Champagne said. "We are going to continue that discussion and see what else Canada can do in addition to sanctions and the sums that we have provided." Champagne will meet Tikhanovskaya on the sidelines of a summit with his counterparts from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and will also meet with Stoltenberg and European Commission Vice President Josep Borrell to discuss the dispute in Nagorno-Karabakh and relations with China.

Canada's top diplomat will also visit the OSCE headquarters in Vienna, Austria, and where he will be joined by the organization's Chair and Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama for a discussion on the ongoing protests in Belarus.

Canada imposed sanctions on Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, his son Viktor, and a number of top officials last week over their alleged participation in election fraud and for violence against protesters. Minsk countered with "symmetric restrictions" against Canadian last Friday.

Champagne said that he will depart for Europe on Sunday, starting with a stop in Greece, and returning to Canada next Saturday.

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Canada's Top Diplomat Says He Told Cavusoglu Turkey Should Stay Out of Karabakh Conflict

TORONTO, October 9 (Sputnik) - Canadian Foreign Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne said on Friday that he told his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu Ankara must stay out of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh.

"My key message was: Stay out of the conflict," Champagne told reporters. "I certainly urged my Turkish counterpart to play a role in de-escalation, staying out of the conflict and encouraging Azerbaijan to come back to the negotiating table.

Champagne said Cavusoglu was in agreement that there is no military solution to the dispute and would do his part in bringing the warring sides to the negotiating table.

Champagne also said he explained to Cavusoglu Canada's export rules following its decision earlier this week to suspended export permits to Turkey amid allegations that Canadian military equipment is being used in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Champagne added that he deplores anyone who believes there is a military solution to the dispute in Nagorno-Karabakh, following Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's address to the nation, in which he said that he disagrees with the premise that no military solution exists.

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

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Trump Weighing Options to Make China Pay 'Real Cost' for COVID-19 Spread - Pompeo

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump is currently studying options to make China pay "real costs" for its role in the spread of COVID-19, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in an interview With Larry O'Connor of the Larry O'Connor Show on Friday.

When asked whether Trump would retaliate against China now that the virus has made its way to the White House, Pompeo said, "Absolutely, and you're starting to see this formulated."

"There will be real costs imposed. President Trump is being presented options, ways to respond," Pompeo said. "I don't want to get out in front of the decisions he'll make, but it is not only appropriate but necessary that a nation that made this kind of decision, that's now cost over a million lives across the world and countless trillions of dollars in economic wealth for ordinary Americans and people of the middle class all across the world, there has to be a cost imposed." Relations between the United States and China have significantly deteriorated under the Trump administration following US accusations that Beijing engaged in unfair trade practices and made a poor effort to contain the COVID-19 outbreak. Tensions between the two countries have also soared over China's activity in the South China Sea and the Arctic region, as well as its Belt and Road Initiative to gain an economic influence around the world.

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Trump Planning First Public Event Saturday Since COVID-19 Diagnosis - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - President Donald Trump is planning an event at the White House this weekend, which will be his first time returning to public engagement events since his novel coronavirus (COVID-19) diagnosis last week, US media reported on Friday, citing administration officials.

Trump will address the audience from the balcony of the White House and give remarks related to protests and law and order, ABC News reported.

On Thursday, White House physician Sean Conley gave Trump the green light to return to public events by Saturday.

Last Friday, Trump was admitted to the Walter Reed Medical Center for treatment after announcing that he had tested positive for COVID-19. 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.

Since Trump's diagnosis, there has been an outbreak of the novel coronavirus disease at the White House that has affected at least 30 individuals.

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UN Chief Calls on All Actors in Kyrgyz to Refrain From Violence - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, October 9 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres expressed his concern over the protests that erupted in Kyrgyzstan in the aftermath of the Sunday's parliamentary elections and called on all actors to refrain from violence, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in a statement on Friday.

"The Secretary-General is concerned about developments in the Kyrgyz Republic, where protests that erupted following the 4 October parliamentary elections continue, with episodes of violence being reported today," Dujarric said. "The Secretary-General calls on all actors involved to refrain from violence."

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Trump in U-Turn Says Stimulus Packages Offered by Congress Not Big Enough

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump on Friday said he wants a bigger coronavirus relief package approved for the American people than what has been on

offer from both political parties, in an apparent U-turn from just days ago when he canceled talks.

Earlier this week, Trump shocked the nation and caused the stock market to plunge by terminating negotiations for a new COVID-19 stimulus because he felt the House Democrats' \$2.4 trillion package was too big.

"I'd like to see a bigger stimulus package than either the Republicans or Democrats are offering," Trump told the Rush Limbaugh radio show referring to both his party as well as the opposition. "I'd like to see money going to people."

The president blamed House Speaker and leader of the Democrats in Congress, Nancy Pelosi for the aborted talks, saying she demanded an outsize \$2.4 trillion package versus the \$1.6 trillion offered by the Republicans.

But on Friday, White House Economic Adviser Larry Kudlow told the Fox Business network that Trump had approved a revised coronavirus stimulus package and wanted to make a deal now with Democrats. The Wall Street Journal later reported that the White House was working on an \$1.8 trillion package, citing people familiar with the discussions.

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

Republicans and Democrats 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. Trump, who stands for reelection on November 3, has accused Pelosi of playing political football over the issue. The House Speaker says any deal approved should be to the advantage of Americans, and not for Trump's political expediency.

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RPT - Trudeau Says Canada at 'Tipping Point' as COVID-19 Cases Hit All-Time High

TORONTO, October 9 (Sputnik) - Canada is at tipping point in the fight against the novel coronavirus pandemic, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said during a briefing on Friday.

On Thursday, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) said that it identified 2,436 new coronavirus cases, the largest one-day increase since the onset of the pandemic. A combined 2,041 new cases in Ontario and Quebec pushed Canada's tally to 177,600, according to data released by provincial health agencies.

"We're at a tipping point in this pandemic, not only is the second wave underway, yesterday we hit the highest daily recorded cases – well above what we saw this spring," Trudeau told reporters.

In its latest short-term projection, PHAC said it is anticipating up to additional 20,230 new cases and 243 virus related deaths in the next week.

Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Theresa Tam told reporters the predicted number of cases could be in the range of 188,150 to 197,830 by October 17.

"The predicted number of deaths could be in the range of 9,690 to 9,800 by October 17," Tam said.

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Trudeau Says Canada at 'Tipping Point' as COVID-19 Cases Hit All-Time High

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US, Romania Sign Cooperation Agreement on Civil Nuclear Programs - Energy Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - The United States and Romania have signed a cooperation agreement on civil nuclear programs, the US Energy Department said in a press release on Friday.

"Today, US Secretary of Energy Dan Brouillette and Romania's Minister of Economy, Energy and Business Development Virgil Popescu initialed a draft Intergovernmental Agreement to cooperate on the expansion and modernization of Romania's civil nuclear power program," the release said.

Once the agreement is finalized, Romania will have access to US expertise and technology to build two nuclear reactors and refurbish a third one, the release added.

The agreement will ensure Romania's electricity security and improve economic growth, according to the agreement.

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Trump Says Will Be Disappointed if Obamagate Report Not Released Before Election

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump said on Friday that he will be very disappointed if the Justice Department fails to produce a report on the origins of the Russian collusion allegations before the Election Day.

Earlier, Axios reported that US Attorney General William Barr told Republican officials the report would not be released ahead of the November 3 election.

"I will very disappointed if that Axios piece that you read to me is true. I will be very disappointed because they have had plenty of time to get this done," Trump said in an interview to radio anchor Rush Limbaugh.

Trump also promised to raise the issue with Barr.

Barr appointed US Attorney John Durham to investigate allegations that Obama administration officials weaponized American intelligence in an attempt to defeat Trump's 2016 bid and then undermine his presidency. Media speculate that Trump seeks an expedited declassification and release of materials that might give him a political advantage ahead of the election.

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Ryabkov, Billingslea to Speak by Phone Early Next Week - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) – Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov and US Special Envoy for Arms Control Marshall Billingslea will speak by phone next week amid a push by the United States to secure a new nuclear deal before the November 3 presidential election, Axios reported on Friday.

The US believes that a deal could be reached within a week or so, if Russia is ready for serious negotiations, the report added.

On Tuesday, Billingslea praised the "important progress" achieved at nuclear arms control negotiations with Ryabkov in the Finnish capital of Helsinki.

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White House Preparing New \$1.8 Trillion COVID-19 Relief Package Offer - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - The White House is preparing a new \$1.8 trillion COVID-19 relief offer, its largest proposal to date in the long-running negotiations with congressional Democrats, the Wall Street Journal reported on Friday, citing people familiar with the matter.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin is expected to discuss the \$1.8 proposal with US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi when the two meet later in the day, the report said.

Earlier on Friday, White House Economic Adviser Larry Kudlow told the Fox Business network that President Donald Trump has approved a revised coronavirus stimulus package and wants to make a deal with Pelosi and the Democrats.

Shortly after Kudlow's comments, Trump tweeted that the negotiations for the next COVID-19 relief package are moving along and encouraged Mnuchin to "go Big."

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 as loans and grants to businesses, paycheck protection for workers and personal aid to qualifying US citizens and permanent residents.

Republicans and Democrats have been locked in a stalemate since on a successive package to the CARES Act as thousands of Americans, particularly those in the airlines sector, risked losing their jobs without further aid.

Earlier this week, Trump announcing he was terminating negotiations with Pelosi because she and the Democrats demanded an \$2.4 trillion stimulus package that the US president said contained items unrelated to COVID-19 versus the \$1.6 trillion package offered by the Republicans.

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Twitter Announces New Rules to Combat Disinformation Aimed at Confusing Voters

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - Twitter has announced new rules to provide its platform from being used to disseminate false information aimed at confusing the US national election process ahead of the November 3 vote, the social media giant announced on Friday.

"Starting next week, when people attempt to Retweet a Tweet with a misleading information label, they will see a prompt directing them to credible information about the topic before they can amplify it," the company said in a Twitter message.

Tweets that include premature claims of a victory in an election will be labeled and the labels will also direct viewers to the company's official US Election page in Explore, Twitter explained.

"Tweets that encourage others to interfere with the election process or the results will be removed," the company said.

The measures were being taken to protect the integrity of the 2020 national elections to be held on November 3, the company explained.

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Trump Has Approved Revised Coronavirus Stimulus Package - Kudlow

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - President Donald Trump has approved a revised coronavirus stimulus package and wants to make a deal with rival Democrats in Congress, White House Economic Adviser Larry Kudlow said on Friday.

"The President has approved a revised package. He would like to do a deal. It will be relatively broad-based but I can't go through details to it," Kudlow told the Fox Business network.

Kudlow also said Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin would be speaking with US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Friday afternoon regarding the stimulus package.

Minutes after Kudlow's interview, Trump said via Twitter that COVID-19 relief negotiations are moving along and encouraged Mnuchin to "go big."

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 for loans and grants to businesses, paycheck protection for workers and personal aid to qualifying US citizens and permanent residents.

Republicans and Democrats have since been locked in a stalemate on a successive package to the CARES Act.

Earlier this week, Trump announced he was terminating negotiations for a new stimulus package. Trump blamed US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and the Democrats, saying they demanded a \$2.4 trillion package versus the \$1.6 trillion offered by the Republicans.

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Trump Promises to Fast-Track Regeneron's COVID-19 Drug Approval

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump said on Friday that he works to fast-track the approval of Regeneron, an antibody drug developed by Regeneron Pharmaceuticals and Eli Lilly pharmaceutical companies for coronavirus treatment.

"We are sending that in an Eli Lilly version of it, which is very similar. We are sending that to all of our hospitals... I am doing an emergency use authorization. I have to get them to approve really fast," Trump told radio anchor Rush Limbaugh.

Trump himself took Regeneron after he was diagnosed with coronavirus and briefly hospitalized. President says that he feels perfect now and has stopped receiving any medication.

Trump has previously pushed to get a COVID-19 vaccine available for the election. But regulators reportedly crushed these hopes by stipulating that an approval period would extend beyond November 13.

The US has more than 7.6 million COVID-9 cases and more than 213,000 related deaths, according to Johns Hopkins University.

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UNHCR Calls for Improvement of Conditions for 7,800 Refugees on Lesbos - Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, October 9 (Sputnik) - The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) called for an urgent improvement of living conditions of some 7,800 refugees housed in an emergency shelter facility on the Greek island of Lesbos after devastating fires destroyed the Moria Reception and Identification Center, UNHCR spokesperson Shabia Mantoo said in a statement on Friday.

"Four weeks after the fires destroyed Moria Reception and Identification Centre on Lesvos, UNHCR is reiterating its call that urgent action and improvements are needed to avoid further deterioration of living conditions for some 7,800 refugees and asylum-seekers currently sheltered in the emergency site in Kara Tepe," Mantoo said. "Colder weather and the onset of winter will only bring more hardship for the people there."

On September 9, the overcrowded Moria facility was destroyed by a massive fire, leaving nearly 13,000 migrants without shelter. According to Greek media, the fire could have been caused by arson.

Mantoo said heavy rains have exacerbated the situation for refugees sheltered in the Kora Tepe emergency site as the tents set up there cannot provide necessary protection against the looming cold weather because the area is prone to floods.

The UNHCR currently provides short-term solutions, such as the delivery of gravel to the site to lessen the risk of flooding and plywood sheets for tents. However, large-scale efforts are required, including proper drainage throughout the site and more transfers to the mainland, Mantoo added.

The UNCHR is calling for immediate action for winter preparation and more transfers to adequate accommodation to address the needs of the stranded refugees.

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US, India Further Strengthening Defense Ties - Ambassador to Washington

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - The United States and India have continued to strengthen their defense and economic ties and have developed a global strategic partnership, Ambassador to Washington Taranjit Singh Sandhu said on Friday.

"We have a very broad defense partnership with the United States," Sandhu told a Heritage Foundation podcast. "The partnership between India and the United States has deepened into a global partnership."

The growing relationship now included regular combined military exercises, co-production agreements on military equipment and joint research and development projects, the

ambassador added. The United States was also emerging as an important partner for India in energy cooperation, he said

"US companies have invested over \$46 billion in India... More than 200 Indian companies have created over 125,000 jobs in this country," he said.

Also on Friday, the Department of State announced that Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun will travel to India next week from October 12 to October 14 to discuss advancing the US-India Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership and how both countries can work together to advance peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region.

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Trump Says 'Feels Perfect,' Stopped Taking Medicine

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump said on Friday that he feels perfect and has ceased taking any medication for his coronavirus ailment.

"Now I am free, I feel perfect, I am not taking anything. I am off," Trump told radio anchor Rush Limbaugh.

The president added that he met earlier in the day 11 administering doctors who showed him "amazing stats."

Last Thursday, Trump announced that he and First Lady Melania Trump tested positive for the coronavirus. Trump was transferred to the Walter Reed Medical Center for treatment the following day and was released from the hospital on Monday.

Trump after being released from the hospital said he has felt fine and called on Americans not to let the COVID-19 dominate their lives.

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US Urges Turkey to 'Pull Back' S-400 Defense System - Pompeo

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - The United States calls on Turkey to pull back its S-400 air defense system and assist in the security of NATO's southern flank, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in an interview on Friday.

On Wednesday, 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.

"It's unfortunate what they've chosen to do by purchasing the S-400 weapons system. We urge them to reconsider that and to pull it back," Pompeo said on the Hugh Hewitt radio show. "We need Turkey to be a good NATO partner to assist in the security of NATO's southern flank."

A State Department spokesperson told Sputnik on Thursday 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).

Since 2018, the United States has introduced a number of measures to pressure the Turkish government into canceling the S-400 purchase, including removing Turkey from the F-35 aircraft supply chain despite the added costs to the program. The United States has proposed buying the S-400s from Ankara in a bid to break the deadlock. Washington has claimed the S-400 is incompatible with NATO security standards and might compromise the operations of the F-35 jets.

Turkey has repeatedly vowed to activate the missile systems, delivered by Russia last summer, despite the US threats of sanctions.

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UN Hopes Armenia-Azerbaijan Talks in Moscow Lead to Ceasefire - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, October 9 (Sputnik) - The United Nations expressed hope that the Russian-brokered negotiations scheduled for Friday between Armenia and Azerbaijan will lead to the cessation of hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in a press briefing.

"We very much welcome the meeting that will take place and we hope that it would lead to, first and foremost, a cessation of hostilities," Dujarric said. "I think we have seen the very disturbing reports of civilians continuing to be to be killed or wounded."

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Senior US Diplomat Will Visit India to Advance Global Strategic Partnership - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - A high-ranking US diplomat is flying to New Delhi next week to advance the United States' global strategic partnership with India, the US Department of State announced in a media note on Friday.

"US Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun will travel to India and Bangladesh October 12-16," the note said. "From October 12-14, the Deputy Secretary will visit New Delhi, India where he will meet with senior government officials and deliver keynote remarks at the India-US Forum."

The State Department said in the note that Biegun will focus on strategic cooperation with India both in the Indo-Pacific region and around the world. His visit follows US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's meeting on Tuesday with Indian Minister of External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, the note also said.

"Deputy Secretary Biegun's engagements in India will focus on advancing the United States-India Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership and how the United States and India

can work together to advance peace, prosperity, and security in the Indo-Pacific and around the globe," the note added.

From October 14-16, Biegun will also visit Dhaka, Bangladesh to meet with senior government officials there and reaffirm the United States-Bangladesh partnership, according to the State Department.

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Canada's Unemployment Rate Drops to 9% Following Jobs Gain - Statistics Agency

TORONTO, October 9 (Sputnik) - The Canadian economy added 378,000 jobs in September reducing the unemployment rate to 9 percent, the country's statistics agency said on Friday. "Following an increase of 246,000 (+1.4%) in August, employment rose by 378,000 (+2.1%) in September. The unemployment rate declined 1.2 percentage points to 9.0% in September, down from the peak of 13.7% in May," Statistics Canada said in its Labor Force Survey. The job gains brought the Canadian economy to within 720,000 (-3.7%) of its pre-pandemic levels, although the country's unemployment rate is the second highest among G7 countries above the OECD average of 7.4%.

The recorded employment gains were on the strength of 334,000 full-time vacancies, an increase of 2.1%, the report said.

The report does come amid fears of a resurgence of COVID-19 and renewed shutdowns. On Thursday, the country recorded its third highest daily increase of COVID-19 infections and preliminary numbers suggest that may be surpassed on Friday. As a result, Quebec is introducing partial shutdowns of certain businesses for 20 days and reports out of Ontario say the provincial government in that province will follow suit.

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Hurricane Delta Shuts 92% of US Oil Production in Gulf of Mexico - Interior Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - Hurricane Delta, the latest storm to hit the US portion of the Gulf of Mexico, has shut down almost all oil production and about two-thirds of natural gas output in the region, according to US government data on Friday.

Nearly 92 percent of oil production facilities in the Gulf and almost 62 percent of gas output capability have been battered down, data from the Interior Department Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement revealed.

The 2020 Atlantic hurricane season has featured tropical cyclone formation at an unprecedented rate. So far, there have been a total of 26 tropical or subtropical cyclones, 25 named storms, nine hurricanes and three major hurricanes.

Rain from Hurricane Delta spread into southwestern Louisiana on Friday morning as the storm approached the region still recovers from the damage wrought by Hurricane Laura in August.

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Trump Has Approved Revised Coronavirus Stimulus Package - White House Adviser Kudlow

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - President Donald Trump has approved a revised coronavirus stimulus package and wants to make a deal with rival Democrats in Congress, White House Economic Adviser Larry Kudlow said on Friday.

"The President has approved a revised package. He would like to do a deal. It will be relatively broad-based but I can't go through details to it," Kudlow told Fox Business.

He added Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin would be speaking with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi Friday afternoon on the package.

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US House Democrats Introduce Bill for Commission to Determine if President Incapacitated

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - Democrats in the US House of Representatives on Friday introduced a bill to establish a panel that would to decide whether a US president may be declared incapacitated in case he is unable to make that determination himself.

US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said during a press conference after the bill was introduced that the measure seeks to create a process for future Presidents and is not about President Donald Trump, who is recovering after he contracted the novel coronavirus last week. Trump has said he feels very well after receiving a comprehensive treatment and is going about his duties as usual.

"Congress has a constitutional duty to lay out the process by which the President's incapacity... is determined. This bill honors the duty by creating a standing commission of top former executive officials and medical experts selected in a bipartisan, bicameral way," Pelosi said. The US House Speaker noted that a president's fitness for office must be determined by science and facts.

"This legislation applies to future presidents, but we are reminded of the necessity of action by the health of the current president," Pelosi said.

US Congressman Jamie Raskin said during the press conference that the bill seeks to establish a 16-member commission that could act in the event of an emergency in which the president is unable to transfer powers because of being incapacitated.

"Eight members are chosen - half by Republican leaders and half by Democratic leaders - from medical personnel, physicians and other medical authorities. The other eight members are drawn from the ranks of former high-ranking executive branch officers, including former

presidents, vice presidents, attorneys general, secretaries of defense, treasury and state and surgeons general," Raskin said.

The Congressman explained the procedure to transfer the powers of the US President would require a bicameral vote with a mandatory two-thirds majority, a close cooperation with Vice President as a successor and take into account possible objections on the part of the latter.

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IOM Urges Meeting Needs of 2.7M In Migrants Stranded Worldwide Amid Pandemic - Statement

UNITED NATIONS, October 9 (Sputnik) - The international community should take an immediate and coordinated action to address the fate of at least 2.75 million migrants stranded across the world due to the novel coronavirus-related restrictions on movement, the International Organization for Migration said in a statement on Friday.

"Effective international cooperation is urgently needed to address the circumstances of [at least 2.75 million] migrants stranded worldwide due to mobility restrictions imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19," the statement said.

IOM pointed out that stranded migrants face a higher risk of abuse, exploitation and neglect, and are often excluded from national COVID-19 response plans as well as are unwilling to seek health services.

The imposition of quarantine measures to mitigate the spread of the novel coronavirus has also contributed to many migrants being housed in warehouses, where basic hygiene and physical distancing cannot be met.

IOM Director General Antonio Vitorino said in the statement that countries should allow migrants to return home safely and re-open labor corridors to help reanimate economies.

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Fewer Than Half of Canadians Say They Feel More Secure After Seeing Police Officer - Poll

TORONTO, October 9 (Sputnik) - Fewer than half of Canadians say they feel more secure after seeing a police officer, an new Angus Reid Institute poll revealed on Friday.

"Overall, fewer than half of the population says they feel more secure when they see a police officer. For one-in-five (17 percent) seeing an officer in public generates unease," the Angus Reid report on the poll results said.

Among 18 to 24-year-olds, the number of those who feel less secure in the presence of police outnumbers those who feel safer by 6 percent and is nearly identical to those between the ages of 25 and 34 who felt the same, the report said.

Among young people of indigenous and visible minority background, the percentage of those who feel less safe is even higher.

According to the poll, 66 percent of Canadians have had at least one direct encounter with police in the past five years.

Canadians generally fall into one of four types of attitudes toward law enforcement: those who vocally support the police, those who are silently supportive, those weary of law enforcement and those who wish to defund the police, according to the report. The share of each of the groups is almost equal.

The report also found that three-quarters of Canadians view police in their neighborhood favorably.

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Senator Van Hollen Says US Arms Control Envoy Threatens Russia With No Contingency Plans

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - US Special Envoy for Arms Control Marshall Billingslea is making threats against Russia without having contingency plans to meet those threats, Senator Chris Van Hollen said during the event organized by the Arms Control Association on Friday. "I must say all of the chest beating and statements that we've heard about spending Russia and China 'into oblivion' and that we are going to do this study on how we are going to rapidly deploy our stockpile forces is seen, I think, by Russia and others for what it is, just empty rhetoric," Van Hollen said.

The Senator noted the General Accounting Office has exposed that the US military has not done any kind of planning for what it would do if the United States were not constrained under the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START).

"So, on the one hand we have these folks like Billingslea out there, you know, making these threats when in fact, the United States has made no contingency plans whatsoever to meet those threats," Van Hollen said.

In late September, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said Russia considers it inconceivable to strengthen control and verification measures in the New START as proposed by US special envoy Marshall Billingslea, adding that there is no reason to change anything and there will be no return to the practice of the late 1990s.

In an interview with Russia's Kommersant newspaper, Billingslea said that unless Washington and Moscow struck a presidential memorandum on arms control by February 5, 2021, the date when the New START is set to expire, the treaty would not be extended.

Billingslea also warned that the price for Russia would rise after November if US President Donald Trump is reelected.

In response, Ryabkov said that reaching an agreement is possible only if the United States abandons any ultimatums.

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Antonov Urges US to Eliminate Its Chemical Weapons Following Anti-Russia Allegations

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - Russian Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov on Friday urged the United States to focus on eliminating its chemical weapons stockpile instead of circulating unfounded allegations of Russia's involvement in poisoning former spy Sergei Skripal and opposition figure Alexey Navalny.

Antonov made the comment in response to the State Department's announcement that the United States conducted a virtual training with international partners to detect and respond to the use of weapons of mass destruction for assassinations.

"The document circulated by the US foreign policy agency is yet another example of unfounded accusations against Russia," Antonov said via Facebook. "We are not adherents of 'megaphone' diplomacy and believe that such issues need to be resolved within the framework of a professional discussion, in particular, through the OPCW [Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons]."

Antonov noted that the United States is the only country in the world with chemical weapons reserves and called on US government to concentrate on the complete elimination of its stockpile instead of "replicating anti-Russian insinuations and conducting dubious training."

The State Department has accused Russia of using military-grade chemical agents to target adversaries for assassination, including the alleged attempts to poison former spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in the United Kingdom as well as opposition figure Alexey Navalny.

The State Department said the virtual exercise in detecting and responding to such attacks is the first in a series of bilateral and multilateral training sessions sponsored by the United States to help address the threat of weapons of mass destruction.

Russia has repeatedly denied the allegations it was involved in the Skripal and Navalny incidents.

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US Approves Possible \$12.5Bln Sale of F-35 Jets to Finland - Defense Security Agency

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - The United States has approved a possible \$12.5 billion sale of F35 fifth generation fighter aircraft to Finland, the US Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) said in a statement of Friday.

"The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Government of Finland of F-35 Joint Strike Fighter aircraft with air-to-air missiles and air-to-ground precision guided munitions and related equipment for an estimated cost of \$12.5 billion," the statement said.

The State Department also approved a possible sale for Finland of F/A-18E/F Super Hornet and EA-18G Growler aircraft as well as weapons and related equipment at an estimated cost of \$14.7 billion, the DSCA said in a separate statement.

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US Judge Blocks Bid to Extend Florida Voting After Registration Website Crashes - Order

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - A US federal judge has blocked an attempt by four civil rights groups in Florida to extend the deadline to register to vote after the state's voter registration website crashed due to abnormally heavy traffic, a court order showed on Friday. On Tuesday, the four groups - Dream Defenders, New Florida Majority, Organize Florida and Florida Immigrant Coalition - filed a federal lawsuit seeking an injunction to extend the deadline after the state's online voter registration system "crashed, going offline for several hours," court documents show.

On Friday, Chief US District Judge Mark Walker denied the groups' request, though he sharply chastised state officials over the system meltdown.

"Unfortunately for these potential voters, the Court cannot remedy what the state broke under these circumstances," Walker wrote in his ruling. "This Court notes that every man who has stepped foot on the Moon launched from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. Yet, Florida has failed to figure out how to run an election properly - a task simpler than rocket science."

Just hours before the Monday night deadline to register to vote, the website crashed as it experienced "an unprecedented 1.1 million requests per hour," Secretary of State Laurel Lee said in a statement on Tuesday.

In her statement, Lee also announced that the deadline would be extended until Tuesday night, but the four civil rights groups had argued that this was not enough time to allow for the high volumes of traffic and had sought to keep voter registration open for two more days. They said that thousands of potential voters had been disenfranchised when the voting system crashed.

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US Senator Calls Efforts to Include China in New START Talks Flawed From Beginning

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) should be extended but efforts to bring in China in the negotiations have been flawed from the beginning, US Senator Chris Van Hollen said during the event organized by the Arms Control Association on Friday.

"Why should we care about the New START agreement? Well, very simply, it's in our national security interest to extend New START," Van Hollen said. "Their efforts to force, to shoehorn China into the agreement was flawed from the beginning."

The New START is the last remaining legally binding agreement between the United States and Russia - countries with the largest stockpiles of nuclear weapons - and will expire in February of 2021 if it is not extended.

Russian President Vladimir Putin previously proposed a five-year extension of the treaty without preconditions. However, the United States has insisted on including China in the negotiations to extend the treaty and create a new trilateral nuclear deal. In addition, the United States has proposed expanding the treaty to encompass a number of new classes of weapons. The United Nations had previously torn up the key Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty and maintains that China must be a party to any upcoming arms reductions or control treaty.

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IOM Warns of Potential Mass Displacement of People in Nagorno-Karabakh - Statement

UNITED NATIONS, October 9 (Sputnik) - The International Organization for Migration (IOM) said in a statement on Friday that the ongoing deadly clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region will likely lead to mass displacement of people there.

"Fierce fighting in and around Nagorno-Karabakh is likely to result in significant displacement," the statement said.

IOM Regional Director for Southeastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia Renate Held said in the release that her office is deeply concerned about the safety of those who might be forced to flee and spend time without shelter as winter looms.

"We hope for a prompt, long-lasting and meaningful peaceful resolution to the current situation," Held said.

Held affirmed that IOM stands ready to assist the displaced and other conflict-affected people with humanitarian support in coordination with governmental and international actors.

Earlier on Friday, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights said it has received unconfirmed reports that at least 53 civilians have been killed since clashes erupted in the region.

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US Imposes New Aluminum Sheet Tariffs on 18 Countries - Commerce Dept

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - The United States will impose sweeping new tariffs on 18 countries determined to have dumped, or exported at below market value, aluminum sheet products into the United States, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said on Friday.

"We look forward to receiving parties' comments on the preliminary determinations that aluminum sheet imports from 18 countries have been dumped, and in some cases unfairly subsidized, into the US market," Ross said in a statement, adding it was "the broadest US trade enforcement action in two decades."

The countries impacted will be Bahrain, Brazil, Croatia, Egypt, Germany, Greece, India, Indonesia, Italy, Oman, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Taiwan and Turkey, the statement said.

Separately, Ross told Fox Business that tariffs were being immediately imposed on Germany and Bahrain, even though the department's determination that there was dumping was preliminary.

The tariff rate would be largest against Germany with 52 percent to 132 percent, followed by Bahrain with rates in the single digits, Ross said.

Sheet, the most widely used form of aluminum, is found in all of the aluminum industry's major markets. In packaging, sheet is used to manufacture cans and packages. In transportation, aluminum sheet is used to manufacture panels for automobile bodies and tractor trailers. Sheet is used in home appliances and cookware.

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US 'Deeply Concerned' About Attack on UN Humanitarian Convoy in South Sudan - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - The United States is very concerned about the recent attack on a United Nations humanitarian convoy that occurred earlier in the week, US State Department spokesperson Morgan Ortagus said in a statement on Friday.

"The United States is deeply concerned by the attack on a United Nations World Food Program (WFP) humanitarian cargo convoy in South Sudan this week," Ortagus said.

The spokesperson also said that three aid workers were injured in the attack and one remains missing.

"We call on the government of South Sudan to investigate this attack fully and expeditiously and provide the security necessary to ensure the safety of aid workers who are delivering critical life-saving services and assistance," Ortagus said.

The United States is committed to providing humanitarian aid to the people in South Sudan despite the existing security concerns, Ortagus added.

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At Least 53 Civilians Killed Since Start of Clashes in Nagorno-Karabakh - UN

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - The United Nations has received unconfirmed reports that at least 53 civilians have been killed since clashes erupted in Nagorno-Karabakh last month, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet's office said in a press release on Friday.

"Since the latest violence erupted on 27 September, artillery strikes have reportedly hit a number of cities, towns and villages. Information from different sources, which the UN Human

Rights Office has not been able to independently verify, suggests that as of 8 October some 53 civilians had been killed, including children, as a result of the hostilities," the release said. Several buildings, including houses, schools and other civilian facilities have been reportedly destroyed, the release said, stressing that most of them were located in Nagorno-Karabakh. Bachelet expressed concern about populated areas reportedly being targeted and shelled with heavy weaponry, as well as violence spreading along the line of contact in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone and also affecting other populated areas outside the immediate zone of fighting.

"I remind all parties to the conflict to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, abiding by the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution and avoiding the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas," Bachelet said.

She also called on all states that hold sway over the parties to the conflict to do everything possible to ensure respect for international humanitarian law.

Bachelet also raised concern about reports that cluster munitions had been used in the conflict area.

"The use of such munitions should stop immediately. I also urge Armenia and Azerbaijan to join the more than 100 States that have ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions which comprehensively bans their use," she said.

Bachelet also urged the sides to the conflict to refrain from using inflammatory, or discriminatory language and expressed concern at how the violence outbreak was posing a direct health threat amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The fighting on the contact line in Karabakh began on September 27. Armenia and Azerbaijan accuse each other of unleashing hostilities, Karabakh reports artillery shelling of peaceful settlements of the unrecognized republic, including its capital, Stepanakert. Armenia has declared martial law and — for the first time — general mobilization, claiming that Ankara is actively supporting Baku. Partial mobilization was introduced in Azerbaijan.

The leaders of Russia, the United States and France called on the opposing sides to end the clashes and to commit themselves to begin negotiations without preconditions. Turkey has stated that it will provide Azerbaijan with any support it requests amid another aggravation of the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh.

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Senator Vows to Use All Congressional Power to Preserve US Interests Under START Treaty

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - Senator Chris Van Hollen on Friday said he was prepared to use all the powers of Congress to continue protecting US interests that were secured under the New START treaty with Russia.

"I am certainly determined as a member of the Senate to make sure that we do use our constitutional powers to preserve and enforce our interests - the US interests - with respect to

this arms control agreement," Hollen said at a virtual event hosted by the Arms Control Association.

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2020 US Election

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump refused to conduct the next presidential debate virtually as proposed by a commission given his COVID-19 diagnosis, while a new Gallup poll reveals that Republican voter confidence in a fair election has reached record lows.

BIDEN, TRUMP FIGHT OVER NOT DEBATING

Trump pulled out of his proposed second debate with Biden which had been scheduled for next Thursday, October 15. The president announced his decision after the debate organizing commission had announced it would be conducted as a "virtual" event to eliminate any risk of COVID-19 infection.

"I heard that the Commission a little while ago changed the debate style. And that's not acceptable to us," Trump told FOX News on Thursday. "I'm not going to do a virtual debate." Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden, meanwhile, will appear in a nationally televised town hall meeting on October 15 on the night he had been scheduled to debate Trump, his campaign said on Thursday.

REPUBLICANS DOUBT ELECTION FAIRNESS

Just 44 percent of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents believe the presidential election will be decided with accurate ballot tallies, tying the lowest level ever recorded for a major political party, a new Gallup poll revealed on Thursday. The poll comes as Trump repeatedly claims that mail-in ballots will result in massive voter fraud.

"The 11-percentage-point drop since 2018 in the national figure on confidence in election accuracy is largely driven by a 34-point drop among Republicans and Republican-leaning independents. The GOP's [Republican Party] current 44 percent level of confidence is the lowest Gallup has recorded for identifiers and leaners of either major political party in its trend dating back to 2004," a press release explaining the poll said.

PENCE-HARRIS DEBATE NEARLY BREAKS VIEWING RECORD

Wednesday evening's vice presidential debate between Vice President Mike Pence and Senator Kamala Harris drew an audience of 57.9 million people, a notable increase compared to the audience in the 2016 vice presidential debate, the Nielsen marketing research firm revealed in a press release on Thursday.

The viewership in Wednesday night's debate was a 56 percent jump from the 37 million who tuned into the 2016 vice presidential debate, which made it the second largest audience ever for such event.

TRUMP RADIO RALLY

President Donald Trump plans to hold a monster "virtual" rally on Friday by hosting a three hour broadcast in a regular commentary show usually run by one of his strongest supporters, Rush Limbaugh, the veteran radio host said on Thursday.

"I'm thrilled to announce that our commander-in-chief, President Donald Trump, will be right here tomorrow hosting the largest virtual rally in radio history," Limbaugh said in a statement. "Be sure to tune in. You don't want to miss this. It will be special. And I am really looking forward to it."

Trump's doctor said in a letter released later in the day that the president will be safe to return to public engagements on Saturday.

CANADA WATCHING ELECTION

The Canadian government is closely monitoring developments in the US presidential election campaign and preparing for any eventuality, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told reporters on Thursday.

"We are all watching the US election with close attention because of its potential impact on the Canadian economy and on Canadians," Trudeau said. "As we watch the American election unfold, we are, of course, going to be prepared for various eventualities but we are certainly hopeful that all will proceed smoothly."

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RPT - State Dept. Says US Monitoring Russian Missile Tests After Zircon Launch

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - The United States is watching Russian missile tests which informs Washington's arms control policies, a State Department spokesperson told Sputnik commenting on the Zircon hypersonic cruise missile demonstration.

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.

"We continue to monitor Russian military activity and missile tests, which inform our arms control and security policies," the spokesperson said on Thursday.

Upon the completion of state tests, Zircon will enter service with the Russian Navy's submarines and surface ships, the chief of the General Staff added.

Putin praised the successful test as a highly important step toward equipping the Russian armed forces' with modern weapons.

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RPT - Baranov Statue to Be Placed in Sitka History Museum by October 18 - Director

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - The statue of the first governor of Russian America Alexander Baranov should be moved to its permanent place in the history museum of the US city of Sitka by October 18, Executive Director Hal Spackman told Sputnik.

"At this time, we are hopeful we can have the statue mounted and in place on or before October 18th, which is celebrated as 'Alaska Day,'" Spackman said.

In July, the city assembly adopted a resolution to relocate the Baranov statue to the Sitka Historical Society Museum, after a group of local activists urged legislators to remove it, citing mistreatment of indigenous people.

In 1799, Baranov founded Sitka - called at that time Novo-Archangelsk - as the capital of the Russian colonies in North America.

The disputed statue has been moved to the museum on September 29. The museum is temporary closed for building a mount for the monument.

Statues of several historical figures associated with racism have been removed, toppled or defaced across the United States amid nationwide protests fueled by multiple police-involved killings of African Americans.

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RPT- Baranov Statue Remaining in Public Domain in Sitka 'Important Outcome' - Foundation

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - The decision by the city of Sitka in Alaska to keep the statue of Alexander Baranov - the first governor of Russian America - in the public domain after initially deciding to relocate it is a very positive development, Art Russe Foundation Director Rena Lavery told Sputnik.

"We consider the very fact of the physical preservation of the monument and its placement in the public domain to be the most important outcome," Lavery said.

In July, Sitka's assembly adopted a resolution to relocate the Baranov statue to the city's History Museum after a group of local activists urged legislators to remove it because of allegations of mistreatment of indigenous people.

In 1799, Baranov founded Sitka - called Novo-Archangelsk at the time - as the capital of the Russian colonies in North America.

Lavrey said after the Sitka city assembly's adoption of the resolution, the Art Russe Foundation attempted to purchase the statue and transfer it to the Museum of the Arctic in St. Petersburg, Russia.

She noted the foundation decided to undertake such a step because Baranov undoubtedly belongs to a group of people who have greatly contributed to Russian history.

"Baranov is associated with Russia's new trade partnerships established in the 18th century as well as with a breakthrough in the development of North America: the discovery and description of new lands, the construction of new settlements and industrial enterprises, including copper smelters and coal mines," Lavrey said.

The Art Russe Foundation concurrently made an effort to purchase the monument for US President Theodore Roosevelt after the New York City authorities decided to dismantle it

following a wave of protests against racism and police brutality against African-Americans in the United States. However, the Foundation's request to purchase the monument remained unanswered.

Art Russe Foundation founder and entrepreneur Andrey Filatov told Sputnik that Baranov and Roosevelt were statesmen who greatly influenced the history of Russia, including the development of its statehood and economy.

"Alexander Baranov was not merely a governor of Russian colonies in North America. An incredibly gifted and energetic entrepreneur, he was involved in establishing Russia's new trade partnerships with China and the United States," Filatov told Sputnik. "His role in Russia's trade and economic development was enormous."

Filatov also noted that Roosevelt played an important role in supporting Russia during a particularly difficult war with Japan.

"It was the United States, under the presidency of Roosevelt, that mediated the 1905 peace talks, and the Portsmouth Peace Treaty signed in the United States was concluded on conditions so favorable to Russia that, on his return to the country, then-Prime Minister of Russia Sergei Witte was hailed as the winner," Filatov said.

The Art Russe Foundations' collection includes works of Russian art from the late 19th century to the late 20th century. The Foundation has set as its goal to raise international awareness of Russian art.

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Armenia, Azerbaijan Must Probe Attack That Injured Russian Journalists - Watchdog Group

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - The governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan must investigate the recent attack in the Nagorno-Karabakh region that injured two Russian journalists covering the ongoing conflict, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) Europe and Central Asia Program Coordinator Gulnoza Said wrote in a statement.

"The fighting sides in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict must respect journalists' right to report freely and take all necessary measures to ensure their safety," the statement said on Thursday.

"Both Azerbaijan and Armenia must investigate the recent attack that injured two journalists, and must grant press accreditations freely and without bias."

The CPJ said it reached out to the Armenian and Azerbaijani ministries of foreign affairs for comment on the journalists' injuries, and the Armenian ministry for comment on stripping Novaya Gazeta journalist Ilya Azar's press accreditation, but did not immediately receive any responses.

Three Russians were injured in a strike that hit the Ghazanchetsots Cathedral (Holy Savior Cathedral) in the city of Shusha in Karabakh, Sputnik Armenia reported.

Armenian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Anna Naghdalyan told Sputnik that the three Russians injured are two journalists and their escort.

Russian blogger Yuri Kotenok was seriously injured in the strike, doctors are fighting for his life, the official press center of the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic told Sputnik. The other journalist and the escort suffered minor injuries, the press center said.

Earlier, the Armenian Unified Information Center said that the Azerbaijani armed forces struck the Ghazanchetsots Cathedral, the city's main temple, which was built in the 19th century and restored in the 1990s. The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry said that the Azerbaijani armed forces were not targeting historical, cultural and religious buildings.

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White House Doctor Says Fully Anticipates Trump Return to Public Events by Saturday

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - White House physician Sean Conley in a letter said he anticipates President Donald Trump will make a return to public engagements by Saturday. "Saturday will be day 10 since Thursday's diagnosis, and based on the trajectory of advanced diagnostics the team has been conducting, I fully anticipate the President's safe return to public engagements at that time," Conley said in the letter on Thursday.

Conley said Trump's physical condition has been stable and there are no signs he is becoming more ill.

On Friday, Trump was admitted to the Walter Reed Medical Center for treatment after announcing that he tested positive for COVID-19. 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.

Trump has been treated with the remdesivir antiviral treatment, an 8 gram dose of Regeneron's polyclonal antibody cocktail, and the steroid drug dexamethasone.

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US Disability Groups Back Lawsuit Against Texas Limits on Ballot Drop-Off Sites - ACLU

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - Leading disability rights groups in the state of Texas joined a lawsuit against an order from Governor Greg Abbott that limits drop off sites for ballots in the upcoming US presidential election, the American Civil Liberties Union said in a press release.

"Represented by the American Civil Liberties Union of Texas, the Texas Civil Rights Project, Disability Rights Texas, and the law firm of Lieff Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein LLP, the groups seek to protect the voting rights of individuals with disabilities," the release said.

Disability rights groups ADAPT Texas, REV UP Texas, and Disability Rights Texas filed a friend of the court brief in support of a lawsuit to block the Abbott's requirement that early voters to deliver paper ballots to a single cite in each county, the release said.

Abbott's order has drawn widespread criticism, in part because a single site would serve large jurisdictions such as Harris County, with more than 4 million residents, while forcing people in rural areas such as Brewster County - with more than 6,000 square miles - to drive long distances to vote.

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US Defense Chief, Romanian Counterpart Sign 10-Year Defense Cooperation Accord - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of Defense Mark Esper and Romanian Defense Minister Nicolae Ciuca during a meeting at the Pentagon pledged to strengthen bilateral defense cooperation for the next ten years, Defense Department spokesperson Jonathan Hoffman said in a press release.

"Secretary of Defense Dr. Mark T. Esper met with Romanian Minister of National Defense Nicolae-Ionel Ciuca at the Pentagon today," Hoffman said in the release on Thursday. "At the conclusion of the meeting, the Secretary joined Minister Ciuca in signing a 10-year 'Roadmap for Defense Cooperation,' which builds upon the strong spirit of defense cooperation between our two countries."

Esper highlighted Romania's key role as an ally on NATO's eastern flank and the Black Sea, Hoffman said.

Esper and Ciuca specifically discussed security and cooperation in the Black Sea, China's malign influence in the region, and defense modernization, Hoffman said.

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US Vice Presidential Debate Audience 56% Larger Than 2016 - Nielsen Ratings

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - The US vice presidential debate between Vice President Mike Pence and Senator Kamala Harris drew an audience of 57.9 million people, a notable increase compared to the audience in the 2016 vice presidential debate, the Nielsen marketing research firm revealed in a press release.

"An estimated 57.9 million people tuned in to watch the first and only vice presidential debate of the 2020 election on Wednesday, Oct[ober] 7, 2020," the release said on Thursday. The viewership in Wednesday night's debate was a 56 percent jump from the 37 million who tuned into the 2016 vice presidential debate, which made it the second largest audience ever for such event.

The stakes at Wednesday's vice presidential debate were higher than usual because of President Donald Trump's COVID-19 diagnosis. The diagnosis raised concerns over longevity of both presidential candidates - the Republican incumbent, who is 74, and his 77-year-old Democratic opponent, Joe Biden - and the aptitude of their running mates to step in.

The two vice presidential candidates clashed over the Trump administration's handling of the novel coronavirus pandemic, plans for an economic recovery, foreign policy, climate change, and police violence before closing the debate by discussing voter fraud.

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Pentagon Awards \$600Mln for Dual-Use 5G Experiments

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - The US military awarded more than a half billion dollars for conducting 5G dual-use experiments and tests, the Defense Department said in a statement. "Today, the Department of Defense announced \$600 million in awards for 5G experimentation and testing at five US military test sites, representing the largest full-scale 5G tests for dual-use applications in the world," the statement said on Thursday.

The test sites include: Hill Air Force Base in the state of Utah; Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington state; Marine Corps Logistics Base in Georgia; Naval Base San Diego in California; and Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada, the release added.

A lengthy list of private sector companies involved in the project includes a number of the world's biggest telecommunication companies such as AT&T, Nokia and Ericsson, according to the release.

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Airlines Report Tiny COVID-19 Risk With 1 Case for Every 27Mln Passengers - Trade Group

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - The risk of contracting the novel coronavirus on a passenger airline is so miniscule that of 1.2 billion passengers that flew so far this year, air

carriers reported just 44 confirmed or probable cases, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) said in a press release.

"We recognize that this may be an underestimate but even if 90% of the cases were un-reported, it would be one case for every 2.7 million travelers," IATA's Medical Adviser David Powell said in the release on Thursday. "Furthermore, the vast majority of published cases occurred before the wearing of face coverings inflight became widespread."

Masks, first recommended by the IATA in June, have since become a standard requirement for airline passengers, the release said.

The industry claims High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters and systems that replace cabin air supplies every two minutes add a key layer of protection to universal face coverings now used by passengers and crew.

The release cited experiments by the aircraft manufacturer Airbus demonstrating that filtering systems reduce the concentration of respiratory droplets - a primary source of coronavirus transmission - to a level comparable to an indoor environment where people remain six feet apart.

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Democrats Want Commission to Evaluate Trump's Capacity to Govern

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - US House Democrats on Friday plan to unveil legislation to create a commission to probe President Donald Trump's capacity to execute his responsibilities.

"[House] Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Congressman Jamie Raskin will hold a press conference tomorrow, Friday, October 9 in the Capitol Visitor Center to discuss the introduction of The Commission on Presidential Capacity to Discharge the Powers and Duties of Office Act," the lawmakers said in a statement on Thursday.

At the press conference, the Speaker and Rankin will discuss the 25th Amendment to the US Constitution following reports on Thursday that 34 members of the White House staff have now tested positive for COVID-19, The Hill newspaper said.

Pelosi indicated the discussion would relate to what she called a lack of transparency from the White House over Trump's health, The Hill said.

The 25th Amendment defines the presidential succession and gives the vice president and a majority of Cabinet officers the authority to declare a president unable to discharge the powers and duties of office, the newspaper noted.

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US Court Sentences Ex-GITMO Chief to 24 Months in Prison for Obstructing Justice - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - A US court in Florida sentenced John Nettleton, a former commander of the US Navy base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to 24 months in prison for obstructing justice in a probe into the death of a civilian employee with whose wife Nettleton had an affair, local media reported.

Guantanamo base civilian employee Christopher Tur, 42, was found drowned in the waters of Guantanamo Bay on January 11, 2015. An autopsy revealed that Tur suffered injuries prior to his drowning.

The court did not charge Nettleton in Tur's death, firstcoastnews.com portal reported on Thursday. However, the former GITMO chief was convicted of lying to conceal the crime and his extramarital affair, the report added.

Federal prosecutors asked court to impose a maximum prison sentence of between 37 to 46 months.

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White House Wants 'Skinny Package' in Next COVID-19 Relief Bill – Spokeswoman

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik) - The Trump administration pressed for a COVID-19 relief package that would help businesses pay furloughed workers and to keep airlines flying during the pandemic, but cost less than more than \$2 trillion sought by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, spokeswoman Alyssa Farah told reporters.

"We've made very clear we want a skinny package. We're for direct payments, we're for extension of PPP [Paycheck Protection Program], and we'd like to see an airline bailout, but not part of a larger package," Farah said in a White House pool report on Thursday.

President Donald Trump proposed spending \$25 billion to bail out airlines and another \$135 billion for a second PPP, a provision in the CAREs act that provided grants for businesses to pay furloughed workers.

Earlier in the day, Pelosi also signaled a willingness to resume negotiations after a two-day hiatus triggered when Trump pulled out of negotiations with the House leader. But the House speaker continued to reject proposals for a standalone bill not accompanied by a larger package.

"I have been very open to having a standalone bill for the airlines or part of a bigger bill," she said. "But there is no standalone bill without a bigger bill."

Pelosi is seeking more than \$2 trillion in a relief plan that would payments to cash-strapped state and local governments and other measures rejected by the administration.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, October 9 (Sputnik)

NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT

- * Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and his Armenian counterpart Zohrab Mnatsakanyan will discuss the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh on October 12 in Moscow, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Thursday.
- * Turkey's intervention in the conflict in Karabakh would be destructive, but the position of Collective Security Treaty Organization will be careful not to harm the settlement, CSTO Secretary-General Stanislav Zas said.
- * A strike hit the Ghazanchetsots Cathedral (Holy Savior Cathedral) in the city of Shusha in Karabakh, Russian journalists were injured, Sputnik Armenia reported.

US PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

- * The next debate between US President Donald Trump and Democratic nominee Joe Biden on October 15 will be held in a virtual format, with both candidates participating from remote locations, the Commission on Presidential Debates announced in a statement on Thursday.
- * Trump announced that he would not participate in the next debate against Biden after organizers said the event would be held in a virtual format to guarantee participants' safety.
- * Trump agrees to postpone the two remaining debates with his Democratic nominee Joe Biden by a week to October 22 and October 29, the Trump campaign announced.
- * Biden rejected Trump's proposal to delay the next debate until October 29 as a precaution following the president's COVID-19 diagnosis, his campaign said.

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

- * US President Donald Trump said in an interview on Thursday that he has stopped taking most of the prescribed therapeutics for the novel coronavirus, but still remains on steroids.
- * The Bangladeshi authorities have been in touch with their Russian counterparts to request delivery of Russia's Sputnik V vaccine against COVID-19 at the earliest possible opportunity, Foreign Minister A. K. Abdul Momen told Sputnik.

GLOBAL OIL MARKETS

- * Oil will remain a fuel product with the largest share of the global energy mix until 2045, although its share is projected to decline by 4 percentage points over the next 25 years, OPEC said in its World Oil Outlook report on Thursday.
- * The world's oil demand is forecast to grow by 4 million barrels a day (mbd) to 103.7 mbd by 2025 despite a huge drop it has suffered due to the COVID-19 pandemic, OPEC said.

NAVALNY CASE

- * Moscow will respond to possible EU sanctions against Russia over the Alexey Navalny case, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Thursday.
- * The Russian Interior Ministry refuted reports that a bottle from the Tomsk hotel room occupied by Navalny had been brought by his ally Maria Pevchikh to Germany as not corresponding to reality.

* The Russian Interior Ministry said that it had questioned over 230 people who were in contact with Navalny in the Siberian city of Tomsk or witnessed his movements.