

06/01/21 Tuesday

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Madrid Backs Out of AFRICOM 'African Lion' Drill to Protest Western Sahara Occupation, Paper Claims

by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Madrid has pulled its forces out of the forthcoming 2021 African Lion exercises in Morocco, Tunisia, and Senegal reportedly after learning part of the maneuvers would be held in Western Sahara.

On Saturday, Spanish daily [El Pais reported](#) that the Spanish Ministry of Defense was pulling its part of the African Lion exercises for what it officially claims are budgetary limitations. However, ministry insider sources reportedly told the paper the real reason was that Madrid didn't wish to legitimize Morocco's occupation of Western Sahara, where some of the drills will reportedly be held.

The drills are due to begin on June 7 and will last until June 18, involving some 7,000 troops, including from the US and from hosting nations Morocco, Tunisia and Senegal, as well as from Italy, United Kingdom, and the Netherlands. According to El Pais, the Moroccan drills will take place at Tantan in Morocco as well as Dakhla and al-Mahbès, both of which are in Western Sahara and the latter of which is less than 100 miles from the Saharawi refugee camp in Tindouf, Algeria.

Drill Locations Lay in Dispute

As early as late March, the Moroccan tabloid Al-Ahdath [Al-Maghribia reported](#) the two Western Sahara locations in African Lion plans, but more recently, these have been omitted in reports about the drills. For example, [US Africa Command](#) (AFRICOM), which coordinates the African Lion exercises, [only mentions Tantan](#) in an April 27 report. This has created a dispute about whether or not Morocco is even hosting drills in Western Sahara.

Saharawi media collective [Saharawi Voice tweeted](#) that the reports are "a lie," but seemed unsure on Tuesday if the source was Moroccan King Mohammed VI or Prime Minister Saad-Eddine El Othmani, noting the head of government had previously been circumvented in his opposition to normalizing relations with Israel by the monarchy.

According to AFP, El Othmani said on Twitter last month that AFRICOM's participation in the Western Sahara drills "marks the consecration of American recognition of the Moroccan Sahara," Rabat's name for Western Sahara.

Later on Tuesday, [AFRICOM told EFE](#) news agency that it would only take part in drills in Morocco, not in Western Sahara, refuting Othmani's claims.

Rabat has occupied Western Sahara since 1975, since Spanish colonial forces pulled out of what was previously called Spanish Sahara. However, the indigenous Saharawi people declared their own Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic in the territory at the same time, and the Polisario liberation front fought a 16-year war with Morocco that ended in a 1991 peace treaty and a pledge by the United Nations to hold an independence referendum in Western Sahara.

Polisario cancelled that peace agreement last November, after Moroccan forces dispersed a Saharawi protest outside the Guerguerat border crossing with Mauritania.

One month later in December, the [Trump administration recognized](#) Morocco's claim to rule Western Sahara in exchange for Morocco's recognition of the state of Israel. The move [provoked widespread condemnation](#) both in the international community and within the US political sphere. However, the Biden administration that took office in January has [so far taken no action](#) to reverse Donald Trump's move.

[Strange comments](#) on Twitter by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Tuesday also seem to suggest ambiguity about the Netherlands' participation in the drills, but no official word has been given.

Or Was it Morocco's Move?

El Pais' claims have been disputed by the investigative news outlet [Maghreb Intelligence](#), which reported on Sunday that "according to reliable sources," Spain's exit from the African Lion drills was due to opposition by Morocco and the US to its participation, due to Madrid allowing Polisario secretary-general Brahim Ghali to receive treatment in Logroño after he contracted a severe case of COVID-19 in April.

"For Rabat, there is no question of giving the impression that relations are resuming normally between the two countries before the Brahim Ghali case is resolved," the outlet wrote.

Morocco has accused Ghali of war crimes, and pressured Spain into [serving a summons](#) on him last week as part of an investigation of the claims. However, after Ghali testified before the Spanish National Court on Tuesday, [the judge declined](#) to hold him in pretrial detention as human rights activists had requested, determining he is not a flight risk.

"The prosecution report has not provided elements of evidence supporting the existence of reasons to believe he is responsible [for] any crime," a court document viewed by [Al Jazeera](#) [said](#).

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

African Union Suspends Mali After Second Military Coup, Threatens Sanctions
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Mali's military has been locked in conflict with Islamist militias in the desertous northern provinces since NATO's destruction of Libya in 2011 destabilized the Sahara region. Former colonial ruler France joined Mali's fight in 2013, but as the war drags on it has become increasingly unpopular, especially as civilian deaths at French hands mount.

In the wake of a coup d'etat by the Malian military last week, the African Union has voted to suspend Mali and has threatened sanctions against the Sahelian nation if a civilian-led government is not restored. This follows a similar decision on Sunday by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

In a Tuesday statement, the Addis Ababa-based bloc called for "an unimpeded, transparent and swift return to the civilian-led transition ... failing which, the Council will not hesitate to impose targeted sanctions."

A similar move was made in August 2020 after the Malian military carried out a coup against democratically-elected President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, but they dropped the suspension once a civilian-led government was created in early October.

Last week, Vice President Assimi Goita, who is a colonel in the Malian Army, had former Interim President Bah Ndaw, former Prime Minister Moctar Ouane, and former Defense Minister Souleymane Doucoure arrested and removed from office. [Goita claimed](#) they had violated the Transitional Charter by announcing a new cabinet that removed two other colonels as heads of the defense and security ministries without consulting with him first. [Goita named himself](#) as the new interim president on Friday and on Monday, Choguel Maiga as the new [interim prime minister](#).

Maiga is from the June 5 Movement - Gathering of Patriotic Forces (M5-RFP) umbrella party that grew out of the mass demonstrations last summer that preceded the August 2020 coup. The military coup that removed Keita from power was also masterminded by Goita and a group of other army colonels who called themselves the National Committee for the Salvation of the People (NCSP). Both M5-RFP and the NCSP were named as the primary brokers in the Transitional Charter introduced last October, which is intended to chart a path to 2022 elections, but the formal grouping of the [NCSP was abolished](#) in January.

From the beginning, the civilian-military alliance was tenuous, [with M5-RFP complaining](#) in early September that the military was excluding it from most working groups on the creation of a transitional order that would return Mali to democratic government.

The establishment of the interim government, which included the appointing of Ndaw and Ouane, saw heavy inclusion of military figures responsible for the coup and the charter explicitly provides for their immunity from prosecution for the coup. M5-RFP [was reportedly furious](#) at having not received any ministerial posts in the interim government, and by early May, the party was demanding a smaller role for the military, claiming it was slowing the process of reform. [They demanded](#) "a more law-abiding and more legitimate" body, but Ndaw delivered a "broad-based" government by removing the Defense Minister Sadio Camara and then-Security Minister Colonel Modibo Kone, both army colonels, and replacing them with civilian figures. Hours later, [Goita launched](#) his second coup.

The Malian coup is just the latest to be carried out by troops trained by US Africa Command. [As Sputnik reported](#), AFRICOM's counterterrorism training programs are linked to at least seven coups d'etat in Africa since AFRICOM's establishment in 2008. Goita has received extensive training from US Special Operations forces and has also trained in France and Germany, and the [European Union has said](#) it trained up to 90% of the Malian military. After the coup, Goita said the plan for 2022 elections had remain unchanged.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Western Sahara's Polisario Front Says Leader Brahim Ghali Successfully Left Spain for Algeria by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Spain recently pulled out of massive US Africa Command drills, reportedly due to Madrid objecting to some of the exercises being held in Western Sahara. However, other reports claim Morocco kicked Spain out of the exercises because it had welcomed in Polisario Front secretary-general Brahim Ghali, who Rabat considers a war criminal.

The Polisario Front announced on Tuesday that Ghali had left Spain for Algeria just hours after testifying at the Spanish National Court. He traveled to Spain in April to receive treatment for COVID-19.

Polisario Front spokesperson Jalil Mohamed said late on Tuesday that Ghali had arrived in Algeria "safe and sound," with Spanish daily El Pais reporting he flew out of Pamplona airport. The outlet cited Spanish Foreign Ministry sources, saying that Ghali left using the name he arrived under and that Morocco had been informed "via diplomatic channels" of Ghali's departure. When Ghali arrived in Spain on April 18, he did so using an Algerian passport and the name "Mohamed Ben Battouch." He was admitted on humanitarian grounds and allowed to seek treatment at the San Pedro de Logroño hospital.

Last month, as Ghali was being treated in Logroño, Spain agreed to investigate claims that he had tortured prisoners in Tindouf, a Saharawi refugee camp across the border in Algeria, but they only opened the probe after [Morocco allowed thousands](#) of refugees to enter the Spanish exclave of Ceuta, which is surrounded by Morocco.

Ghali testified before the Spanish National Court on Tuesday for an investigation into the claims. Judge Santiago Pedraz rejected calls by the prosecution to keep [Ghali in pretrial detention](#), saying he had no evidence supporting suspicion of Ghali and that he was not a flight risk, and that he was free to leave Spain when his recovery from COVID-19 was complete.

Also on Tuesday, [El Confidential reported](#) that an Algerian Air Force Gulfstream 2000 aircraft bound for Agoncillo airport near Logroño had been turned away by Spanish air traffic controllers because it did not have the special permits required to land executive flights there.

The 71-year-old Ghali heads the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro (POLISARIO), which is fighting for an independent Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic in the territory of Western Sahara, which has been occupied by Morocco since 1975. Morocco has claimed the territory as its own, and in December 2020, the Trump administration recognized Morocco's claims [in exchange for Rabat](#) normalizing relations with Israel.

Polisario fought a 16-year war with Morocco that resulted in a 1991 peace deal and a promise by the United Nations to hold an independence referendum in Western Sahara. However, that promise has never materialized and in November 2020, Polisario cancelled the peace deal and declared the war was back on after Moroccan forces dispersed a Saharawi protest outside the Guerguerat border crossing to Mauritania.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Interior Dept Suspends Oil, Gas Permits in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

While the Trump administration opened vast areas of US public lands to petroleum exploration, the new Biden administration has moved to rein in fossil fuel use in an attempt to reduce carbon emissions by the United States and mitigate the effects of man-made climate change.

The US Department of the Interior [announced on Tuesday](#) it was pausing all leases for oil and gas drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) until it can conduct an environmental review of their impacts.

The department said it would "initiate a comprehensive environmental analysis to review the potential impacts of the Program and to address legal deficiencies in the current leasing program's environmental review" under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The 1970 law requires US federal agencies to prepare environmental impact statements on federal projects and to weigh environmental concerns alongside other factors in the approval process.

In August 2020, the administration of then-US President Donald Trump moved to [begin auctioning off](#) lands in the remote frozen nature preserve, which is home to thousands of indigenous people from several Alaskan Native tribes, as well as numerous endangered and threatened species such as polar bears and several species of whales. In January, just as Trump was preparing to leave office, a US federal court in Alaska [rejected attempts](#) by conservation groups and indigenous tribes to halt the auctioning process.

When US President Joe Biden took office, one of his day-one [executive orders directed](#) the Interior Department to review all existing oil and gas activity in ANWR as part of his administration's response to the climate crisis. "After conducting the required review, the Department identified defects in the underlying Record of Decision supporting the leases, including the lack of analysis of a reasonable range of alternatives in the EIS conducted under NEPA," the department said Tuesday.

In March, 13 [US states sued](#) the Biden administration for the executive order, which similarly imposed a moratorium on oil and gas leasing activities on public lands and in offshore waters. They cited the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act and Mineral Leasing Act, which they said should allow their leases to proceed as agreed.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Photo: FBI Agent Charged With Attempted Murder in Off-Duty Shooting of Man on Maryland Metro

by [Evan Craighead](#)

Back in December, it was reported that an agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was involved in a shooting aboard a Red Line train at the Medical Center Metro Station in Maryland. According to an emergency call transcript, a witness overheard the agent warning a man to "move away" before firing "two or three" rounds.

[Unsealed records](#) from a Maryland circuit court detail that Eduardo Valdivia, a 37-year-old FBI agent, has been slapped with an attempted murder charge, in association with the December shooting that left a man wounded.

Charges leveled against the FBI agent include attempted second-degree murder; first-degree assault; reckless endangerment; and felony use of a firearm to commit a violent crime. Emergency call records from a witness were released in January, and have been used to piece together details of the incident, which occurred on a Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) train car.

"The FBI agent said: 'Move away. I'm an FBI agent. Back away,'" the 911 [caller said](#). "The other gentleman didn't, dropped his bag, [and] approached him to fight him."

Soon after, Valdivia fired "two or three" rounds as the train was en route to the Medical Center Metro Station.

According to the caller, the agent was "attacked," but the witness did not provide further details to indicate whether the man physically attacked Valdivia.

Robert Bonsib, Valdivia's attorney, claimed in a Tuesday statement to the [Associated Press](#) that the agent was approached by "a man who threatened his personal safety, and he acted reasonably in order to prevent himself from being killed."

Bonsib also emphasized that, for decades, Valdivia "has served his community in some very dangerous and sensitive assignments."

The FBI's field office in Baltimore, Maryland, has confirmed knowledge of the charges.

"As is customary following a shooting incident, this matter will be subject to internal review," spokesperson Joy Jiras said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Pay Up: Supreme Court Rejects J&J's Request to Appeal \$2 Bln Verdict in Talc Cancer Case by [Evan Craighead](#)

A Missouri court ruled in June 2020 that Johnson & Johnson "disregarded the safety of consumers," and put profit above safety by marketing talc products that caused ovarian cancer in humans. As a result, the company has been ordered to award several women an estimated total of \$2.12 billion in damages.

The Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) on Tuesday rejected Johnson & Johnson's request to appeal a verdict in favor of 22 cancer sufferers in 12 different US states.

None of the participating SCOTUS justices commented on the move, which upholds a previous court decision in which a Missouri jury found that Johnson & Johnson's once-popular, talc-based baby powder contained asbestos and asbestos-laced talc, which has been linked to ovarian cancer.

It's worth noting that the [July 2018](#) verdict ordered the New Jersey-based pharmaceutical company to pay nearly \$4.7 billion in damages to the plaintiffs. However, the payout was lowered to \$2.12 billion after a Missouri appeals court dismissed claims made by some of the 22 women.

Johnson & Johnson - manufacturer of one of three COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in the US - has denied that its talc-based products contain asbestos.

In its appeal, the company argued that it was not treated fairly during court proceedings, and was "at odds with decades of independent scientific evaluations confirming Johnson's Baby Powder is safe, is not contaminated by asbestos and does not cause cancer."

The pharmaceutical company notably pulled its talc-based baby powder from shelves in both the US and Canada back in [May 2020](#). At the time, the company attributed the move to its decline in baby powder sales, which they alleged were driven by "changes in consumer habits and fueled by "changes in consumer habits" and "misinformation around the safety of the product."

The Tuesday SCOTUS decision comes months after the Missouri Supreme Court also refused to consider Johnson & Johnson's appeal on the multi-billion-dollar matter.

SCOTUS Associate Justices Samuel Alito and Brett Kavanaugh did not take part in the decision, as Alito owns somewhere between \$15,000 to \$50,000 in Johnson & Johnson stock, and Kavanaugh's father, E. Edward Kavanaugh, participated in pro-talc lobbying.

"This decision sends a clear message to the rich and powerful: You will be held to account when you cause grievous harm under our system of equal justice under law," Mark Lanier, lead attorney for the 22 women, told the [Associated Press](#).

The SCOTUS decision may signal a rough legal road ahead for Johnson & Johnson, which is facing thousands of lawsuits related to its talc-based baby powder.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

No Gold Toilets? Records Show Trump's Secret Service Will Spend Almost \$35K on 'Bathroom Trailers'

by [Evan Craighead](#)

It was reported last month that former US President Donald Trump would spend the summer months at his Trump National Golf Club Bedminster, a private golf club in Bedminster, New Jersey - approximately 40 miles west of New York City, New York. Trump's previous residence was recognized as the Mar-a-Lago Club in Palm Beach, Florida.

Since May 24, 2021, agents of the US Secret Service have been permitted to use taxpayer funds to acquire "bathroom trailers" for a property in Bedminster, according to federal procurement data obtained by [The Daily Beast](#).

Per federal documents observed, the contract will collectively run taxpayers some \$8,500 per month, and runs through September 30.

The company in question is Imperial Restrooms, a mobile restroom trailer rental company based in New York City.

"Even now, taxpayers continue to spend many thousands of dollars to facilitate Donald Trump's businesses," said Noah Bookbinder, a former federal corruptions prosecutor who serves as executive director for Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington.

"He is of course entitled to protection, but from the beginning, it has been about his advancement and convenience, rather than what is good for the country. Forcing taxpayers to

spend all of this money for porta potties at a business that surely has sufficient bathrooms is confounding."

The allegations have yet to be publicly verified by the Secret Service.

This is not the first time that the Trump family has been caught with restroom-related reports involving Secret Service agents.

Agents assigned to protect Ivanka Trump, Trump's 39-year-old daughter, and her husband, Jared Kushner, [reportedly](#) spent over \$100,000 in taxpayer funds on a studio basement rental in the Kalorama neighborhood of Washington DC. The two notably served as senior advisers to Trump.

However, then-White House presidential assistant Avi Berkowitz later [came out](#) and slammed the Washington Post report, claiming the entire scoop was actually "a lie."

"The story never made sense, and was simply not true. Now the Secret Service has even denied the story," he said in a tweet that was later retweeted by Ivanka Trump's official account.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Rapper Diddy Partners With Salesforce to Launch Digital Marketplace for Black-Owned Businesses

by [MariTi Blaise Lovell](#)

Harlemite Sean "Diddy" Combs has announced his enterprise's partnership with cloud-based data company Salesforce to build Shop Circulate, a digital marketplace geared towards promoting Black-owned businesses, across categories that include beauty, fashion, art, health, wellness and home.

"Building Black wealth starts with investing in black-owned businesses and giving entrepreneurs access to the consumers needed to build sustainable companies that can thrive," said Combs, who serves as chairman of Combs Enterprises, in a [statement on Revolt TV](#).

"I'm excited to partner with Salesforce to create a platform that will advance our collective pursuit of economic justice."

Shop Circulate plans to invest in the rapidly growing digital community whose main goal is to connect consumers with black-owned businesses and brands, such as those associated with both the Nile List and the Official Black Wall Street, two black-owned digital data platforms that host various businesses run by black entrepreneurs.

The Nile List founder Khadijah Robinson, who practices law in international trade, has been appointed Head of Product, where she will oversee the development of all Shop Circulate global efforts.

The digital marketplace will be designed and built by 5G, AI and cognitive tech giant Deloitte Digital and powered by eCommerce platform Marketplacer's technology.

"As the largest professional services organization in the world, we have a responsibility to help level the playing field and advance opportunities for the Black community in business," Deloitte Global CEO Punit Renjen said in the statement.

Deloitte is one business that has advanced in making the [technological shift](#) to stay-at-home orders during the worst of the pandemic, which forced citizens around the world to shift to online-based lifestyles. These include virtual-monitoring care for COVID-19 patients in India, which has faced a recent surge in cases.

As the world moves towards a life forever altered by the pandemic, the nation has also pushed for a world aimed at building more economic benefits for black and brown communities. Earlier this year Combs wrote an open letter blasting US businesses for the continued exploitation of black and brown communities, pushing a stance of acknowledging the value of black consumers and businesses.

"Marketplaces are a great leveler in bringing together businesses of all sizes into a single venue to drive opportunity and growth. It's our goal that our partnership with Shop Circulate will bring our powerful marketplace platform to the Black and brown-owned businesses and entrepreneurs as a vehicle to drive change, growth and success," Marketplacer executive chairman Jason Wyatt said in the Tuesday announcement.

The announcement of the launch follows the [100th anniversary](#) of the burning of "Black Wall Street," a district of black-owned businesses based in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Shop Circulate is set to launch later this year.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

RPT - US Must Go Beyond Symbolism to Deliver Justice for 1921 Black Massacre - Activists

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - The United States must pay reparations for the 1921 massacre of 300 Black Americans in Tulsa, Oklahoma in order to deliver justice and avoid reducing the tragedy to mere symbolism, civil rights advocates told Sputnik.

On May 31 and June 1, 1921, white mobs attacked a Black section of Tulsa, Oklahoma, leaving around 300 dead and 10,000 homeless, in one of the worst massacres in American history. The massacre occurred in Tulsa's Greenwood District, also known as the Black Wall Street, then home to a prosperous African American community.

"I think it's a good thing, that after 100 years, attention is being given to the massacre [but]... we must not make this symbolism," civil rights activist Rev. Benjamin Chavis said. "We need substantive justice and the repatriation of property to descendants of those who were killed, victimized and lost property and land in 1921. There must also be financial repair and emotional repair."

On Tuesday, US President Joe Biden in a speech marking the centenary of the tragic event, called it "an act of hate and domestic terrorism with a through-line to today," citing the white nationalists who marched in Charlottesville in 2017 and the January 6 Capitol Hill riots.

Monique Gamble, an assistant political science professor at the University of the District of Columbia, said those who oppose reparations, such as Tulsa's mayor G.T. Bynum, have not grappled with the history of racism against Black people.

"Outside of Native Americans, there has been no other racial group that has experienced the mob mentality and systematic attempts to destroy them than Black people have," Gamble said.

"Tulsa is the greatest example of what racism looks like. It is also the perfect example of why you'd pay reparations."

Gamble said Black success in Tulsa illustrated the excellence, independence and self-sufficiency of African Americans when allowed to flourish unfettered.

"It also shows the rabid nature of white supremacy and racism and their role in destroying multiple Black communities," Gamble said.

Edith Lee Payne, a Detroit resident and longtime social justice and civil rights activist, said watching a program about the massacre over the weekend angered her but stiffened her resolve to keep working and advocating for change.

"When you look at what happened then, it's not much different today. Clearly, it shouldn't have happened. Taking a tally of what Black America has endured for 400 years, it's an ongoing travesty," Payne said. "The same thing happened in Paradise Valley, called 'The Bottoms.' They built a freeway through the community. It makes me very angry but reminds me of how strong we are. If all of that anger was ever unleashed, it would be the most horrifying event in this country's history. But that hasn't happened because we're rooted and grounded in spiritual strength."

Payne said these are "really perilous times" for America recounting militias storming the statehouse in Michigan and plotting to kill the governor and white nationalists and domestic terrorists overrunning and ransacking the US Capital on Jan 6.

"I see us moving into a more dangerous situation. We had people who don't look like us storm the government and people in the halls of government protecting them," she said. "We saw a preview in Michigan with the storming of the government here. This showed that there's something wrong with America. Those who voted to not certify the election shouldn't be allowed to work there [in Congress]. We have to regain control of our country. Conversations are over." Also on Tuesday, Biden met privately with three surviving members of the Tulsa massacre: Viola Fletcher, Hughes Van Ellis, and Lessie Benningfield, whose ages range from 101 to 107.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Must Go Beyond Symbolism to Deliver Justice for 1921 Black Massacre - Activists

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - The United States must pay reparations for the 1921 massacre of 300 Black Americans in Tulsa, Oklahoma in order to deliver justice and avoid reducing the tragedy to mere symbolism, civil rights advocates told Sputnik.

On May 31 and June 1, 1921, white mobs attacked a Black section of Tulsa, Oklahoma, leaving around 300 dead and 10,000 homeless, in one of the worst massacres in American history. The massacre occurred in Tulsa's Greenwood District, also known as the Black Wall Street, then home to a prosperous African American community.

"I think it's a good thing, that after 100 years, attention is being given to the massacre [but]... we must not make this symbolism," civil rights activist Rev. Benjamin Chavis said. "We need substantive justice and the repatriation of property to descendants of those who were killed,

victimized and lost property and land in 1921. There must also be financial repair and emotional repair."

On Tuesday, US President Joe Biden in a speech marking the centenary of the tragic event, called it "an act of hate and domestic terrorism with a through-line to today," citing the white nationalists who marched in Charlottesville in 2017 and the January 6 Capitol Hill riots.

Monique Gamble, an assistant political science professor at the University of the District of Columbia, said those who oppose reparations, such as Tulsa's mayor G.T. Bynum, have not grappled with the history of racism against Black people.

"Outside of Native Americans, there has been no other racial group that has experienced the mob mentality and systematic attempts to destroy them than Black people have," Gamble said. "Tulsa is the greatest example of what racism looks like. It is also the perfect example of why you'd pay reparations."

Gamble said Black success in Tulsa illustrated the excellence, independence and self-sufficiency of African Americans when allowed to flourish unfettered.

"It also shows the rabid nature of white supremacy and racism and their role in destroying multiple Black communities," Gamble said.

Edith Lee Payne, a Detroit resident and longtime social justice and civil rights activist, said watching a program about the massacre over the weekend angered her but stiffened her resolve to keep working and advocating for change.

"When you look at what happened then, it's not much different today. Clearly, it shouldn't have happened. Taking a tally of what Black America has endured for 400 years, it's an ongoing travesty," Payne said. "The same thing happened in Paradise Valley, called 'The Bottoms.' They built a freeway through the community. It makes me very angry but reminds me of how strong we are. If all of that anger was ever unleashed, it would be the most horrifying event in this country's history. But that hasn't happened because we're rooted and grounded in spiritual strength."

Payne said these are "really perilous times" for America recounting militias storming the statehouse in Michigan and plotting to kill the governor and white nationalists and domestic terrorists overrunning and ransacking the US Capitol on Jan 6.

"I see us moving into a more dangerous situation. We had people who don't look like us storm the government and people in the halls of government protecting them," she said. "We saw a preview in Michigan with the storming of the government here. This showed that there's something wrong with America. Those who voted to not certify the election shouldn't be allowed to work there [in Congress]. We have to regain control of our country. Conversations are over." Also on Tuesday, Biden met privately with three surviving members of the Tulsa massacre: Viola Fletcher, Hughes Van Ellis, and Lessie Benningfield, whose ages range from 101 to 107.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UPDATE 2 - One Dead, 1 Injured in Los Angeles County Fire House Shooting - Chief

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - One firefighter is dead and another is in critical condition after a shooting at a firehouse in Agua Dulce, California, Los Angeles County Fire Chief Daryl Osby said during a press conference.

"It is with a heavy heart that I stand here to say that one of our firefighter specialists succumbed from his injuries... Additionally at Fire Station #81, a fire captain, who's a 54-year old male, sustained a gunshot and he was transported to Henry Mayo Hospital where he remains in critical but stable condition," Osby said on Tuesday.

The fire department is still in the process of gathering additional information about the shooting and is cooperating with the LA County Sheriff's Office in the investigation, chief said.

Osby also confirmed that the shooting suspect is believed to be an off-duty firefighter who worked at the station where the shooting occurred. Law enforcement has yet to determine the motive or release the identity of the suspect.

The suspected shooter then went to his home near the fire station, where he is believed to have set his own house ablaze before dying from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head.

However, officials have yet to verify the identity of the corpse due to the ongoing fire.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US, NATO Defense Chiefs Talk Collaborate on Afghan Exit in Summit Prep Meeting - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and his NATO counterparts, at a virtual prep session for the alliance's June 14 summit, discussed the withdrawal in Afghanistan and collaborating on the transition to a civilian-led engagement in the war-torn country, Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby said in a press release.

"In addressing Afghanistan and Iraq, Secretary Austin discussed the retrograde in Afghanistan, pledging to support Afghanistan and work hand in hand with NATO as the Resolute Support Mission transitions to a civilian-led engagement," Kirby said in the release on Tuesday.

Austin also underscored that the United States remains committed to defeating the Islamic State terror group (banned in Russia) and supporting the Iraq government.

Lloyd and his counterparts also discussed confronting challenges from Russia and China, Kirby said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

FBI Agent Charged With Attempted Murder for Shooting Person in Washington Metro - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - FBI agent Eduardo Valdivia has been indicted on charges of attempted second-degree murder, first-degree assault, firearm use and reckless endangerment charges after shooting a person inside a metrorail car in Bethesda, Maryland, the local broadcaster Fox 5 DC reported citing officials.

The report said on Tuesday that Valdivia allegedly shot a person on the morning of December 15, 2020 aboard a metrorail car near the Medical Center station. The victim survived the gunshot, the report added.

The court date for Valdivia's trial is unknown at present, the report noted.

The FBI told Fox 5 DC that it is aware of the charges against Valdivia and is cooperating with state prosecutors on the case.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Blinken Calls for Regional Cooperation in Central America to Address Migration, Corruption

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called during a joint press conference with Costa Rican President Carlos Alvarado for increased cooperation between the United States and Central American countries to confront issues related to immigration, COVID-19 and corruption, among others.

"The fate of the people in the United States, is more intertwined than ever with our neighbors in Central America," Blinken said during remarks in Costa Rica on Tuesday. "To effectively confront the biggest challenges we face, like COVID-19, like the climate crisis, like immigration, like corruption, regional cooperation is more important than ever."

Blinken said democracy and human rights are undermined in many parts of Central America, adding that President Joe Biden is planning to provide \$4 billion in US investments into the region to help stabilize the area.

Asked whether the United States plans to share coronavirus vaccines with Costa Rica, Blinken said the Biden administration will rollout within two weeks its plan to determine which countries will receive a share of the 80 million vaccine doses made available to the global community.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden Administration Ends Trump-Era 'Remain in Mexico' Immigration Policy - Memorandum

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration formally terminated the Trump-era Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) program, also known as the Remain in Mexico policy, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said in a memorandum.

"I direct DHS [Department of Homeland Security] personnel to take all appropriate actions to terminate MPP, including taking all steps necessary to rescind implementing guidance and other directives or policy guidance issued to implement the program," Mayorkas said in the memorandum on Tuesday.

Under the MPP, thousands of asylum-seeking migrants mostly from Central America were forced to wait in Mexico until their immigration court proceedings were completed in the United

States. Some migrants waited up to several years while others became discouraged and settled in Mexico, returned to their country of origin or illegally crossed into the United States.

President Joe Biden halted the MPP program through an executive order immediately after being sworn into office on January 20. The memorandum noted that as of May 25 about 11,200 migrants enrolled in MPP have been processed in the United States under Biden's plan to process them in a phased and orderly manner.

Moreover, Mayorkas said the MPP intended to reduce the burdens on border security resources but imposed additional responsibilities on immigration enforcement personnel and increased asylum claim backlogs.

The MPP program faced challenges, risks and costs that far outweighed the benefits, Mayorkas added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden Vows to Fight Encroachments on US Voting Rights

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden condemned during a speech in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the alleged attacks on the right to vote in the United States and promised that June will be a "month of action" to provide new legal tools against encroachments on that right. "In 2020, we faced a tireless assault on the right to vote - restrictive laws, lawsuits, threats of intimidation, voter purges and more... I will have more to say about this at a later date to truly unprecedented assault on our democracy, an effort to replace nonpartisan election administrators, and to intimidate those charged with tallying and reporting the election results," Biden said on Tuesday.

The US president said the House of Representatives is currently working on the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, which he described as being a critical measure in providing "new legal tools to combat the new assault on the right to vote."

Biden also called on voting rights groups in the United States to redouble their efforts to register and educate voters to fight what were "un-American" voting right violations.

Biden noted that the fact Democrats have a small majority in the House of Representatives and a tie in the Senate was among the primary reasons why the new measure to protect voting rights has not been made a law.

Biden's call comes amid recent changes in the voting laws in Florida and Georgia introduced by Republicans. The supporters of the new laws claim that the new voting measures strengthen the voting process by prohibiting mass mailing of ballots and banning vote harvesting.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden in Tulsa Commemorates One of Worst Massacres in US History

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - Joe Biden paid tribute to African American victims of the 1921 Tulsa violence becoming the first US President in 100 years to visit the city and labeling the event one of the worst massacres in the United States' history.

"My fellow Americans, this was not a riot. This was a massacre. Among the worst in our history. But not the only one. And for too long, forgotten by our history," Biden said in an anniversary speech.

On May 31 and June 1, 1921, White mobs, many of them armed and deputized by local officials, attacked Black residents and businesses in the Tulsa's Greenwood district. The pogrom, which included attacks from aircraft, killed as many as 300 people and destroyed more than 35 square blocks of the neighborhood that was at that time one of the wealthiest African-American communities in the United States.

Biden met with three remaining survivors and observed a moment of silence.

"They deserve the dignity, and they deserve our respect," he said. "For much too long the history of what took place here was told in silence, cloaked in darkness... While darkness can hide much, it erases nothing."

Biden noted that he became the first president in 100 years ever to come to Tulsa.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden Vows Broad Strategy Against Domestic Terrorism

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden promised to unveil soon a strategy to fight domestic terrorism which he described as the deadliest threat to the United States.

"My administration will soon lay out our broader strategy to counter domestic terrorism and the violence driven by the most heinous hate crimes and other forms of bigotry," Biden said in his speech in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

He repeated the assessment of the intelligence community which labeled terrorism from white supremacy as "the most lethal threat to the homeland today."

"Not ISIS, not Al Qaida [terror groups, banned in Russia] - white supremacist. That's not me, that's the intelligence community under both Trump and under my administration," Biden said.

On Tuesday, he became the first President to visit Tulsa to commemorate to commemorate victims the 1921 pogrom that killed as many as 300 African Americans.

"I didn't realize hate is never defeated, it only hides. It only hides. And given a little bit of oxygen, just a little bit of oxygen by its leaders it comes out from under the rock... Folks, we can't, we must not give hate a safe harbor," Biden said.

The Tulsa race massacre took place on May 31 and June 1, 1921, when White mobs, many of them armed and deputized by local officials, attacked Black residents and businesses in the city's Greenwood district. The pogrom, which included attacks from aircraft, destroyed more than 35 square blocks of the neighborhood that was at that time one of the wealthiest African-American communities in the United States.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Launches Phase 1 Clinical Trial of Universal Flu Vaccine Candidate - Health Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - An investigational flu vaccine designed to provide long-lasting immunity to multiple strains of the seasonal illness began the first-ever phase 1 clinical of its kind in healthy adults, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) said.

"The experimental nanoparticle FluMos-v1 vaccine is designed to elicit antibodies directed against the HA protein from four different virus strains, two influenza type A strains of H1 and H3 subtype and two influenza type B strains," the NIH said in a press release on Tuesday.

The vaccine was developed by scientists at NIH's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), the release said.

Healthy participants 18 to 50 years old will receive either a licensed seasonal influenza vaccine or the experimental vaccine, the release added.

Standard influenza vaccines must be reformulated and administered annually to match changes in the HA protein in the viral strains predicted to dominate in the upcoming flu season, according to the release.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Borrell to Brief Security Council on UN-EU Cooperation June 10 - President

UNITED NATIONS, June 1 (Sputnik) - EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell will on June 10 participate in a UN Security Council meeting on cooperation between the world's body and regional organizations, the President of the UN Security Council for June and Permanent Representative of Estonia Sven Jurgenson said in a press briefing.

"On June 10, [there will be a meeting on] cooperation between the United Nations and the European Union, where high Representative Josep Borrell will brief the Council," Jurgenson said on Tuesday.

Jurgenson said the UN Security Council was working with the European Union to decide whether Borrell will come to New York in person or participate in the meeting virtually.

Last week, the UN Security Council resumed in-person meetings in the UN headquarters in Manhattan after switching to virtual conduct of business back in October due to the coronavirus pandemic.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Pentagon Releases Military Intelligence Program Budget Request for \$23.3Bln for 2022

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - The Defense Department said that it has released its budget request for the Military Intelligence Program (MIP) for Fiscal Year 2022 in the amount of \$23.3 billion.

"The total is \$23.3 billion and is aligned to strategic priorities of the Secretary of Defense," the Defense Department said in a statement on Tuesday.

The Defense Department will not provide additional MIP budget-related numbers or program details as they remain classified for national security reasons, the statement added.

In late May, the Defense Department released a budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2022 of \$715 billion.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Republican Congressman Introduces Bill to Reimpose Sanctions on Nord Stream 2

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - Congressman Fred Keller, a Republican representing Pennsylvania's 12th district, introduced legislation that would reinstate sanctions on entities involved in the construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, a Tuesday release from Keller's office announced.

"Today, Congressman Fred Keller (R-PA) introduced the Protecting Our Wellbeing by Expanding Russian Sanctions Act or the POWERS Act, legislation that would immediately reinstate sanctions on Russia's Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline," the release said.

The legislation was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, whose Republican members sent a letter to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken earlier in the day, urging him to reverse the decision to waive sanctions on Nord Stream AG and its corporate officers.

While President Joe Biden placed some sanctions on Russian businesses and vessels involved with the project in an effort to slow its construction, he waived other sanctions on Nord Stream 2 AG and its corporate officers back in May.

Keller previously called upon Biden to prioritize American infrastructure projects in an attempt to make the US's energy supply more secure following the Colonial Pipeline cyberattack, and has criticized the president for working to 'unravel' America's energy independence through his domestic policy.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) -

GLOBAL OIL MARKET DEVELOPMENTS

* Global oil demand in the fourth quarter of 2021 will exceed 99 million barrels per day and will return to the pre-pandemic level, OPEC Secretary General Mohammad Barkindo said on Tuesday.

* OPEC+ raised its forecast for growth in oil demand in 2021 to 6 million barrels per day, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said.

* Brent crude closed trading day above \$70 per barrel first time since May 18, 2019, according to trading data.

* The "surplus" of global oil inventories decreased from 260 million barrels to 34 million barrels, and the level of inventories is expected to return to five-year average in June, Novak said.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE ENERGY COOPERATION

* The power systems of Russia and Ukraine continue to operate in a synchronous mode; in a cold winter, with a lack of capacities in Ukraine, Russia supplied electricity to its neighbor, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak told reporters.

* Ukraine bought 16 billion cubic meters of Russian gas from European countries by reverse last year, Novak told reporters.

* The agreement on the transit of Russian gas to Europe via Ukraine stays in force for the entire period of its validity, and Moscow is not planning to abandon the Ukrainian transit route even after the expiration of the treaty, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

EU READIES NEW SANCTIONS AGAINST BELARUS

* If the situation in Belarus does not improve, Austria considers it appropriate to consider new sanctions against Minsk in the EU, Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz said.

* The European Union is preparing sanctions against more than 10 representatives of Belarusian aviation and national airline over the emergency landing of a Ryanair plane, Reuters reported.

* Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said that he has doubts that threats of Western sanctions on gas transit via the Yamal-Europe pipeline are real.

NORD STREAM 2

* Negotiations between Germany and the US on Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project are ongoing in Washington, and there is interest in finding a common path, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said on Tuesday.

* Russian President Vladimir Putin is aware of the statements from Washington about the refusal to impose sanctions against the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project, these statements are welcome, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

PUTIN-BIDEN MEETING

* Russia has no illusions that breakthroughs will be achieved or historical decisions will be made after the June 16 meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his US counterpart, Joe Biden, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Tuesday.

* Preparations for the talks between Russian and US presidents continue, with no one aiming at "sterilizing" the agenda, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov assured.

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

* Germany's Robert Koch Institute lowered the national coronavirus alert level from "very high" to "high" for the first time in almost six months, institute President Lothar Wieler said.

* The World Health Organization on Tuesday approved the use of China's Sinovac vaccine for emergency use.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UN Security Council to Hold Ministerial Meeting on Afghanistan June 22 - President

UNITED NATIONS, June 1 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council on June 22 will hold a high-level meeting on the situation in Afghanistan with the participation of foreign ministers, the President of the UN Security Council for June and Estonia Permanent Representative to the world body Sven Jurgenson said during a press briefing on Tuesday.

"Looking at the situation in Afghanistan with the foreign troops leaving, the violence on the rise... We wanted to raise the issue of Afghanistan a little higher," Jurgenson said. "Therefore, we are planning to have this regular meeting on a high level. It will be chaired by our Foreign Minister, but other countries will be able to participate on a ministerial level."

The UN Security Council meets every month for a regular meeting on the situation in Afghanistan and the UN Assistance Mission (UNAMA) in that country.

On May 1, the United States, along with NATO partners, began withdrawing troops from Afghanistan after 20 years of war that resulted in the deaths of over 2,300 US servicemen and hundreds of thousands of Afghan casualties. US President Joe Biden vowed to complete the pullout by the 20th anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks against the United States that sparked the so-called War on Terror by then-President George W. Bush.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Wall Street Enters June on Sluggish Note as US Inflation Concerns Return

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - US stocks entered June trading on a sluggish note, finishing the first day of the month mostly flat as concerns about inflation returned to an economy making progress from the coronavirus-related disruptions.

The S&P 500, which groups the top 500 stocks on the New York Stock Exchange, closed at 4,202 points, down 2 points or 0.05 percent. The S&P gained just 0.6 percent in May, its smallest rise in four months.

The Nasdaq Composite index, which includes high-flying tech stocks such as Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Microsoft, Netflix and Google, closed at 13,736, down 12 points or 0.01

percent. That came on the heels of May's drop of 1.5 percent for Nasdaq - the tech bellwether's first monthly loss since November.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average, the broadest US equity barometer, closed at 34,575, up 46 points or 0.1 percent.

A rash of recent economic data have shown the United States making faster-than-expected recovery from the coronavirus pandemic that had throttled growth since March 2020. While investor optimism had been lifted by such data, concerns about creeping inflation had suppressed stock prices since last month.

Federal Reserve Governor Lael Brainard said ON Tuesday the US economy was still far from goals set by the Fed but the central bank was nevertheless ready with its toolkit to moderate inflation should price pressures thwart recovery.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Tip From Mosque Prompts Arrest of Man Traveling to Join Islamic State - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - Information from mosque in the city of Seattle allowed US law enforcement to stop a man from boarding a flight to the Middle East to join the Islamic State terror group (outlawed in Russia), the Justice Department said on Tuesday.

"As alleged, [Elvin] Williams was determined to support ISIS [Islamic State] either by traveling overseas to join and fight with the terrorist organization, or by conducting an attack here in the United States," Assistant Attorney General John Demers of the Justice's National Security Division said in a press release.

Williams was arrested on Friday as he prepared to board an international flight at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, the release said.

In November 2020, a member of a Seattle-area mosque contacted the FBI with concerns about Williams. The mosque had attempted to provide support and guidance to Williams, but members became aware he was deeply involved in Islamic State propaganda, the release added.

Williams was using mosque-provided electronic devices to engage in online chats with terrorists and to view videos of beheadings and other acts of violence. In November 2020, Williams allegedly swore an oath of allegiance to the terrorist group, according to the release.

Information from the mosque enabled the FBI to begin monitoring Williams activity, leading to his arrest on charges of attempting to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization, the release said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UN Security Council President Calls for Urgent Quartet Meeting on Mideast Peace

UNITED NATIONS, June 1 (Sputnik) - The president of the UN Security Council for the month of June and Estonia Permanent Representative to the United Nations Sven Jurgenson on Tuesday called for an urgent reconvening of the Quartet on the Middle East peaceful settlement following the recent flare-up between Israel and Gaza.

"With every wave of violence, the possibility for a two-state solution diminishes, with every new settlement, it diminishes, and there are no winners in the situation where we are right now," Jurgenson said during a press briefing. "So, there has to be a reconvening of the Quartet as soon as possible on a high level."

Israel and Palestine's Gaza Strip were locked in a bitter conflict for 11 days that ended with an Egypt-brokered ceasefire on May 20. The hostilities came after days of clashes between the Arab population and the Israeli police in East Jerusalem over an Israeli court's decision to evict several Palestinian families from the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in Jerusalem.

In the recent clashes, 12 people were killed and more than 50 were seriously wounded in Israel while the death toll among Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem and the West Bank topped 270.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Suspends All Oil, Gas Leases in Arctic National Wildlife Refuge - Interior Department WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is suspending all oil and gas exploration leases in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge under an immediate review of activities in the Alaska sanctuary, the Interior Department announced on Tuesday, overturning one of former president Donald Trump's most significant environmental acts during his last days in office.

"The Department is notifying lessees that it is suspending oil and gas leases in the Arctic Refuge, pending the review, to determine whether the leases should be reaffirmed, voided, or subject to additional mitigation measures," the Interior Department said in a statement.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

West Virginia to Give Away Guns, Cash as COVID-19 Vaccine Incentive - Governor

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - The US state of West Virginia will be giving away prizes including money, trucks, and guns as part of its COVID-19 vaccine incentivization program, Governor Jim Justice said on Tuesday.

"The giveaway will include a \$1.588 million grand prize, a \$588,000 second prize, full scholarships to any higher education institution in West Virginia, custom-outfitted trucks, weekend vacations at state parks, lifetime hunting and fishing licenses, custom hunting rifles and custom hunting shotguns," a release on the governor's official webpage stated.

Residents of West Virginia must be fully vaccinated in order to be eligible for the lottery giveaways. The state is currently developing a registration website for the program. The state set a goal of getting at least one vaccine dose to 65 percent of all eligible West Virginians, 75 percent of West Virginians age 50 and older, and 85 percent of West Virginians age 65 and older by the state's birthday on June 20. Justice added that the faster the state gets people fully vaccinated, the more lives they will be able to save, noting that the cost of not doing so will continue to increase over time.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Air Force Probes Reports of Soldiers Revealing Data on Nuclear Arms in Europe- Pentagon

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - The US Air Force probes reports that its servicemen may have disclosed locations of bases with nuclear weapons in Europe through an application they used to memorize security protocols, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told reporters on Tuesday.

"The Department of the Air Force is investigating the suitability of information shared via study flashcards... All US weapons are safe and secure," Kirby said during a briefing.

Kirby added that it is a Defense Department policy "to neither confirm nor deny the presence or absence of nuclear weapons at any specific location."

Last week, the Bellingcat investigative website reported that US soldiers tasked with guarding nuclear weapons in Europe used publicly visible flashcards applications and inadvertently revealed a multitude of sensitive security protocols about American nuclear weapons and the bases where they are stored.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UN Security Council President Says 'Impossible' to Issue Statement on Ryanair Incident

UNITED NATIONS, June 1 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council will not be able to adopt a joint statement on the situation around the forced landing of the Ryanair plane in Minsk, Belarus, the President of the UN Security Council for June and Permanent Representative of Estonia, Sven Jurgenson, said in a press briefing on Tuesday.

"Looking at the composition of the Security Council, it's absolutely impossible to have any product or any outcome in the council," Jurgenson said.

The diplomat added his country intends to continue raising the issue at the UN Security Council, including through a possible Arria-Formula informal meeting and a discussion on it under the "Any Other Business" agenda.

On May 23, a flight by the Irish airline Ryanair from Athens to Vilnius was forced to land in Minsk over a bomb threat which later turned out to have been false. Among the passengers was

Roman Protasevich, one of the founders of the Telegram channel Nexta, which was active during last year's post-election protests. The journalist was detained during the stopover. The incident provoked an outcry from Western politicians and officials. Later, the EU suspended the flights of Belarusian airplanes and recommended European carriers to avoid flights over Belarus. The West has also been pushing for new sanctions against Belarus. A response to the sanctions was among the key topics discussed by Lukashenko and Russian President Vladimir Putin at their recent meeting in Sochi.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Senators Call for Sanctioning Belarus After Meeting With Tsikhanouskaya - Statements

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - US Senators Chris Murphy, Rob Portman and Jeanne Shaheen urged in separate statements imposing more effective sanctions on Belarus in light of the alleged human rights violations there and the recent Ryanair incident after the lawmakers met with Belarusian opposition figure Svyatlana Tsikhanouskaya in Lithuania earlier on Tuesday. "While there already are some sanctions in place, they are clearly not effective enough. Therefore, I support increased sanctions on places where the Lukashenko regime will feel pain and I hope that on our next trip we will have the opportunity to see free and fair elections in Belarus," Portman said in the statement on Tuesday afternoon.

The senators called upon the Belarusian government for "the immediate release" of Roman Protasevich and his partner, Sofia Sapega, while finding no excuse for Minsk to apprehend and detain the two.

Murphy pointed out that the moment has come for the United States to act in concert with its European allies to implement significant sanctions against Belarus that will have an impact on the political strength of the country's government.

In May, a Ryanair plane en route from Athens to Vilnius had to make an emergency landing in Minsk over a bomb threat, which later turned out to be fake. Protasevich - founder of a Telegram channel that Minsk designated as extremist - and his partner Sapega were detained during the stopover at the airport.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Gov't Seeds \$50M In Venture Capital to Prepare for Next Pandemic - Health Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) – The non-profit Global Health Investment Corporation (GHIC) will receive \$50 million from the US government in a bid to attract \$500 million in private investment in new technology to combat future pandemics, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) said on Tuesday.

A statement from the HHS characterized the project as a “new type of public-private partnership that enables investments using venture capital practices.”

“This partnership will allow direct linkage with the investment community and establish sustained and long-term efforts to identify, nurture, and commercialize technologies that aid the U.S. in responding effectively to future health security threats,” the release said.

GHIC plans to use the \$50 million in seed capital to attract private investors to companies that are developing breakthrough technologies in pandemic mitigation, the release added.

GHIC's Global Health Investment Fund has a history of accelerating the development and delivery of more than a dozen innovative products that address global health and pandemic threats, including diagnostics, vaccines, pharmaceuticals, and other medical products, according to the release.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Ambassador to UN to Visit Turkey This Week for Talks on Syria - Mission

UNITED NATIONS, June 1 (Sputnik) - US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield will travel to Turkey from Wednesday to Friday to discuss the humanitarian situation in Syria, the United States mission to the world body said in a press release on Tuesday.

“US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield will travel to Turkey June 2-4 to focus on the extensive support provided by the United Nations and its partner agencies to meet the dire humanitarian needs in Syria,” the release said.

Thomas-Greenfield will meet with senior Turkish officials to discuss the strengthening of bilateral relations and Ankara's role in facilitating cross-border aid deliveries to Syria.

The US envoy's visit comes ahead of the UN Security Council's vote on a resolution over the extension of cross-border aid deliveries to Syria that expires on July 10.

“Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield will emphasize the urgent need for additional crossings and stepped-up international assistance,” the release said.

The United States, along with European countries at the UN Security Council, supports the expansion of the cross-border mechanism that was first authorized in 2014 and used four border points to bring in aid.

In July 2020, the number of border points was reduced to one after Russia and China indicated opposition to renewing all four.

Russian Permanent Representative to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia had previously stated that with the transfer of northwestern territories under the control of Damascus and the progress reached in delivering aid from within the country, the council should return to assisting from within the Arab Republic.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Republicans Press Biden Administration to Keep Sanctions on Nord Stream 2

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) – Republicans on the US House Foreign Affairs Committee urged State Secretary Anthony Blinken to reverse a decision waiving sanctions on the firm building the Nord Stream 2 pipeline in a letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken that was released by Representative Michael McCaul on Tuesday.

"We request that you immediately remove these ill-conceived U.S. national interest waivers and use the mandatory authorities Congress passed to target the insurance and certification companies participating in the project," the letter said.

Last month, the Biden administration waived sanctions on the company building the pipeline, despite earlier statements from administration officials including Blinken and President Biden himself that they oppose the \$11 billion project.

"If, as you [Blinken] asserted during your confirmation hearing, you are serious about doing everything possible to stop the completion of Nord Stream 2, then we urge you to do just that," the letter said.

The US will continue to sanction Russian ships involved in building the pipeline, according to the State Department, although critics claim the penalties will not be enough to halt the project's completion.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UPDATE - Los Angeles Fire Department Confirms 'Tragic' Shooting at Station

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - The Los Angeles County Fire Department said on Tuesday a shooting occurred at one of its fire stations, but did not disclose if there were any casualties.

"It is with heavy hearts that the LACoFD [Los Angeles County Fire Department] confirms that a tragic shooting occurred at approximately 10:55 am today at FS 81 in Agua Dulce," the fire department said via Twitter.

The fire department is still in the process of gathering additional information about the shooting and is cooperating with law enforcement in the investigation.

Local television station KABC reported, citing officials, that a disgruntled employee allegedly shot and killed a firefighter and wounded another at the fire station.

According to live video footage, the suspect is at his or her home which is currently on fire.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Blinken Urges NATO to Deepen Cooperation With Japan, S. Korea, Australia – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) – US top diplomat Antony Blinken has urged NATO cooperation with Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and the South Korea as well as to confront the perceived systemic challenges from Russia and China ahead of the alliance summit, the State Department said on Tuesday.

“The Secretary [Blinken] expressed support for Secretary General [Jens] Stoltenberg’s efforts to adapt the Alliance through the NATO 2030 initiative, making it more resilient and capable of confronting systemic challenges from Russia and the People’s Republic of China...,” the Department said in a release. “Secretary Blinken underscored the importance of Alliance partnerships, including NATO-EU cooperation, and encouraged NATO to deepen its cooperation with Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea.”

The upcoming NATO summit will take place in Brussels on June 14 and will be the first stop of Biden’s first overseas trip as president. He will meet Russian President Vladimir Putin in Geneva on June 16.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Pentagon Chief to Discuss Iran’s ‘Malign Behavior’ with Israel’s Defense Minister Thursday

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin is expected to discuss Iran’s “malign behavior” among other regional security concerns with his Israeli counterpart Benny Gantz during the latter’s visit on Thursday, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told reporters on Tuesday.

“I think it is safe to expect that among the things they will talk about are regional security issues and clearly we have every expectation that Iran and its malign behavior in the region will certainly come up,” Kirby said during a briefing.

Gantz is expected to arrive in Washington, DC, for a day of talks with Austin and US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan as part of a strategic dialogue between the two countries on Iran with Israel opposing US efforts to re-enter the nuclear deal. Gantz’s office said that various aspects of the Gaza ceasefire will also be discussed during the visit.

The Israeli government plans to ask the United States for \$1 billion in aid to replenish the Iron Dome air defense system used to intercept rockets during the latest stand-off with Palestinian militant groups, US Senator Lindsey Graham told Fox News from Israel. The hostilities which lasted for 11 days and ended in a ceasefire on May 20 killed 12 people in Israel and more than 270 Palestinians in Gaza, Jerusalem and the West Bank.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Los Angeles Fire Department Confirms ‘Tragic’ Shooting at Station

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - The Los Angeles County Fire Department said on Tuesday a shooting occurred at one of its fire stations, but did not disclose if there were any casualties. "It is with heavy hearts that the LACoFD [Los Angeles County Fire Department] confirms that a tragic shooting occurred at approximately 10:55 am today at FS 81 in Agua Dulce," the fire department said via Twitter.

The fire department is still in the process of gathering additional information about the shooting and is cooperating with law enforcement in the investigation.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden to Cancel Oil, Gas Leases in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is suspending a string of oil and gas leases in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, overturning one of former President Donald Trump's most significant environmental acts during his last days in office, the Washington Post reported on Tuesday.

The action by the Department of Interior could spark a major legal battle as it aims to unwind nearly a dozen oil and gas drilling leases in the heart of a pristine expanse in Alaska that Democrats and Republicans have fought over for four decades, the Post reported, citing three individuals briefed on the decision.

The Trump administration auctioned off the right to drill in the refuge's coastal plain — home to hundreds of thousands of migrating caribou and waterfowl as well as the Southern Beaufort Sea's remaining polar bears — just two weeks before President Biden was inaugurated on January 20.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

BP Says Will Invest \$220Mln in Solar Projects Across US

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - Energy giant BP on Tuesday announced that it will invest \$220 million in solar energy projects around the United States in the hope of developing so-called clean energy production capabilities.

"BP will pay 7X Energy \$220 million for [solar] projects and 1GW of 'safe harbour' equipment and expects the acquisition to complete in 30 days," BP said.

The move is part of BP's ongoing effort to achieve a renewable energy generating capacity of 20GW by 2025, with hopes of increasing that capacity to 50GW by 2030.

The company noted that solar energy is the fastest growing power source in the United States with the sector expected to quadruple over the next decade.

The solar projects will be spread across 12 US states, with the largest portfolios in Texas and in the Midwest. Upon completion, the projects will be able to generate enough clean energy to power approximately 1.7 million homes and provide thousands of jobs through construction.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Economy Far From Goals, But Fed Ready With Inflation Toolkit - Brainard

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - The US economy is still far from goals set by the Federal Reserve but the central bank is nevertheless ready with its inflation toolkit should price pressures thwart recovery from the COVID-19, Fed Governor Lael Brainard said Tuesday.

"I expect we will see further progress in coming months, but the economy is far from our goals, and there are risks on both sides," Brainard said in a speech to the Economic Club of New York. "Should inflation move materially and persistently above 2 percent, we have the tools and experience to gently guide inflation back down to target, and no one should doubt our commitment to do so."

Just as it was important to be attentive to upside risks, Brainard said it was crucial to be mindful of the risks of pulling back too soon.

"Remaining steady in our outcomes-based approach during the transitory reopening surge will help ensure the economic momentum that will be needed as current tailwinds shift to headwinds if not curtailed by a premature tightening of financial conditions," she said. "The best way to achieve and sustain our maximum-employment and average-inflation goals is by remaining steady and clear in our approach while also being attentive to changing conditions."

The US economy grew by an annualized rate of 6.4 percent in the first quarter of this year, after a 3.5 percent contraction in 2020 due to shutdowns and other disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic. The Fed has forecast a 6.5 percent growth for all of 2021.

Fed Chairman Jerome Powell said he did not expect "full employment" — defined by a monthly unemployment rate of 4.0 percent or lower — before 2023. The monthly unemployment rate stood at 6.1 percent in April.

Inflation has proved problematic as prices of almost everything have soared from the lows of the pandemic. The Fed's closely-watched gauge for inflation, the Personal Consumption Expenditure Index, jumped 3.6 percent in April compared to the same month of 2020. The scenario has scared economists into believing that inflation growth in 2021 could be the highest in 35 years.

The Fed acknowledges the price pressures arising from bottlenecks in US supply chains struggling to cope with demand in an economy reopening after months of pandemic-suppression. But the central bank's policy-making Federal Open Market Committee, led by Powell, insists that these inflationary pressures are "transient" and will fade as the economy makes a full recovery from the COVID-19.

Despite such assurances, US stock markets have been jittery of late on fears of inflation, with pundits warning of a possible crash, particularly in the tech sector, which posted last month its first monthly loss since November.

The Fed's Vice Chair for Supervision Randal Quarles said Wednesday that US banks were resilient enough to continue providing credit to the economy in the event of a major asset repricing that might include a stock market crash.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Uganda Secures \$1Bln IMF Credit to Tackle COVID-19 Recovery, Ensure Economic Stability

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) – Uganda would receive a three-year, \$1 billion financing package under a staff-level agreement announced by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Tuesday.

"The authorities' reform program aims at tackling the near-term impact of COVID-19 and helping Uganda's recovery by safeguarding macroeconomic stability and generating more inclusive growth," an IMF press release said.

The \$1 billion in credit will support the next phase of the COVID-19 response while strengthening fundamentals needed for economic growth led by the private sector, the release said.

The staff-level agreement is subject to approval by IMF management and the Fund's executive board, which is expected in the coming weeks, according to the release.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UN Chief Strongly Condemns Abduction of Students in Northern Nigeria - Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, June 1 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres strongly condemned the abduction of school children from an Islamic school in the northcentral Nigerian state of Niger, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Monday.

On Sunday, gunmen invaded the town of Tegna and abducted "an unconfirmed number" of students from the Salihu Tanko Islamic school, leaving one person dead, the Niger State Government said via Twitter. About 200 children were in the school when the gunmen attacked. "The Secretary-General strongly condemns the abduction of students from an Islamic school in Tegna town in Nigeria's Niger state that took place on Sunday on May 30," Dujarric said. Dujarric said Guterres was disturbed by the frequency of abductions for a ransom of students by extremists in Nigeria, which has become an "abhorrent pattern" with a profound impact on children's well-being.

"The Secretary-General reiterates that this constitutes a violation of the rights of children to education and underscores the need to hold perpetrators accountable," the spokesman added. Nigeria is regularly subjected to attacks, killings, and kidnappings, conducted either by bandits or jihadists for ransom or other purposes. Since December, militant groups abducted more than 700 students for ransom in northern Nigeria.

Boko Haram - which means "Western education is forbidden" - the militant group linked to the Islamic State terror group (banned in Russia), appears to have intensified its attacks and abductions of schoolchildren across the Western African nation over the past several months.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trudeau Says Canada Failed Indigenous Community Over Child Mass Grave at Former School

TORONTO, June 1 (Sputnik) – Canada has failed the country's indigenous community, namely the children whose remains were found at a mass grave site at a former residential school in the province of British Columbia, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Tuesday.

The Tk'emlups te Secwepemc First Nation announced on Thursday that a deep scan of the Kamloops Indian Residential School site with ground-penetrating radar confirmed the discovery of 215 children's remains, with some of the deceased as young as three years old.

"Our country failed them, it failed their communities and their families. That is the truth and that is the truth we must all face," Trudeau said in an address at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)'s Annual Conference.

There will be "much work" ahead in the coming weeks and months to address the situation, according to Trudeau, who said that he convened a cabinet meeting on Monday to discuss concrete steps the government could take.

Meanwhile, the grisly discovery has prompted politicians and indigenous leaders across the country to call for action.

On Monday, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations Perry Bellegarde urged the authorities to launch a probe into all former residential school sites, noting that indigenous survivors have long been trying to draw attention to the issue but nobody believed them.

Kamloops was one of the largest schools in Canada and operated from the late XIX century to the late 1970s as part of the residential school system, which placed indigenous children in state-sanctioned boarding schools where they were to be culturally assimilated.

According to Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission report, released in 2015, roughly 150,000 aboriginal children were forcibly assimilated through the residential schools from 1883 to 1998, in a process equated to "cultural genocide."

The report discovered that around 3,200 died in the schools, with the greatest number of deaths taking place before 1940. Schools also had high rates of tuberculosis and other health incidences in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with death rates remaining high until the 1950s.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Houthis in Yemen Block Access to COVID-19 Vaccines in Areas They Control - Rights Group

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - Coronavirus vaccines have yet to reach areas in Yemen controlled by Houthi rebels, who have dismissed the pandemic as an American conspiracy and suppressed information on the disease, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said on Tuesday.

"The deliberate decision of the Houthi authorities' to keep the real number of cases of COVID-19 under wraps and their opposition to vaccines are putting Yemeni lives at risk," HRW Deputy Middle East Director Michael Page said in a press release. "Pretending Covid-19 does not exist is not a mitigation strategy and will only lead to mass suffering."

As of early 2021, the Houthi-controlled Health Ministry in Sanaa, Yemen's capital, reported only one COVID-19-related death, four confirmed cases and two recoveries since the pandemic began, the release said.

Yet Doctors without Borders said in March that their teams in Yemen were seeing a drastic rise in the number of people seriously ill with COVID-19, the release added.

In the same month, Houthi leader Abdul Malik Al-Houthi dismissed the pandemic as an American conspiracy during a television interview, according to the release.

Yemen's internationally recognized government received 360,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine on March 31 as the first batch, part of 1.9 million doses that the nation was due to receive in 2021 from the COVAX global distribution program, HRW said. Nevertheless, no vaccines have reached areas under Houthi control, it added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US to Explain Spying on EU Leaders Via Security Channels With Allies - White House

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - The United States will address the issue of spying on the European leaders, including the German chancellor Angela Merkel, and Denmark's role in it through the national security channels with its allies, White House Principal Deputy Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters on Tuesday.

"In 2014, the United States issued a thorough review of our approach to overseas surveillance, President Obama issued a presidential directive that changed our approach in significant ways. We will work with our European allies and partners to address any questions through the appropriate national security channels," Jean-Pierre said.

On Sunday, a European media investigation revealed that the Danish Defense Intelligence Service cooperated with the US intelligence operations that targeted the highest-ranking European officials, including Merkel, from 2012 to 2014.

French President Emmanuel Macron has already condemned such behavior as unacceptable between allies.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Canada's Vaccine Advisory Panel Relaxes Vaccine Mixing and Matching Rules

TORONTO, June 1 (Sputnik) - Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunizations (NACI) on Tuesday recommended relaxing rules governing the interchangeability of second coronavirus vaccine doses.

The advisory panel now says that Canadians, who received the Oxford-AstraZeneca or its Indian analogue COVISHIELD, can receive an messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccine for their second shot, namely the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna shots.

"NACI recommends that either AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD COVID-19 vaccine or an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine product may be offered for the subsequent dose in a vaccine series started with an AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD COVID-19 vaccine," the advisory committee said in its updated guidance.

The decision to offer an mRNA vaccine for the second dose was made after experts studied the risk of Canadians' developing Vaccine-Induced Immune Thrombotic Thrombocytopenia (VITT) following vaccination with the UK drugmaker's vaccine and the risk of complications pertinent to vaccine mixing, NACI said.

Additionally, the advisory panel still recommends that first and second mRNA vaccine doses should come from the same manufacturer, however, in the event of supply shortages the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines can be considered interchangeable.

Canada's vaccination regime has faced repeated setbacks, with the country experiencing a shortage of doses, despite the Trudeau government lauding deals with numerous vaccine manufacturers.

The vaccination program has also been undermined by inconsistent messaging and Canadian health officials' decision to delay the time between vaccinations for up to four months.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Earmarks \$52Mln in Grants to Help Homeless Veterans Find Jobs - Labor Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - The US budgeted \$52 million for programs to help homeless veterans transition to the workforce, the Labor Department said on Tuesday.

The department will award 119 grants to continue funding existing aid programs and 36 new three-year grant awards totaling more than \$12 million to provide a wide range of services to veterans currently homeless or at risk of homelessness, a department press release said.

"Our veterans deserve our best efforts to ensure they have a safe place to live, means to support themselves and their families and opportunities to pursue a fulfilling career," Labor Secretary Marty Walsh said in the release.

Funding for the department's Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program also supports the Homeless Female Veterans' and Veterans with Families program and the Incarcerated Veterans' Transition Program, the release said.

Although a precise count of homeless veterans is nearly impossible to make, multiple advocacy groups estimate that more than 40,000 former service members are homeless on any given night.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Assailants Fire Small Arms, Mortars in 'Complex' Attack on UN Mission in Mali - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, June 1 (Sputnik) - Attackers that earlier on Monday conducted a complex assault on a camp of the UN Integrated Stabilization Mission for Mali (MINUSMA) in the Kidal Region used a mortar and small arms fire, United Nations spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said during a press briefing.

"The UN Mission in Mali reports that earlier today, its premises were targeted by unidentified assailants in Aguelhok in the Kidal region," Dujarric said on Tuesday. "Preliminary reports on the ground described a complex attack against a number of UN mission's locations in Aguelhok, and that attack involved indirect mortar and small arms fire."

Dujarric said UN peacekeepers retaliated the attacks, which forced the assailants to flee. No casualties or material damage have been reported on the UN side.

Earlier, UN Special Representative and Head of MINUSMA El-Ghassim Wane strongly condemned the attack, which was successfully repelled by the Chadian troops deployed in the area.

Last week, the Mali military arrested interim President Bah N'Daw and Prime Minister Moctar Ouane and transported them to the Kati base near the capital of Bamako. Mali's newly-appointed Interim President, Col. Assimi Goita, said that he had dismissed the president and prime minister for violating the transitional charter.

A military source told Sputnik that Goita had informed the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) that a military council would assume power in Mali. Since, Mali's membership in the ECOWAS has been suspended.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

White House Says Meat Producer JBS USA Suffered Hack From Group 'Likely Based in Russia'

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - Meat-producing giant JBS USA has notified the Administration of President Joe Biden of the latest cyberattack that they believe came from a criminal entity likely located in Russia, Principal Deputy Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters on Tuesday.

"Meat producer JBS notified us on Sunday that they are the victims of a ransom ware attack. The White House has offered assistance to JBS and our team at the Department of Agriculture have spoken to their leadership several times in the last day," Jean-Pierre said. "JBS notified the Administration that the ransom demand came from a criminal organization likely based in Russia."

Jean-Pierre added that the White House was in touch with Russian authorities regarding this matter while also assessing possible impact on meat supply.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Special Envoy for Horn of Africa to Visit Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - The US Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa is visiting Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Kenya seeking cooperation in resolving the conflict between Ethiopia and its neighbors over the Grand Ethiopian Dam project, the State Department announced on Tuesday.

"US Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Jeffrey Feltman will travel to Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Kenya from May 31 to June 6," the State Department said in a media note. "Feltman will meet with senior officials of the four countries to discuss... a resolution of the dispute over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam that is acceptable to all parties."

The State Department added that the US envoy would also seek to develop other cooperative approaches with all four countries toward supporting a stable and prosperous Horn of Africa.

On Monday, Egypt rejected Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's announcement that Ethiopia was going to build 100 more small- and medium-sized dams across the country in fiscal year 2022.

The Egyptian Foreign Ministry accused Ethiopia of dealing in bad faith about the water projects along the Nile and other waterways that it shares with neighboring nations.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UN Expert Urges Israel to Protect Minority Palestinian Population Amid Right-Wing Violence

UNITED NATIONS, June 1 (Sputnik) - UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues Fernand de Varennes on Tuesday called on Israel to ensure the protection of Palestinians in the country amid reports of right-wing violence and disproportional use of force by law enforcement during protests.

"Given the urgency of the situation, I call on the government of Israel to firmly condemn all acts of violence, hatred and discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel," de Varennes said in a statement. "The authorities must ensure its citizens immediately stop these attacks and that everyone is fully and equally protected without any form of discrimination."

De Varennes said the attacks took place during protests in Sheikh Jarrah, Damascus Gate and the Al-Aqsa mosque during the recent protests and led to violence against Palestinians living in Israel.

Palestinians, including the Bedouin, represent about 1.5 million people or 20 percent of the population of Israel.

Israel and Palestine's Gaza Strip were fighting for 11 days and the conflict ended with a ceasefire on May 20. The hostilities emerged after days of clashes between Palestinians and the Israeli police in East Jerusalem over an Israeli court's decision to evict several Palestinian families from the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in Jerusalem.

In Israel, 12 people were killed and more than 50 were seriously wounded during the hostilities. The death toll among Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem and the West Bank exceeded 270.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Military Completed 30-44% of Afghan Withdrawal Process - CENTCOM

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - The United States has completed up to 44 percent of its withdrawal process from Afghanistan, US Central Command (CENTCOM) said on Tuesday.

"US Central Command estimates that we have completed between 30-44 percent of the entire retrograde process," CENTCOM said in a press release.

The United States has removed some 300 C-17 planeloads of material out of Afghanistan since the withdrawal process began on May 1, the release said.

The United States has so far handed over six facilities to the Afghan army, the release added. US base Camp Antonik in Helmand, Afghanistan, and Kandahar airfield are among the bases handed over to the Afghan National Army, according to previous reports.

On May 1, the United States, along with NATO partners, began withdrawing troops from Afghanistan after 20 years of war that resulted in the deaths of over 2,300 US servicemen and hundreds of thousands of Afghan casualties. US President Joe Biden vowed to complete the pullout by the 20th anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks against the United States that sparked the so-called War on Terror by then-President George W. Bush.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Pentagon Warns Middle East Countries Against Security Cooperation With Russia, China

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - A senior Pentagon official on Tuesday warned that Middle Eastern countries that test waters of deeper security cooperation with China or Russia put at risk their partnerships with the United States.

"It's... clear that certain countries and partners would want to hedge and test what more they might be able to get from the United States by testing the waters of deeper cooperation with the Chinese or the Russians, particularly in the security and military space," Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Dana Stroul said during a webinar at the Middle East Institute. "And I would just caution them again that there is a point that it will tip into the strategies that will not only threaten your partnership with the United States, but will actually threaten your national sovereignty in countries like Lebanon."

Stroul claimed that the potential benefits of cooperation with Russia and China pale in comparison with what the United States can offer in terms of security cooperation.

"To me, the choice is clear between what you can get from China or Russia and what you can get from the United States," she said.

Stroul accused Russia of nurturing intentions to challenge the United States in the Middle East and stress its strategic regional partnerships.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Over 50 Countries to Get Approval for 'Vaccination Operations' By End of June - World Bank
WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - More than 50 countries will get approval to vaccinate against the novel coronavirus by the end of June, World Bank President David Malpass told reporters on Tuesday.

"By the end of June, we will have approved vaccination operations in over 50 countries,"

Malpass said during a press conference.

These countries can immediately use vaccines from the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) facility as well as from manufacturers and donor states, he added.

Malpass noted that the World Bank currently has \$12 billion in vaccine financing and will be ready to increase the level of funding if necessary. He also urged countries to speed up the vaccine supply chain and shorten the time from manufacturing to final delivery to people.

Earlier in the day, the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Health Organization and the World Trade Organization leaders said in a joint statement that the international community should invest \$50 billion to accelerate the end of the coronavirus pandemic.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UN Mideast Envoy Visits Gaza Tuesday to Reinforce 'Fragile' Ceasefire - Statement

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - UN Special Envoy Tor Wennesland announced on Tuesday that visited Gaza and discussed strengthening Hamas' shaky ceasefire with Israel after their 11-day conflict.

"Visited Gaza today and discussed reinforcing fragile cessation of hostilities," Wennesland said via Twitter. "It is crucial to maintain calm and address urgent humanitarian needs and reconstruction efforts."

Wennesland's visit came against the backdrop of ongoing Egypt-brokered negotiations between Israel and Hamas for a longer-term ceasefire, including the exchange of prisoners and the return of dead bodies following their week and a half of clashes in May, the worst violence between the two sides in seven years.

"Ultimately, the future of Gaza requires political solutions and political will to implement them," Wennesland said.

Earlier in the day, Hamas called on Palestinians to hold "a day-of-rage" protest rallies on Friday, in mass demonstrations against the Jewish settlers and Israeli government occupation in the West Bank.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Israel to Request \$1Bln in Aid From US to Replenish Iron Dome System - Senator Graham

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - The Israeli government will be making a request to the US Pentagon for \$1 billion in aid to replenish the Iron Dome air defense system used to intercept rockets fired at the country, Senator Lindsey Graham said during an interview on Tuesday. "There is going to be a request made tomorrow I think, or Thursday, by the Israelis to the Pentagon for a billion dollars in aid to replenish the Iron Dome batteries that were used to protect Israel," Graham told Fox News.

Graham conducted the interview from Israel, where he had recently met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Iron Dome system, which intercepted hundreds of rockets fired during the most recent 11-day escalation in the conflict between Israeli and Palestinian forces, is funded and produced, in large part, by the US government and contractors.

The news comes following affirmations from both President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken last week that the US would be replenishing the system as part of their commitment to Israel's right to self-defense.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Over 400,000 People Displaced After Volcano Erupts in DR Congo – IOM

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) – More than 415,000 people have had to leave Goma, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), in the aftermath of the active Nyiragongo Volcano eruption that occurred in May, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said on Tuesday.

"The eruption of Mount Nyiragongo volcano has forced more than 415,000 people, nearly half of whom are children, to leave Goma, according to thousands of individual assessments carried out by the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix," IOM said in a release.

IOM found that about 114,000 people have moved to Masisi, 77,000 have traveled to Rutshuru, and approximately 52,000 people have crossed the border into neighboring Rwanda.

It is estimated that about 47 percent of the displaced people are under 18 years of age while 58 percent are females, having fled mainly on foot but also by boat, vehicles, motorcycles, buses and trucks, the release added.

On May 22, the volcano, located about 20 kilometers (12 miles) north of Goma and Lake Kivu on the DRC's border with Rwanda, erupted, killing at least 30 people, according to the United Nations.

The last time a major Nyiragongo eruption occurred was in 2002, when around 250 people were killed and 120,000 were left without homes as lava flows destroyed about 20% of Goma.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Authorizes Transactions Involving Venezuela's PdVSA Until December 1 - Treasury

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - The United States has authorized certain companies to engage in transactions with Venezuela's PdVSA until December 1 despite the US sanctions imposed on the state-owned oil and gas company, the Treasury Department said on Tuesday. "All transactions and activities prohibited by Executive Order (EO) 13850 of November 1, 2018, as amended by EO 13857 of January 25, 2019, or EO 13884... that are ordinarily incident and necessary to the limited maintenance of essential operations, contracts, or other agreements, that: (i) are for safety or the preservation of assets in Venezuela; (ii) involve PdVSA or any entity in which PdVSA owns, directly or indirectly, a 50 percent or greater interest; and (iii) were in effect prior to July 26, 2019, are authorized through 12:01 am eastern standard time, December 1, 2021," the Treasury said in a notice.

The companies allowed to engage in transactions with PdVSA include Chevron Corporation, Halliburton, Schlumberger Limited, Baker Hughes Holdings LLC, and Weatherford International, Public Limited Company, the notice said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

COVID-19 Screening of Donors Maintains Safety of US Blood Supply - Health Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - Screening of donors for COVID-19 has maintained the safety of the US blood supply without testing the blood itself, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) said in a report on Tuesday.

"The new analysis is based on 17,995 pools of donated blood, representative of 257,809 single blood donations collected between March and September 2020 from six US metropolitan regions," the report said.

Current guidelines do not require testing blood samples for the novel coronavirus but do require that donors be screened for physical symptoms of COVID-19 and for infections that occurred within 14 days of the blood donation. The blood of donors with recent COVID-19 infections, or who develop infections after recent donations, cannot be used, the report said.

Blood donations examined for the report were subjected to highly sensitive nucleic acid amplification tests, which have been documented to be 99.96 percent effective at detecting

genetic components of the novel coronavirus. Of the thousands of samples tested, just three came back positive, all with very low concentrations of the virus, the report added. Researchers concluded the likelihood of a transfusion recipient receiving blood with trace amounts of the novel coronavirus was approximately 0.001 percent - a little over 1 in 100,000 - and that the likelihood of transmission by blood transfusion was insignificant compared to airborne transmission, according to the report.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Poll Finds US Voters Believe Biden Has So Far Failed to Deliver For African-Americans

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) – US voters believe that President Joe Biden during his early months in office has so far failed to deliver any significant improvement in living conditions or race relations for African-Americans, despite their overwhelming support for him in the 2020 national elections, a Rasmussen Poll stated on Tuesday.

"While support from black voters was crucial to President Joe Biden's election, most voters – including most black voters – don't believe the new president has improved race relations or made life better for young black people," the company noted.

According to the latest Rasmussen Reports national telephone and online survey, only 28 percent of likely US voters believe race relations in the United States have gotten better since Biden's election.

Thirty-nine percent of those polled believed race relations have gotten worse, with another 28 percent saying they had remained the same, the poll reported.

The poll was conducted between May 27 and May 30 with 1,000 likely voters and a margin for error of 3 percent, Rasmussen said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Banks Resilient Enough to Face Shock of Major Asset Repricing - Federal Reserve

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - US banks are resilient enough to continue providing credit to the economy in the event of a major asset repricing that might include a stock market crash, Federal Reserve Vice Chair for Supervision Randal Quarles said Wednesday.

"We're in the process of completing now our banks' stress test for this year, the seventh stress test we've done over the course of the last year, and all of those stress tests are showing a very resilient banking system," Quarles said in a discussion on the US economy and banks hosted by Politico. "So, even in the face of an asset shock, you would have a banking system that would be able to provide credit to the real economy."

The US economy grew by an annualized rate of 6.4 percent in the first quarter of 2021, after a 3.5 percent contraction for all of 2020 due to shutdowns and other disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

However, prices of almost all commodities have soared from the lows of the pandemic. The Federal Reserve's closely-watched gauge for inflation, the Personal Consumption Expenditure Index, increased 3.6 percent in April compared to the same month of 2020. The scenario has scared economists into believing that inflation growth in 2021 could be the highest in 35 years. The Federal Reserve acknowledges the price pressures arising from bottlenecks in US supply chains struggling to cope with demand in an economy reopening after months of pandemic-suppression. But the central bank's policy-making Federal Open Market Committee, led by Chairman Jerome Powell, insists that these inflationary pressures are "transient" and will fade as the economy makes a full recovery from the COVID-19.

Despite such assurances, US stock markets have been jittery of late on fears of inflation, with pundits warning of a possible crash, particularly in the tech sector, which posted last month its first monthly loss since November.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Venezuela 'Forgotten Crisis' Leaves 6 in 10 Facing Moderate-to-Severe Hunger - Aid Group

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) – Misery from Venezuela's economic crisis, largely overshadowed by the COVID-19 pandemic, has reached a new milestone, with 62 percent of the population living with hunger and refugees in neighboring countries now exceeding 5.6 million, the aid group World Vision said on Tuesday.

"We have reached the tipping point that we have feared for some time, for this forgotten crisis," World Vision regional leader for Latin America and the Caribbean, Joao Diniz, said in a press release. "Humanitarian needs only continue to rise exponentially and yet sadly, this year's regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan is less than 2 per cent funded."

The release said recent World Vision surveys indicate that an average of 62 percent of households in four states are living with moderate to severe hunger, while one in three Venezuelan children living in seven neighboring countries now going to bed hungry.

Meanwhile, an exodus of refugees since the beginning of the crisis in 2014 continues, with more than 5.6 million, or 20 percent of the population, having fled the country, World Vision said.

In recent weeks, Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro accepted a UN World Food Program (WFP) plan to distribute emergency supplies to 1.5 million children, according to media reports.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

IMF, WB, WHO, WTO Call for \$50Bln Investment to Accelerate End to COVID-19 Pandemic

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) – The International community should invest \$50 billion to accelerate the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) said in a joint statement on Tuesday.

“At an estimated \$50 billion, it will bring the pandemic to an end faster in the developing world, reduce infections and loss of lives, accelerate the economic recovery, and generate some \$9 trillion in additional global output by 2025,” the statement read.

The statement warned that there will be no broad-based recovery without an end to the health crisis and urged governments to act immediately to avoid further risks of continued waves and explosive outbreaks of COVID-19.

“To urgently get more shots in arms, doses need to be donated immediately to developing countries synchronized with national vaccine deployment plans, including through COVAX,” the statement, signed by leaders of four organizations, said.

They also called on trade cooperation to ensure free cross-border flow of goods to facilitate the movement of raw materials and finished vaccines.

National authorities have to act on the investment opportunity to boost supplies of vaccines, oxygen, tests and treatment, they added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

IMF, WB, WHO, WTO Call for \$50Bln Investment to Accelerate End to COVID-19 Pandemic

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) – The international community should invest \$50 billion to accelerate the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) said in a joint statement on Tuesday.

“At an estimated \$50 billion, it will bring the pandemic to an end faster in the developing world, reduce infections and loss of lives, accelerate the economic recovery, and generate some \$9 trillion in additional global output by 2025,” the statement read.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Supreme Court Affirms Right of Tribal Police to Detain, Search Non-Indians

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - The US Supreme Court held that tribal police operating on reservations have the authority to detain and search the vehicle and person of non-Indians traveling through tribal reservations on state or federal roads, a decision released by the court on Tuesday stated.

"A tribal police officer has authority to detain temporarily and to search non-Indian persons traveling on public rights-of-way running through a reservation for potential violations of state or federal law," the decision said.

The case, *United States v. Cooley*, came about after Officer James Saylor of the Crow Police Department approached a truck parked along a highway that runs through the Crow Reservation in the state of Montana. Saylor observed that the driver, Joshua Cooley, had guns, drugs and paraphernalia in his possession, and subsequently arrested him.

Cooley argued that a tribal police officer could not stop and detain a non-Indian suspect unless the officer first tries to determine whether the suspect is non-Indian and, in the course of doing so, finds an apparent violation of state or federal law. The Ninth Circuit concluded that Saylor had failed to make that initial determination here, and upheld Cooley's request to have the drug-related evidence suppressed.

The Supreme Court's decision vacates the Ninth Circuit's ruling, finding instead that Saylor had full authority to perform the actions that he did, and as such, the drug-related evidence in Cooley's case ought to be permissible. The Supreme Court remanded the case for further proceedings consistent with their opinion.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Canadian Economy Grows by 1.1% in March, Decline Expected in April – StatCan

TORONTO, June 1 (Sputnik) – The Canadian economy grew by 1.1 percent in March but is expected to decline for the first time in a year in April, the state statistics agency said on Tuesday.

"Real gross domestic product (GDP) grew 1.1% in March, following 0.4% growth in February," Statistics Canada said in its monthly economic report. "Preliminary information indicates an approximate 0.8% decline in real GDP in April, the first decline since April 2020."

The Canadian economy remains 1 percent below pre-pandemic levels, the agency noted.

The moderate rise in economic activity was spurred by retail trade and new construction.

Preliminary information, however, indicates that declines in retail trade, manufacturing and real estate, as a result of the third wave of the pandemic in the country, will impede the Canadian economy next month.

Canada expects its GDP and employment levels to reach pre-pandemic levels at some point during 2021, according to the federal budget delivered last month.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Raises Concerns over Chinese Military Presence at Cambodia Naval Base - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - The United States is alarmed by the presence of Chinese forces at Cambodia's naval base, the US State Department said in a release after a meeting between Deputy Secretary Wendy Sherman Prime Minister Hun Sen in Phnom Penh on Tuesday.

"Deputy Secretary Sherman expressed serious concerns about PRC's military presence and construction of facilities at Ream Naval Base on the Gulf of Thailand," the release said. "She sought clarification on the demolition of two U.S.-funded buildings at Ream without notification or explanation and observed that a PRC military base in Cambodia would undermine its sovereignty, threaten regional security, and negatively impact U.S.-Cambodia relations." Sherman called on the Cambodian authorities to maintain an independent and balanced foreign policy, the State Department added.

During her Cambodia visit Sherman also met with representatives from civil society and the leader of the Cambodia National Rescue Party Kem Sokha, according to the State Department.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US to Spend Over \$60Bln to Build Black Wealth and Narrow Racial Gap - White House

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration announced on Tuesday that a plan to spend more than \$60 billion to build wealth among the Black community to narrow the racial wealth gap in the US.

"The Biden-Harris Administration is announcing new steps to help narrow the racial wealth gap and reinvest in communities that have been left behind by failed policies," the White House said in a statement. "Specifically, the Administration is expanding access to two key wealth-creators – homeownership and small business ownership – in communities of color and disadvantaged communities."

It said \$31 billion will go into small business programs that increase access to capital for small businesses. This will also provide mentoring, networking and other forms of technical assistance to socially and economically disadvantaged businesses seeking to access federal contracts and participation in federal research and development investments.

Some \$15 billion will be allocated for new grants and technical assistance to support the planning, removal, or retrofitting of existing transportation infrastructure that creates a barrier to community connectivity, including barriers to mobility, access, or economic development.

A \$10 billion "Community Revitalization Fund" will be set up to support community-led civic infrastructure projects that create innovative shared amenities, generate new local economic activity, provide services, build community wealth, and strengthen social cohesion.

Another \$5 billion will be invested through a so-called Unlocking Possibilities Program that reduces needless barriers to producing affordable housing and expands housing choices for people with low or moderate incomes.

The homeownership program will be twinned with a "Neighborhood Homes Tax Credit" to attract private investment in the development and rehabilitation of affordable homes for low- and moderate-income homebuyers and homeowners.

The measures were announced on the 100th anniversary of the Tulsa Race Massacre, when mobs of white residents, many of them deputized and given weapons by city officials, attacked Black residents and burned businesses of the Greenwood District in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The thriving Black community, known as the "Black Wall Street," was particularly targeted in the attack that killed an estimated 300 people from the community and left another 10,000 destitute and homeless.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Moderna Eyeing Full US FDA Approval For COVID-19 Vaccine

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) – US pharmaceutical giant Moderna said on Tuesday it will start the process of applying for full US Federal Drug Administration (FDA) approval of its COVID-19 vaccine.

The vaccine is currently being administered to citizens under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) that it had obtained from the FDA in December last year.

"We are pleased to announce this important step in the US regulatory process for a Biologics License Application (BLA) of our COVID-19 vaccine," Moderna Chief Executive Officer Stephane Bancel said.

The company will continue cooperating with the FDA and submit data from the Phase 3 study, Bancel added.

The EUA license granted to Moderna's mRNA vaccine requires two months of data while the full approval requires at least six months. The approval process by the FDA may take several additional months.

US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data noted that more than 124 million doses of the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine have been administered in the country, the statement added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Losing Presidential Candidates in Syria to Cooperate With Gov't - Ambassador to Russia

MOSCOW, June 1 (Sputnik) - Losing candidates in the recent presidential election in Syria acknowledge the choice of the country's people and will cooperate with the Syrian government, Ambassador to Russia Riyad Haddad said on Tuesday.

"There is no doubt that they will take part in the Syrian government's program. Because the program of the government is for the benefit of the people of Syria," Haddad said at an online press conference at the Rossiya Segodnya International News Agency, adding that both candidates "fully agree with the choice of the people of Syria and respect their will."

Syria held its second presidential election since the onset of the ongoing civil war in late May, with incumbent Bashar al-Assad running against two challengers, former minister of state for

parliamentary affairs, Abdullah Salloum Abdullah, and the head of the opposition National Democratic Front, Mahmoud Ahmad Marei.

Assad, who has been in charge of Syria since 2000, secured 95.1 percent of the vote, while Marei and Abdullah got 3.3 and 1.5 percent, respectively.