

06/10/21 Thursday

**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.**

Fujimori Seeks to Get 200,000 Votes Annulled As Castillo Remains Ahead in Peru's Presidential Race

by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

As fewer and fewer votes remain to be counted in Peru's presidential election, Fuerza Popular candidate Keiko Fujimori is looking to undermine her rival Pedro Castillo's razor-thin lead by disqualifying votes already counted. If she doesn't take office, Fujimori faces likely prison time for corruption charges.

Late Wednesday evening, Fujimori appealed to Peru's National Electoral Tribunal (JNE) to annul the results of 802 polling stations, which could lead to some 200,000 votes being discarded. At [a press conference](#), she also said she asked for another 300,000 to be reviewed, so "half a million votes are in play."

"There's clear evidence of systematic intent on the part of Free Peru to subvert the popular will," Fujimori said.

Miguel Torres, Fujimori's legal counsel, [told the Financial Times](#) that the candidate is "not going to throw in the towel" and "will fight until the final vote."

"Many Peruvians feel that their votes are being stolen, and we can't permit that," he said.

Castillo, the candidate from the left-wing Peru Libre party, is ahead of Fujimori by just 71,500 votes, [according to Kawsachun News](#). While more than 99% of votes have been counted, the final ballots could take days to trickle in, coming from a mixture of expatriates overseas and rural inland locations.

While Fujimori had an early lead in the Sunday vote tally, by Monday, Castillo had pulled ahead and Fujimori [began alleging fraud](#) by Peru Libre. However, she has yet to present evidence of her claims, and has called on her supporters to furnish proof, while international observers like the Organization of American States and the Observer Mission of the Inter-American Union of Electoral Organizations (UNIORE) have not logged any cases of fraud, either.

In the past, the OAS has been [quick to allege](#) inconsistencies when leftist candidates are winning ballot counts, such as in Bolivia in 2019, when their accusations - later proven to be false - helped spark a coup d'etat that forced democratically elected President Evo Morales from office.

However, Fujimori has said she will respect the conclusion reached by the JNE and National Official of Electoral Processes (ONPE) when they reach it. An ONPE official told Agence France-Presse on Thursday that the final counting could take a week.

Castillo Calls for 'Peace, Tranquility, Unity'

Despite Fujimori's moves, Castillo has continued to appeal for calm from his supporters, urging them to let the election authorities do their work.

"Dear brothers and sisters: I thank those who continue to resist in the streets. Let us not fall into provocations of those who want to see this country in chaos," Castillo tweeted on Wednesday

evening. “Therefore, we call for peace, tranquility and unity. Let us remain firm and joyful in this final struggle that belongs to all Peruvians.”

He previously called on the ONPE to “protect the vote,” after Fujimori began leveling fraud accusations.

Fujimori is the daughter of the right-wing dictator Alberto Fujimori, who ruled Peru from 1990 until 2000, and presided over a period of civil war against the Maoist Sendero Luminoso movement and the imposition of intense neoliberal privatizations that wrecked economic havoc on millions of poor Peruvians.

The elder Fujimori was imprisoned in 2007 and is serving a 25-year sentence on charges of corruption, violating people’s political rights, and crimes against humanity during his presidency. Keiko has said she [would pardon him](#) if she is elected, but if she isn’t, she could soon find herself in a cell alongside him: she is also accused of corrupt dealing and money laundering and has already spent 16 months in pretrial detention, which was [only suspended](#) so she could run her campaign.

Castillo couldn’t be [more different](#) from Fujimori. The son of illiterate peasants, he is an avowed socialist and a schoolteacher and union leader. He has pledged to increase access to education and other public services for the country’s impoverished rural communities and to renegotiate deals with foreign companies that have mining and other resource extraction operations in Peru so that Peruvians get a bigger cut of the profits.

#### A Convenient Weapon

This isn’t the first time Fujimori has tried to win a close election by getting votes thrown out, either: in the 2016 election, which Fujimori narrowly lost to ex-Wall Street financier Pedro Pablo Kuczynski by a similarly small margin after days of waiting for the final count, she also appealed for some 42,000 votes to be annulled due to alleged irregularities at polling stations. That effort failed, and Kuczynski ultimately became president.

This past February, [she expressed regret](#) for not calling for a recount in 2016, when the difference was “less than the number of people who enter the National Stadium.”

Ironically, Fujimori herself appealed for faith in the electoral process just a month before the election.

“I want to reject the insinuations of Mr. Castillo of possible fraud, or the affirmations of Mr. Vladimir Cerron that there could be possible fraud here,” Fujimori told reporters in early May. “That’s irresponsible, and to me it seems like a pessimistic attitude that they’ve assumed after the debate in Chota. I think that what’s important here is that it’s fundamental to respect the organizations in charge of holding the elections [and] respect the will of the people, which will be expressed June 6. So let’s keep calm.”

**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.**

French National Charged With Espionage in Central African Republic After Paris Nixes Training Deal

by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

A French national arrested last month in the Central African Republic (CAR) has been charged with espionage just days after France cancelled a military training agreement with the country. On Wednesday, CAR Attorney General Eric Didier Tambo said that Juan Remy Quignolot, 55, was accused of having helped and trained rebel fighters since 2013. He has been charged with espionage, illegal possession of military and hunting weapons, criminal association, harming domestic state security and conspiracy, [according to Reuters](#).

[Al Jazeera reported](#) that Tambo didn't explicitly mention either a country or an organization for whom Quignolot allegedly worked. He also didn't say which group or groups Quignolot allegedly aided. Quignolot has denied the charges and the French government hasn't commented on them.

The CAR has been wracked by a series of civil wars since 2004, and since 2013, the Muslim Séléka rebel coalition that briefly seized power before being formally dissolved by leader Michel Djotodia after he lost control of it, has fought Antibalaka forces composed largely of Christian groups. In late 2013, as his support base collapsed, Djotodia appealed to France for help, which dispatched its seventh military mission to the country under the aegis of Operation Sangaris. This mission ended in 2016, when presidential elections were held, but continued spats of violence have kept a United Nations peacekeeping mission and a European Union military training detachment in the country, as well as 300 French military advisors. However, on Tuesday, Paris suspended this cooperation agreement.

"A number of commitments made by the Central African authorities vis-à-vis France have not been kept," the French Ministry of the [Armed Forces said](#), noting in particular that Bangui had not taken adequate measures to curb what it called "disinformation networks" that were "promoting well-identified interests who are used to targeting France's presence and actions," a thinly-veiled reference to Russia, to whom the CAR has turned in recent months for greater stability.

In December, the Russian [Foreign Ministry announced](#) that 300 military instructors had been dispatched to the CAR at the request of the government. In addition to the Russian experts, a total of 15,000 personnel - 11,000 of whom are soldiers - are also in the country as part of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic ([MINUSCA](#)) [peacekeeping force](#).

Also in December, [Facebook said](#) it had taken down two "government interference" campaigns in the CAR - "one French and one Russian" that were spreading disinformation "as a central part of their operations to mislead people about who they are and what they are doing, and that was the basis for our action."

Moscow has not commented on the accusations and Paris has not denied them, but did say it would [conduct an investigation](#).

Under the training deal, Paris supplied Bangui with \$12.8 million toward its budget; this has now been ended, and the roughly 300 French troops not in the country as part of an international mission will leave.

The EU's mission in CAR came under [scrutiny in February](#) by lawmakers in the European Parliament, who said that they could find no demonstrable improvement in the ability of the CAR government forces to fight after five years of EU training.

Diamonds are the CAR's primary export, with industrial diamonds constituting 57% of its exports. It also exports timber and gold. In 2017, France, the former colonial ruler from which CAR won independence in 1960, was still the country's largest export partner, accounting for 31.2% of all exports.

**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.**

Texas Governor Abbot Says Next Week He Will Announce Plans to Build More Border Wall  
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

The construction of the border wall was launched by former US President Donald Trump but ended by his successor, Joe Biden, in January. The Trump administration was able to construct 400 miles of the large steel wall structure despite lengthy court battles and opposition from Congress.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott held a televised "Border Security Summit" with a group of Texas judges, police chiefs, sheriffs and mayors on Thursday afternoon to lay out his plan to "secure the southern border and address the ongoing humanitarian crisis."

In addition to promising to resume construction on the halted border wall, the conservative governor said that state police would begin jailing people who crossed the border illegally. "The border crisis is no laughing matter," Abbott said. "It's not a tourism site for members of Congress to visit and then return to [Washington] DC and do nothing."

"I am right now invoking Article 4 of the Texas constitution to form the Governor's Task Force on Border and Homeland Security," the governor said. "It will help all of us to work on ways to stem the flow of unlawful immigration and to stem the flow of illegal contraband."

US Vice President Kamala Harris traveled to Guatemala and Mexico earlier this week to speak about immigration to the US, telling people in Guatemala City "[do not come](#)" to the US, arousing [fury from members](#) of her own Democratic Party. However, amid calls by Democrats in border states like Texas for her to visit the border itself and see the [migrant detention facilities](#) that have not just persisted but expanded since Trump left office, she has so far declined.

Many of the migrants who have entered or tried to enter the US at the southern border in recent years have come from Central America, where a trio of [US-backed governments](#) have allowed [poverty and violence](#) to proliferate, sending families and people from vulnerable groups fleeing the country northward.

Abbott has [already deployed](#) 1,000 Texas Department of Public Safety troopers and National Guard members to the state's border with Mexico to address what he called a "crisis" of fentanyl, a powerful opioid 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine, being smuggled into the US.

However, last month the US Army Corps of Engineers announced it was [resuming some](#) of the work it had been doing at the border prior to Biden's halting of wall construction, but would not be working on the wall itself. Instead, the engineers will be constructing a 13.4-mile-long levee along the Rio Grande left unfinished by the pause, because previous excavation along the route had left area communities vulnerable to flooding by the river.

[According to US](#) Customs and Border Protection, in May officers “encountered” or apprehended 180,034 migrants, a slight rise over April, but with significantly fewer children among them. The CBP said it expelled 112,302 single adults and families in May in keeping with a US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention order aimed at preventing cross-border transmission of COVID-19.

**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.**

Report Reveals How Israel Targeted Gaza’s Fragile Economy During Bombing Campaign  
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Unemployment in Gaza was already more than 50%, but that is likely to get even worse. According to a new report, Israel’s bombing of the Gaza Strip last month didn’t just target alleged members of Hamas, it also targeted the territory’s already-fragile economy. When the Israeli Defense Forces bombed and shelled Gaza from May 10 to May 21, they launched more than 1,500 projectiles and destroyed more than 2,000 homes, damaging another 17,000, [according to Gaza officials](#). The bombing killed more than 250 people, including 67 children.

However, they also destroyed commercial buildings like shops, farms, restaurants, and factories. According to a Wednesday report published by [Electronic Intifada](#), Israeli bombing destroyed more than 500 enterprises, including 50 factories.

Muhammad Abu Jayyab, a Gaza-based economist, estimated that economic losses from the 11-day bombing campaign amounted to \$350 million.

An industrial area established in 1996 by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the European Union was targeted repeatedly during the strikes, having never been previously attacked. Jaoudat estimated losses in the industrial estate alone were \$20-25 million. The site employed 1,500 people.

“Once we learned that the industrial area was being bombed, we called the civil defense to fight the fires. When they arrived, they were targeted, too. Shells were falling right where they worked, which led to more fires and even more damage,” Bajess Jaoudat of the Palestinian Industrial Estate and Free Zone Authority told Electronic Intifada.

Some other institutions hit by bombing included [more than 20 media](#) offices, [including al-Jalaa tower](#), which housed the offices of several international news agencies, including Al Jazeera and the Associated Press. Israel said it bombed the building because it was supposedly being used by Hamas.

Before the war, unemployment was already more than 50% and at times reached [more than 80%](#) in Gaza, which has been almost totally cut off from the world since 2006 by an Israeli and Egyptian cordon. More than 2 million people live in Gaza, half of whom are children. Many goods are not allowed to enter or leave, even those used for construction, and food and [fuel are rationed](#) by Israeli authorities, only allowing a few hours of electricity each day.

“The bombing of commercial areas is aimed solely at bringing the people in Gaza to their knees and to continue the siege,” said Adib Zineldeen, a shop owner in Al-Rimal district, which was

heavily targeted by Israeli bombing. "They targeted the wealthiest residential and commercial areas, which provide livelihoods to thousands of Palestinians in Gaza, who were already making the bare minimum."

In the wake of the bombing campaign, the US offered as much as [\\$75 million for development](#) and economic assistance to the Palestinians, but pledged that none of it would benefit Hamas, which rules the Gaza Strip and which Israel and the US regard as a terrorist organization. In response, Hamas said it would [not accept a cent](#) of international aid and would not allow the offer to divide the Palestinian people.

Solidarity efforts by other Muslim nations, such as Qatar and Iran, have been welcomed. Even before the May campaign, Doha had [pledged \\$360 million](#) in aid to Gaza in January. However, last week, Qatari Assistant Minister Lolwah Al-Khater, a spokesperson for the foreign ministry, said Doha had pledged another \$500 million for rebuilding and repairing more than 45,000 damaged homes in Gaza, most of which remain unfixed from past bombing campaigns by the Israelis.

So far, Israel has not allowed any of this aid to enter Gaza, and [Hamas has pledged](#) that if the aid isn't released by the end of the week, it will resume rocket attacks on Israel.

During the 11-day war, Hamas fired more than 4,300 rockets into Israel, most of which were intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome air defense system. However, 13 Israelis, two of whom were children, were killed by the bombardment and more than 200 were injured.

Hamas called the operation "Sword of Jerusalem," having [fired them in response](#) to a number of events targeting Palestinians in Jerusalem, including the [imminent eviction](#) of several Palestinian families from the neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah after Israeli settlers won a court case, and Israeli police [storming Al-Aqsa Mosque](#) during prayers on the last Friday of Ramadan, injuring more than 300 worshippers and 17 police officers.

**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.**

State Dept: US Expects Sullivan to Return to Moscow in Coming Weeks  
by [Evan Craighead](#)

It was recently reported that John Sullivan, US Ambassador to Russia, met with members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last month and warned lawmakers that US President Joe Biden may be making the same mistake as his predecessors when it comes to US-Russia diplomacy.

The US Department of State confirmed on Thursday that Ambassador Sullivan intends to return to Moscow, Russia, in the coming weeks.

"Ambassador Sullivan has been deeply engaged in the preparations for the upcoming meeting between President [Joe] Biden and [Russian] President [Vladimir] Putin," State Department spokesperson Ned Price said. "We have [an] expectation that he will return to Moscow in the coming weeks."

No concrete date was provided for Sullivan's trip. Putin and Biden [are slated](#) to meet on June 16, at the Villa La Grange in Geneva, Switzerland.

Sullivan has remained in the US [since late April](#), after it was recommended that he leave Russia and return to Washington for consultations.

The ambassador's return to the US came amid the tit-for-tat expulsion of ambassadors in both the US and Russia.

"It is obvious that the extremely tense situation currently implies an objective need for the ambassadors of both our countries to be in their capitals to analyze the situation and hold consultations," the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement issued after the US expelled 10 Russian diplomats.

At the time, the US had also announced sweeping sanctions against 32 Russian entities and individuals, alleging that they were behind a series of cyber attacks in the US.

During his time back in the US, Sullivan has reportedly briefed members of Congress on diplomatic efforts with Russia.

According to sources that spoke with CNN, Sullivan testified to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that Biden should tread lightly during his upcoming summit with Putin, as he believes the Russian president "has not really changed his stripes."

He also reportedly advocated for more in-person engagements between US and Russian officials, warning that actions such as sanctions were unlikely to work.

The State Department spokesperson has claimed that the reporting of Sullivan's testimony during a "classified hearing" is "wildly off base."

"As we engage Russia in ways that advance American interests, we remain clear eyed about the challenges that Russia poses and will work to hold Russia to account for its reckless and adversarial actions," Price 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 Attorney General Pledges to Probe 'Astonishing' Leak of Wealthy Americans' IRS Data by [Evan Craighead](#)

Earlier this week, ProPublica published a trove of tax documents from the US Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The outlet's cache included income tax information on wealthy, US-based businessmen like Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, ex-New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg and Elon Musk, founder of SpaceX and CEO of Tesla Inc.

US Attorney General Merrick Garland on Wednesday pledged to launch an investigation to determine who, or what entity, was behind the "astonishing" [IRS data leak](#) that exposed how little US billionaires contribute in income tax.

"Senator, I take this as seriously as you do. I very well remember what President [Richard] Nixon did in the Watergate period — the creation of enemies lists and the punishment of people through reviewing their tax returns," Garland told Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) and other members of the US Senate Committee on Appropriations. "This is an extremely serious matter." "This was on my list of things to raise after I finished preparing for this hearing, and I promise you will be at the top of my list," the US AG added, noting Americans are entitled "to great privacy with respect to their tax returns."

From 2014 to 2018, Bezos paid some \$973 million in taxes, despite his wealth growing by \$99 billion, according to the report. ProPublica's wealth growth estimates were obtained from Forbes.

During the same four-year period, [Bloomberg paid](#) some \$292 million in taxes, despite his wealth growing by \$22.5 billion; Berkshire Hathaway Inc. investor Warren Buffett paid some \$23.7 million in taxes, despite his wealth growing by \$24.3 billion; and Musk paid some \$455 million in taxes, despite his wealth growing by \$13.9 billion.

While the US has introduced its highest income tax rate - 37% for households earning more than \$628,300 - the leaked IRS data shows that uber-rich Americans are sometimes able to skirt paying federal income tax.

ProPublica has claimed it does not know the exact source of the IRS leak, nor did it solicit it. Garland's vow to federally probe the matter comes shortly after the US Department of Justice announced its intent to change its "longstanding practice" of seizing records from reporters during leak investigations.

"The department strongly values a free press, protecting First Amendment values, and is committed to taking all appropriate steps to ensure the independence of journalists," said DoJ spokesperson Anthony Coley.

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki has said that US President Joe Biden's policy direction to the DoJ does not support "the issuing of subpoenas for the records of reporters in leak investigations."

**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.**

'He Was a Disruptor': Caitlyn Jenner Says She's Looking to Emulate Trump in California Gov Race

by [Evan Craighead](#)

Democratic California Governor Gavin Newsom is facing a likely recall election after more than 1.6 million Californians signed a petition first launched back in February. California counties now have until June 22 to verify the signatures.

As the signature verification deadline approaches, retired Olympic gold medal-winning decathlete Caitlyn Jenner, a Republican, has launched efforts to throw her hat into the gubernatorial recall election.

"A lot of Republicans in this country believe that [former US President] Donald Trump won the election and not [now-US President] Joe Biden. Are you one of those people?" asked "The View" co-host Joy Behar.

Jenner shot back that she was "not going to get into that" because the "election is over with." "Trump did do some good things," the retired Olympian went on to assert. "What I liked about liked about Donald Trump is he was a disruptor."

"He was a disruptor when he was president. I want to do the same thing. I want to go in and be a thoughtful disruptor," Jenner said.

Behar scoffed at her remarks.

Sunny Hostin, another co-host and a former federal prosecutor, pressed Jenner on her voting record, emphasizing that the 71-year-old has a spotty voting record.

"My question to you is why should California voters vote for you when my understanding is, in the last 20 years, you did not vote in 2/3 of elections," Hostin questioned.

Jenner replied that she is simply "the best person for the job" due to her "common sense."

"I also attract a lot of good people. I would also do everything for the people of the state," she concluded.

Other Republican candidates seeking to replace the Democratic governor include pro-choice, moderate Republican Kevin Faulconer and businessman John Cox, who lost to Newsom in 2018.

**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 Government Prioritizing Palestinian Hamas as Target for Sanctions, Yellen Says  
by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

Earlier, House Democrats had rejected an effort by Republican lawmakers to weigh legislation that would effectively apply sanctions against Hamas after tensions escalated between the militant group and Israeli officials in May.

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen declared on Thursday that the Biden administration would be prioritizing the Palestinian Hamas group as a target for looming sanctions.

Yellen's remarks were made during a hearing before the House Appropriations subcommittee and comes amid a push by the administration to combat terrorism financing and money laundering abroad.

"Hamas has been designated as a target of the US government for counterterrorism sanction programs and we prioritize targeting Hamas and their supporters," Yellen told congressional lawmakers. "We have targeted a large number of Hamas-affiliated individuals and entities around the globe and that includes a host of charities around the world that have served as critical fundraising mechanisms."

"We also work closely with jurisdictions that are vulnerable to Hamas. We work with them to improve their anti-money laundering and countering financing of terrorism frameworks," the official added.

The commentary comes just a few weeks after Democrats within the US House of Representatives blocked a GOP effort that would have raised the possibility of implementing sanctions against the Hamas group during the May [rocket exchanges](#).

The [bill](#), dubbed the International Terrorism Support Prevention Act, had been reintroduced into the chamber by Rep. Brian Mast (R-FL) and would have enacted sanctions against any foreign entities that fund Hamas. The measure had initially been introduced in 2019 and unanimously passed, however, it was not taken up for a vote in the US Senate.

Over the last several weeks, the Biden administration has faced intense scrutiny from lawmakers over its response to the [latest escalation](#) in tensions between Israeli and Hamas

officials, including from US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), among other prominent Democrats.

**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.**

Highly Contagious Delta COVID-19 Variant 'Poised to Take Hold' of Europe, WHO Official Says by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

The Delta COVID-19 variant, otherwise known as B.1.617.2, was first detected in India and has recently been responsible for the surge in novel coronavirus cases across parts of the United Kingdom. To date, over 90% of COVID-19 cases stem from the Delta variant.

As much of the UK is undergoing a spike in infections, health officials have warned that the Delta variant of SARS-CoV-2, the deadly virus that causes COVID-19, is more than likely to "take hold" of the nation.

Hans Henri P. Kluge, the regional director of the World Health Organization's Europe division, remarked during a Thursday conference that the health body was growing concerned with the Delta variant's ability to spread quickly.

"The new Delta variant of concern, which shows increased transmissibility and some immune escape, is poised to take hold in the region, while many among vulnerable populations above the age of 60 remain unprotected," Kluge told reporters during [the event](#), highlighting that research has proven B.1.617.2 is able to infect individuals who are not fully vaccinated.

In fact, a [study](#) released by the UK's Public Health England determined that the Pfizer-BioNTech and the AstraZeneca vaccines were only 33% effective against symptomatic Delta cases after one dose.

However, researchers also found that individuals who had received both doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech and AstraZeneca vaccines were 88% and 60% effective, respectively.

Although Kluge steered clear of warning the public against traveling, he did take the opportunity to urge individuals to act "responsibly, apply common sense and do not jeopardize hard earned gains."

"Over the course of last summer, [COVID-19] cases gradually rose in younger age groups and then moved into older age groups, contributing to a devastating resurgence, lockdowns and loss of life in the autumn and winter of 2020," he said. "Let's not make that mistake again."

Kluge later acknowledged that the British public must continue to adhere to preventative COVID-19 measures, as well as subjecting oneself to being vaccinated as such options are "the way out of the pandemic."

"Although we have come far, we have not come far enough," he added. "Vaccination coverage is far from sufficient to protect the region from resurgence."

Latest figures indicate that nearly 41 million people in the UK have received at least one vaccine dose, with more than 28 million being fully vaccinated. Authorities are hoping to vaccinate an additional 21 million people by the end of July, [according](#) to the BBC.

Kluge's remarks came as UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock admitted on Thursday that the Delta variant presently makes up 91% of new COVID-19 cases, just one day after government figures revealed that the UK had recorded its highest daily case spike since late February.

UK's Alpha COVID-19 Variant Accounts for Majority of US Cases

Although the Alpha COVID-19 variant initially emerged in the UK as one of the more "[efficiently transmitted](#)" strains, it has since moved on to the US and other nations around the world.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) revealed in a [study](#) published on Thursday that the Alpha variant, also known as the B.1.1.7, made up roughly 66% of the US' COVID-19 infections in April. When the variant first emerged in the US in late December, it had only made up about 0.2% of the nation's cases.

A [recent study](#) has suggested that the Alpha variant is able to spread so quickly because it disables the body's immune defenses by attacking interferons, a group of proteins that are released in the body in the presence of a virus.

The CDC also projected that the variant made up about 72.4% of cases between April 25 and May 8 in states such as Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.

**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.**

Soaring Biden - Cartoon

Under the Trump administration, global approval of the US fell to one of its more historic lows largely due to former US President Donald Trump's brash decisions and blunt commentary. However, under the new commander-in-chief, there appears to be a shift on the world stage.

A new [global survey](#) by the Pew Research Center revealed on Thursday that trust in the Land of the Free has rebounded, and is currently on the up-and-up with US President Joe Biden at the helm.

Comparing survey results collected from 2020 and 2021, researchers found confidence in the US spiked by a median of 75%, as respondents believed the Biden White House would "do the right thing regarding world affairs." Another 62% indicated they now have a favorable view of the US, compared to a slim 34% who had a positive opinion during the Trump years.

"The election of Joe Biden as president has led to a dramatic shift in America's international image," Pew researchers wrote. "Throughout Donald Trump's presidency, publics around the world held the United States in low regard, with most opposed to his foreign policies."

Researchers surveyed individuals from over 10 countries, including Greece, Italy, Sweden, France, South Korea, Spain and the UK.

**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 Capitol Police Add Labrador Retriever to Ranks as Full-Time Emotional Support Animal

by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

In the wake of the January 6 riot and the subsequent April car ramming against the security barriers at the US Capitol, officers with the US Capitol Police have experienced a variety of serious setbacks, with many suffering from heightened stressors and associated emotional issues.

The US Capitol Police recently announced that a two-year-old Labrador retriever named Lila is expected to be joining the department in a few weeks' time as its very first full-time emotional support animal.

Lila's duties will include providing companionship and easing emerging day-to-day stresses. She will not officially be taking on the new role until July 5, according to the Wednesday release issued by the agency.

At present, it remains unclear which branch Lila will begin her first assignment, or whether she will be assigned to only one handler within the department.

The mid-week announcement comes more than five months after thousands of Trump supporters stormed the US Capitol and overwhelmed law enforcement officials stationed at the federal building.

Video from the scene documented a bevy of violent clashes between rioters and Capitol Police officers, many of whom ended the day with a collection of bruises and injuries. In fact, after the clashes ceased and calm was restored at the building, more than 100 officers reported injuries to their superiors.

However, estimates suggest that the figure could be much higher as many officers opted to not report their injuries.

Sources [recently relayed](#) to CBS News that at least 10 Capitol Police officers were still inactive as of Thursday due to the injuries they received during the riot, and that another seven officials with the Metropolitan Police Department in the nation's capital were listed as "less than full duty status."

The Capitol Police force took a second hit in April after a 25-year-old Indiana resident [rammed](#) his vehicle into two police officers at an access point near the US Capitol. The incident killed one officer and seriously wounded the other.

The pair of events have largely been [blamed](#) for the reduced on-the-job morale, as well as for officers experiencing post-traumatic stress, depression and anxiety, among other mental health conditions. Officers have also grown increasingly frustrated over a lack of communication between authorities. Earlier, Gus Papathanasiou, the chairman of the Capitol Police Labor Committee, noted that [over 70 officers](#) had left the Capitol Police force since the riot took place.

**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 State Lawmakers' Proposals to Regulate Fracking 'Start,' Fall Short - Environment Group

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - Democrat lawmakers in the Pennsylvania state legislature recently introduced new measures to tighten restrictions on fracking, however, they will fall short of protecting the environment and people, Better Path Coalition spokesperson Karen Feridun told Sputnik.

The proposed legislation would increase the distance gas wells must be from residential homes, schools, and hospitals in addition to requiring full disclosure of all chemicals used in fracking and labeling trucks carrying fracking waste.

"The legislation is a start, not a finish, to the action the state must take on fracking," Feridun said. "Neither Pennsylvanians nor the planet will be protected until fracking is banned."

State Republican lawmakers, and Republicans at the US Capitol, have argued that a ban on fracking in the United States would only destroy jobs for working-class families and jeopardize US national security.

Feridun said Republican lawmakers for years have been making the same "baseless" arguments in favor of shale gas development.

"The last thing on their minds is the best interest of anyone or anything other than themselves and their campaign coffers," Feridun said.

Republicans control the Pennsylvania state legislature and are expected to reject the measures. Green groups are vehemently opposed to fracking, which is the process of extracting fossil fuels, like oil and gas, from shale basins by injecting a mixture of water, salt, and thousands of toxic chemicals into the earth.

Environmentalists say the chemicals used are toxic pollutants that have been linked to cancer, mutations, and other adverse impacts on human health, and are destructive to aquatic life and ecosystems.

**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.**

Russia, Belarus to Hold 3 Military Exercises in Coming Months on Belarusian Soil - General

MOSCOW, June 10 (Sputnik) - Russia and Belarus plan to hold three joint military exercises in the coming four months on Belarusian territory, according to the commander of the Western Military District, Col. Gen. Alexander Zhuravlev.

"From June to September, a complex of special exercises for all types of support will be held, three of which will be conducted jointly with the armed forces of the Republic of Belarus," Zhuravlev said in an interview with the Krasnaya Zvezda newspaper.

The general went on to say that special attention will be paid to Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Protection Troops of the Russian Armed Forces.

The Russian-Belarusian exercises Zapad-2021 will be held on the territory of two states but mainly on Belarusian soil, from September 10 to 16 under the leadership of the chiefs of general staffs of the Armed Forces of both countries.

**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.**

#### **NASA Chief Says Directed Top Scientists to Explain UAP, Trusts Military Reports**

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - Newly appointed NASA chief Bill Nelson said that he directed the agency's top scientists to investigate the evidence of unidentified aerial phenomena (UAP) because they must be explained.

Speaking to Politico, Nelson said that he trusted the military reports of sightings when he was briefed on the matter when he served as a Senator.

"A couple of years ago, as a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I was briefed on what those Navy pilots saw, and I have talked to the Navy pilots. They are quite convinced. And these are realistic folks," Nelson said. "They tracked and then they saw it move so fast that they couldn't believe it. And then they went and tracked it again, locked their radar on it in a new position. So there's some phenomenon that we need to explain."

Over the past two years, the Pentagon has repeatedly confirmed that a handful of leaked videos showing unknown objects moving in unpredictable ways were in fact authentic.

Last week, The New York Times reported that an upcoming report to Congress about the UAP purports to have found no evidence that the approximately 120 sightings over the past 20 years are of extraterrestrial origin.

**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.**

#### **Russia Releases Japanese Vessel, 14 Crew Members Detained Over Illegal Fishing - Reports**

TOKYO, June 10 (Sputnik) -Russian has returned the Japanese trawler Eiho Maru and all 14 crew members on board back to the port of Wakkanai, media reported.

The fishing vessel and its crew had been in Russian custody since May 28 when they were apprehended in Russian economic waters in the Sea of Okhotsk in the Far East. Tokyo demanded the release of its fishermen without delay while Moscow expressed protest over illegal fishing in its exclusive economic zone.

According to the Kyodo News Agency, the trawler was returned on Friday after the payment of a 6 million ruble (\$83,000) fine.

**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.**

#### **Colombia AG's Office Says 84 Remain Missing After Nationwide Protests, Violence**

BUENOS AIRES, June 10 (Sputnik) - More than 80 people remain missing in Colombia after a wave of protests and violence swept the country earlier this year, the country's office of the Attorney General said.

"To date, 84 people of the 572 initial registrations [of missing persons] remain to be located," the office said in a release on Thursday.

The office announced an intensification of the Urgent Search Mechanism to establish the locations of the remainder of the missing people.

Colombia was gripped by protests against tax hikes since late April, which continued even after the authorities shelved the initiative. Labor and student organizations demand social and healthcare reforms, demilitarization of cities, and dissolution of Mobile Anti-Disturbance Squadron forces.

According to official information, more than 2,000 people were injured in clashes between protesters and law enforcement officers, and at least 57 were killed, including three police officers.

The roadblocks set up by protesters reportedly cost the Colombian economy 400 billion pesos (\$110 million) in daily losses, generating food and fuel shortages in several cities.

**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.**

Castillo Ahead by Slim Margin in Peru's Presidential Race With 100% Votes Processed

BUENOS AIRES, June 10 (Sputnik) - Peru's leftist presidential candidate Pedro Castillo is ahead by a slim margin with 100 percent of the ballots processed in the contentious second-round vote against Keiko Fujimori.

According to information provided by Peru's National Office of Electoral Processes, with and 99.408 percent of ballots counted, Castillo has garnered 50.179 percent of the vote against Fujimori's 49.821 percent.

As of 01:45 GMT, Castillo, a high school teacher with no political experience, has claimed 8,810,426 votes against the 8,747,652 that Fujimori, daughter of former President Alberto Fujimori, was able to secure.

The National Office is stopping short of declaring the winner until all votes have been accounted for, but both candidates have earlier declared victory, with Fujimori claiming election fraud.

Head of the election commission Peiro Corveto took to Twitter to assure that the election workers "carried out a safe, calm, clean and transparent election."

The leftist presidents of Argentina and Bolivia congratulated Castillo on Twitter, prompting the Peruvian Foreign Ministry to issue a note of protest to the countries' embassies for not awaiting the official announcement of the victor.

**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.**

#### Man Arrested in Italy in Connection With Deaths of 39 Migrants in Essex, UK - Police

MOSCOW, June 10 (Sputnik) - Police from UK's Essex announced the arrested of a 27-year-old man in connection with the 2019 death of 39 Vietnamese migrants.

The man was detained near Milan in northern Italy by local police in coordination with the UK National Crime Agency, the police service said.

The suspect was charged with conspiracy to assist unlawful immigration and assisting the commission of an offense and is set to appear before an Italian court.

Much of the smuggling gang involved in the operation have been arrested and given lengthy prison sentences, with leading conspirators Ronan Hughes and Gheorghe Nica given 20 and 27 years respectively.

On October 23, 2019, the bodies of 39 immigrants were found in a container truck coming to the UK from Belgium, having suffocated to death.

**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.**

#### Two Guests Onboard Royal Caribbean Cruise Ship Test Positive for COVID-19 - Company

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - Two guests onboard the Royal Caribbean cruise ship Celebrity Millennium tested positive for the novel coronavirus at the end of the trip, the company said in a press release.

"Today, two guests sharing a stateroom onboard Celebrity Millennium tested positive for COVID-19 while conducting the required end-of-cruise testing," the company said on Thursday.

"The individuals are asymptomatic and currently in isolation and being monitored by our medical team."

The company said it is conducting contact tracing and expediting testing for all individuals who were in close contact with the infected guests.

All the staff and guests aboard the Celebrity Millennium ship are fully vaccinated, the company said. All guests were required to show proof of vaccination as well as a negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours before the ship set sail from Sint Maarten on Saturday.

The company has health and safety measures in place on the ship that exceed guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the release added.

Last year, numerous cruise ship lines, including Royal Caribbean, Carnival, and Norwegian Cruise Lines, suspended operations after they suffered massive COVID-19 outbreaks aboard their cruise ships at the start of the pandemic.

6/11/2021 2:05:31 AM +03:00

#### Texas Governor Signs New Border Security Measures to Stem Flow of Illegal Immigration

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - Texas Governor Greg Abbott signed an order to boost border security in the state to stem the flow of illegal immigration and drug trafficking.

"I am right now invoking Article 4 of the Texas constitution to form the Governor's Task Force on Border and Homeland Security," Abbott said on Thursday. "It will help all of us to work on ways to stem the flow of unlawful immigration and to stem the flow of illegal contraband."

Abbott said the Task Force will meet with local law enforcement agencies and leaders every two weeks to find immediate solutions to address the border crisis.

Moreover, Abbott said he will sign a Texas budget bill that allocates \$1 billion for border security. He added that next week he will announce his plan to build more border wall along Texas' border with Mexico.

Abbott also signed an agreement with Arizona that empowers states to help each other in times of disaster and emergency. The Texas governor called on other states to join in on the agreement to help Texas solve the border crisis.

**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 Spoke to Turkish Counterpart About Regional Issues, Cooperation - Kirby

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin discussed bilateral cooperation and regional issues in a phone conversation with Turkey's defense minister, Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby said in a statement.

"Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin spoke by phone today with Turkish Minister of National Defense Hulusi Akar to discuss bilateral cooperation and regional issues," Kirby said in a readout. "The secretary reaffirmed the longstanding US-Turkey defense relationship and said he looked forward to seeing the Minister at the June 14 NATO Summit in Brussels."

**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.**

Venezuelan Foreign Minister Says Payments For COVAX Vaccines Blocked

BUENOS AIRES, June 10 (Sputnik) - Part of Venezuela's payments for the COVID-19 vaccinations to the COVAX scheme have been blocked, Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza said. "Venezuela has paid ALL of its commitments with the #COVAX mechanism to acquire vaccines. However, the Bank has arbitrarily 'blocked' the latest payments and they are under 'investigation.' A crime!" Arreaza wrote on Twitter late on Thursday.

The top diplomat attached a COVAX letter addressed to Hector Rosales, Caracas' Permanent Representative to the United Nations, that stated that four payments totaling \$4.6 million have been frozen. The letter also shows that altogether, Venezuela had made 12 payments for a total sum of over \$110 million.

Venezuela has been relying on a mix of international sources for its COVID-19 vaccination campaign, mainly relying on Russia's Sputnik V vaccine as well as China's Sinopharm and AstraZeneca supplied through the WHO-led COVAX scheme.

**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.**

#### Texas Governor Says Will Announce Plan Next Week to Build More Border Wall

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - Texas Governor Greg Abbott said during a press conference that next week he will announce a plan to build more of border wall along the state's border with Mexico.

"I will announce next week the plan for the state of Texas to begin building the border wall in the state of Texas," Abbott said on Thursday.

**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's Liberals Hold 4-Point Canada-Wide Lead, Voters Split on Election Call - Poll

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - Canada's governing Liberal Party led by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau holds a four-point advantage over its closest competitor, the Conservative Party, a Counsel Public Affairs poll revealed.

The poll unveiled on Thursday finds the Liberal Party in front with 31.9 percent support, with the Conservatives trailing by 4.3 percent at 27.6 percent. Canada's New Democratic Party (NDP) finds itself in third place at 17.9 percent followed by the Bloc Quebecois and the Greens with 7.7 and 6.9 percent support respectively.

The findings show that with the Bloc Quebecois making further headway in the province, especially in the traditionally Liberal leaning Montreal area, the Toronto and Vancouver metropolitan areas will likely be the determining factor in whether any of the parties can form a majority government.

Liberal Party holds a 10-point lead in Ontario and a commanding 20-point lead in Toronto, the poll found, however, both the Liberals and Conservatives have lost ground to the NDP, thereby setting the stage for three-way showdown.

The poll also found that Canadians are split in their desire to see an election before the end of 2021, despite there being strong speculation that an election will be triggered later in the year. According to the figures, 20 percent want to see an election call as soon as possible and 24 percent wish to go to the polls before the end of the year. Thirty-three percent would like to see a call to the polls in 2022, while 23 percent prefer 2023.

**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.**

#### Trump Wishes Biden Good Luck in Summit With Putin, Sends Russian Leader Warm Regards

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump in a statement wished his successor Joe Biden good luck in his upcoming summit with President Vladimir Putin and sent warm regards to the Russian leader.

"Good luck to Biden in dealing with President Putin - don't fall asleep during the meeting, and please give him my warmest regards!" Trump said on Thursday.

Putin and Biden will meet in Geneva on June 16 to discuss a wide range of bilateral issues, including global strategic stability and arms control.

**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.**

Harris to Meet With Texas Lawmakers Who Blocked Voter Suppression Bill - White House

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - US Vice President Kamala Harris next week will meet with Texas Democrat lawmakers who temporarily blocked a Republican bill that would have made it difficult for some residents in the state to vote, Harris' senior advisor Symone Sanders said in a statement.

"On Wednesday, June 16, Vice President Harris will meet at the White House with members of the Texas State Senate and Texas House of Representatives, who in May blocked passage of legislation that would have made it significantly harder for the people of Texas to vote," Sanders said on Thursday.

On May 30, Texas Democrats walked out of the state Capitol as the legislative session came to an end in order to deny Republicans a quorum to pass a bill known as SB7. Texas Governor Greg Abbott said he would call a special session to get the bill passed before the fall.

The bill would limit early voting hours, ban drive-through voting, further restrict voting by mail, ban public officials from sending unsolicited absentee ballot applications, make it easier to overturn an election based on fraud allegations, provide poll watchers more access where election activity is happening, among other things.

Former President Donald Trump's claims of voter fraud in the 2020 presidential election has pushed several Republican states to pass election reform legislation to prevent vote harvesting and other forms of potential abuse.

**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 State Lawmakers' Proposals to Regulate Fracking 'Start,' Fall Short - Environment Group

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - Democrat lawmakers in the Pennsylvania state legislature recently introduced new measures to tighten restrictions on fracking, however, they will fall short of protecting the environment and people, Better Path Coalition spokesperson Karen Feridun told Sputnik.

The proposed legislation would increase the distance gas wells must be from residential homes, schools, and hospitals in addition to requiring full disclosure of all chemicals used in fracking and labeling trucks carrying fracking waste.

"The legislation is a start, not a finish, to the action the state must take on fracking," Feridun said. "Neither Pennsylvanians nor the planet will be protected until fracking is banned."

State Republican lawmakers, and Republicans at the US Capitol, have argued that a ban on fracking in the United States would only destroy jobs for working-class families and jeopardize US national security.

Feridun said Republican lawmakers for years have been making the same "baseless" arguments in favor of shale gas development.

"The last thing on their minds is the best interest of anyone or anything other than themselves and their campaign coffers," Feridun said.

Republicans control the Pennsylvania state legislature and are expected to reject the measures. Green groups are vehemently opposed to fracking, which is the process of extracting fossil fuels, like oil and gas, from shale basins by injecting a mixture of water, salt, and thousands of toxic chemicals into the earth.

Environmentalists say the chemicals used are toxic pollutants that have been linked to cancer, mutations, and other adverse impacts on human health, and are destructive to aquatic life and ecosystems.

**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.**

**Castillo Ahead by Slim Margin in Peru's Presidential Race With 100% Votes Processed**

BUENOS AIRES, June 10 (Sputnik) - Peru's leftist presidential candidate Pedro Castillo is ahead by a slim margin with 100 percent of the ballots processed in the contentious second-round vote against Keiko Fujimori.

According to information provided by Peru's National Office of Electoral Processes, with and 99.295 percent of ballots counted, Castillo has garnered 50.196 percent of the vote against Fujimori's 49.804 percent.

As of 21:45 GMT, Castillo, a high school teacher with no political experience, has claimed 8,803,629 votes against the 8,734,854 that Fujimori, daughter of former President Alberto Fujimori, was able to secure.

The National Office is stopping short of declaring the winner until all votes have been accounted for, but both candidates have earlier declared victory, with Fujimori claiming election fraud.

**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.**

**Six People Indicted for US Capitol Riot Members of '3 Percenters' - Court Documents**

WASHINGTON, June 11 (Sputnik) - Six men being indicted for crimes connected to the January 6 US Capitol riot were allegedly members of the so-called "Three Percenters" group, unsealed court documents revealed.

The six men - Alan Hostetter, Russell Taylor, Erik Scott Warner, Felipe Antonio Martinez, Derek Kinnison, and Ronald Mele - are being charged with crimes including conspiracy to obstruction of an official proceeding, obstruction of law enforcement during civil disorder, and unlawful possession of a dangerous weapon on Capitol grounds among others.

"On January 1, 2021, in his introductory post to the DC Brigade, Kinnison attached a picture of himself, Martinez, and Warner with the following message: 'From left to right, I'm Derek aka midnightrider the short guy, Tony aka blue collar patriot, Erik aka silver surfer... We are 3 percent so cal[!]',... In the photo all three are flashing a hand signal that designates affiliation with a Three Percenter group," the court documents said on Thursday.

The document also cited other instances where the men referred to themselves as Three Percenters on various social media and messaging platforms.

The court documents describes the men as a "group of individuals, some of whom associate with militias identify as 'Three Percenters' based on their views that only 3 percent of Americans took up arms against the British during the American Revolution."

The court documents allege the six men shouted encouraging messages to others who were pushing back against US Capitol Police officers, eventually making it through the line of law enforcement to the Upper West Terrace.

**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.**

EU Parliament Issues 14-Day Ultimatum to Commission to Enforce Key Rule-of-Law Regulation

MOSCOW, June 10 (Sputnik) - The European Parliament on Thursday issued a two weeks ultimatum to the Commission to apply conditionality regulation designed to protect EU funds against potential misuse by EU governments or be sued, the legislature said in a release.

"MEPs instruct EP President Sassoli to call on the Commission, within two weeks at the latest, to 'fulfill its obligations' under the Rule of Law Conditionality Regulation." The EU said in a release.

Under this regulation which has been in force since January 1, 2021, the Commission, after establishing that there has been a breach, is expected to propose a conditionality mechanism that would be triggered against a given EU government and subsequently either cut or freeze payments to that member state from the EU budget.

EU lawmakers adopted the resolution imposing the ultimatum against the EU's executive branch with 506 votes in favor, 150 against, and 28 abstentions, the release said.

Although the Parliament set June 1 as the deadline for the Commission to apply this regulation, however, the European Council "requested the Commission to delay their application so member states could challenge it in the EU Court of Justice (Poland and Hungary did so on March 11, 2021), and until the Commission had developed specific application guidelines."

In response to this, the lawmakers conclude that the delay “constitutes a sufficient basis for taking legal actions under Article 265 of the TFEU [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union] against the Commission.”

Brussels has been grappling with Poland and Hungary, who have shown increasing discord with much of the rest of the bloc over diverging priorities, particularly in such matters as immigration and abortion.

**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 10 (Sputnik) -

#### BIDEN-JOHNSON TALKS

\* us President Joe Biden and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson issued a joint statement in which they reiterated their commitment to effective arms control with an aim to have a world without nuclear weapons.

\* Biden and Johnson have committed to a global minimum tax of at least 15 percent, a joint statement by the US and UK governments said in conjunction with Biden's visit to the United Kingdom.

\* The United States and the United Kingdom have confirmed their commitment to the 1998 Good Friday Peace Agreement in Northern Ireland, Biden and Johnson said.

#### US-RUSSIA RELATIONS

\* The United States expects US Ambassador to Russia John Sullivan to come back to Moscow in the coming weeks, State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said.

\* The Biden administration hopes President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin next week will agree to return their ambassadors to Moscow and Washington, CNN reported on Thursday citing three sources familiar with the matter.

#### NORD STREAM 2

\* Nord Stream 2 AG, the operator of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project, said on Thursday that all parts of the first leg of the pipeline have been connected.

\* The first line of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project will be prepared and tested for launch within the next several months, Nord Stream 2 AG said.

\* Russia does not understand US State Secretary Antony Blinken's statement when he said it is necessary to mitigate negative consequences from the implementation of the Nord Stream 2 project, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.

#### US ECONOMY

\* The US Consumer Price Index, a measure of inflation, grew by 5 percent over a one-year period in May for its largest increase in almost 13 years, the Labor Department said on Thursday.

\* The weekly filings for jobless claims in the United States fell by 2 percent last week as some 376,000 people sought unemployment benefits, the lowest number since the start of the coronavirus pandemic in mid-March 2020, the Labor Department said.

#### OPEC OIL MARKETS FORECAST

\* The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) maintained its forecast for the 2021 global oil demand unchanged and still expects it to total 96.58 million barrels per day.

\* OPEC said that its oil production increased by 390,000 barrels daily in May as the output cuts were curbed, but it still overcomplied with the deal by 25 percent, close to April's level.

\* OPEC upgraded its forecast for non-OPEC oil and condensate production in 2021 by 130,000 barrels daily and now expects it to total 63.73 million barrels per day.

#### UKRAINE DEVELOPMENTS

\* Russia's Permanent Representative to the OSCE Alexander Lukashevich refuted claims about Russian servicemen participating in the Donbas conflict, since this cannot be confirmed by anyone, including the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine.

\* NATO instructors, including those from Canada and the United States, have been training the Ukrainian military for years, and Kiev then applies this knowledge in Donbas, Lukashevich said in an interview with Sputnik.

\* The Special Monitoring Mission of the OSCE does not react to Kiev's violations of the agreements on de-escalating tensions in Donbas, and this fosters Kiev's militarist aspirations, Lukashevich 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.**

#### Wall Street's S&P500 at Record High as Investors Take US Inflation in Their Stride

NEW YORK, June 10 (Sputnik) - Wall Street's S&P500 hit record highs on Thursday as investors looked beyond a spike in US consumer prices for May on signs that the Federal Reserve's support for the economy and markets would continue.

The US Consumer Price Index, a key measure of inflation, grew by 5 percent over a one-year period in May for its largest increase in almost 13 years, the Labor Department reported. While the number was higher than the 4.7 percent inflation growth for May forecast by economists, investors were comforted by the assurance that the Federal Reserve was not prepared to withdraw yet its pandemic-related stimulus measures which have kept stock prices bubbling since last year.

The S&P 500, which groups the top 500 stocks on the New York Stock Exchange, hit a record high of 4,250 before closing at 4,239, up 20 points, or 0.5 percent on the day.

The Nasdaq Composite index, which includes high-flying tech stocks such as Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Microsoft, Netflix and Google, hit a five-week high of 14,031 before settling at 14,020, up 109 points, or 0.8 percent.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average, the broadest US equity barometer on the New York Stock Exchange, finished at 34,466, up 19 points or 0.1 percent.

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 pandemic. The Fed expects a 6.5 percent growth for all of this year.

The problem for the central bank though is inflation as prices of almost everything have soared from the lows of the pandemic. Some economists believe that inflation growth in 2021 could be the highest in 35 years.

**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.**

Native Americans Thank Biden for Canceling Keystone XL Pipeline - Statement

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The Cheyenne River Sioux tribe is grateful to President Joe Biden for revoking a permit for the \$8 billion Keystone XL pipeline that exerted pressure on the pipeline construction parent company TC Energy to officially terminate the project earlier this week, Chairman Harold Frazier said on Thursday.

"I would like to thank United States President Joseph Biden for understanding the damage to this planet projects like this would cause and canceling the permit needed to cross the medicine line with Canada," Frazier said in a statement.

Frazier also thanked all the demonstrators who participated in the protests to stop the pipeline project.

However, Frazier said much more work remains to be done to oppose other pipelines that threaten tribes' territories and the environment.

Rosebud Sioux Tribe President Rodney Bordeaux said in a separate statement that the members of the tribe are thrilled the project was canceled. Tribes were guaranteed protections under treaties and laws, and they are committed to see that they are upheld, he added.

Biden signed an executive order in January to rescind the Keystone XL construction permit granted in 2019 by former President Donald Trump.

Keystone is an oil pipeline system that moves Alberta crude oil from the Canadian town of Hardisty to refineries and tank farms in the US states of Illinois, Oklahoma and Texas. The first three phases of the system are currently operational, however, the construction of the fourth phase, better known as Keystone XL, was planned to transport oil to the US state of Nebraska.

**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.**

Police Killed Andrew Brown With Gunshot to Back of Head - N. Carolina State Autopsy Report

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - Elizabeth City police killed Andrew Brown Jr. with a gunshot to the back of the head, a newly-revealed autopsy report from the state of North Carolina revealed on Thursday.

"Based on scene finding, external exam and consultation with ECU, it is my opinion the manner and cause of death will be listed as Homicide; Penetrating Gunshot Wound of the Head," the report said.

Brown was shot and killed by police in April after attempting to flee from officers who were executing a warrant for his arrest. The officers said they shot Brown when he attempted to use his car as a deadly weapon while trying to evade capture.

The officers involved in the shooting were not charged and will remain on their jobs, although they will be disciplined and retrained, according to Pasquotank County Sheriff Tommy Wooten II. However, civil rights lawyer Ben Crump, who has taken up the case, believes justice is yet to be served.

"Andrew Brown Jr's official autopsy lists his death as homicide by a gunshot to the back of the head. Pasquotank County deputies executed Andrew and this report completely discredits DA Womble's false narrative," Crump said via Twitter.

**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 Keep Imposing Sanctions on Nord Stream 2 Participants - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The United States will continue to utilize sanctions against entities and individuals engaged in the construction of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline to reiterate its opposition to the Russian project despite low likelihood of stopping it, US State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters on Thursday.

"We will continue to take action as appropriate against entities and individuals engaged in sanctionable activity to demonstrate our continued opposition to this pipeline," Price said during a daily briefing.

Price cited US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken who recently admitted that there is "a low likelihood to prevent or to forestall physical construction using sanctions."

The spokesperson added that the goal nevertheless remains to ensure that Russia cannot use energy as "a coercive tool against Ukraine or anyone else in the region."

The Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which is 95 percent complete, is designed to transport natural gas across the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany. It has been met with opposition from the US, who views the project as threatening European energy independence and imposed multiple rounds of sanctions on companies and businessmen engaged in it. Russia insists that the Nord Stream 2 is a purely economic endeavor and vows to finish the construction in the nearest future.

In May, the Biden administration announced that it would waive sanctions on the pipeline's operator Nord Stream 2 AG, as well as its chief executive Matthias Warnig, as part of efforts to repair the damage done to US-Europe relations during the Donald Trump presidency.

Price said the US government did not want to arrive at the situation where physical construction of the pipeline was completed while also putting its relationship with its ally Germany on footing that was perhaps less stable or undermining that relationship in any way.

"We feel that other tools are more appropriate to engage our German allies including the tool of diplomacy and that tool we have been wielding ever since this administration took office," he 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.**

#### Lawsuits Seek US Data on Wuhan Institute as Possible Source of COVID-19 - Watchdog

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - Two lawsuits, one against the State Department and the other against the Director of National Intelligence, seek to uncover US information on the Wuhan Institute of Virology and the origins of the coronavirus, the conservative advocacy group Judicial Watch said on Thursday.

"The lawsuit against the Office of the Director of National Intelligence was filed after it failed to respond to a March 11, 2021, FOIA [Freedom of Information Act] request for all reports and records of communication dating back to June 1, 2017, regarding the Wuhan Institute of Virology and/or the origins of the SARS-CoV-2 virus," a Judicial Watch press release said. The second lawsuit against the State Department was filed after it failed to respond to a March 10, 2021, FOIA request that asked for "All cables/teletypes, emails, or other messages" from US diplomatic outposts in China that are related to the Wuhan research facility or the origins of the virus that causes COVID-19.

Last week, an earlier Judicial Watch lawsuit uncovered Department of Health and Human Services records showing the US government gave \$826,277 to the Wuhan institute from 2014 to 2019 for research on coronaviruses endemic in bats.

Judicial Watch said it filed the latest lawsuits because it does not trust the Biden administration to voluntarily disclose possible connections between the novel coronavirus and the Wuhan facility.

**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.**

#### Unknown Hackers Attack US Major Game Maker, Steal Source Code - Spokesperson

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - Unknown hackers intruded into the systems of major US-based game maker Electronic Arts (EA) and allegedly stole 780 gigabytes of data including game engine source code that powers FIFA, Battlefield and others, a company spokesperson said on Thursday.

"We are investigating a recent incident of intrusion into our network where a limited amount of game source code and related tools were stolen," the EA spokesperson said as quoted by CNN.

"No player data was accessed, and we have no reason to believe there is any risk to player privacy. Following the incident, we've already made security improvements and do not expect an impact on our games or our business."

The EA spokesperson said the breach was not a ransomware attack while the criminal investigation by law enforcement is still ongoing.

The intrusion took place on June 6 and resulted in a group of hackers getting "full capabilities of exploiting on all EA services," according to the report, including software development tools for FIFA 21 and server code for player matchmaking in FIFA 22.

Last week, the White House announced that President Joe Biden launched a rapid strategic review to address the mounting challenge of ransomware attacks. The most recent one targeted the meat-producing giant JBS USA in late May and led to the closure of its facilities across the country. The US administration believes some of the members belonging to the hacker groups reside in Russia.

**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 Expects Ambassador Sullivan to Return to Moscow in Coming Weeks - State Dept

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The United States expects US Ambassador to Russia John Sullivan to come back to Moscow in the coming weeks, State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said on Thursday.

"Ambassador Sullivan has been deeply engaged in the preparations for the upcoming meeting between President [Joe] Biden and [Russian] President [Vladimir] Putin," Price said. "We have [an] expectation that he will return to Moscow in the coming weeks."

Price pointed out that Sullivan came to the United States several weeks ago in advance of the leaders' summit and because he was expelled.

"He came here to consult with members of the new administration," Price said. "But also Ambassador Sullivan has not been back here in the United States for quite some time and had not seen his family for quite some time."

In March, Moscow invited Anatoly Antonov, Russia's ambassador to the United States for consultations. In late April, Sullivan in turn returned to the US. According to official statements, he went back home to meet with his family and members of the new administration.

On April 15, the US imposed new sanctions against Russia, including 32 individuals and organizations. The sanctions also forbid US financial institutions to buy Russian government bonds at their initial offering, starting June 14th. Washington further announced the expulsion of 10 Russian diplomats. The Russian foreign ministry said the US sanctions do not satisfy the interests of both countries' peoples.

In response, Russia declared ten American diplomats persona non grata, giving them until May 21 to leave the country. Moscow suggested Sullivan go to Washington for consultations.

**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 Government Halts Shipments of J&J COVID Vaccine Amid Surplus of Doses - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The US government has suspended shipments of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine in order to help clear existing surpluses, the Wall Street Journal reported on Thursday, citing state and federal health officials.

The stoppage, which is believed to be temporary, comes following news that the FDA extended the official shelf life of the J&J COVID vaccine from 3 to 4.5 months. Of the roughly 21 million J&J doses in the US, just over half have been administered – a lower percentage than the vaccine's Moderna and Pfizer counterparts – partly as a consequence of the US's decision to temporarily suspend use of the vaccine back in April in order to assess reported blood-clot risks. "It just hasn't been included in our weekly allocations, from the feds, which means it is not available to order," Keith Reed, Oklahoma's State Department of Health Deputy Commissioner, said.

Both state and federal health officials stated that they have been unable to order new doses since mid-May due to CDC restrictions on ordering. A J&J spokesperson did not reply to requests for comment on the US government's decision to halt distribution of the vaccine to 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 Suffered No Serious Damage or Casualties in Iraq Attacks - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - There was no serious damage or casualties reported in two attacks on the Balad air base and diplomatic facility at the Baghdad international airport in Iraq on Wednesday, State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said on Thursday.

"There was no serious damage to the facilities or casualties attributable to the attacks [on Wednesday], and an investigation is ongoing. A small number of personnel, which were treated and released for smoke inhalation. We are still assessing those attacks and we'll reserve comments until we have a fuller understanding of them," Price told reporters during a briefing.

**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 Keep Imposing Sanctions on Nord Stream 2 Participants - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The United States will continue to use sanctions against entities and individuals engaged in the construction of the Nord Stream 2 gas-exporting pipeline to reiterate its opposition to the Russian project, State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters on Thursday.

"We will continue to take action as appropriate against entities and individuals engaged in sanctionable activity to demonstrate our continued opposition to this pipeline," Price said during a daily briefing.

He added that the goal remains to ensure that Russia cannot use energy as "a coercive tool against Ukraine or anyone else in the region."

He vowed continued contacts with Germany, Ukraine and others on the matter and said that US opposition to the pipeline has been a feature in all recent consultations. Price added that US President Joe Biden will have an opportunity to meet with German Chancellor Angela Merkel during his trip to Europe and to discuss the entirety of the bilateral relationship.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said Nord Stream 2 is a purely economic project and any statements claiming otherwise do not correspond to reality.

**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.**

Wife of Mexican Drug Lord 'El Chapo Pleads Guilty to Drug Trafficking - US Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The 31-year-old wife of Mexican drug lord Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman pleaded guilty to drug trafficking and money laundering charges, the Justice Department said on Thursday.

"Emma Coronel Aispuro, 31, a dual U.S.-Mexican citizen, pleaded guilty to a three-count criminal information charging her with: 1) Conspiring to distribute five kilograms or more of cocaine, one kilogram or more of heroin, 500 grams or more of methamphetamine, and 1,000 kilograms or more of marijuana in the U.S., Mexico, and elsewhere... 2) conspiring with others to launder narcotics proceeds; and 3) violating the criminal penalties of the Kingpin Act by engaging in transactions and dealings in property of her husband," the department said in a press release.

Coronel Aispuro is scheduled to be sentenced by a federal judge on September 15, the release said.

Guzman is currently serving a life sentence at the ADX prison in the US state of Colorado.

Mexico extradited Guzmán to the United States in 2017 after he escaped twice from Mexican maximum security prisons following his initial capture in 1993.

6/10/2021 10:15:04 PM +03:00

Detectives Investigating Shooting in Florida Supermarket - Police

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - Detectives from Florida's Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office (PBSO) are investigating a shooting inside a Publix supermarket that left three individuals, including the shooter, dead, the PBSO stated on Thursday.

"Detectives are investigating a shooting that took place INSIDE Publix in [Royal Palm Beach]. Upon arrival deputies located three individuals deceased from gunshot wounds, one adult male, one adult female and one child. The shooter is one of the deceased. This was NOT an active shooter situation," the PBSO said in a tweet.

Detectives have been speaking to witnesses and reviewing surveillance footage of the incident as they attempt to figure out what led to the shooting, the Palm Beach Post reported.

They added that authorities have yet to describe the relationship of the three deceased, although PBSO spokeswoman Teri Barbera said it is possible that they knew one another.

**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 Prioritizing Hamas as Target for Sanctions - Treasury Chief Yellen

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The US government is prioritizing Hamas as a target for sanctions as it works to fight terrorism financing and money-laundering, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Thursday.

"Hamas has been designated as a target of the US government for counterterrorism sanction programs and we prioritize targeting Hamas and their supporters," Yellen told a Congressional hearing on the Treasury's budget request for 2022. "We have targeted a large number of Hamas-affiliated individuals and entities around the globe and that includes a host of charities around the world that have served as critical fundraising mechanisms. We also work closely with jurisdictions that are vulnerable to Hamas. We work with them to improve their anti-money laundering and countering financing of terrorism frameworks."

**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 Expects Ambassador Sullivan to Return to Moscow in Coming Weeks - State Dept

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The United States expects US Ambassador to Russia John Sullivan to come back to Moscow in the coming weeks, State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said on Thursday.

"Ambassador Sullivan has been deeply engaged in the preparations for the upcoming meeting between President [Joe] Biden and [Russian] President [Vladimir] Putin," Price said. "We have [an] expectation that he will return to Moscow in the coming weeks."

**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 Announces \$57Mln in New Humanitarian Aid for Central America, Mexico - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The United States has allocated \$57 million in new humanitarian aid for Central America and Mexico, US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Thursday.

"Senior Advisor to the President on Migration Amy Pope announced more than \$57 million in new humanitarian assistance at the June 10 Solidarity Event for Forcibly Displaced Persons and Host Communities in Central America and Mexico," Price said in a statement.

Price noted that the funding event was co-hosted by the governments of Spain, Guatemala and Costa Rica with the support of the UN Refugee Agency and the Organization of American States.

"Through our international organization partners, this assistance will help meet the immediate humanitarian needs of forcibly displaced persons and support access to protection in line with the national action plans of the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS) countries - Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and Panama," Price said.

The United States was represented at the event by a delegation of senior officials from the National Security Council staff and the Department of State, he said.

Price emphasized the need for international cooperation for safe and humane migration, adding that Washington is calling on others to join the response to support vulnerable people across Central America and Mexico.

**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 Budget Deficit Hits Record \$2.1Trln for First 8 Months of Fiscal Year - Treasury

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The US budget deficit stands at \$2.06 trillion in the first eight months of fiscal 2021, after growing by \$132 billion in May, the Treasury Department said in its monthly balance sheet reported on Thursday.

Outlays for October to May amounted to \$4.67 trillion while receipts totaled \$2.61 trillion, resulting in the \$2.06 trillion deficit, according to the balance sheet.

The US budget deficit in 2021 is almost on pace with 2020, reaching 66 percent of last year's level of \$3.13 trillion within eight months of the financial year.

The current deficit includes a \$900 billion COVID-19 bill passed under the Trump administration in November and an additional relief of \$1.9 trillion by the Biden administration in March.

According to The Wall Street Journal, the nearly \$2.1 trillion budget deficit represents a new record for the first eight months of a fiscal 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.**

#### UK COVID-19 Variant Accounts for Over 70% of Cases 4 Months After US Arrival - CDC

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The B.1.1.7 coronavirus variant from the United Kingdom that accounted for less than 1 percent of US infections at the beginning of the year, became the

dominant strain responsible for more an estimated 72 percent of infections in just over four months, a report published by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) said on Thursday. "The B.1.1.7 VOC represented an estimated 0.2 percent of US infections during the 2-week period ending January 2 and increased to 66.0 percent during the 2-week period ending April 24," the report said.

During the latter period, the P.1 variant from Brazil accounted for about 5 percent of US infections, the report said.

The April estimates were based on genetic testing of 25,000 samples from positive COVID-19 test specimens collected in 10 regions of the US.

However, a subsequent extrapolation of the April data using computer modeling yielded an estimate that the UK variant comprised 72.4 percent of US infections during the two week period ending May 8, the report 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.**

FBI Pushes for Greater FARA Use Against China's Influence - Director

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The Federal Bureau of Investigation advocates a more aggressive use of The Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) to counter China's influence in the United States, FBI Director Christopher Wray said on Thursday.

"Certainly FARA... is an extremely important tool that we in the FBI have been pushing for a while to be using more aggressively in particular against the Chinese threat," Wray said in a testimony to the House Committee on the Judiciary.

FARA is a law enacted in 1938 which imposes requirements for any individual or entity that becomes an "agent of a foreign principal" to disclose their affiliations, related activities and finances with penalties for violations.

The US previously employed the Foreign Missions Act, as opposed to FARA, to designate five Chinese media outlets as foreign missions last 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.**

Pfizer Vaccine Effective Against All Existing COVID-19 Variants - CEO

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - No COVID-19 variant has escaped the protection of Pfizer's vaccine, but the company continues to monitor and test it against emerging strains around the world, CEO Albert Bourla said on Thursday.

"We are also closely monitoring and addressing the emerging variants. We are testing our vaccines' response to newly-arising variants and coordinating with public health authorities

around the world on surveillance efforts... none of the existing variant strains has escaped the protection provided by our vaccine," Bourla said.

Bourla added, however, that Pfizer has developed a process to manufacture a new vaccine for the emerging strains within 100 days if need be.

In late May, the World Health Organization issued a new list of labels for so-called variants of concern, including the Delta variant, first identified in India, which now makes up more than 60% of new cases in the UK and more than 6% in the US.

The statement was made alongside President Joe Biden, who announced that Pfizer has agreed to partner with the US to donate half a billion vaccines to lower income countries around the world. After purchasing the vaccines from Pfizer, the US plans on delivering 200 million doses by the end of 2021 and another 300 million in the first half of 2022 to 92 low and middle-income countries.

**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 Says G7 to Announce on Friday Further Steps on Fighting COVID-19 Pandemic**

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The G7 member states will announce later this week a collective initiative to further help combat the novel coronavirus pandemic, US President Joe Biden said on Thursday.

"This US contribution is the foundation for additional coordinated efforts to help vaccinate the world... Tomorrow the G7 nations will be announcing the full scope of our commitment," Biden said during a press conference in the United Kingdom.

**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, Johnson Reaffirm US-UK Commitment to Northern Ireland Peace Accord – Statement**

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The United States and the United Kingdom have confirmed their commitment to the 1998 Good Friday Peace Agreement in Northern Ireland, US President Joe Biden and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Thursday.

"Today, the United Kingdom and the United States reaffirm their commitment to working closely with all parties to the Agreement to protect its delicate balance and realize its vision for reconciliation, consent, equality, respect for rights, and parity of esteem," the leaders said in a joint statement.

The agreement has looked increasingly fragile as violence and protests have spread around Northern Ireland following a European Union move to limit the export of coronavirus vaccines into Northern Ireland in case they were then re-exported to the United Kingdom.

"It took a deep partnership between the UK, Ireland, and the US to support the people of Northern Ireland in bringing the Troubles to an end and it will take a continued and ongoing

partnership to advance and safeguard Northern Ireland's stability and prosperity into the future," the statement said.

Biden and Johnson said they remained fully committed to the 1998 agreement that established new democratic institutions in Northern Ireland, provided for consultation and cooperation across all of Ireland and created structures for British-Irish engagement.

**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 Announces \$57Mln in New Humanitarian Aid for Central America, Mexico - State Dept.  
WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The United States has allocated \$57 million in new humanitarian aid for Central America and Mexico, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Thursday.

"Senior Advisor to the President on Migration Amy Pope announced more than \$57 million in new humanitarian assistance at the June 10 Solidarity Event for Forcibly Displaced Persons and Host Communities in Central America and Mexico," Price 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.**

Cyberthreat to US Unprecedented, 'Will Get Much Worse' - FBI Chief

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - FBI Director Christopher Wray on Thursday warned that the current spate of cyberattacks on the United States is already unprecedented and will get much worse.

"We think the cyberthreat is increasing almost exponentially... The scale of this is something I don't think this country has ever seen anything quite like it. And it is going to get much worse," Wray said in testimony to the House Committee on the Judiciary.

He added that the FBI probes a hundred different ransomware variants with each having "dozens, if not hundreds of victims."

"The total volume of amounts paid in ransomware I think has tripled over the last year," Wray told lawmakers. "And that is just ransomware... We obviously investigate scores and scores and scores of nation-state intrusions and other kinds of cybercriminal attacks."

He accused Russia of pursuing a state-sponsored cybercampaign against the US and refused to discuss in an open setting "the degree of nexus" between the Russian government and cybercriminals allegedly operating from the country, including Darkside, a group blamed for a ransomware attack that briefly shut down a key American fuel pipeline.

Wray claimed that "perhaps not coincidentally" Darkside specifically targets English-speaking victims.

**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, UK Reaffirm Commitment to Effective Arms Control, World Without Nukes - Statement

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson issued a joint statement after meeting on Thursday in which they reiterated their commitment to effective arms control with an aim to have a world without nuclear weapons. "As we maintain close alignment on our nuclear deterrence and modernization programs, we reaffirm our commitment to effective arms control and nuclear security, and to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons," the statement said. "We will draw on our extensive diplomatic, defense, security, civil and scientific cooperation to ensure Space is a safe and secure environment for all."

**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 Envoy to UN Calls for Open Meeting on Humanitarian Situation in Ethiopia's Tigray

UNITED NATIONS, June 10 (Sputnik) - US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield on Thursday called on the UN Security Council to convene an open meeting to discuss the dire humanitarian situation in Ethiopia's Tigray region.

"Despite the best efforts of many members of the Security Council - and sadly due to the impediments placed in front of us by some Council members - the Council still has not yet held a single - a single - public meeting," Thomas-Greenfield said at a US-UN high-level roundtable on Tigray. "It's time for the Security Council to have a public meeting on this issue."

Thomas-Greenfield said the crisis in Ethiopia is the "moment of truth" for the global community, and the UN's most powerful must take meaningful action to address the "humanitarian nightmare" there.

"Today, an estimated 90 percent of people in Tigray are now in desperate need of assistance. Hundreds of thousands more may be in famine conditions by September," she said.

The US diplomat further called on the Ethiopian government to provide humanitarian access, end the fighting and bring those accountable for human rights violations to justice.

Fighting in the province of Tigray broke out in November after the Ethiopian government accused the local ruling party - Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) - of attacking a regional military base to hijack weapons and arm the anti-government militia.

**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 Has Capabilities to Defeat China If It Invades Taiwan - US General

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The US military has all the necessary capabilities to defeat China in case of a military invasion of Taiwan and if respective political decision is made, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley said during a congressional hearing on Thursday.

"If you're talking about a military invasion of Taiwan [by China], crossing the Taiwan Straits with a sizable military force to seize an island ... that's an extraordinarily complex and difficult operation. But I can assure you that we have the capabilities if there were political decisions made in accordance with the Taiwan Relations Act and so on," Milley told the US Senate Armed Services Committee.

Milley pointed out that China and Russia are two main threats to US security from the military standpoint with Beijing being number one threat and Moscow remaining a considerable great power competitor.

Earlier in the day, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said there is a need for a direct communication line between the United States and China to prevent any accidents in the Indo-Pacific region which can lead to a large-scale conflict between the two powers.

**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 Chief Admits Ransomware Attacks Incomparable to 9/11

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - FBI Director Christopher Wray said on Thursday that ransomware cyberattacks are incomparable to 9/11 events clarifying his previous public statements.

"I don't think any attack - ransomware or January 6 [Capitol unrest] - can fairly be compared to the horror of September 11 and... three thousand or so individuals who lost their lives," Wray said in a testimony to the House Committee on the Judiciary.

Earlier this month, Wray told the Wall Street Journal the FBI investigates about 100 different types of ransomware, many tracing back to hackers allegedly based in Russia, and compared them to the challenge posed by the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

"My reference to September 11... was not about the attack, but about how the country came together in response," he told lawmakers.

Most high-profile attacks targeted Colonial Pipeline and meat-producing giant JBS, forcing both US companies to briefly suspend operations and transferred millions of dollars to hackers in exchange for encryption keys. Wray reiterated that the FBI policy and guidance remains not to pay ransoms.

**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, Johnson Commit to Global Minimum Tax of at Least 15% - Joint Statement

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Boris Johnson have committed to a global minimum tax of at least 15 percent, a joint statement by the US and UK governments said on Thursday in conjunction with Biden's visit to the United Kingdom. "We commit to reaching an equitable solution on the allocation of taxing rights, with market countries awarded taxing rights on at least 20% of profit exceeding a 10% margin for the largest and most profitable multinational enterprises," the statement quoting the two leaders said. "We also commit to a global minimum tax of at least 15% on a country by country basis."

**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, Johnson Commit to Further Enhance US-UK Bilateral Defense - Joint Statement**

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson issued a joint statement after meeting on Thursday in which they vowed to further strengthen bilateral defense efforts.

"We commit to enhance further the world's strongest bilateral defense, security and intelligence partnership to overcome the evolving threats of the twenty-first century," the statement said. This includes threats and challenges associated with: cyberspace, foreign interference, harmful influence campaigns, illicit finance, violent conflict and extremism and terrorism in all its forms."

**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 Condemns Nigeria's Suspension of Twitter, Threats to Arrest Users - State Dept.**

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The United States has denounced Nigeria's decision to discontinue Twitter and the its threats to detain users of the social media platform, US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said in a statement on Thursday.

"The United States condemns the ongoing suspension of Twitter by the Nigerian government and subsequent threats to arrest and prosecute Nigerians who use Twitter," Price said. "The United States is likewise concerned that the Nigerian National Broadcasting Commission ordered all television and radio broadcasters to cease using Twitter."

Nigeria suspended Twitter indefinitely last week after it deleted a tweet by President Muhammadu Buhari, in which the ex-army general threatened to deal with secessionists in the "language they understand." The authorities voiced concerns that the platform could be used to jeopardize the country's unity.

"Unduly restricting the ability of Nigerians to report, gather, and disseminate opinions and information has no place in a democracy," Price said. "We support Nigeria as it works towards unity, peace, and prosperity. As its partner, we call on the government to respect its citizens' right to freedom of expression by reversing this suspension."

According to Nigeria's information and culture ministry, Twitter has contacted the authorities of the West African nation to resolve the issue.

The Nigerian government has said that social networks should register in the African country as commercial enterprises to be able to continue operations after the Twitter controversy, Nigerian newspaper Premium Times reported on Wednesday, citing Minister of Information and Culture, Lai Mohammed.

In the deleted tweet, Buhari referred to the 1967-70 Nigerian Civil War and threatened to treat "those misbehaving today" in "the language they will understand." Some of the country's media interpreted the tweet as a threat to those supporting separation of Biafra, a southeastern region that attempted to secede in the late 1960s, resulting in a brutal armed conflict.

**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 Sanctions 7 People, 4 Entities, 1 Vessel Over Financing Houthis, IRGC - Treasury

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The United States sanctioned seven individuals, four entities and one vessel involved with a smuggling network that financed Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the Houthi movement, the Treasury Department said in a release on Thursday.

"Today, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) is designating members of a smuggling network that helps fund Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force (IRGC-QF) and the Houthis in Yemen," the release said. "Led by Iran-based Houthi financier Sa'id al-Jamal, this network generates tens of millions of dollars in revenue from the sale of commodities, like Iranian petroleum, a significant portion of which is then directed through a complex network of intermediaries and exchange houses in multiple countries to the Houthis in Yemen."

The vessel, the Triple Success, was used to smuggle petroleum products out of Iran, while al-Jamal's network, a cohort of businessmen and shipping experts, enabled the sale of the goods abroad and repatriated the funds to the Houthis and IRGC-QF.

The sanctions require that all property of the individuals and entities placed on the list be blocked and reported to OFAC authorities. They restrict individuals from sending or receiving any funds, goods, or services by, to, or for the benefit of any sanctioned person.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, in a separate statement, said the United States will continue to apply pressure to the Houthis, including via sanctions, to advance the goals of reaching a comprehensive ceasefire in Yemen.

In addition to sanctioning al-Jamal, the US State Department also lifted sanctions against three former Iranian government officials involved in the sale of petrochemical products. The delistings come as the result of verified changes in the behavior of the sanctioned parties.

**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 Privacy Commissioner Rules Federal Police Use of Facial-Recognition Tool Broke Law

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - Canada's federal police force's use of Clearview AI's facial recognition technology to review photosets illegally obtained by the company violates the country's privacy act, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner said on Thursday.

Clearview, itself, was the subject of an investigation by Canadian privacy commissioners, which concluded that the company's catalogue of billions of photographs amounts to mass surveillance and is illegal.

"The use of [facial recognition technology] by the [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] RCMP to search through massive repositories of Canadians who are innocent of any suspicion of crime presents a serious violation of privacy," Privacy Commissioner Daniel Therrien said in the statement. "A government institution cannot collect personal information from a third-party agent if that third party agent collected the information unlawfully."

The Privacy Commissioner's investigation of Clearview revealed that the company had 48 contracts with law enforcement agencies around the country, including the RCMP. Clearview began winding down its Canadian operations after the investigation began and the facial recognition company and the RCMP, the only remaining client, parted ways in July 2020. Responsibility falls upon federal institutions to ensure that third parties comply with Canadian law, the Commissioner said, adding that Parliament should reflect this in an update to the Privacy Act.

"We encourage Parliament to amend the Privacy Act to clarify that federal institutions have an obligation to ensure that third party agents it collects personal information from have acted lawfully," Therrien said.

Clearview AI has courted controversy for mining billions of users' images from social media sites for its platform.

**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 Hopes Biden, Putin Reach Deal to Return Ambassadors to Moscow, Washington - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration hopes President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin next week will agree to return their ambassadors to Moscow and Washington, CNN reported on Thursday citing three sources familiar with the matter. Not having an ambassador in either the United States and Russia has made conducting basic diplomacy even harder at a time when relations are already severely strained, the report 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, Johnson Reaffirm US-UK Commitment to Northern Ireland Peace Accord – Statement

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The United States and the United Kingdom have confirmed their commitment to the 1998 Good Friday Peace Agreement in Northern Ireland, US President Joe Biden and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Thursday.

"Today, the United Kingdom and the United States reaffirm their commitment to working closely with all parties to the Agreement to protect its delicate balance and realize its vision for reconciliation, consent, equality, respect for rights, and parity of esteem," the leaders said in a joint statement.

The agreement has looked increasingly fragile as violence and protests have spread around Northern Ireland following a European Union move to limit the export of coronavirus vaccines into Northern Ireland in case they were then re-exported to the United Kingdom.

**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 Needs Federal Enforcement to Guard Private Sector Cybersecurity - CISA Director Nominee

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The US government needed to have congressionally-mandated authority to secure industrial supply chain security from external attacks, nominee for Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) Director Jen Easterly said during her confirmation hearing on Thursday.

"We need to have rigorous and accelerated processes to secure the supply chain from external threats," Easterly told the US Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. "Cyber security accountability is incredibly important. ... It seems to me that voluntary standards are not getting the job done."

National Cyber Director nominee John "Chris" Inglis agreed with Easterly's assessment. Private responsibility was "apparently not working on establishing security of critical services in cyber security," he told the confirmation hearing.

On May 7, Colonial Pipeline, an oil pipeline system that originates in Houston, Texas, and carries gasoline and jet fuel to the Southeastern United States, suffered a ransomware cyberattack that impacted 100 million Americans and the 16,000 service stations it supplied.

**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 Condemns Nigeria's Suspension of Twitter, Threats to Arrest Users - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The United States has denounced Nigeria's decision to discontinue Twitter and the its threats to detain users of the social media platform, US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said in a statement on Thursday.

"The United States condemns the ongoing suspension of Twitter by the Nigerian government and subsequent threats to arrest and prosecute Nigerians who use Twitter," Price said. "The

United States is likewise concerned that the Nigerian National Broadcasting Commission ordered all television and radio broadcasters to cease using Twitter."

**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.**

Arctic to See Increased Great Power Competition Over Time - US General

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The Arctic region will become a place of an increased great power competition over time as Russia and China plan to advance their interest there, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley said during a congressional testimony on Thursday.

"We are going to see increased not decreased great power competition in the Arctic, over time, and we do need to resource, fully resource the Arctic strategy," Milley told a US Senate Committee on Armed Services hearing.

Both Russia and China aim to exploit the natural resources that are becoming more available due to the consequences of climate change, Milley added.

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said during the same hearing that the issue of the Arctic will be included in the country's new national defense strategy that is currently being developed.

Earlier in June, NATO Chief Jens Stoltenberg also underscored the growing importance of the Arctic to the alliance in view of increased presence of Russia and China in the region.

**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 Remains 'At Great Risk' of Catastrophic Cyber-Attack - CISA Director Nominee

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The United States remains "at great risk" of a catastrophic cyber attack on its critical infrastructure, nominee for the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) Director Jen Easterly told a US Senate confirmation hearing on Thursday.

"Even as we contend with the billions of daily intrusions against our networks by malicious actors, I believe that as a nation, we remain at great risk of a catastrophic cyberattack," Easterly told the US Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

Easterly also said United States adversaries already combined hacking with malign influence operations to interfere in democratic processes.

"They breach major corporations to steal capital and intellectual treasure, target industrial control systems to disrupt critical infrastructure, and incapacitate entities large and small with the scourge of ransomware," she said.

If confirmed as CISA head, Easterly said she would focus on ensuring the agency had the right resources to exercise its mission, developed the right partnerships with other government

bodies and private sector companies, and boost its own visibility as the "go-to" agency for companies under attack to reach out to.

**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 Can Cut Ransomware Attacks by 85%, Contain Rest - CISA Head Nominee

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The US government can reduce the current wave of ransomware attacks on companies and installations by 85 percent or more and the rest can be contained and aggressively attacked, National Cyber Director nominee John "Chris" Inglis told a congressional hearing on Thursday.

"[The ransomware onslaught] is not going to stop under its own accord," Inglis told his confirmation hearing at the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. "We must step in: We must align actions to consequences. It must be doable."

The federal government needed to step in and make cyber defenses of companies and services in the private sector defensible and it could and should drastically reduce their exposure to vulnerabilities, Inglis explained.

"What we need to do is make these systems defensible: They will never be secure. ... [With] two factor identification [and] if we build segmentation firebreaks, 85 percent of the problem goes away. It will never go away completely, but we can bring it to heel significantly," he told the Senate committee.

A ransomware attack on the Colonial Pipeline in May shut down fuel transportation to the US East Coast and forced the company to pay \$4.4 million to the Darkside hacking group allegedly based in Russia in exchange for encryption tools. More than half of the sum was later retrieved by US law enforcement agencies.

**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 Chief Says 36 US Law Enforcement Officers Killed in 2021

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - Thirty six US law enforcement officers were killed during the first five months of 2021 in a troubling uptick of violence against the community, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Christopher Wray said in a congressional testimony on Thursday.

"In just the first five months of 2021 36 officers have been feloniously killed on the job. That is far surpassing the number by this time last year. To put that in perspective that is almost two law enforcement officers shot and killed every week," Wray told the US House Judiciary Committee. The FBI director said the number killed officers is a result of "a troubling uptick in violence against members of the law enforcement community" that has been observed over the "epicly difficult year."

Wray added that the number does not include officers who died in the line of duty under other circumstances such as during racing in pursuit of a suspect and getting in car accidents.

**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 Ethics Committee Says No New Government Contribution to WE Charity Before Audit

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The Canadian government should not provide any further funding to WE Charity, which is at the heart of the scandal that has plagued the Trudeau government for nearly a year, until the organization is audited, the parliamentary ethics committee said on Thursday.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as well as current and former members of his cabinet incurred heavy criticism last summer after media revealed close ties between the officials' families and the WE Charity, in light of a government decision to award the charity a \$670-million sole-source contract to administer a government-sponsored student volunteer program.

"The Government of Canada refrain from further contracts or contribution agreements with the WE group until an independent audit or a Canada Revenue Agency forensic audit can be undertaken to determine exactly how the finances flow between their charitable operations and their multitude of side companies and real estate holdings," was one of the recommendations included in the report.

The report titled, "Questions of Conflict of Interest and Lobbying in Relation to Pandemic Spending" contained 22 other recommendations, including cabinet members screening for conflicts of interest before awarding government contracts and improved record-keeping of meetings with lobbyists.

The investigation by the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics was triggered by allegations of the Trudeau government exploiting the pandemic to remunerate parties considered to be close to the Liberal Party of Canada.

Aside from the WE scandal, as the affairs has come to be known, parliamentarians probed Canada's former ambassador to United States David MacNaughton's lobbying of top officials on behalf of Palantir Technologies and the government's decision to award a ventilator contract to a company head by a former Liberal MP.

Committee members from Canada's opposition parties - Conservatives, New Democrats and the Bloc Quebecois - welcomed the report, while the Liberal Vice-Chair, Brenda Shanahan, slammed the probe as a "politically motivated witch-hunt."

Trudeau, whose family was paid \$342,955.72 in speaking and expense fees for their participation in over 42 WE Charity events, was the subject of an ethics investigation regarding the affair. However, the Prime Minister was cleared of wrongdoing by Ethics Commissioner Mario Dion last month.

Despite Trudeau walking away from the investigation legally unscathed, his former finance minister, Bill Morneau, was found guilty of contravening three sections of the Conflict of Interest Act, including making a decision that would further his private interests and giving preferential treatment to WE Charity.

**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 Sanctions 7 People, 4 Entities, 1 Vessel Over Financing Houthis, IRGC - Treasury

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The United States sanctioned seven individuals, four entities and one vessel involved with a smuggling network that financed Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the Houthi movement, the Treasury Department said in a release on Thursday.

"Today, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) is designating members of a smuggling network that helps fund Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force (IRGC-QF) and the Houthis in Yemen," the release said. "Led by Iran-based Houthi financier Sa'id al-Jamal, this network generates tens of millions of dollars in revenue from the sale of commodities, like Iranian petroleum, a significant portion of which is then directed through a complex network of intermediaries and exchange houses in multiple countries to the Houthis in Yemen."

In addition to sanctioning al-Jamal, the US State Department also lifted sanctions against three former Iranian government officials involved in the sale of petrochemical products. The delistings come as the result of verified changes in the behavior of the sanctioned parties.

**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 Commerce Secretary Cites China's 'Unfair' Industrial Policies to Beijing Counterpart

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo expressed to her Chinese counterpart Wang Wentao the Biden administration's concerns about what she said were Beijing's unfair, market-distorting industrial policies, the Commerce Department said in a statement on Thursday.

"Secretary Raimondo discussed the Biden-Harris administration's focus on economic policies benefiting American workers and expressed US concerns, including China's unfair and market-distorting industrial policies, the need to level the playing field for US companies in China, and the importance of protecting US technology from unauthorized users," the statement said.

Raimondo's message to her Chinese counterpart came as another senior Biden administration official spoke on Thursday about the value placed by the United States on its relationship with Taiwan.

US Trade Representative Katherine Tai, in a virtual meeting with Taiwan's Minister-Without-Portfolio John Deng emphasized the importance of the US-Taiwan trade and investment relationship and explained the Biden-Harris administration's worker-centered trade priorities.

Taiwan has been governed independently since 1949, but China views the island as part of its territory. China has vowed to unify Taiwan with the mainland, using force if necessary. Any importance lent by the United States to Taiwan thus makes the Chinese government bristle. On Tuesday, the Senate voted overwhelmingly to approve a \$200 billion bill to boost US tech competition against China, prompting an indignant response from Beijing about being cast as an "imaginary" US enemy.

**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 Government Extends Shelf Life of J&J Coronavirus Vaccine From 3 to 4.5 Months

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - Vaccine manufacturer Johnson & Johnson said on Thursday that the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has decided to extend the company's coronavirus vaccine shelf life from three months to four-and-a-half months. "We are pleased to confirm the US Food & Drug Administration has authorized an extension of the shelf life for the Johnson & Johnson single-shot COVID-19 vaccine from three months to four-and-a-half months," Johnson & Johnson said in a release. The FDA made its decision based on data from ongoing studies that have demonstrated that the vaccine remains stable for up to four-and-a-half months when refrigerated at temperatures between 36 and 46 degrees Fahrenheit (2-8 degrees Celsius). The company also reiterated the effectiveness and importance of their single-shot vaccine, adding that they plan to continue working with the US government and other health authorities to support the continued use of the vaccine.

**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 Requests Emergency Use Authorization for Coronavirus Vaccine for Adolescents

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The biotechnology company Moderna announced on Thursday that it has filed a request with the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for emergency use authorization of its coronavirus vaccine on adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18. "We are pleased to announce that we have submitted for an emergency use authorization for our COVID-19 vaccine with the FDA for use in adolescents in the United States," Moderna CEO Stephane Bancel said. In May, Moderna announced the results from its study of the vaccine's use in adolescents, which determined that the vaccine efficacy in the nearly 2,500 adolescents who received the vaccine was 100%.

Moderna said it did not observe any significant safety issues, with the majority of adverse events being mild or moderate in severity. The most common adverse reactions were injection site pain, headache, fatigue, myalgia and chills, it 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 Offers Reward of Up to \$3Mln for Information on Attacks in Iraq - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The United States is offering \$3 million for information leading to the capture of the individuals responsible for attacks against US diplomatic facilities in Iraq, the State Department said on Thursday.

"America is offering a reward of up to \$3 million for information on planned or past attacks against US diplomatic facilities," the State Department said in a statement.

The US-led coalition in Iraq is currently investigating a drone attack against the Bagdad Diplomatic Support Center, a spokesperson told Sputnik on Wednesday.

The Victory military base near Baghdad International Airport and the Balad air base in the Iraqi province of Salah ad Din also came under rocket fire on Wednesday.

**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 Analysis Says Over 350,000 People in Ethiopia's Tigray Region Facing Famine

UNITED NATIONS, June 10 (Sputnik) - More than 350,000 people in Ethiopia's Tigray region are currently experiencing famine, the latest UN Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis said on Thursday.

"An IPC analysis update conducted in Tigray and the neighboring zones of Amhara and Afar concludes that over 350,000 people are in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) between May and June 2021," the analysis said.

The number of people facing catastrophic hunger is the highest since the 2011 famine in Somalia, which killed up to 260,000 people.

Despite the significant humanitarian assistance that reached as many as 5 million people in the last few months, some 5.5 million people, or 61 percent of those living in the area, experience high levels of acute food insecurity, the analysis said.

Some 3.1 million people are at the crisis level of food insecurity, and 2.1 million find themselves in the emergency phase. By September, the situation in Tigray might worsen, bringing the number of people in catastrophic food scarcity to 400,000, the analysis projected.

Fighting in the province of Tigray broke out in November 2020 after the Ethiopian government accused the local ruling party - the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) - of attacking a regional military base to hijack weapons and arm anti-government militias.

**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 Commerce Secretary Cites China's 'Unfair' Industrial Policies to Beijing Counterpart

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo has expressed to her Chinese counterpart Wang Wentao the Biden administration's concerns about what she said were Beijing's unfair, market-distorting industrial policies, the Commerce Department said in a statement on Thursday.

"Secretary Raimondo discussed the Biden-Harris administration's focus on economic policies benefiting American workers and expressed US concerns, including China's unfair and market-distorting industrial policies, the need to level the playing field for US companies in China, and the importance of protecting US technology from unauthorized users," the statement 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 Orders Amazon to Pay Delivery Drivers \$61.7Mln in Withheld Tips - Regulator

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - Amazon has been ordered to pay contracted Flex drivers \$61.7 million from tips that the on-line retailer withheld from contract delivery drivers over a two-and-a-half year period, despite company promises that drivers would receive 100 percent of tips from customers, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) announced on Thursday.

"The company regularly advertised that drivers participating in the Flex program would be paid \$18-25 per hour for their work making deliveries to customers. The ads, along with numerous other documents provided to Flex drivers, also prominently featured statements such as: 'You will receive 100% of the tips you earn while delivering with Amazon Flex,'" an FTC press release said.

The final order requires Amazon to pay \$61,710,583, which represents the full amount that the company allegedly withheld from drivers and will be used by the FTC to compensate drivers. In addition, Amazon will be prohibited from misrepresenting any driver's likely income or rate of pay, how much of their tips will be paid to them, as well as whether the amount paid by a customer is a tip, the release said.

The company stopped pocketing a portion of tips received by drivers only after becoming aware of the FTC investigation in 2019, the release added.

The final consent order announced on Thursday followed approval in a 4-0 Commission vote, 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 Trade Representative Says to Join Biden in Brussels for Talks on Trade Disputes With EU

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - US Trade Representative Katherine Tai said on Thursday that she will join President Joe Biden in Brussels next week to meet with her European counterparts to try to resolve the aircraft manufacturers Boeing and Airbus disputes, among other trade-related issues.

"Next week, I will join the President on his trip to Brussels and meet with my European counterparts," Tai said. "We'll participate in intense negotiations to resolve the 16-year old Boeing/Airbus disputes and to find a path forward on products like steel and aluminum." Tai said the US-EU trade talks in Brussels are scheduled for June 15 and will also focus on initiatives to counter unfair trade policies from China and other countries that undermine competition.

Tai said she is optimistic the meeting will be successful.

The trade war between the United States and the 27-nation bloc broke out in 2018 under then-President Donald Trump as part of his strategy to impose tariffs to change US trade policy and reduce the trade deficit.

New duties were imposed that largely affected a set of steel, aluminum and other European goods, to which the European Union responded with its tariffs on various US items. The tense trade relations between Brussels and Washington are also affected by a long-term subsidy row between Boeing and Airbus.

**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 Trade Representative Says to Join Biden in Brussels for Talks on Trade Disputes With EU

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - US Trade Representative Katherine Tai said on Thursday that she will join President Joe Biden in Brussels next week to meet with her European counterparts to try to resolve the aircraft manufacturers Boeing and Airbus disputes, among other trade-related issues.

"Next week, I will join the President on his trip to Brussels and meet with my European counterparts," Tai said. "We'll participate in intense negotiations to resolve the 16-year old Boeing/Airbus disputes and to find a path forward on products like steel and aluminum."

**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 Meets With UK Prime Minister Ahead of G7 Summit, Putin Meeting

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden on Thursday met with UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson in Cornwall, England, as part of his trip to Europe where he is scheduled to attend the G7 summit and also meet with Russian President Putin.

Both Biden and Johnson said during a joint press event that it was a "great pleasure" to have held the meeting

Their meeting marks the beginning of Biden's first visit to Europe as US president, where he has several notable items on his agenda, including a series of joint and bilateral meetings at the G7 summit in Cornwall starting on Friday.

The meeting between Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin is among the most anticipated, with the two presidents expected to discuss the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, Ukraine and arms control agreements, among other issues.

**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 Wants to See More Progress on Ukraine's Program - Spokesman

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Ukraine continue discussions but more progress needed before the completion of the first review under its Stand-by arrangement, IMF spokesperson Gerry Rice told reporters on Thursday.

"We have been having those discussions, they are ongoing, we remain engaged. Some progress has been made, but more is needed before completion of that first review," Rice said during a briefing.

The objectives of the program include the strengthening of the governance of the National Bank, improvements to the legislative and regulatory framework for bank supervision, policies to reduce the medium-term fiscal deficit, as well as strengthening the anti-corruption framework, Rice explained.

The IMF approved the \$5-billion program last June and immediately provided \$2.1 billion. The rest of the funding was made conditional upon Ukraine's satisfactory progress on the outlined criteria. The original schedule of further payments entailed four \$700-million installments - two in late 2020 and two during 2021 - but none were wired so far.

**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.**

#### Russia-EU Relations Reach 'Lowest Ebb' in History - Deputy Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, June 10 (Sputnik) - The diplomatic relations between Russia and the European Union have reached the lowest point in history, Russian Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy said during a UN Security Council meeting on Thursday.

"Russia-EU relations are currently, unfortunately, at the lowest ebb in history," Polyanskiy said. "Our European partners are more often choosing destructive unilateral approach. This gives rise to nothing but the gravest of concern."

The most obvious example of such an approach is unilateral sanctions by the EU, approved in circumvention of the UN Security Council and international laws, hindering economic prosperity in affected countries, Polyanskiy pointed out.

**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.**

Austin Cites Need for Direct US Communication Line With China, Others to Prevent Conflict

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - There is a need for a direct communication channel between the US and Chinese militaries and governments, as well as with other alleged adversaries, to prevent any accidental conflicts that can spark in the future, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said in a congressional testimony on Thursday.

"I am concerned about something that could happen, that could spark a crisis and I think we need the ability to be able to talk with both our allies and partners but also our adversaries, or potential adversaries. I think there needs to be a direct line of communication between the military and also between government officials as well," Austin told the US Senate Armed Services Committee.

**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, Argentina Dialogue on New Program Continues, But Not Nearing Conclusion - Spokesman

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Argentine authorities continue working on the new support program for the country, but have no specific timeframe when these efforts will conclude, IMF spokesperson Gerry Rice told reporters on Thursday.

"Close dialogue continues, but no timing for you on when we might be nearing the conclusion of discussions on the new program," Rice said.

The spokesperson recalled that IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva met with Argentine President Alberto Fernandez several weeks ago on the issue of a new IMF-supported program for Argentina.

"They committed to continuing our work together on IMF-supported program that can help Argentina," Rice said.

Argentina continues facing economic difficulties since 2018 when the country entered a recession. Fernandez said in May that he wants to reach a new deal with the IMF as soon as possible.

**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 Weekly Jobless Claims Down 2% in Continued Progress From COVID-19 - Labor Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The weekly filings for jobless claims in the United States fell by 2 percent last week as some 376,000 people sought unemployment benefits, the lowest number since the start of the coronavirus pandemic in mid-March 2020, the Labor Department said Thursday.

"In the week ending June 5, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims was 376,000, a decrease of 9,000 from the previous week's unrevised level of 385,000," the department said in a statement. "This is the lowest level for initial claims since March 14, 2020, when it was 256,000."

Economists polled by US media had anticipated 370,500 filings for unemployment benefits for the week to June 5. That put the 376,000 claims reported by the department not far from target. Unemployment benefits have fallen in seven of the past eight weeks, signaling a recovery from the COVID-19 marked by other bullish macroeconomic data and falling infection rates versus vaccinations for the virus.

Continuing claims for the week ended May 29 — reported with a one-week lag — slid to 3.50 million, from 3.76 million during the week to May 22.

That reduced the weekly reading for unemployment to 2.5 percent from a previous 2.7 percent. More than a year into the COVID-19 crisis, restoring job growth remains one of the main concerns of US policymakers.

The Labor Department said there were only 559,000 job additions for all of May, at least 90,000 below economists' estimates.

The United States lost more than 21 million jobs between March and April 2020, at the height of business lockdowns forced by the coronavirus. About 8 million of those jobs have yet to return, officials say.

The US economy itself shrank 3.5 percent in 2020, although first quarter data for 2021 showed a dynamic rebound of 6.4 percent.

The Federal Reserve has forecast a 6.5 percent economic growth for all of 2021 although Jerome Powell, chairman of the central bank, says he does not expect "full employment" — defined by a monthly unemployment rate of 4.0 percent or lower — before 2023. The monthly unemployment rate stood at 5.8 percent in May.

**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 Watching El Salvador Bitcoin Developments 'Very Closely' - Spokesman

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is watching very closely all developments related to the adoption of Bitcoin by El Salvador and will be meeting with the country's president later on Thursday, IMF spokesperson Gerry Rice told reporters. "The adoption of Bitcoin raises a number of microeconomic, financial and legal issues that require very careful analysis. So we are following the developments closely and will continue our consultations with the authorities," Rice said during a press briefing.

Rice said the IMF team will meet with El Salvador President Nayib Bukele later on Thursday. Bukele said over the weekend El Salvador would formally adopt Bitcoin as legal tender that will help Salvadorans living abroad send remittances home.

The El Salvador parliament adopted a law legalizing Bitcoin as a means of payment on Tuesday 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.**

Air Force Multiyear \$2.3Bln Contract to Maintain Minuteman III Missiles - Northrop Grumman

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - A US Air Force Propulsion Subsystem Support Contract (PSSC) with a \$2.3 billion ceiling will provide engineering and maintenance services for Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), helping to extend the aging Cold War nuclear weapon system's life for the next 18.5 years, Northrop Grumman said on Thursday. "The Northrop Grumman propulsion systems team is addressing sustainment challenges of the missile propulsion system such as material obsolescence, associated hardware and/or equipment repair, and propellant aging-surveillance testing and analysis," a company press release said.

The award has a \$287 million base contract, with options totaling \$2.3 billion over 18.5 years, the release said.

Minuteman III was originally manufactured in 1970 and has undergone multiple refurbishments to ensure viability. The new contract is to keep the system "on alert and ready until the its end-of-life later next decade," the release said

US nuclear modernization plans call for the Minuteman III to be replaced with a newer ICBM known as the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD), which is in the early stages of development, according to the Defense Department. The transition is scheduled to begin when the GBSD achieves initial operating capability as early as 2029.

**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 Trade Chief Plays Up Importance of Taiwan Trade, Investment Amid New Tiff With China

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - US Trade Representative (USTR) Katherine Tai has played up the importance of Taiwanese trade and investment to United States, the Office of the USTR said on Thursday.

"Ambassador Tai emphasized the importance of the US-Taiwan trade and investment relationship and explained the Biden-Harris administration's worker-centered trade priorities," the Office of the USTR said in a statement. "Ambassador Tai also expressed the United States' continued interest in working together with Taiwan on issues of common concern in multilateral organizations."

Tai's remarks came after holding a virtual meeting with Taiwan Minister-Without-Portfolio John Deng on Thursday and at a time when US President Joe Biden wages a new fractious trade relationship with China.

Tai and Deng committed to convening in the coming weeks the 11th Trade and Investment Framework Agreement Council meeting with the participation of the American Institute in Taiwan and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States, the statement added.

Taiwan has been governed independently of China since 1949, but Beijing views the island as part of its territory and has vowed to unify Taiwan with the mainland by using force if necessary.

**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.**

**China Boosting Its Military Capability at Very Serious, Sustained Rate - Top US General**

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) – China is boosting its military capabilities at very serious and sustained rate which will require the United States to remain competitive in face of the alleged threat to its national security, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley said in testimony to Congress on Thursday.

"China is increasing its military capability at a very serious and sustained rate, and we must ensure that we retain our competitive and technological edge against this pacing threat," Milley said during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing.

**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 Consumer Prices Up 5% On The Year In May, Highest Inflation Since 2008 - Labor Dept**

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - US consumer prices, a measure of inflation, grew by 5.0 percent over a one-year period in May for its largest increase in almost 13 years, the Labor Department announced on Thursday.

"Over the last 12 months, the all-items index increased 5.0 percent before seasonal adjustment," the department said, referring to the Consumer Price Index or CPI. "This was the largest 12-month increase since a 5.4-percent increase for the period ending August 2008." For the month of May itself, the CPI rose 0.6 percent.

Economists polled by US media had forecast an annual increase of 4.7 percent and monthly rise of 0.5 percent for May.

"This is a big upside surprise for the second month in a row," economist Adam Button said in a post on ForexLive.

The Federal Reserve acknowledges the inflation 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 policymaking Federal Open Market Committee,

led by Chairman Jerome Powell, insists that these price pressures are "transient" and will fade as the economy makes a full recovery.

Like in April, prices of used cars and truck prices continued their climb in May, rising 7.3 percent on the month and 29.7 percent for the past 12 months, the CPI data showed.

However, the energy component of the index was surprisingly flat on the month, despite retail prices of gasoline continuing to rise in May. For the year, the gasoline component was up 56.2 percent, reflecting seven-year highs of above \$3 a gallon for fuel prices at US pumps.

The food component of CPI grew 0.4 percent in May, reprising its April growth, and expanded 2.2 percent for the 12-month period.

The US stock market has fallen on many occasions over the last two months on fears that creeping inflation would force the Fed to raise interest rates and taper some of the \$120 billion in bonds and other asset purchases the central bank has been doing over the past year in its pandemic-rescue mode.

But stocks have also routinely rebounded as the Fed denied these conjectures, saying it would only raise rates and pull back asset purchases significantly when it achieves its twin mandates of inflation averaging at 2 percent a year and a job market with full employment. Under Fed definition, full employment is attained when the jobless rate is at 4.0 percent or lower for a month. In May, the unemployment rate was at 5.8 percent.

**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 Homeland Secretary Mayorkas to Visit Mexico on June 14-15 - DHS

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - US Homeland Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas will visit Mexico next week for talks on areas of mutual interest, the Department of Homeland Security said in a statement on Thursday.

"On Monday, June 14, 2021 and Tuesday, June 15, 2021 Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas will travel to Mexico to meet with counterparts in the Government of Mexico on areas of mutual interest. This will be Secretary Mayorkas's first international trip since being confirmed in February," the department 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 Weekly Jobless Claims Down 2% in Continued Progress From COVID-19 - Labor Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The weekly filings for jobless claims in the United States fell by 2 percent last week as some 376,000 people sought unemployment benefits, the lowest number since the start of the coronavirus pandemic in mid-March 2020, the Labor Department said Thursday.

"In the week ending June 5, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims was 376,000, a decrease of 9,000 from the previous week's unrevised level of 385,000," the

department said in a statement. "This is the lowest level for initial claims since March 14, 2020, when it was 256,000."

**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 Consumer Prices Up 5% On The Year In May, Highest Inflation Since 2008 - Labor Dept

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The US Consumer Price Index, a measure of inflation, grew by 5.0 percent over a one-year period in May for its largest increase in almost 13 years, the Labor Department announced on Thursday.

"Over the last 12 months, the all-items index increased 5.0 percent before seasonal adjustment," the department said, breaking down the data. "This was the largest 12-month increase since a 5.4-percent increase for the period ending August 2008."