

08/10/21 Tuesday

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Argentinian Governor Pledges No Surrender to 'Pro-British' Figures Endorsing UK Rule of Falklands
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

In February, the UN Special Committee on Decolonization unanimously ratified a resolution calling for the resumption of negotiations between Argentina and the United Kingdom over their conflicting claims to rule the islands Buenos Aires calls Islas Malvinas and London calls the Falklands.

The governor of Argentina's southernmost Tierra del Fuego state took to Twitter on Monday to rage about Argentines he said were "trying to normalize the occupation" of the Falkland Islands, a territory controlled by the UK and claimed by Buenos Aires, which launched a failed invasion in 1982.

"I want to express my rejection of the advance of the 'pro-British' movement by a sector of the opposition, which is against the sovereign rights of our country over the Malvinas and the South Atlantic Islands," Tierra del Fuego Governor Gustavo Melella [wrote on Twitter](#) on Monday, using the Argentinian name for the Falklands and South Sandwich Islands, respectively.

Both archipelagoes, which sit in the frigid waters off Argentina's eastern coast, have been territories of the United Kingdom for more than 150 years, although settlements by other nations, including Argentina, did exist before then.

In the final months of Argentinian military dictator Leopold Galtieri's rule, he launched a marine invasion of the Falkland Islands and South Georgia Island and fought a 10-week war with the British task force sent to liberate them, which Argentina ultimately lost. His government fell a few weeks later, while the Conservative government of UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was propelled to a landslide victory the following year.

However, Buenos Aires has never given up its claim to be the rightful rulers of the archipelago. Even right-wing former President Mauricio Macri, who [said in 2016](#) he wanted a "new kind of relationship" with London over the Falklands, [also said later](#) that Argentinian sovereignty over the islands is "a legitimate and irrevocable claim, which unites all Argentines beyond our differences."

Indeed, a poll conducted late last month by consulting firm Julio Aurelio-Aresco found that 80% of Argentines believe "the country should continue to demand the end of British occupation" of the islands, the [UK Express reported](#).

"These expressions respond to the pro-British stance of an opposition sector linked to the policy carried out by Macrismo, trying to naturalize the occupation of our territory, claiming a surrender policy," Melella continued, adding that "during the Macri administration, we suffered a process of demalvinization. Not only was no measure taken to allow progress in the resumption of the negotiations as proposed by UN Resolution 2065/65, but it was yielded to every demand of the United Kingdom."

[The UN resolution](#), dating to 1965, notably referred to the “cherished aim of bringing to an end everywhere colonialism in all its forms, one of which covers the case of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)” and urged the UK and Argentina to come to a peaceful solution to their dispute. “The Argentine people are very clear about the Malvinas belonging to their territory, and for the Fuegians and Fuegians in particular, this National Cause is part of our DNA,” Melella continued. “We must be united and united in the face of this advance by the right, so as not to suffer again the ravages of a foreign policy at the service of colonialism.”

It’s unclear to whom Melella was referring, but several critical comments by prominent Argentines in recent weeks have reignited debate about the issue.

One is Sabrina Ajmechet, a professor of Argentine Political Thought at the University of Buenos Aires and a National Assembly candidate for Buenos Aires in the November elections on the Juntos por el Cambio ticket, a political coalition that includes Macri’s Republican Proposal. After she announced her candidacy last month, [several past comments](#) by her began to surface that aroused fury, such as that Malvinas do not exist, the Falkland Islands belong to the “kelpers,” a term for residents of the islands.

When former home secretary Patricia Bullrich, who is presently chairwoman of Republican Proposal, came [to her defense](#) by saying Ajmechet “has a historian’s vision of the issue” and that the furious response amounted to “academic debates out of context,” it only further fanned the flames.

Then, last week, Beatriz Sarlo, a prominent Argentinian essayist and cultural critic, stirred the pot further by saying in a television interview that “the Falklands are a British territory.” “When people say ‘the Falklands are Argentine’ they do not sit down for a minute to think, if they are Argentine, if they are not Argentine, nor what are the Falklands,” [Sarlo said](#), adding that the islands resemble “the south of Scotland.”

She went on to call the 1982 invasion “a national psychotic act.” The war resulted in the deaths of 649 Argentinian military personnel, 255 British military personnel, and three kelpers.

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Biden 'Does Not Regret' Afghanistan Withdrawal, Says Schedule Unchanged Despite Taliban Gains

by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Despite having signed a ceasefire in February 2020, the US carried out several airstrikes on Taliban targets in recent days, including dispatching B-52 strategic bombers and Spectre close air support gunships on missions over Afghanistan as the US withdrawal enters its final stages. US President Joe Biden told reporters on Tuesday that he “does not regret” the decision to pull US forces out of Afghanistan after 20 years of war, despite the fact that the Taliban have made significant gains against government forces in recent months, and would not alter the withdrawal schedule.

"We spent over a trillion dollars over 20 years, we trained and equipped with modern equipment over 300,000 Afghan forces and Afghan leaders have to come together. We lost thousands of American personnel," Biden said.

"They've got to fight for themselves, fight for their nation," he said of Afghan forces, who have been on the retreat in recent weeks. However, he added that the US would "continue to keep the commitments we made - providing close air support, making sure that their air force functions and is operable, resupplying their forces with food and equipment, and paying all their salaries. But they've got to want to fight. They have outnumbered the Taliban ... I think they're realizing they've got to come together politically at the top."

"But I do not regret my decision," he added.

A European Union official [said on Tuesday](#) that the Taliban Islamist militia group now controls 65% of Afghanistan, with half a dozen [provincial capitals falling](#) to them in recent days, including Kunduz, one of the country's largest cities. Their rapid advance began in May, as the original withdrawal date the US agreed to in peace talks with the Taliban in 2020 came and went. Biden then committed to a September 11, 2021, final withdrawal date, and by early August 95% of US forces were already out of the country.

However, the Taliban made no such agreement with the Afghan government in Kabul, which was installed in 2001 by a US invasion that ousted the Taliban government. The Taliban regards the current government as a puppet state.

On Tuesday, Zalmay Khalilzad, the US' longtime envoy to Afghanistan, [told Taliban representatives](#) in Doha, Qatar, that there was no point to them pursuing the Kabul government's overthrow, as the US would politically isolate a Taliban government if it came to power. The US has given its support to the idea of a government of [national unity](#) that would include the Taliban, but neighboring countries like [China have indicated](#) they are more concerned about stability in the Central Asian country, which has served as a harbor for terrorist groups like the East Turkistan Islamic Movement, al-Qaeda, and Daesh, than they are about a Taliban government coming to power.

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New York Governor Cuomo is Resigning: What Happens Next?

by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo is also facing two other investigations into alleged misconduct, including whether he gave the US Justice Department falsified reports on COVID-19 deaths in nursing homes, and whether he used state resources to finish his memoir about handling the pandemic.

At a Tuesday press conference, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo announced he was resigning amid a slew of accusations by women that he had sexually harassed them. However, this isn't the end of the road for the 63-year-old Democratic governor, who still has two weeks in office and could also face charges after stepping down.

Two Weeks Left

Cuomo said Tuesday afternoon that his resignation from office would take effect in two weeks, on August 24. The announcement comes a day after a report in the [New York Times](#) detailing how the three-term Democratic governor planned to “drag out the process” of his impending impeachment by the state legislature, which the paper said might come in early September. He gave no explanation for why he wasn’t immediately leaving office, except that the “transition must be seamless. We have a lot going on.”

Common Cause New York, a government accountability nonprofit, [said on Twitter](#) that his resignation should be immediate because “New Yorkers require a functioning government, not a leadership void created by a grace period for misconduct.”

A total of 13 women have come forward with accusations that Cuomo touched them inappropriately or made inappropriate sexual comments toward them, with many of the accusations going back several years. The first claims hit headlines in December 2020 when former Cuomo aide Lindsey Boylan gave details about several events on Twitter.

Through early 2021, several more women came forward and the state’s attorney general, Letitia James, opened an investigation into 11 of them. [Her damning report](#), released last week, vindicated the accusers’ claims and set in motion calls for Cuomo’s resignation and threats to have him impeached. Two more women have since come forth with accusations, and a criminal complaint has been brought against Cuomo, as well.

First Female Governor

Set to take office after Cuomo’s departure on August 24 is Kathy Hochul, New York’s lieutenant governor, who will become first female head of government in the Empire State’s history, which goes back to the founding of the United States as one of the original 13 colonies that rebelled against and ultimately broke away from Great Britain in the late 18th century.

A self-described “independent Democrat,” the 62-year-old Hochul is a veteran of New York politics and has been Cuomo’s second-in-command since 2015.

Still, Hochul has supported Cuomo’s removal from office since March, when she appeared at a rally alongside Boylan and [urged the State Assembly](#) to “act swiftly” and “do the right thing” by impeaching her boss. Shortly after taking office in 2015, she also vocally supported the state’s “Enough Is Enough” legislation, which aimed to fight the epidemic of sexual assault on college campuses.

On Tuesday afternoon, Hochul tweeted that Cuomo’s resignation was “the right thing to do and in the best interest of New Yorkers” and that she is “prepared to lead as New York State’s 57th Governor.”

Possible Lawsuits?

On August 6, three days after the AG report was published, Brittany Commisso, identified in the report as “Executive Assistant #1” filed a criminal complaint against Cuomo with the Albany County Sheriff’s Office. [According to NBC](#), the sheriff’s office is coordinating with the district attorney’s office, but the governor hasn’t yet been charged with any crimes.

“What he did to me was a crime,” [Commisso told CBS](#) in an interview published on Sunday. “He broke the law ... The governor needs to be held accountable.”

Boylan has also vowed to bring charges, [writing on Medium](#) on Monday that she intended to sue both Cuomo and others in his administration who attempted to smear her reputation.

“He is gaslighting and revictimizing us. He is showing everyone what happens to women when they speak up about harassment and abuse in the workplace,” Boylan wrote, referring to

Cuomo's repeated public denials of guilt. "Too many people have been harmed or had their careers destroyed after reporting harassment. Retaliation is unacceptable in any workplace. It revictimizes those who have suffered abuse and it deters people from coming forward." Other accusers have also retained legal representation, but there's no guarantee they will file charges.

Mariann Wang, a lawyer representing Alyssa McGrath and Virginia Limmiatis, the two women who came forth after the AG report was published, told [the Associated Press](#) after Cuomo's resignation that her clients were "vindicated and relieved that Cuomo will no longer be in a position of power over anyone."

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China to Begin Trials on Benefit of Mixing SinoVac, Inovio COVID-19 Vaccines This Autumn
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Despite being the first place where a major COVID-19 outbreak was identified, China quickly got the outbreak under control and has had among the world's best pandemic response records, recording just 4,636 deaths and less than 100,000 cases of the illness.

As COVID-19 cases in China continue to expand, the country's medical products regulator has approved trials for a new combination treatment using both a Chinese and an American vaccine. Meanwhile, Sinovac has reported a third dose of its vaccine seems to give substantial benefits to older recipients.

China's National Medical Products Administration (NMPA) has signed off on local trials on combining two different COVID-19 vaccines to produce an enhanced immune effect: the inactivated vaccine produced by Chinese biopharmaceutical company SinoVac and a novel new DNA-based vaccine being developed by American medical firm Inovio.

Inovio CEO J. Joseph Kim said in a [Monday press release](#) the company's vaccine could serve as "a primary and a booster vaccine due to its tolerability, balanced cross-reactive immune responses, and strong thermostability profile that does not require cold or ultra-cold-chain transport."

According to [IEEE Spectrum](#), Inovio's vaccine is delivered in a unique way: because traditional injection proved to have only limited effect, a special electroporation device delivers a small electric shock upon injection, which also uses a shorter needle. The minute shock opens channels into the recipient's cells temporarily, allowing the vaccine to be delivered.

Wang Bin, chairperson of Advaccine Biopharmaceuticals Suzhou, Inovio's partner institution in China, added in the release that the preclinical work suggested that combining the two "brings the advantages of two different vaccine applications to produce an even stronger and more balanced immune response."

Studies in June in the UK and July in South Korea on combining AstraZeneca's vaccine with Pfizer-BionNTech's demonstrated that getting the first shot of AstraZeneca and the second shot of Pfizer yielded the same immune benefits as two doses of Pfizer. [According to Reuters](#), the finding means nations hesitant to continue using the AstraZeneca vaccine due to reports of

blood clots in some people after the second shot can continue to use the vaccine for their vaccination campaigns safely.

“The success of the adenovirus-vectored AstraZeneca vaccine and mRNA vaccine by Pfizer-BioNTech combination may not be necessarily reproduced with other vaccine combinations,” Julian Tang, a clinical virologist at Britain’s University of Leicester, told the [South China Morning Post](#), adding that scientists “need to try it and see.”

The outlet noted that trials are due to start “in autumn,” but gave no further hint about the date or the duration.

Third Shot Benefits

Meanwhile, SinoVac is also reporting that results from testing on a third dose of the same vaccine delivered six months after the second dose yielded a substantial increase in protective antibodies.

“The study provides an important scientific basis for policymakers to develop strategies and plans for the timing of a booster dose for the elderly,” the company told [the Global Times](#), which noted that among older recipients, antibodies levels tended to decline about six months after receiving their second shot.

The World Health Organization [approved the SinoVac](#) vaccine for emergency use in June, enabling the shot to join China’s other major vaccine by Sinopharm in being exported. [According to Caixin Global](#), by the end of June, China had exported 500 million vaccines abroad, the vast majority of them to Africa and Asia. The two continents are largely unable to purchase expensive vaccines made by pharmaceutical giants like Pfizer and Moderna.

Expanding Chinese Cases

On Monday, the Chinese National [Health Commission reported](#) 143 new cases of COVID-19, the most it’s reported this year as the outbreak that began in Jiangsu Province last month continues to grow. Of those cases, 31 were imported, with 8 of them being detected in Shanghai, while 94 cases were from internal spread - 41 of them in Henan, 38 in Jiangsu, 12 in Hunan and 3 in Hubei.

[Sputnik reported](#) last week on the extensive measures adopted by the Chinese government to clamp down on viral spread before it becomes an uncontrolled outbreak. They include closing and locking down several large cities, including Nanjing, Wuhan, and Zhangjiajie, as well as sharply limiting travel into and out of affected provinces. In those cities, massive testing programs are underway, as well as supply efforts to ensure residents are getting the food, medicine, and other products they need to remain locked down in their homes until all infected persons can be identified.

According to [the Global Times](#), pandemic experts at the Collaborative Innovation Center for Western Ecological Safety of Lanzhou University expect the outbreak to be controlled - meaning zero daily new confirmed infections - by August 23.

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Tracing How Andrew Cuomo Went From Renowned Leader to Political Pariah in Less Than a Year

by [Evan Craighead](#)

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo (D) announced his resignation on Tuesday, exactly one week after New York Attorney General Letitia James (D) released the results of an independent probe that determined the 63-year-old did sexually harass several women, including former and current state employees. Cuomo now faces the prospect of criminal charges.

Cuomo's August 10 resignation comes as just another date in an ongoing series of events and allegations that have transpired in less than a year. Though the outgoing [New York governor has opposed](#) the results of the independent probe led by attorneys Joon H. Kim and Anne L. Clark, he will be stepping down from his position in 14 days.

Within the past year, Cuomo has managed to go from a governor heralded for his COVID-19 response to a disgraced politician with a litany of sexual misconduct allegations and ethical scandals.

August 18, 2020: Crown, of Random House Publishing Group, [announces that it will publish](#) "American Crisis: Leadership Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic," a book authored by Cuomo on his experience leading New York amid the early onslaught of COVID-19.

August 26, 2020: The [US Department of Justice requested COVID-19 data](#) on nursing home deaths from the governors of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Michigan. Authorities said the request was made to "determine if the state orders requiring admission of COVID-19 patients to nursing homes is responsible for the deaths of nursing home residents."

October 13, 2020: Cuomo's book on his government response to the COVID-19 pandemic was published and goes on to be a New York Times bestseller. [Later reports suggested](#) the New York governor would make around \$5 million off the book.

November 23, 2020: Cuomo received an Emmy, known as the 'Founders Award,' at the 48th International Emmy Awards. The award, in recognition of his daily COVID-19 presentations, was presented by a star-studded cast that included actors Billy Crystal, Robert De Niro and Ben Stiller.

December 13, 2020: Lindsey Boylan, a former aide to the New York governor, took to Twitter to "give voice to the voiceless" and declare that Cuomo "sexually harassed me for years." Boylan, who previously described her professional experience with Cuomo as ["beyond toxic,"](#) detailed that Cuomo would frequently comment on her physical appearance.

She also asserted that she was not the only woman subjected to such harassment.

Cuomo responded to allegations at a news conference, claiming that Boylan has the right to "express her opinion," however, the allegations are "just not true."

January 28: [New York AG published a report](#) confirming the state was not logging coronavirus-related deaths that took place in hospitals as nursing home deaths. [Cuomo's Department of Health asserted](#) there was "no undercount," despite the AG's office asserting that nursing home residents who died in hospitals should be included in the state's log of nursing home deaths.

February 10: Records showed Melissa DeRosa, Cuomo's secretary, confirmed that the New York government concealed data regarding the COVID-19 death toll in nursing homes. ["We froze," DeRosa claimed,](#) referring to fears of a federal investigation.

February 24: Boylan [penned an article on Medium](#) alleging that Cuomo kissed her on the lips and, at one point, suggested they "play strip poker."

February 28: Charlotte Bennett, another former aide to Cuomo, [claimed that the New York governor sexually harassed her](#) and asked numerous questions about her sexual history and personal life. Cuomo claimed to the New York Times that he thought he was acting as a mentor to Bennett and that his actions were misinterpreted.

New York AG announced the intent to probe the sexual harassment allegations leveled against Cuomo.

Cuomo's office granted James permission to pursue the independent investigation the following day.

March 7: New York Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins (D) and New House Speaker Carl Heastie (D) urged Cuomo to resign, referring to his mounting scandals as a distraction. "New York is still in the midst of this pandemic and is still facing the societal, health and economic impacts of it. We need to govern without daily distraction," [said Stewart-Cousins](#). "For the good of the state, Governor Cuomo must resign."

March 8: Over a dozen female, Democratic lawmakers in the New York State Assembly issued a joint statement declaring they would "support" the AG's probe. That same day, New York State Assembly Minority Leader Will [Barclay \(R\)](#) [announced the introduction of an impeachment resolution](#) against the New York Governor.

[Another female aide made a complaint against Cuomo](#), alleging that she was called to the New York governor's Executive Mansion in Albany because he was struggling with a technical phone issue. While they were alone in a room on the second floor of Cuomo's residence, he allegedly closed the door, reached under the unnamed woman's blouse and began fondling her.

"I have never done anything like this," Cuomo said, saying that he would not speak further on the reports because he was "confident in the result of the attorney general's [forthcoming] report."

March 18: More allegations of Cuomo's sexual misconduct were [reported by the Daily Beast](#) and [Ronan Farrow](#), who landed an extensive interview from Boylan. She previously said she was not interested in talking to reporters.

April 13: New York State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli issued a letter to AG James authorizing a probe into the "alleged commission of any indictable offense or offenses in violation of" laws prohibiting public officials from utilizing state resources for private purposes."

July 17: Independent investigators appointed by the New York AG questioned Cuomo as part of the state probe into allegations that he sexually harassed several women.

July 23: US Department of Justice announced it would not open a civil rights probe into New York's handling of COVID-19-related deaths at nursing homes.

August 3: The New York AG's independent probe, 179 other individuals, determined that Cuomo's actions toward 11 women - many of whom happened to be government employees - violated multiple state and federal laws. Investigators concluded the New York governor sexually harassed the women "by engaging in unwanted groping, kissing, and hugging."

Cuomo claimed the allegations leveled against him are "just not who I am." "I want you to know directly from me that I never touched anyone inappropriately or made inappropriate sexual advances," he asserted.

August 10: Cuomo announced he would be resigning from his position as New York governor in two weeks. New York Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul is set to become the first female governor of the Empire State.

"I agree with Governor Cuomo's decision to step down. It is the right thing to do and in the best interest of New Yorkers," [she tweeted on Tuesday](#). "As someone who has served at all levels of government and is next in the line of succession, I am prepared to lead as New York State's 57th Governor."

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'I've Had It': Rachel Uchitel Reveals Details of Her \$8 Million, Post-Affair NDA With Tiger Woods by [Evan Craighead](#)

Earlier this year, HBO released "Tiger," a two-part documentary on the life of 15-time major winner Tiger Woods. The HBO special included an exclusive interview with Rachel Uchitel, a former overseer of VIP operations for Tao Asian Bistro and Nightclub, who rose to infamy after it was revealed in 2009 that Woods had an affair with her.

Months after the premiere of HBO's "Tiger," Uchitel revealed in a [new interview with the New York Times](#) that Woods' legal team is now accusing her of violating a more than 30-page, \$8 million non-disclosure agreement (NDA) regarding details of their notorious affair.

"His lawyers are saying, 'We want all your text messages and here's the price,'" she recalled of the deal, "and you're like 'screw you' and you move into deal-maker mode and all of a sudden, it's the rest of your life."

According to Uchitel, the deal ultimately cost her the right to defend herself against the onslaught of attacks against her character that continue to this day, 12 years after news of Woods' affair broke headlines.

Per the NDA, she was restricted from "directly or indirectly, verbally or otherwise" discussing the golf star's "lifestyle, proclivities, customs, private conduct, fitness, habits, sexual matters, familial matters" and other associated topics. Famed women's rights attorney Gloria Allred represented Uchitel during this time.

The NDA also expressed that Uchitel could not discuss that she entered into the agreement. She explained that she agreed to be interviewed for the HBO documentary back in 2019 because she "wanted for once to be the one to narrate my story."

During her sit-down for the special, which did not involve Woods himself, Uchitel detailed that the golf star would beg her to come to his tournaments because he "needed me." She also claimed that he "unplug" from the pressures of life when he was around her.

Uchitel also claimed that, during their last meeting, Woods urged her to "get as much as you can" via the NDA with his legal team.

According to her account to the New York Times, Uchitel was initially set to receive \$5 million upfront from the agreement, and annual \$1 million payments over the next three years.

However, Uchitel claimed that she only initially pocketed \$2 million after she paid associated taxes and Allred's fee, which by itself was around \$1 million.

Furthermore, when it came time for the annual payments, she never received the funds. Uchitel believes this may have been because of her appearance on Season Four of VH1's "Celebrity Rehab with Dr. Drew" for her struggles with both alcohol and opioids.

Uchitel's financial troubles led her to file for [Chapter 7 bankruptcy](#), reporting a monthly income of \$2,000 in child support and around \$3,400 in unemployment benefits.

She specifically told the Times that Michael Holtz, one of Woods' lawyers, has threatened to put her in financial ruin.

"If you get a job, I'll come after your wages. If you get married, I'll go after your joint bank account. I will come after you for the rest of your life," she said, recounting a conversation that occurred prior to the January release of the HBO documentary.

"I've had it with NDAs," Uchitel told the outlet.

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'It Was Past Time': US Lawmakers, Netizens Rejoice After Cuomo Resigns Amid Impeachment Probe

by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

A week after an explosive report described a toxic work environment for women working within the Cuomo administration, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced that he would be resigning from office not because he was admitting guilt to sexual harassment accusations, but because of his desire to direct attention back to state government.

Moments after New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced that he would be resigning from his post on Tuesday, praises and cheers began to trickle in across social media from everyday netizens to US lawmakers, with many emphasizing that it was only right for Cuomo to hit the road.

Cuomo's announcement indicated that his resignation would be effective in approximately two weeks' time, and that he would be replaced by Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul, who will become the first woman to hold the coveted governorship.

Although Cuomo resigned not because he was admitting to any wrongdoing, he stated his decision came as part of a larger effort to no longer distract the Empire State from the important work that still needed to be done.

"In my mind, I have never crossed the line with anyone," he said in his first public address since the damning sexual harassment report was first released by the New York Attorney General's Office. "But I didn't realize the extent to which the line has been redrawn."

"Thank you for letting me serve you. It has been the honor of a lifetime," Cuomo added.

And with that sign off came a chorus of cheers from the bevy of individuals who called for Cuomo to step aside.

Lindsey Boylan, who was the very first staffer to raise allegations against Cuomo, took to social media to [address](#) the development, noting that it was a "tragedy that so many [individuals] stood by and watched these abuses happen."

"I am thankful for the Attorney General, the investigators and all those who have pursued the truth despite intimidation and threats of retaliation," she added. "Most importantly, I am in awe of the strength of the other women who risked everything to come forward. My hope always has been that this will make it safer for other women to report their own harassment and abuse."

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, who was among the first to blast Cuomo's defense of "cultural" and "generational" differences, highlighted that the only reason the governor was out the door was because of "survivors bravely telling their stories."

"It was past time for Andrew Cuomo to resign and it's for the good of all New York," the city official underscored in his [Twitter post](#).

While fellow politician US Sen. Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) [rejoiced](#) in the resignation, Rep. Ted Lieu (D-CA) [pointed out](#) that Cuomo ultimately only decided to part ways with the governorship "because he was going to be impeached and he knew it would be successful."

In fact, the New York State Assembly revealed on Monday that it would be holding multiple public and private hearings through the remainder of the months with the goal of presenting impeachment articles within a matter of "[several weeks](#)."

US President Joe Biden, who has in the past been accused of [sexual misconduct](#), [told reporters](#) Friday that he "respected" Cuomo's decision to step down, and that "women should be believed when they make accusations that... make sense."

However, many netizens also pointed out how it was outrage over the sexual harassment report, and not the nursing home deaths that forced the resignation. The state assembly's impeachment probe was expected to determine whether the Cuomo administration had in fact deliberately hidden the full scope of the nursing home deaths at the peak of the pandemic.

"The resignation of notorious Democrat New York governor, Andrew Cuomo is not only long overdue, but comes far too late for thousands who suffered and died by his actions," Vlad Davidiuk, a Republican strategist and political analyst, told Sputnik in reference to the [nursing home scandal](#).

"His well-documented role in causing the preventable deaths of thousands of elderly New Yorkers who were sent to their doom in nursing homes on his orders during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic was largely ignored by a complicit media," he added. "The fight for justice and accountability is just beginning. Cuomo should be immediately prosecuted."

Echoing Davidiuk's remarks, conservative political commentator and lawyer Marc Little further indicated that if findings emerge about the nursing home debacle, "it would be an indictment not only against the Democrat party whose narrative was that he was a standard-bearer in responding to covid, but also an indictment of the media that propped him up as a savior."

Looking ahead, Dr. Nicholas Waddy, an associate professor of history at Alfred State, SUNY, commented that Cuomo's ouster and sexual harassment allegations will inevitably "continue to haunt the progressive movement."

"If Cuomo's accusers are to be believed, then why not Biden's?" Waddy questioned. "America as a whole is grappling with a similar issue: How are we to move forward politically, when accusations against prominent politicians are almost always 'litigated' in the press, rather than in court?"

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Bowing Out - Cartoon

Earlier, the New York State Assembly indicated that it was also investigating Cuomo to determine if he used state resources to write a book, and whether or not his administration deliberately falsified reports on COVID-19 deaths in state nursing homes.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced Tuesday that he would be stepping down from his post in exactly two weeks' time, as both the tides turned against him and the New York State Assembly raised [impeachment proceedings](#).

Exactly a week after the New York Attorney General's Office released the sexual harassment report to the public, Cuomo [informed](#) New Yorkers that he needed to resign in order to redirect attention and "let government get back to governing."

The report, which was conducted by independent investigators, effectively found that nearly a dozen current and former staffers had been sexually harassed by Cuomo while working under his leadership. Additionally, it was detailed that several insiders had worked to protect the governor from allegations, and even went so far as to character assassinate accusers.

Cuomo, who also faced impeachment proceedings over alleged misuse of state resources and the [nursing home scandal](#), has continued to deny any wrongdoing, going so far as saying that he "never crossed the line with anyone." Earlier, Cuomo defended his up-close-and-personal embraces by saying they were "cultural" and "generational" differences."

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Football Superstar Lionel Messi Officially Signs Contract With France's PSG Club
by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

Shocking the football world, FC Barcelona announced just last week that Messi would no longer be part of the famed club after ongoing contract discussions had hit "financial and structural obstacles" that prevented either party from moving forward together. The Argentine player had been with the club since late 2003.

Football superstar Lionel Messi officially signed a two-year contract with France's Paris Saint-Germain Football Club (PSG) on Tuesday, bringing to a close days' worth of speculation on where the footballer would go after suddenly leaving FC Barcelona.

The contract between Messi and the Parisian club includes the option for a third year, and will reportedly see him earn at least €35million net per year on top of a hefty €25 million signing bonus.

The Paris-based club confirmed the development with a video post shared on Twitter that showed the Argentine sporting a #30 jersey.

Messi had famously sported the #10 jersey at FC Barcelona, however, that number is currently being used by Brazilian player Neymar da Silva Santos Júnior.

"I am excited to begin a new chapter of my career at Paris Saint-Germain," Messi said in a [statement](#) released by the club. "Everything about the club matches my football ambitions."

"I know how talented the squad and the coaching staff are here. I am determined to help build something special for the club and the fans, and I am looking forward to stepping out onto the pitch at the Parc des Princes," he added.

Earlier reports had suggested the champion footballer would either go to Manchester City or PSG on account of both teams being the only that had a vast enough budget to afford the highly-coveted player. However, shortly after signing on Aston Villa's [Jack Grealish](#), Man City issued a statement indicating that they would not be pursuing Messi, leaving the option open for PSG.

Nasser Al-Khelaifi, chairman and CEO of the club, further noted that adding Messi onto the team roster, which also includes French megastar Kylian Mbappe and Spanish footballer Sergio Ramos, will continue "a very strategic and successful transfer window for the club."

"I am delighted that Lionel Messi has chosen to join Paris Saint-Germain and we are proud to welcome him and his family to Paris. He has made no secret of his desire to continue competing at the very highest level and winning trophies, and naturally our ambition as a club is to do the same," he added.

The confirmation came hours after the six-time Ballon d'Or winner had arrived in Paris on a private jet with his wife and kids and cleared a medical review before the transfer was made official.

Prior to his departure from FC Barcelona, Messi had been with the Spanish club since 2003, going on to win 10 La Liga champions, 7 Copa del Rey titles and four UEFA Champion League trophies, among a bevy of other awards and recognition. Talk of leaving FC Barcelona had initially surfaced in August 2020, after Barcelona's 8-2 loss against Bayern Munich in the Champions League quarterfinals.

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Tropical Storm Likely to Thrash Caribbean Islands Before Heading for Florida, Forecasters Warn
by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

Ahead of the official start to the 2021 hurricane season, the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicted the season would see between 13 and 20 named storms, and that as many as five would be major hurricanes. However, recent predictions have spelled out a much more concerning season that may have 7 to 10 major cyclones.

The sixth named storm of the 2021 hurricane season could soon be declared as watchful forecasters are tracking a system in the Caribbean that's set to ravage the region before making a beeline straight to the US mainland.

Current predictions released by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) indicate that the potential sixth-named storm of the Atlantic hurricane season could form over the next several hours as it makes its way through the northern Caribbean islands before bringing heavy rainfall and gusty winds to Florida.

Officials have emphasized that the system will more than likely turn into a tropical storm late on Tuesday. A forecast released by NOAA suggests that outerbands of the looming storm may bring rainfall to the Sunshine State by Friday before eventually towering over the state on Saturday.

The US hurricane agency currently places the system -presently named Potential Tropical Cyclone Six - about 105 miles south-east of Ponce, Puerto Rico, with maximum sustained winds reaching about 35 miles per hour.

Moving west-northwest at a pace of 17 miles per hour, the storm is forecasted to pass through the US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico overnight Tuesday, and have reached the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands by Thursday.

“Gradual strengthening is forecast during the next day or so and the disturbance is expected to become a tropical storm tonight,” reads the agency’s [latest advisory update](#). “Some weakening is likely while the system interacts with Hispaniola on Wednesday.”

Estimates provided by NOAA suggest as much as six inches of rainfall could fall across the region and create conditions for mudslides, flash floods and a rapid spike in water levels within waterways in the US Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.

The latest weather update comes after NOAA’s Climate Prediction Center issued a [mid-season update](#) on their 2021 hurricane season outlook. Although officials initially forecasted that 13 to 20 storms would be named, their recent update indicates that anywhere between 15 and 21 named storms could be documented. Of that tally, as many as 10 could be hurricanes and five could be major cyclones.

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US Consumer Prices Up 5.4% in Year to July - Labor Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - The US Consumer Price Index (CPI), a measure of inflation, grew by 5.4 percent over a one-year period in June, the Labor Department announced on Tuesday.

“In July, the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers rose 0.5 percent on a seasonally adjusted basis; rising 5.4 percent over the last 12 months, not seasonally adjusted,” the department said, breaking down the data.

The CPI was, however, virtually unchanged from June, when it rose by a similar 5.4 percent for its fastest one-year growth in 13 years.

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US Demands China Immediately Release Two Canadian Citizens Charged With Spying – Blinken

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a statement on Wednesday demanded Chinese authorities immediately and unconditionally release two Canadian nationals on trial over espionage charges.

"We stand with the international community in calling for the People's Republic of China (PRC) to release, immediately and unconditionally, Canadian citizens Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig," the statement said. "Mr. Spavor and Mr. Kovrig have not received the minimal procedural protections during their more than two-and-a-half-year arbitrary detention, and we stand with more than 60 countries who endorsed the recent Declaration Against Arbitrary Detention in State-to-State Relations."

Both US and Canada called upon China to provide full consular access to Spavor and Kovrig while Blinken urged Beijing to release all individuals who have been allegedly arbitrarily detained, the statement said.

Earlier in the day, Spavor, detained by China in late 2018, was sentenced to 11 years in prison by a Chinese court on espionage charges. The court also called for Spavor's deportation and confiscation of some \$10,000 of personal property. It was not immediately clear when the Canadian could be forced to leave China.

Kovrig, detained at the same time as Spavor, is awaiting a verdict following his trial, which ended in March.

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RPT - US, Russian Activists Commemorate 280-Year Anniversary of Russia Discovering Alaska

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - Russian and US scientists, civil society leaders, religious figures and others are commemorating the 280-year anniversary of the Russian voyagers discovering Alaska, Historical and Education Society Russian America President Vladimir Kolychev told Sputnik.

"Currently, we are holding a range of events in Moscow and in other cities and places in Russia and the United States under the joint slogan 'Europe Discovers Alaska,' to honor the great geographical discoveries," Kolychev said.

In July of 1741, two Russian packet-boats from the Second Kamchatka Expedition - St. Peter and St. Pavel - reached the shores of Alaska as commandeered by the renowned Russian seafarers Vitus Bering and Alexei Chirikov.

"It was an epoch of great geographical achievements in the northern part of the Pacific ocean, when Alaska was discovered, including the Alexander Archipelago and the Aleutian Islands," Kolychev said.

The Orthodox churches in Russia and the United States, including the cities of Moscow, Perm, Irkutsk, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy, Vologda, Penza, Tula region, Juneau, Garfield, Minneapolis, San Francisco and others, as well as Fort Ross in the US state of California, are commemorating the anniversary by ringing the church bells, he said.

The US-based Congress of Russian Americans and the Russian American Cultural Heritage Center have supported the commemoration by arranging for church services and bell ringing as well as by informing people about the celebratory events.

"We also organized a special online and in-person conference 'Europe Discovers America' in the Moscow Garden Ring museum with participation of experts from both countries," Kolychev said.

The experts discussed historical topics related to Russian America, including two expeditions in the 18th century as well as the Russian settlements in Alaska, he said.

"We have found again and again that the history of Russian America and Alaska is interesting not only to Russians, but to people in different part in the world," Kolychev added.

Russia maintained its colonies, named Russian America, in the 18th and 19th centuries. In 1867, Russia sold its last remaining possessions to the United States for \$7.2 million.

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UPDATE 2 - US Senate Approves \$1Trln Infrastructure Bill, Some Republicans Slam 'Wasteful' Spending

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - The US Senate approved a \$1 trillion infrastructure package, sending the measure to the House for consideration.

The Senate passed the legislation with a 69-30 vote on Tuesday, receiving votes from prominent Republicans such as minority leader Mitch McConnell and Lindsay Graham. The bill includes \$550 billion in new spending for bridges, roads, water infrastructure, electric vehicle infrastructure, strengthening energy grids, and expanding internet access across the United States.

The measure also funds social programs, including COVID-19 relief assistance.

The House of Representatives will take up the bill when lawmakers reconvene at the Capitol in late September after taking a couple of weeks off.

However, a handful of senators released statements slamming what they saw as a suspicious process and wasteful spending.

"The bill was negotiated in secret, rushed through the process without meaningful opportunities to have input, and adds a net increase of \$350 billion to the national debt. I can't vote for a bill like that," Senator Marco Rubio said in a statement after Tuesday's vote.

Senator Mike Lee said he was disappointed that the Senate passed the "irresponsible" package. "It drastically expands federal power; it increases spending without legitimate 'pay-fors'; it exacerbates our already dangerous inflation; and it facilitates burdensome taxes and regulations that will hamper and harm our infrastructure," Lee said in a statement.

Lee said it is for these reasons that he is also concerned with the \$3.5 trillion budget plan the Senate is working on now, which is due for a vote near midnight or early on Wednesday.

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Canadian Prosecutor Says No One Received 'Fairer' Hearing Than Huawei CFO Meng

TORONTO, August 10 (Sputnik) - The extradition process against Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou could not be any fairer, Crown attorney Robert Frater told a British Columbia Supreme Court judge, rejecting the defense's appeal to end the proceedings.

The final arguments in the nearly 19-month extradition process against the Huawei executive continued Tuesday, with lawyers representing the Attorney General of Canada (AGC), on behalf of the United States, making the case before Associate Justice Heather Holmes that the Huawei executive's defense is nothing more than a concoction of mostly baseless assertions, at times, held together loosely by "conspiracy theories."

Meng's legal team, which counts more than half-dozen lawyers, is arguing that the United States' bid to have her extradited south of the border to face justice for fraud charges should be denied because she is the victim of an abuse of process.

This defense is based on four components, or branches, which say that the sum of former US President Donald Trump's comments, procedural errors during the executive's arrest, and a misleading case built by US prosecutors, one which allegedly violates international law, amounts to an abuse of process.

"Our general position on this [case] is: One, there is no misconduct to accumulate and, two, none for impugned conduct, by itself or added to any other conduct, would justify a stay," Frater told the court on Tuesday, emphasizing that "no person sought has enjoyed a fairer hearing than Ms. Meng."

The lead legal counsel for the Canadian government argued that the defense has "greatly" exaggerated Trump's words and that if his words infringed on Meng's Charter right to fair trial, then a stay of the extradition process should have been pursued immediately, based solely on the former President's comments.

Throughout the proceedings, Meng's legal counsel has placed particular emphasis on Trump's December 2018 interview with Reuters – conducted just days following Meng's arrest – in which he asserted that he would intervene in the case brought forward by the Justice Department against Meng, if it would be beneficial to US national interests.

On Monday, Meng's chief legal representative, Richard Peck, said Trump's comments indicated he wanted to "ransom" Meng in exchange for China's capitulation in trade negotiations between Washington and Beijing.

Frater rejected Peck's assertions, saying that Trump's words did not represent a threat, while noting that the Biden administration has stayed the course regarding the extradition process.

"We gave you the words of the current President and the current Attorney General, which show that a forward-looking remedy, which abuse of process is, is unnecessary," the crown attorney said.

Frater also dismissed claims that Meng's Charter rights were violated by Canadian authorities during her three-hour detention at Vancouver's international airport and that the arrest process was riddled with procedural errors, which forms the basis for the second branch of abuse of process.

The prosecutor said that out of the 34 allegations of misconduct brought forward by the defense, only one can be classified as an error, which itself caused "no prejudice to Ms. Meng."

During the arrest at Vancouver's International Airport, Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) agents sealed the executive's mobile devices special bags, designed to prevent remote

wiping, and transferred it to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) but not before a border agent obtained passcodes to the phones from Meng and placed them in the bags. Canadian Justice Department lawyers have argued that there is no evidence Canadian law enforcement officials turned over information about Meng's electronic devices to the FBI. Frater added that border screening measures do not afford individuals the right against self-incrimination, suggesting, citing relevant case law, that the passcode transfer does not represent a breach of law.

The Canadian prosecution's top attorney also rallied against insinuations that Canadian police and border agents were acting at the behest of US law enforcement agencies when the procedural errors were committed. In the early phase of the hearings, lawyers for the Huawei executive argued that the arrest and the alleged misconduct were part of a "covert investigation" targeting Meng.

"The US-led conspiracy theory was needed as the glue to hold together the second branch abuse argument, without it that argument falls apart," Frater said.

Meng, the daughter of Huawei founder and CEO Ren Zhengfei, was arrested on December 1, 2018 at Vancouver International Airport during a layover stop at the request of the US government.

The US Justice Department alleges that Meng committed fraud by misleading HSBC into approving more than \$100 million in transactions that contravened US sanctions on Iran from 2010 to 2014 through a Tehran-based shell company, Skycom.

Meng remains under house arrest in Vancouver, although is free to traverse the region in the company of state-imposed guards outside of her 11:00 p.m to 6:00 a.m. curfew.

The final arguments are expected to wrap up on August 20, with committal hearings, where the judge will decide whether or not to proceed with the extradition request, set to begin on Wednesday.

Holmes is expected give her recommendation on the United States' extradition request to AGC and Justice David Lametti later in the fall. Lametti has the final say on the request and has the right to refuse extradition in exceptional circumstances.

Analysts say Lametti's decision could hinge on developments in China, where the fate of multiple Canadians is held in the balance.

On Tuesday, the Canadian state broadcaster CBC reported that a Chinese court upheld the death penalty for Canadian Robert Schellenberg for drug smuggling. Additionally, two Canadians, who Ottawa alleges are being held in retaliation for Meng's arrest – former diplomat Michael Kovrig and businessman Michael Spavor – are expected to learn their fate in the coming days.

Kovrig and Spavor were tried in a closed trial in March. Both have been charged with charged with espionage.

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NASA Launches Cygnus NG-16 Cargo Spacecraft for ISS Resupply Mission

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - NASA successfully launched a Cygnus NG-16 Cargo Craft, which now headed toward the International Space Station (ISS).

The cargo capsule was launched from Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia shortly after 6:00 p.m. local time on Tuesday.

Both the Cygnus cargo spacecraft and the Antares rocket are developed by aerospace company Northrop Grumman as part of NASA's Commercial Resupply Services program.

It will then take approximately two days to make contact with the ISS, at which point the capsule will be docked and unloaded onto the vessel using a robotic arm for assistance.

The capsule is loaded with roughly 8,200 pounds of cargo for the ISS crew, including supplies, research equipment, and hardware – the heaviest load taken by Cygnus so far.

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US Adds Israel to 'Do Not Travel' List Amid Spike of Coronavirus Cases - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - The US State Department on Tuesday issued an advisory informing Americans that it has included Israel on its "Do Not Travel" list of countries after a marked increase in the number of coronavirus cases in that country.

The advisory list, which is updated weekly, is primarily based on US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Travel Health Notices (THNs) and secondary factors such as commercial flight availability, restrictions on US citizen entry and impediments to obtaining coronavirus test results within three calendar days.

Israel is joined in the so-called Level Four category by other nations experiencing a surge in cases, including Iceland, France, Laos, Thailand, Eswatini, Aruba and French Polynesia.

The number of cases in Israel has increased in the past couple of months despite the fact that more than 60 percent of the population has been vaccinated against the novel coronavirus.

Israeli media has reported that a large part of the new cases is among those who have received the vaccines.

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Mexican Auto Parts Maker to Provide Backpay for Alleged Labor Abuses - US Trade Office

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - Workers dismissed for trying to unionize at Mexico's Tridonex will get a minimum nine months of combined backpay and severance from the auto parts firm in the second labor dispute resolved under the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement, the Office of the United States Trade Representative said in a statement.

"Workers at home and abroad deserve the right to collectively bargain for a fair wage and decent working conditions without the fear of retaliation," US Trade Representative Kathrine Tai said on Monday.

Total backpay and severance for the workers, who number at least 154, will be more than \$600,000, according to the statement.

It was the second time that the USMCA's Rapid Response Labor Mechanism was used to resolve a dispute in favor of workers in Mexico, said Tai, who noted that the outcome demonstrated USTR's worker-centered trade policy as well.

"It also signals to workers here at home and around the world that the US government is committed to taking decisive steps to defend workers' rights and ensure that the benefits of trade are enjoyed by all workers," US Labor Secretary Marty Walsh added in the statement. In addition to the commitments made by Tridonex, the Mexican government agreed to help facilitate workers' rights training at the facility, as well as monitor any union representation election and investigate workers' rights violations, the statement said.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY
WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik)

AFGHANISTAN

- * President Joe Biden said on Tuesday that he does not regret his decision to withdraw US forces from Afghanistan as the Taliban gains territory in the country.
- * Biden continues to believe that it is not inevitable the Taliban will take over Afghanistan. White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said.
- * The United Nations remains in touch with the parties in Afghanistan to find a political solution to the conflict there amid reports of violence the organization finds extremely concerning, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said.
- * The Afghan government delegation at the Doha talks called for an end to hostilities and urged the Taliban to take a political approach to solving the crisis in the country through peace talks, Abdullah Abdullah, the head of the Kabul delegation said.
- * The levels of violence in Afghanistan are unacceptably high and run contrary to the Taliban's pledges under the 2020 agreement with the US, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said.
- * US conducts daily evaluations of the security environment in Afghanistan to determine the staffing posture at the embassy in Kabul which is in constant contact with the top US officials regarding the dynamics of the situation, Price said.

BELARUS REVIEWS WESTERN SANCTIONS

- * Belarus will thoroughly evaluate new sanctions imposed by the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada and will take adequate retaliatory measures, the Belarusian Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday.
- * Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko has instructed the government to work out a set of additional measures in response to new Western sanctions against Minsk, his spokeswoman Natalya Eismont said.

NEW YORK GOVERNOR CUOMO RESIGNS

* New York Governor Andrew Cuomo said on Tuesday that he was resigning over charges he sexually harassed nearly a dozen colleagues and accepted full responsibility for his actions although he characterized the allegations against him as "false."

* Biden said he respects Cuomo's decision to step down as New York Governor over the sexual harassment allegations.

* Biden was not notified about Cuomo's decision to step down over sexual abuse allegations, White House spokesperson Jen Psaki said.

RUSSIAN MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

* The first regiment of Russia's strategic missile systems with Avangard hypersonic gliding unit will enter combat duty with the strategic missile forces by the end of the year, the commander of the 13th missile division, Maj. Gen. Andrei Cherevko, said on Tuesday.

* The Russian armed forces will receive 20 newest T-14 Armata tanks until the end of the year, Deputy Defense Minister Alexey Krivoruchko said.

* State tests of Russia's Zircon hypersonic missile will be completed this year, Krivoruchko said.

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US Lawmaker Wants Data on Nursing Home Deaths Before Governor Cuomo Leaves Office

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, who announced his resignation over sexual harassment allegations, needs to end a coverup of nursing home deaths due to his misguided order early in the pandemic by publicly releasing data before he leaves office, US House Republican Whip Steve Scalise said on Tuesday.

"Now that he is finally resigning, it is long overdue for Governor Cuomo to end the coverup and be transparent by releasing the data from his deadly mandate that nursing homes take COVID-19-positive patients, which led to the untimely deaths of thousands of seniors. All those families who lost loved ones deserve answers and the ability to seek closure," Scalise said in a press release.

Earlier on Tuesday, Cuomo announced his resignation with which he likely bypassed an impeachment probe by New York legislature based on an independent report commissioned by state Attorney General Letitia James charging the three-term governor with harassing 11 women. Lawmakers were also examining charges that a Cuomo order requiring nursing homes to admit coronavirus positive residents resulted in thousands of deaths, according to media reports.

"If Governor Cuomo refuses to release this data, then Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul must do the right thing and end the coverup by making this nursing home information public when she takes the oath as governor. Grieving families across the Empire State deserve answers about the real reason why so many seniors died of COVID-19 in nursing homes and long-term care facilities," Scalise said.

The release included a timeline of the New York State's nursing home scandal beginning with a March 2020 Cuomo order that sent thousands of coronavirus positive patients back to senior-care facilities after their discharge from hospitals.

A report by James' office in January 2021 charged the governor's office with understating nursing home deaths by about 50 percent and said Cuomo's order "[may] have contributed to increased risk of nursing home resident infection, and subsequent fatalities" the release said. By then, more than 15,000 seniors had died in the New York State's nursing homes, according to the release.

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Wall Street's S&P, Dow Hit All-Time Highs After Landmark US Infrastructure Deal

NEW YORK, August 10 (Sputnik) - Wall Street's blue-chip and industrial stocks hit historic highs on Tuesday after the Biden administration managed to secure a bipartisan Senate approval for a \$1 trillion infrastructure deal.

The S&P 500, which groups the top 500 stocks on the New York Stock Exchange, continued its record-setting streak by rewriting for a second time in three sessions its all-time peak, with a surge to 4,445. The blue-chip index closed the day at 4,437 for a gain of almost 5 points or 0.1 percent.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average, the broadest US equity barometer on the NYSE, made a historic peak at 35,285 points before finishing the session at 35,265 for a gain of 163 points or 0.5 percent.

The technology-heavy Nasdaq Composite, which includes Big Tech names such as Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix and Google, did not hit a record high but came as close as it could to one, rising 0.5% to 14,895, less than two points shy of the previous peak.

Stocks rallied as the Senate on Tuesday approved a roughly \$1 trillion proposal to improve the nation's roads, bridges, pipes, ports and Internet connections, advancing a historic burst in federal spending after years of failed attempts on Capitol Hill to invest anew in the country's aging infrastructure.

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Biden Says Does Not Believe Has Power to Stop US States From Banning Face Masks

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Tuesday he does not believe he has the authority to stop certain governors from banning mask mandates in their states.

"I don't believe that I do," Biden said when asked if he has presidential powers to intervene in US states that ban mask mandates, but added that his administration is looking into the matter.

The governors of Texas and Florida previously issued executive orders banning mask mandates that remain in place.

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US Energy Security Envoy to Mitigate Risks Posed by Nord Stream 2 - Blinken

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken confirmed in a statement on Tuesday that Washington has appointed Amos Hochstein as Energy Security Envoy to implement the US-German deal on Nord Stream 2 pipeline project.

"I am appointing Amos Hochstein to serve as the Department's Senior Advisor for Energy Security, underscoring the Administration's commitment to promote energy security for the United States and our allies and partners," Blinken said. "His immediate focus will be implementation of measures to reduce the risks posed by the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, as outlined in the July 21 Joint Statement of the United States and Germany on Support for Ukraine, European Energy Security, and our Climate Goals."

Hochstein was formerly the US Special Envoy and Coordinator for International Energy Affairs under President Barack Obama from 2014 to 2017. He stepped down from the supervisory board of Ukraine's Naftogaz in October 2020 and has prominently expressed opposition to the Nord Stream 2 project.

"This appointment demonstrates the Administration's resolve to utilize energy diplomacy to ensure the security of supply during this critical time of energy transition, push back against the Kremlin's use of energy as a geopolitical weapon, and to advance a more secure and sustainable energy future for Ukraine and frontline NATO and EU countries," Blinken said. In July, Germany and the US struck a deal that implies the completion of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline without the threat of American sanctions. Among the conditions stipulated in the deal, Germany vowed to prevent Russia from "using energy as a weapon" and to use all possible leverage to prolong Russian gas transit through Ukraine.

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Armed Men Abduct Libyan Government Official, Fate Unknown - UNSMIL

UNITED NATIONS, August 10 (Sputnik) - Libya's Chief of Staff for the First Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of National Unity (GNU) Rida Faraj Fraitis has been abducted by armed men in the capital of Tripoli and held at an unknown location since August 2, the UN Support Mission in that country (UNSMIL) said in a statement on Tuesday.

"[UNSMIL] is deeply concerned about the abduction and disappearance of Mr. Rida Faraj Fraitis, Chief of Staff for the First Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of GNU," the statement said. "Unidentified armed men abducted Mr. Fraitis with his colleague on 2 August

2021, following Mr Fraitis' visit to GNU premises in Tripoli. The fate and whereabouts of both Mr. Fraitis and his colleague remain unknown and UNSMIL fears for their safety and security.”

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Biden Says Does Not Regret Decision to Withdraw From Afghanistan Amid Taliban Advances

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden said on Tuesday that he does not regret his decision to withdraw US forces from Afghanistan as the Taliban movement (banned in Russia) continues to gain territory in the country.

“I do not regret my decision,” Biden said when asked about his decision to pullout out US troops from Afghanistan.

Biden also said his plans to withdraw US troops from Afghanistan remain unchanged.

The US president noted that the United States has trained more than 300,000 Afghan forces and the Afghan leaders must come together to fight for their country.

The United States continues to provide close air support, ensuring the Afghan Air Force is operable, resupplying Afghan forces with food and equipment and paying all their salaries, Biden said.

In recent days, the Taliban claimed to have taken control of a number of provincial capitals, including the cities of Zaranj and Farah. Kabul has denied that the Taliban succeeded making such advances.

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US Supports Lithuania, Condemns China's Retaliatory Actions Over Taiwan - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - The United States stands in solidarity with Lithuania regarding the latter's recent diplomatic dispute with China over Taiwan and condemns Beijing's retaliatory actions, US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Tuesday.

Earlier in the day, the Chinese Foreign Ministry announced it was recalling its ambassador from Vilnius after the Lithuanian authorities allowed Taiwan to open a representative office in the country.

“We do stand in solidarity with our NATO ally Lithuania, and we condemn the PRC's [China's] recent retaliatory actions, including the recall of Beijing's ambassador from Vilnius and demanding Lithuania recall its ambassador from Beijing. We support our European partners and our allies, as they develop mutually beneficial relations with Taiwan and resist the PRCs course of behavior,” Price said during a press briefing.

The United States holds the view that each country in the world should be able to determine its own way of engagement with Taiwan, Price added.

Official relations between China and Taiwan were severed in 1949, when the Kuomintang government led by Chiang Kai-shek fled to Taipei after being defeated by the Chinese Communist Party in the country's civil war. In the 1980s, Beijing and Taipei resumed informal contacts, and the central government proposed a "one country - two systems" model, which has been rejected by Taiwan.

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Biden Says He Respects Cuomo's Decision to Resign

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Tuesday that he respects Andrew Cuomo's decision to step down as New York Governor over the sexual harassment allegations.

"I respect the Governor's decision, and I respect the decision he made," Biden said at a briefing in the White House.

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Central American Triangle Now Trails Other Origins of Migrants at US Border - Report

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - The source of migrants attempting to cross the US southern border has shifted from the Central American Northern Triangle nations of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras to Mexico and elsewhere in the world, the PEW Research Center said in a report on Thursday.

"In June, 33 percent of migrant encounters involved Mexican citizens, up from 13 percent in May 2019," the report said. "Migration from countries other than Mexico and the Northern Triangle has also increased in recent months. Around a quarter of all encounters in June (26 percent) involved migrants from other countries, up from 9 percent in May 2019."

In contrast, people from the Northern Triangle countries accounted for 41 percent of encounters in June, down from 78 percent in May 2019, the report said.

PEW based its report on US Border Patrol data from June, reporting nearly 180,000 encounters with migrants along the US-Mexico border in June, the highest monthly total in more than two decades. Media reports say the as yet unreported July total is likely to hit 210,000.

The report also noted a surge in migration by single adults, which accounted for 64 percent of migrants discovered crossing the border in June compared with 28 percent in May 2019 while families accounted for 28 percent of border crossers, down from 64 percent in May 2019.

Encounters involving unaccompanied minors was largely unchanged.

May 2019 represented the peak of a migration surge that prompted a number of border controls imposed by former President Donald Trump - restrictions largely scrapped by the Biden administration.

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US Has Relocated 995 People From Afghanistan on 6 Flights - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - The United States has already organized six flights to relocate 995 people from Afghanistan who were employed by or on behalf of the US government, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Tuesday.

"As of today, six flights have landed in the United States. We have relocated, almost a 1,000 special immigrants and their family members... that number is in fact 995," Price said during a press briefing. "We are, of course, unable to preview upcoming flight schedules, but we expect to surpass that 1,000 number very shortly."

Price also said that 60 percent of the relocated Afghans have already departed Fort Lee to begin their new lives in the United States with assistance from the US Refugee Admissions Program.

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Biden Says Does Not Regret Decision to Withdraw From Afghanistan Amid Taliban Advances

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden said on Tuesday that he does not regret his decision to withdraw US forces from Afghanistan as the Taliban gains territory in the country.

"I do not regret my decision," Biden said when asked about his decision to pullout out US troops from Afghanistan.

Biden also said his plans to withdraw US troops from Afghanistan remain unchanged.

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NASA Failure Prompts Elon Musk Offer to Make Spacesuits for 2024 Moon Landing

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Spunik) – SpaceX founder Elon Musk offered to make lunar spacesuits for the Artemis mission after NASA announced it would not meet the 2024 deadline due to significant delays in the development of next-generation space apparel.

"SpaceX could do it if need be," Musk said on Twitter.

Musk's tweet followed a NASA Inspector General (IG) report saying that the US plans to land two astronauts on the lunar south pole 2024 are likely impossible due to delays in the developing suits for astronauts to exit their spacecraft and walk on the moon for the first time since the last Apollo landing in 1972.

The IG report said that NASA had already spent \$420 million to develop the spacesuits and that another \$625 million will be needed to complete the task.

As a result, the report said the suits won't be ready for flight until April 2025 at the earliest.

Space X developed its own pressurized spacesuits worn by astronauts for two flights in the company's Crew Dragon spacecraft to the International Space Station.

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US Evaluating Threats in Afghanistan Daily to Determine Staffing at Embassy– State Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) – US conducts daily evaluations of the security environment in Afghanistan to determine the staffing posture at the embassy in Kabul which is in constant contact with the top US officials regarding the dynamics of the situation, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Tuesday.

“Obviously, it is a challenging security environment [around the embassy in Kabul]. Were we able, were we confident, were we comfortable having a larger staffing presence there, we would. But we are evaluating the threat environment on a daily basis.” Price said at a press briefing. “The [US] embassy [in Kabul] is in regular contact with Washington, with most senior people in this [State Department] building, who in turn are in regular contact with our colleagues at the NSC [National Security Council] in the White House on this dynamic.”

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State Dept. Says Idea That Taliban Advance Unstoppable 'Not The Reality on The Ground'

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - The idea that the Taliban's ongoing offensive in Afghanistan is unstoppable is not the reality on the ground, US State Department Press Secretary Ned Price said during a press briefing on Tuesday.

“The idea that the continued Taliban advance is unstoppable, that there's nothing that can stand in the way, that we'll just have to watch it unfold, that is not the reality on the ground,” Price said. Price added that despite recent gains made by the Taliban, Afghanistan's government security forces still total roughly 300,000 strong, greatly outnumbering the Taliban in addition to having US and other international support.

The Taliban have been reclaiming large portions of the country as US and NATO forces near the completion of their withdrawal, resulting in what Price called “unacceptably high” and inconsistent with agreements made in February 2020.

The rise in violence has led the US to consider further drawdowns in staff at the embassy in Kabul, with officials expediting the decision-making process as the Taliban gains territory more quickly than anticipated.

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Facebook Says Removed Social Media Accounts from Russia Over COVID-19 Disinformation

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - Facebook said on Tuesday it removed some 300 social media accounts on Facebook and Instagram, mostly operated from Russia, because they posted anti-vaccine content.

"We removed 65 Facebook accounts and 243 Instagram accounts from Russia that we linked to Fazze, a subsidiary of a UK-registered marketing firm, whose operations were primarily conducted from Russia," the company said in a report. "Fazze is now banned from our platform. This operation targeted audiences primarily in India, Latin America and, to a much lesser extent, the United States."

Moscow has repeatedly denied all allegations of foreign interference.

Facebook said about \$650 was spent on anti-vaccine advertisements, primarily paid for in US dollars, euros and Russian rubles and focused on discrediting the AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccines, according to the report.

Some of the pages had between 24,000 and 55,000 followers, but for the most part failed to build an audience after their posts received little to no engagement, the report said.

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Violence Levels in Afghanistan Contrary to Taliban Pledges Under 2020 Deal – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) – The levels of violence in Afghanistan amid the ongoing Taliban (banned in Russia) offensive are unacceptably high and run counter the group's pledges under the 2020 agreement with the US, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Tuesday.

"Certainly, the levels of violence do not appear consistent with what the Taliban pledged in that agreement [from February 2020]," Price said at a press briefing.

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Cuomo to Resign Over Sexual Harassment Allegations, Effective in 14 Days

NEW YORK, August 10 (Sputnik) - New York Governor Andrew Cuomo said on Tuesday that he was resigning amid allegations that he sexually harassed nearly a dozen colleagues and accepted full responsibility for his actions while characterizing the accusations as "false."

"I think that given the circumstances, the best way I can help now is if I step aside and let government get back to governing. My resignation will be effective in 14 days," Cuomo said at a news conference.

Cuomo also attributed the COVID-19 emergency as a reason for his decision to quit.

"This situation by its current trajectory will generate months of political and legal controversy. It will cost taxpayers millions of dollars, it will brutalize people. Months of litigation time and money that government should spend managing COVID, and guarding against the Delta variant ... would be wasted. I cannot be the cause of that." said Cuomo, who just a year ago was an establishment star for his handling of New York's coronavirus crisis.

The 63-year-old Cuomo was a year from finishing his decade-long three terms as governor when allegations began surfacing that he had covered up nursing home COVID deaths as fatalities that occurred naturally in intensive care units.

Soon after that, Cuomo was accused of inappropriate gestures, comments and actions toward multiple women he had interacted with at work.

Matters came to a head a week ago when New York State Attorney General Letitia James announced that a months-long investigation into allegations against Cuomo concluded that he harassed at least 11 women colleagues, including a policewoman assigned to protect him and an executive assistant, in violation of state and federal law. The investigation also revealed that he and a senior aide attempted to retaliate against the victims.

Since then, President Joe Biden, a long-time political ally of Cuomo, has led a growing number of lawmakers and officials in the Democratic party calling on the governor to resign.

The New York State Assembly has told Cuomo's lawyers to provide evidence they may have in his favor in impeachment proceedings scheduled to begin next week against the governor.

Cuomo maintained on Tuesday that to his mind, he had not done "no wrong," saying there had been "generational and cultural shifts" he wasn't aware of as a person who believed in expressing himself with touches.

Some of the allegations that he groped women colleagues, touched intimate parts such as their breasts, were also "false" he said.

"I take full responsibility for my actions," Cuomo said. "I have been too familiar with people. My sense of humor can be insensitive and off-putting. I do hug and kiss people, casually women and men. I have done it all my life, it's who I've been since I can remember. In my mind, I've never crossed the line with anyone but I didn't realize the extent to which the line has been redrawn."

It is not clear whether his resignation would absolve Cuomo from criminal investigations New York police were already pursuing in relation to the harassment allegations against him.

Cuomo said New York's lieutenant governor, Kathy Hochul, will step in as interim state governor. Hochul was quoted as saying by US media on Tuesday that Cuomo's resignation was "the right thing to do."

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US Considering Drawdown of US Embassy Staff in Kabul as Taliban Advances - Reports

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - The United States is considering a further drawdown of US officials at the embassy in Kabul as the Taliban (banned in Russia) continue to gain territory in Afghanistan, CNN reported on Tuesday citing two sources familiar with the matter. US officials are expediting the decision-making process after seeing the Taliban gain territory at a much faster pace than expected, the report said.

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Texas Supreme Court Allows Governor to Arrest Democrats Who Left State - Order

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - The Texas Supreme Court approved a request by Governor Greg Abbot and State House Speaker Dade Phelan on Tuesday that would allow for the arrest of state lawmakers who are absent for the state's second special session. The court issued a stay on the request, approving a petition for writ of mandamus by Abbot and Phelan. This overturns a prior ruling by a district judge in Austin that blocked the arrest of the lawmakers.

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Probe Finds New Jersey Women Prison Allowed Sexual Assault - US Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - A probe into the practices at the Edna Mahan Correction Facility for Women in the US state of New Jersey has found that systemic deficiencies in running the facility allowed for sexual abuse of the prisoners to take place, the Justice Department said on Tuesday.

"Our civil rights investigation revealed systemic and long-standing deficiencies in training, supervision and reporting at Edna Mahan, deficiencies that allowed the sexual abuse of prisoners to occur unabated," Acting US Attorney Rachael Honig said.

The investigation began in April of 2018 and two years later the Justice Department provided New Jersey with written notice of the alleged unlawful conditions and remedial measures necessary to address them. The Justice Department concluded there is reasonable cause to believe the institutions violated the Eighth Amendment of the US Constitution by failing to protect prisoners from sexual abuse by staff.

The investigation prompted on Tuesday the US Attorney's Office and the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division to file a complaint and a proposed consent decree with the state of New Jersey and the state's Department of Corrections concerning the facility.

If approved by a federal judge, the proposed consent decree would implement policies and practices within the New Jersey Department of Corrections to help ensure that prisoners are protected from sexual abuse through appropriate prisoner supervision, effective and confidential

methods for reporting of sexual abuse and protections against retaliation for reporting sexual abuse.

Justice Department Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke said the agreement addresses the systemic issues that have plagued the Edna Mahan correctional facility, ensures that women incarcerated there will receive the basic protections they are entitled to under the Constitution, and requires accountability through public transparency.

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US, Russian Activists Commemorate 280-Year Anniversary of Russia Discovering Alaska

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - Russian and US scientists, civil society leaders, religious figures and others are commemorating the 280-year anniversary of the Russian voyagers discovering Alaska, Historical and Education Society Russian America President Vladimir Kolychev told Sputnik.

"Currently, we are holding a range of events in Moscow and in other cities and places in Russia and the United States under the joint slogan 'Europe Discovers Alaska,' to honor the great geographical discoveries," Kolychev said.

In July of 1741, two Russian packet-boats from the Second Kamchatka Expedition - St. Peter and St. Pavel - reached the shores of Alaska as commandeered by the renowned Russian seafarers Vitus Bering and Alexei Chirikov.

"It was an epoch of great geographical achievements in the northern part of the Pacific ocean, when Alaska was discovered, including the Alexander Archipelago and the Aleutian Islands," Kolychev said.

The Orthodox churches in Russia and the United States, including the cities of Moscow, Perm, Irkutsk, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy, Vologda, Penza, Tula region, Juneau, Garfield, Minneapolis, San Francisco and others, as well as Fort Ross in the US state of California, are commemorating the anniversary by ringing the church bells, he said.

The US-based Congress of Russian Americans and the Russian American Cultural Heritage Center have supported the commemoration by arranging for church services and bell ringing as well as by informing people about the celebratory events.

"We also organized a special online and in-person conference 'Europe Discovers America' in the Moscow Garden Ring museum with participation of experts from both countries," Kolychev said.

The experts discussed historical topics related to Russian America, including two expeditions in the 18th century as well as the Russian settlements in Alaska, he said.

"We have found again and again that the history of Russian America and Alaska is interesting not only to Russians, but to people in different part in the world," Kolychev added.

Russia maintained its colonies, named Russian America, in the 18th and 19th centuries. In 1867, Russia sold its last remaining possessions to the United States for \$7.2 million.

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Biden Did Not Receive Advance Notice of Governor Cuomo's Resignation - White House

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden was not notified about New York Governor Andrew Cuomo's decision to step down over sexual abuse allegations, White House spokesperson Jen Psaki said on Tuesday.

"I know a number of you have asked whether the President has talked to the Attorney General, since this report came out, the answer's no," Psaki said. "Whether we had a heads up on this announcement today, the answer is - no."

Earlier on Tuesday, Cuomo said he was resigning over charges he sexually harassed nearly a dozen colleagues and accepted full responsibility for his actions although characterizing the allegations as "false."

"First, let me say the President made clear his views last week and those stand. Our view is that this is a story about these courageous women who came forward, told their stories, shared their stories and an investigation overseen by the Attorney General that of course concluded today in an outcome that the President called for, just last week," Psaki said.

Cuomo said that his resignation will be effective in 14 days.

Calls for impeaching Cuomo came after New York State Attorney General Letitia James announced that the investigation into allegations against Cuomo concluded he violated state and federal law.

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White House Says Taliban Taking Over Afghanistan, Kabul 'Not Inevitable'

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki on Tuesday said President Joe Biden continues to believe it is not inevitable the Taliban will take over Afghanistan.

"The president continues to believe it is not inevitable that the Taliban takes over Kabul or the country," Psaki told reporters.

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US Senate Begins Work on \$3.5 Trillion Budget Plan

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - The US Senate on Tuesday voted to begin work on the \$3.5 trillion budget plan.

The Senate voted 50-49, leaving US Vice President Kamala Harris to cast the deciding vote. All 48 Democrats and two independents supported the motion while 49 Republican Senators voted against it.

Democrats are proposing the package to include \$726 billion to for free community college and to provide universal preschool services for children three and four years old. The package would also provide \$332 billion to support affordable housing and \$198 billion for clean energy projects.

Senator Majority Leader Chuck Schumer previously said the target date for a resolution on the initiative was September 15.

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US Oil Output Seen at 11.8Mln Barrels Daily By 2022, Below Pre-Pandemic High - EIA

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - US crude oil production is expected to average 11.1 million barrels daily this year and 11.8 million b/d in 2022, the Energy Information Administration said Tuesday, unveiling forecasts that remained well below the pre-pandemic record high of 13.1 million b/d.

"EIA's most recent monthly data show U.S. crude oil production was 11.2 million b/d in May," the agency said in the monthly update of its so-called Short-term Energy Outlook for August. "We expect production to be relatively flat through October before it starts rising in November and December and throughout 2022. Forecast US crude oil production for 2022 averages 11.8 million b/d, up from 11.1 million b/d in 2021."

The United States, the world's largest oil consumer, was also the largest producer from 2015 through 2020, before the outbreak of the COVID-19. At its peak, the country pumped 13.1 million b/d in March last year. The evaporation of oil demand brought on by the pandemic, and the resulting harm to the energy industry over the subsequent months, had severely impacted US production, with the country now turning out an estimated 11.2 million b/d now.

As for global oil production, the EIA forecast that output from the 13-member Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) will dip slightly from 25.6 million b/d in 2020 to 26.5 million b/d this year before ramping up in 2022 to 28.7 million b/d.

"Our expectation of rising OPEC production is primarily based on our assumption that OPEC will raise production through the end of 2021 in line with targets it announced on July 18," the agency said.

Consequently, the EIA said it expected the global price of oil, measured by the UK-based North Sea Brent crude, to decline from the average of \$75 per barrel in July to \$72 between August and November, and as low as \$66 by 2022.

Brent hovered at \$71 per barrel in Tuesday's trade, up 37 percent on the year.

"We expect that continuing growth in production from OPEC+ and accelerating growth in U.S. tight oil production — along with other supply growth — will outpace decelerating growth in global oil consumption and contribute to Brent prices declining," the EIA said.

OPEC+ groups the original 13 countries in the Saudi-led OPEC with 10 other oil producing nations that include Russia.

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Over 2.5Mln in US Gain Health Insurance During Biden Admin. Sign-Up Period – Health Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) – Enrollment in subsidized health insurance swelled by an additional 2.5 million Americans during a six-month enrollment period due to end on August 15, the US Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) said on Tuesday.

“There is still time for Americans to take advantage of this excellent opportunity and select a quality, affordable health care plan that works best for them,” CMS Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure said in a press release.

Since the Biden administration launched a special enrollment period on February 15, more than 1.8 million Americans obtained health insurance through the federal HealthCare.gov website, with an additional 723,000 enrolling in state-based marketplaces, the release said.

The \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan (ARP) included money to expand health coverage for uninsured Americans.

As a result, families are seeing average savings of \$40 per person per month on premiums due to the ARP's premium credits, and over a third of customers have found coverage for \$10 or less per month, the release said.

A record-high of nearly 81.7 million people are now receiving subsidized coverage through Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program, according to the release.

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UN in Touch With Parties in Afghanistan Seeking to Find Political Solution - Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, August 10 (Sputnik) - The United Nations remains in touch with the parties in Afghanistan to find a political solution to the conflict there amid reports of violence the organization finds extremely concerning, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Tuesday. "We continue to be in touch with all the parties, whether in Afghanistan or regional parties in an effort to find a political solution," Dujarric during a press briefing.

The spokesperson also said the facts on the ground in Afghanistan as reported are "extremely worrying" and "extremely concerning."

"All this should be reminder for the parties to actually focus on the political process," Dujarric added.

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US Begins Trial of 3rd COVID-19 Vaccine Dose For Kidney Transplant Patients – Health Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) – A pilot study of 200 recent recipients of a kidney transplants will attempt to determine whether a third dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine will create antibodies to the coronavirus following failure by the first two jobs, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) said on Tuesday.

“Between 50 and 100 participants will have had no detectable antibody response to two doses of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine, and 50 to 100 participants will have had a low response,” the NIH said in a press release.

The goal is to determine the proportion of participants who achieve a designated antibody response 30 days after receiving a third dose, the release said.

The pilot study also aims to identify characteristics that could help distinguish those kidney transplant recipients who would benefit from a third dose of an mRNA vaccine from those who will require a different approach to achieve protection, the release added.

The lifelong immunosuppressive therapy that organ transplant recipients must take to prevent organ rejection blunts their immune response to both pathogens and vaccines, meaning reimmunization is especially important among these patients.

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Cuomo Resigns Over Sexual Harassment Allegations Effective in 14 Days

NEW YORK, Aug 10 (Sputnik) - New York Governor Andrew Cuomo said on Tuesday that he was resigning over charges he sexually harassed nearly a dozen colleagues and accepted full responsibility for his actions although he characterized the allegations against him as "false." "I think that given the circumstances, the best way I can help now is if I step aside and let government get back to [being] government," Cuomo said. "My resignation will be effective in 14 days."

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US Senate Approves \$1 Trillion Infrastructure Bill

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - The US Senate on Tuesday approved a \$1 trillion infrastructure package, sending the measure to the House for consideration.

The Senate passed the legislation with a 69-30 vote, receiving votes from prominent Republicans such as minority leader Mitch McConnell and Lindsay Graham. The bill includes \$550 billion in new spending for bridges, roads, water infrastructure, electric vehicle infrastructure, strengthening energy grids, and expanding internet access across the United States.

The measure also funds social programs, including COVID-19 relief assistance. The House of Representatives will take up the bill when lawmakers reconvene at the Capitol in late September after taking a couple of weeks off.

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NASA Says Lunar Landing in 2024 Not Possible Due to Spacesuits Development Delays
WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - US astronauts will not be able to conduct a lunar landing in 2024 due to significant delays in the development of their spacesuits, NASA said in a report on Tuesday,

"NASA's current schedule is to produce the first two flight-ready xEMUs [Exploration Extravehicular Mobility Unit] by November 2024, but the agency faces significant challenges in meeting this goal," the report said.

These challenges include approximately a 20-month delay in delivery for the planned design, verification and testing suit, two qualification suits and two lunar flight suits, the report also explained.

"Given these anticipated delays in spacesuit development, a lunar landing in late 2024 as NASA currently plans is not feasible," NASA said. "By the time two flight-ready xEMUs are available, NASA will have spent over a billion dollars on the development and assembly of its next-generation spacesuits."

NASA's experts have recommended adjusting the original schedule as appropriate to reduce development risks and develop an integrated master schedule by ensuring that technical requirements for the next-generation suits are solidified.

In June, the General Accountability Office said NASA's deadline to return humans to the Moon in 2024 looks increasingly unlikely due to a reliance on technology that has yet to be fully developed.

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Death Toll in Myanmar Violence Reaches 962 - UN Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, August 10 (Sputnik) - At least 962 people have been killed by the security forces in Myanmar since the February 1 military coup as the country continues to face instability, UN Special Envoy for Myanmar Christine Schraner Burgener said on Tuesday.

"Until now, we have 962 people [who] were killed," Schraner Burgener said at a press briefing in the United Nations.

The special envoy pointed out that since her last update in May, the situation on the ground has remained "very worrisome," with Myanmar's Commander-in-Chief Min Aung Hlaing appearing determined to solidify his grip on power.

The military has already arrested more than 7,000 people, including foreigners. Of those arrested, 5,526 still remained in detention, with 104 children among them, Schraner Burgener said.

In addition, the people in Myanmar are now faced with a "severe" third wave of COVID-19 infections sweeping across the country and causing emergencies in many parts.

"Entire families are falling sick with COVID, with relatives desperately seeking and struggling to access treatment, emergency oxygen and other supplies while the prices have skyrocketed," Schraner Burgener said.

In these circumstances, the Security Council should show unity, prioritize COVID-19 prevention issues and focus on its response to the ongoing political crisis, Schraner Burgener said.

"It is up to the Security Council to decide what kind of tool they want to use, to pass unity, to show that they want to find measures to help people with the COVID situation and, clearly, also the democratization," the special envoy stated.

On February 1, following the general election, in which the National League for Democracy (NLD) party, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, won by a landslide, the military seized all control of the country, imprisoned elected leaders and declared a year-long state of emergency. The coup triggered massive demonstrations across the nation that have been met with a violent crackdown.

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Bush Administration Lied About 2007 Taliban Attack Targeting Cheney – Reports

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) – US military officials tried to hide and downgrade the scale of the calamity the American troops faced in Afghanistan when the Taliban (banned in Russia) was gaining strength back in the 2000s, including a lie about the attempted assassination of then-Vice President Dick Cheney by a suicide bomber, the Washington Post reported on Tuesday citing a new book.

On February 27, 2007, a suicide bomber triggered his vest of explosives at Bagram Air Base's checkpoint killing 20 Afghanis, two Americans and one South Korean national. Cheney, who was set to depart Bagram for Kabul 30 minutes later, was announced by the Taliban (banned in Russia) the primary target of the blast. In response, the US military officials accused the terrorist group of spreading lies saying that the vice president was a mile away and not in danger, according to an excerpt from resident reporter Craig Whitlock's "The Afghanistan Papers: A Secret History of the War" published by the newspaper.

Then-Captain Shawn Dalrymple, a company commander with the 82nd Airborne Division responsible for security at Bagram, confirmed that there was a leak about Cheney's presence at

Bagram base and the bomber mistakenly thought Cheney was a passenger in a convoy of vehicles coming out of the front gate, according to the report.

"The insurgents [Taliban] knew this. It was all over the news no matter how much it was tried to keep secret," Dalrymple was quoted as saying. "They caught a convoy going out the gate with an up-armored sport-utility vehicle and thought it was him. . . . That opened up a lot of eyes into the fact that Bagram was not a safe place. There was a direct link with the insurgencies." Whitlock accuses the US military leadership in Afghanistan of lying how close the insurgents had come to assassinating Cheney and deceiving the public about the actual war situation in the country.

Afghanistan is seeing a spike in violence now as the Taliban have stepped up their offensive after international troops started a gradual withdrawal from the country, scheduled to be completed by end of August. The pullout was stipulated in the agreement the Taliban and the United States signed in Doha in February 2020. Over the past three months, the Taliban have since captured large rural territories and overrun several provincial capitals.

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US Returns 29 Cuban Migrants From 4 Interceptions at Sea - Coast Guard

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) – The US repatriated to Cuba 29 migrants that were captured from four vessels attempting to reach the United States since the beginning of the fiscal year, the Coast Guard said on Tuesday.

"Since Oct. 1, 2020, Coast Guard crews have interdicted 648 Cubans, compared to ... 49 Cuban Migrants in Fiscal Year 2020," the Coast Guard said in a release. The US fiscal year begins on October 1.

A pandemic-related economic crisis exacerbated by US sanctions and a wave of protests that gripped the Caribbean country are widely blamed for a surge in migrations from the Caribbean nation.

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Moderna to Build mRNA Vaccine Manufacturing Plant in Canada - Statement

TORONTO, August 10 (Sputnik) - The US biotechnology firm Moderna on Monday announced its plans to build a messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccine manufacturing plant in Canada.

"As Moderna expands internationally, we are delighted to bring mRNA manufacturing to Canada," CEO Stephane Bancel said in a statement after the company inked a memorandum of understanding with the Canadian government.

The partnership aims to provide Canada access to a domestic supply of injections against several respiratory diseases including COVID-19, the seasonal flu, respiratory syncytial virus

(RSV) as well as other potential vaccines in the research and development phase, the statement said.

The federal government, which had largely attributed the vaccine shortages to a lack of domestic vaccine production capability, welcomed Moderna's plans.

"Moderna's plans to establish a state-of-the-art vaccine facility here in Canada is a key move in our plan to grow a strong, competitive domestic life sciences sector with cutting-edge biomanufacturing capabilities," Innovation Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne said in a statement.

He also said the Moderna facility will ensure that Canada is prepared for future pandemics and health emergencies.

Earlier this year, Procurement Minister Anita Anand admitted before a parliamentary committee that all seven manufacturers, who have contracts to supply Canada with coronavirus vaccines, declined Ottawa's offer to make the vaccines in Canada, citing the country's lack of appropriate production facilities.

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US Senate Approves \$1 Trillion Infrastructure Bill

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - The US Senate on Tuesday approved a \$1 trillion infrastructure package, sending the measure to the House for consideration.

While voting is ongoing, more than 50 senators have voted in favor of the bill, including prominent Republicans such as minority leader Mitch McConnell and Lindsay Graham, giving it the green light from the upper house.

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NSA Watchdog Says Will Review Alleged Targeting of US News Media - Inspector General

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - National Security Agency (NSA) Inspector General Robert Storch said on Tuesday his office is reviewing reports that the NSA targeted the communications of US news media after FOX News host Tucker Carlson announced that his private emails were spied on.

"The National Security Agency Office of the Inspector General (OIG) announced that it is conducting a review related to recent allegations that the NSA improperly targeted the communications of a member of the US news media," Storch said in a statement.

The OIG is planning to examine NSA's compliance with applicable legal authorities and policies regarding collection, analysis, reporting activities and whether such actions were based on improper considerations, the statement said.

There is a chance that OIG will also consider additional issues that may arise from the review, the statement added.

On June 28, Carlson said he received information from a whistleblower that the NSA is monitoring his electronic communications and is planning to leak them in an attempt to take this show the Tucker Carlson Tonight off the air.

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US Productivity Dips Year-on-Year in Q2 as Leisure, Hospitality Work Slows

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - US worker productivity growth dipped year-on-year in the second quarter versus the first quarter, the Labor Department said on Tuesday, as the pace of output in the leisure and hospitality industries slowed while wage pressures expanded.

Nonfarm productivity, measured by hourly output per worker, grew at an annualized pace of 2.3 percent in the April-June period versus the 4.3 percent year-on-year growth in the first quarter, the data showed.

Economists polled by US media had expected productivity to rise at 3.2 percent on the average year-on-year for the second quarter.

The Labor Department data showed productivity grew rapidly early on in the pandemic, then took a dive in the final three months of last year, before growing modestly since.

A study of the components showed lower-wage industries such as leisure and hospitality contributed to the larger quarterly declines in productivity.

Unit labor costs, or the price of labor per single unit of output, meanwhile, rose at a 1.0 percent rate in the second quarter versus a decline of 2.8 percent in the first quarter.

The slide in productivity comes after an upbeat US jobs report for July that has raised the probability of the Federal Reserve moving faster than expected to taper the monthly stimulus it has been providing the economy and markets since the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020. The Fed has been buying at least \$80 billion of Treasury securities and \$40 billion of agency mortgage-backed securities monthly to support US economic recovery since the start of the pandemic 16 months ago. It has also kept US interest rates at a record low of between zero and 0.25 percent.

At the close of the Fed's monthly policy meeting for July, Chairman Jerome Powell said it wasn't time for the central bank to discuss revision of either asset purchases or rates. He said focus should instead be on the Fed's mandates of trying to achieve maximum employment for Americans, defined by an unemployment rate of 4 percent or less, and inflation at 2 percent per annum.

Following Powell's comments, the Labor Department reported that 943,000 new job positions were filled in July, bringing the unemployment rate down to 5.4 percent — or less than 1.5 percent to the Fed target for maximum employment. That has raised speculation that the central bank may move faster on its target for asset purchase tapering.

Atlanta Fed President Raphael Bostic, however, said on Monday that the central bank could begin tapering the stimulus between October and December, or move even earlier if monthly jobs growth hits close to 1 million two months in a row.

The US economy itself grew by an annualized rate of 6.5 percent in the second quarter of 2021, after a 3.5 percent contraction for all of 2020 due to COVID-related shutdowns and other disruptions.

The Fed's problem though is higher-than-expected inflation in the near term as prices of almost everything have soared from the lows of the pandemic. The central bank's preferred inflation gauge, the Personal Consumption Expenditure Index, expanded by 3.5 percent in the year to June — its most in 30 years.

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US Seeks Upgrade of Missile Defenses by Linking Multiple Sensors - Northrop Grumman

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) - A contract for the next upgrade of the US Ground-Based Midcourse Missile Defense (GMD) system will attempt to fuse data from disparate sensors into a composite picture to improve the system's reliability, Northrop Grumman said on Tuesday. "The Missile Defense Agency awarded Lockheed Martin a \$157 million contract to augment C2BMC'S engagement support capability for the Ground-Based Midcourse Defense (GMD) system that protects the US from long-range ballistic missile attacks," Northrop Grumman said in a press release.

C2BMC refers to the missile defense's Command, Control, Battle Management and Communications system, which currently engages a threat using the best single source data selected from multiple sensors, the release said.

The next upgrade to C2BMC, called Spiral 8.2-7, will provide GMD with a single, real-time, composite picture of an incoming threat by correlating and fusing data from a broader set of sensors, including satellites, ground- and ship-based radars, the release said.

Once the spiral upgrade is complete, the GMD system will see the same battlespace picture currently seen by combatant commanders, the release added.

Additionally, Spiral 8.2-7 will also enable C2BMC to track hypersonic threats, according to the release.

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Dominion Voting Sues Newsmax, One America News Network Over 2020 Election Fraud Claims

WASHINGTON, August 10 (Sputnik) – Lawyers for the Dominion Voting Systems company have filed lawsuits against conservative US news outlets Newsmax and One America News (OAN) Network and businessman Patrick Byrne over unsubstantiated 2020 election fraud claims, the company said in a statement on Tuesday,

"Today, legal representatives for Dominion Voting Systems filed defamation complaints against Newsmax Media Inc. in the Superior Court of Delaware, and against Herring Networks Inc. — owner of One America News (OAN) Network — and Patrick Byrne in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia," the statement read.

Court documents show complaint against the OAN Network also includes names of Herring Networks owners Robert Herring and Charles Herring, as well as One America News Network personalities Chanel Rion and Christina Bobb, the statement added.

Dominion lawyer Stephen Shackelford, in the statement, claimed that the three groups of defendants pushed false claims that the voting apparatus company was behind widespread irregularities in the 2020 presidential vote, which saw Joe Biden edge out Donald Trump to clinch the Oval Office.

"As detailed in our complaints, OAN, Newsmax, and Patrick Byrne have knowingly and continuously sold the false story of election fraud in the 2020 presidential election, with Dominion cast as the villain, severely injuring Dominion in the process," Shackelford said.

"Newsmax and OAN both endorsed, repeated, broadcast, and amplified a series of verifiably false lies about Dominion to serve their own commercial purposes."

Shackelford also accused Byrne of bankrolling and promoting a viral disinformation campaign about Dominion.

"We are suing to set the record straight, to vindicate Dominion's rights, to hold the Defendants accountable, and to recover damages for the devastating economic harm done to Dominion's business," he added.

The complaint against OAN noted that the network spread false information about Dominion by broadcasting and promoting interviews with "discredited figures", including Byrne, Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani, lawyer Sidney Powell and the controversial CEO of the MyPillow company Michael Lindell.

"OAN's coverage of Dominion was dishonest and false. OAN caused tremendous harm to Dominion," the complaint said.

Another complaint accused Newsmax of manufacturing and broadcasting "verifiably false" information about Dominion.

"If Newsmax cared about the truth - if it cared about informing (rather than deceiving) its viewers - it would identify for its viewers each specific lie it broadcast, promoted, and endorsed in November and December 2020, tell its viewers in no uncertain terms that those lies were false, and explain to its viewers all the voluminous evidence debunking those lies," the document said. Following the 2020 presidential election, former US President Donald Trump declared that his victory was stolen via massive fraud and acts of impropriety. His legal team accused the Smartmatic software company and the Dominion Voting Systems, of participation in a fraudulent scheme to ensure his failure in the election