

9/07/21 Tuesday

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WHO Condemns Wealthier Nations for Hoarding Vaccines, 'Prolonging the Pandemic'
By Evan Craighead

Last month, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director-general of the World Health Organization, called on wealthier member-nations to establish a two-month moratorium on COVID-19 booster shots and assist in expanding the scope of vaccine donations. At the time, about 75% of the 4.8 billion COVID-19 vaccine doses delivered went to only 10 countries. Maria Van Kerkhove, WHO's COVID-19 technical lead, had a few "blunt" words on Tuesday for member-nations continuing to stockpile and "hoard" COVID-19 vaccines amid the clear inequality in global supply.

"This is not just unfair, it's not just immoral," the epidemiologist said during a Q&A session, "it's prolonging the pandemic, and it is resulting in people dying."

Kerkhove asserted that the "hoarding" of COVID-19 vaccines is negatively contributing to the death toll, just as the hoarding of personal protective equipment did at the beginning of the pandemic.

As for supply redistribution, countries that choose to issue COVID-19 vaccines to another country should not consider their act charitable because "we are completely in this together." Earlier in the discussion, Dr. Mike Ryan, executive director for the WHO Health Emergencies Programme, noted that "each country is in its own set of struggles" regarding vaccine distribution and general hesitancy toward receiving it.

"Some countries have lots of available [vaccines], but they're not able to get people to take the vaccine," he said. "And there are other countries - many in the south - who are desperate to get a vaccine and can't get access to it."

Ryan emphasized that the world needs to "recommit" to combating COVID-19, particularly before winter for the northern hemisphere.

"All of the indications are that this virus still has a lot of kinetic energy - it has a lot of momentum," he said, warning that as the virus mutates, its variants will continue to "pick off" unvaccinated individuals.

WHO data [published earlier this month](#) showed that 42 African nations are on track to miss the global goal of vaccinating the most vulnerable 10% of the population against COVID-19.

However, a total of nine countries, including Morocco, Tunisia and South Africa have already reached the target.

"Although Africa's third wave peaked in July, the decline in new cases is at a glacial pace — far slower than in previous waves," said Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa.

"The pandemic is still raging in Africa and we must not let our guard down. Every hour 26 Africans die of COVID-19."

Moeti said that while the current inequity is "deeply disturbing," there have been upticks in COVID vaccine shipments and commitments, which "shows that a fairer, more just global distribution of vaccines looks possible."

The organization's continued pleas come days after former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown chided wealthier nations for committing "moral outrage" by stockpiling COVID-19 vaccines while others struggled to receive shipments.

"We are in a new 'arms' race – to get vaccines into people as quickly as possible – but this is an arms race where the West have a stranglehold on the vaccine supplies," said Brown, who serves as a special envoy for the United Nations.

He also called on the US and other G7 nations to move their stockpiled COVID-19 vaccines out of warehouses and into Africa and other areas of low availability.

USGS: 7.0-Magnitude Earthquake Strikes Southern Mexico, Near Acapulco

[11 hours ago](#) (Updated: 8 hours ago)

The United States Geological Survey (USGS) registered a strong earthquake that shook southern Mexico with a preliminary magnitude of 7.4 around 8:45 p.m. local time on Tuesday. It was later downgraded to a magnitude 7.0 event.

Initial reports from seismologists and locals detailed that the Tuesday night earthquake was centered around the Mexican state of Guerrero's San Marcos, and was felt as far away as Mexico City, Mexico.

Social media footage showed the earthquake interrupting a lucha libre match at Arena México in Mexico City.

The USGS has reported that the earthquake was shallow, and occurred some 7.8 miles (12.5 kilometres) below the surface. Due to its distance, the earthquake's effects were more likely to be felt.

Brief power outages were also observed.

"It was terrible. It really reminds me of the 1985 quake every time something like this happens", Yesmin Rizk, a 70-year-old resident of Mexico City's Roma Sur district, [told Reuters](#). The notorious 1985 Mexico City earthquake - a magnitude 8.1 event - resulted in more than 5,000 deaths in Mexico's capital.

Damage reports have been received in Acapulco, not far from the earthquake's epicentre.

Guerrero Civil Protection Authorities have detailed that the seismic event triggered landslides and falling rocks in the state.

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DeSantis: Speculation Surrounding 2024 Presidential Run 'is Purely Manufactured' By Evan Craighead

Back in July, a straw poll on the potential GOP candidates for the 2024 US presidential election revealed that Republican respondents overwhelmingly approved of both former US President Donald Trump and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis. In fact, the governor garnered the most support amongst those surveyed.

DeSantis took time on Tuesday to dispel rumours that he was plotting a potential run for the GOP spot in the 2024 presidential election, arguing that folks are simply namedropping him. "All the speculation about me is purely manufactured", he told reporters in St. Cloud, Florida, as reported by Fox News. "I just do my job and we work hard ... I hear all this stuff and honestly it's nonsense".

DeSantis' comments come months after Trump said he was "100%" considering running for president and would "certainly" consider tapping DeSantis as his running mate over Pence. More recently, those within the [former US president's inner circle have said](#) that Trump has been motivated for a 2024 run after seeing President Joe Biden's conduct and actions surrounding the US troop pullout from Afghanistan.

Former White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows, a fierce Trump ally, [notably pushed back](#) against reports of a potential 2024 presidential election run by the Florida governor.

He told the Washington Examiner that even though DeSantis has been "identified" for his "conservative solutions" to the COVID-19 pandemic and related issues, the Florida governor is more focused on running for re-election in his state, rather than running for the highest office in the nation.

Hacker Claims to Have Stolen the Personal Data of 75% of Israel's Population [11 hours ago](#)

The hacker uses the name Sangkancil and maintains that they stole the data from CITY4U, a website used by local officials to process property taxes, fines, and utility bills. 'Sang Kancil' is a traditional fable popular in Indonesia and Malaysia about a small and cunning mouse-deer. A hacker, using the name Sangkancil, claims to have stolen the personal information of some seven million Israelis.

If the claims are true, it would be one of the largest privacy breaches in Israeli history and would mean the personal information of approximately 75% of the nation's 9.3 million population has been compromised, The Times of Israel [reported](#).

In one message the hacker, in reference to Rosh Hashanah, wrote, "This is my first surprise for the Jewish new year. Enjoy!"

The hacker has offered the data for sale and has hinted that they will drop more information in the coming days.

The hacker first claimed to have made the attack on Sunday through the use of a Telegram messaging application account. On Monday, they released images of documents, such as Israeli identity cards, driver's licenses and tax bills, as a means of proving their claim.

According to The Times of Israel, the state's National Cyber Directorate offered a statement claiming that the leaked information was out of date.

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Cristiano Ronaldo Spotted on Manchester United Training Pitch Ahead of Much Anticipated
By Nevin Brown

Cristiano Ronaldo got a headstart on his second act for Manchester United. The forward was released from international duty early and made his debut at United's training ground. The 36-year-old met with United boss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer before being introduced to his new teammates.

Cristiano Ronaldo is making headlines once again. The five-time Ballon d'Or winner was [spotted on Manchester United's training pitch](#) ahead of their weekend showdown with Newcastle United. The 36-year-old forward was [released early from international duty](#) with Portugal to return to Manchester after a 12-year absence.

Many of United's key contributors are still absent on international duty, but Ronaldo was filmed jogging with former Spanish International player Juan Mata. The pair battled against each other for two seasons in La Liga, with Mata's Valencia finishing third and Ronaldo and Real Madrid finishing second in both seasons.

Before training, Ronaldo met with United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer before being [introduced to his new teammates](#). Solskjaer and Ronaldo were teammates at Old Trafford for four years. At that point, Solskjaer's career was winding down, while Ronaldo was quickly becoming one of the best players in the world.

The manager is hoping that Ronaldo can reinvigorate the club for a second time after finishing second in the league last season. If Ronaldo's training goes well, he figures to make his second debut for United either this weekend or at mid-week in the Champions League at Swiss side BSC Young Boys.

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'Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings' Crushes Box Office, and Day-to-Date Steaming
By Nevin Brown

"Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings" set box office records over the Labor Day weekend. The newest entry in the Marvel Cinematic Universe was the first major Disney release this summer to not have a day-to-date streaming release. Could its success be a death blow to the day-to-date blockbuster?

The coronavirus pandemic has had a crippling effect on the film industry. Productions were shut down. Release dates were pushed back. Movies once headed for theaters went straight to on-demand. The industry was in flux.

As a result, Hollywood decided to try something new. If people were scared to see movies in theaters, why not bring the films directly to them? The idea was not new, but the idea that a

blockbuster could be available to watch, on your couch, the same day that it graced theaters was. The idea was bold, it was novel, and, if this summer is any indication, it is dead.

[Marvel's 'Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings' Tops Reservation Rate in S Korea](#)

29 August, 11:54 GMT

Over the four-day Labor Day weekend, “Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings” opened to \$90 million. Its three-day opening, how non-holiday box office weekends are reported, came in at \$75.5 million.

The record for a four-day Labor Day weekend was \$30.6 million. “Shang-Chi” more than doubled that in its first three days of release. It also was exclusively available in theaters, like the good old days.

“Shang-Chi” is a massive success. It's opening all but guarantees it'll be one of the highest grossing films of the year, and it also may represent a death blow for day-to-date streaming releases. Using weekend box office projections from [boxofficereport.com](#), an all too telling trend emerges. Movies that had day-to-date streaming releases underperformed and those that didn't defied expectations.

From May 28th, 2021 to September 6th, 2021, nineteen high-profile releases went to American cinemas. Eight had day-to-date steaming releases and eleven did not. Of the eight available for streaming right away they were, on average, projected to gross \$32.6 million in their opening weekend. In reality, these films grossed, on average, \$30.7 million.

While a drop-off of \$1.9 million doesn't sound like much, the projections baked in that people were able to watch it without going to theaters. Factor in that films with day-to-date streaming releases also experienced [more significant declines in subsequent weeks](#), and suddenly studios are seeing their box office returns dwindle.

The other side of the coin are the eleven films that didn't have day-to-date streaming releases. As a group they, on average, were projected to earn \$27.4 million in their opening weekends but brought in an average of \$30.6 million.

On the whole, the difference between the two groups is a small \$100,000 difference on opening weekends. However, expectations are everything in the film industry, and the films without day-to-date releases were more likely to go above and beyond their pre-release expectations. “Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings” had a record setting debut. It caps off a summer of disappointing box office returns with a ray of hope. While it has all but guaranteed a long running franchise, its longest lasting legacy may be that it was the film that officially killed the day-to-date streaming blockbuster.

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As a result, Hollywood decided to try something new. If people were scared to see movies in theaters, why not bring the films directly to them? The idea was not new, but the idea that a blockbuster could be available to watch, on your couch, the same day that it graced theaters was. The idea was bold, it was novel, and, if this summer is any indication, it is dead.

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Virginia Begins Removing Statue of Confederate General Lee from State Capital

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) – US state of Virginia began dismantling the statue of Confederate general Robert E. Lee from the State Capitol in the city of Richmond on Wednesday morning.

Technical workers with special equipment are currently fastening the large statue with construction wires in order to prepare it for removal, according to a live Twitter broadcast from Virginia Governor Ralph Northam.

Hundreds of people gathered around the fences in the area to be a witness of the historical process. Northam ordered the statue removed in June 2020, at the height of the protests against racism that erupted after the police murder of George Floyd.

The statue, which was installed in 1890, will be placed in a secure state-owned facility until a further decision, local authorities said earlier.

During the Civil War in the United States, Lee led the forces of the Confederacy - a group of southern states that sided with the preservation of the institution of slavery. Calls for the removal of monuments honoring Confederate figures became widespread after last years' protest movements against systemic racism following Floyd's death.

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RPT - US 'Concerned' by Affiliations, Track Records of Some Taliban Cabinet Members - State Dept

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is concerned about the affiliations and track records of several newly-announced Taliban (banned in Russia as a terrorist group) cabinet members, a State Department spokesperson said in a statement to Sputnik.

"We note the announced list of names consists exclusively of individuals who are members of the Taliban or their close associates and no women," the spokesperson said on Tuesday. "We also are concerned by the affiliations and track records of some of the individuals."

On Tuesday, the Taliban unveiled their caretaker government with Hasan Akhund, who has been under United Nations sanctions since 2001, at the helm.

The US State Department spokesperson also said the Biden administration understands the Taliban cabinet has been introduced as a temporary caretaker government, but the group will be judged on their actions.

"We have made clear our expectation that the Afghan people deserve an inclusive government," the US official said.

In addition, the official said the United States will hold the Taliban to their commitments to allow safe passage for foreign nationals and Afghan allies eligible to leave the country.

The United States also reiterated its clear expectation that the Taliban will prevent the country from becoming a safe haven for terrorists and to ensure humanitarian aid is allowed into Afghanistan, the spokesperson said.

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Britney Spears' Father Asks US Judge to End Conservatorship - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) - Britney Spears' father Jaime Spears has asked a US judge to end the superstar's conservatorship, TMZ reported citing court documents. In mid-August, Jaime Spears agreed to step down as his daughter's conservator. Jamie Spears decided his daughter no longer needs legally-imposed restrictions, the report said on Tuesday. Britney Spears, who was one of the most famous world singers at the beginning of the 21st century, faced mental issues as well as drug and alcohol addictions following a divorce in the late 2000s. In 2008, she was placed under temporary conservatorship, which later turned termless.

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Biden Says China Has 'Real Problem' With Taliban

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden said China will have issues dealing with the Taliban (banned in Russia as a terrorist group) following the complete US withdrawal from Afghanistan, according to a White House press pool report "China has a real problem with the Taliban," Biden said on Tuesday when asked if China will fund the Taliban. Biden said he expects neighboring countries like China, Pakistan, Russia, and Iran to work out arrangements with the Taliban. Earlier, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia has not made any decisions recognizing the Taliban as the official government of Afghanistan. On Tuesday, the Taliban unveiled their caretaker government with Hasan Akhund, who has been under UN sanctions since 2001, at the helm.

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Blinken to Testify on Afghanistan Before House Panel Next Week - Chairman's Office

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) - Secretary of State Antony Blinken is scheduled to testify on the US exit from Afghanistan before the House Foreign Affairs Committee next week. The announcement comes after the Senate House Foreign Affairs committee announced that Blinken was set to testify before them as well.

The US top diplomat is slated to appear before the panel at 2:00 p.m. EST (6:00 p.m. GMT) on September 13 for a hybrid hearing entitled, "Afghanistan 2001- 2021: Evaluating the Withdrawal and US Policies," Chairman Gregory Meeks's office said in a statement on Tuesday.

On Sunday, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee schedule revealed that the US diplomat would appear before the panel at 10:00 a.m. on September 14 for a full committee hearing entitled, "Examining the US Withdrawal from Afghanistan."

The Biden administration has been criticized for failing to assess that the Afghan government would fall in 11 eleven days to the Taliban.

Moreover, the administration has more harshly been criticized for failing to evacuate all US and Afghan allies from Afghanistan before the August 31 deadline.

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US to Participate in Climate Action Dialogue in Argentina Wednesday - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) - The United States will participate in a virtual climate change dialogue hosted by Argentina on Wednesday and US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry is set to speak at the event, the State Department said.

"The United States will join the High-Level Dialogue on Climate Action in the Americas, hosted by the Government of Argentina, on September 8, 2021. The one-day virtual event will bring together countries in the Americas to discuss our shared commitment to enhancing climate ambition," the State Department said on Tuesday.

Kerry is scheduled to speak during the opening segment of the dialogue alongside heads of state from South America and the Caribbean, as well as the UN Secretary General, among others, the State Department added.

The dialogue is intended to build momentum in anticipation of the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow from October 31 to November 12 to include panel discussions on enhancing climate ambition, accelerating climate action through regional cooperation and strengthening climate resilience, according to the State Department.

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Howard University in Washington Suspends On-Line Classes Due to Ransomware Attack

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) - Howard University, a historically Black college located in Washington, DC, said that it has canceled all on-line classes due to a ransomware attack.

"All online and hybrid undergraduate courses remain suspended for tomorrow, Wednesday, September 8," the university said in a press release on Tuesday.

In-person classes will resume following the cancellation of all classes on Tuesday. But the release warned that course content requiring internet access may not be available.

Howard University also said it is deploying an alternative Wi-Fi system. The attack occurred Friday, September 3. There is no evidence thus far that personal information was accessed or exfiltrated, Howard University said.

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Biden Extends National Emergency on Foreign Interference in US Elections for Another Year

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden said in a letter to Congress that he has extended for another year the 2018 national emergency that was declared in relation to the threat of foreign interference in US elections.

"I am continuing for one year the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13848 with respect to the threat of foreign interference in or undermining public confidence in United States elections," Biden said on Tuesday.

The president also said that the wide spread use of digital devices and internet-based communications has created significant vulnerabilities to the threat of foreign interference in US elections.

However, there has been no evidence of a foreign country ever changing the outcome of a US election, Biden added.

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Documents Detail US-Funded Research in Chinese Lab on Coronaviruses in Bats - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) - More than 900 pages of newly released documents detail the US-based health organization EcoHealth Alliance's use of federal money to study bat-borne coronaviruses at labs in Wuhan, China, the Intercept reported.

The trove of documents includes two previously unpublished grant proposals funded by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, headed by Anthony Fauci, as well as project updates relating to EcoHealth Alliance's research, the report said on Tuesday.

One of the grants, outlines an effort led by EcoHealth Alliance President Peter Daszak to screen thousands of bat samples for coronaviruses. The research also involved screening people who work with live animals, the report said.

After reviewing the documents, Rutgers University molecular biologist Richard Ebright told the Intercept that new coronaviruses were constructed in a Chinese lab and then tested for their ability to infect mice that had been genetically altered with human-type receptors in cells.

The documents raise additional questions about the theory that the pandemic may have begun in a lab accident, an idea that Daszak has aggressively dismissed, the report said.

The grant was initially awarded for a five-year period - from 2014 to 2019. Funding was renewed in 2019 but suspended by the Trump administration in April 2020, the report added.

The second grant based on a 2019 proposal appears prescient as it calls for deploying resources in Asia to prepare for an outbreak of a new disease, according to the report.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) -

AFGHANISTAN DEVELOPMENTS

* The spokesman for the Taliban movement (banned in Russia) Zabiullah Mujahid announced on Tuesday the composition of Afghanistan's temporary government and that he will become deputy head of the country's Culture and Information Ministry.

* The Taliban is not allowing media coverage of protests in Afghanistan and call on reporters to avoid demonstrations, Mujahid said.

* The Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada said that the Islamic Sharia law would be in force in Afghanistan.

* The Biden administration is not rushing to recognize the newly announced Taliban government, White House Jen Psaki said.

* Russia has not made any decision on recognizing the Taliban government given that is important to understand whether the movement will fulfill its promises, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

* Russia will not be participating in the ministerial meeting on Afghanistan scheduled for Wednesday, the Russian Foreign Ministry told Sputnik.

* Italy is discussing with other countries opening a joint representative office in Afghanistan, led by the European Union or the United Nations, Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio said.

RUSSIA-INDIA RELATIONS

* New Delhi hopes that the visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to India will take place before the end of the year and expects the summit will be very successful, Indian Ambassador to Russia Venkatesh Varma said in an interview with Sputnik.

* India plans to increase energy imports from Russia, including imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG), Varma said.

* Russia and India are discussing the issue of recognizing the new government in Afghanistan as part of a dialogue on the Afghan settlement, Varma said.

* Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev will visit New Delhi on Wednesday to hold negotiations with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Security Advisor Ajit Doval, Varma said.

US EXTENDS CUBA RESTRICTIONS

* The United States is extending for another year the trade and remittance restrictions imposed on Cuba, President Joe Biden said in a memorandum sent to Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday.

BRAZIL PROTESTS

* Thousands of people are taking to the streets across Brazil in support of President Jair Bolsonaro in his dispute with the Supreme Court and Parliament to change the nation's voting system and return to paper ballots, according to footage from broadcaster GloboNews that also shower counter-protests.

PARLIAMENTARY VOTE IN RUSSIA

* Russia will not allow any interference in the free expression of will of its citizens at the upcoming parliamentary vote, upper chamber speaker Valentina Matviyenko said on Tuesday.

* The main thing for Russian President Vladimir Putin is that the upcoming parliamentary vote complies with the letter and the spirit of the law, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

COVID-19

* US President Joe Biden will address the nation on his administration's plan to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus Delta variant and strengthen efforts to vaccinate Americans, White House spokesperson Jen Psaki said on Tuesday.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) warned Americans to avoid visiting Sri Lanka and Jamaica by adding them to the list of countries with very high risk of COVID-19.

* The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria has provided Ukraine with nearly \$36 million in financial aid to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the spread of other diseases, the Ukrainian Health Ministry said.

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Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas Head Bought, Sold Stocks While Urging for Stimulus- Reports

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) - Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas President Robert Kaplan was actively buying and selling stocks last year while advocating for unlimited quantitative easing by the US central bank, the Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday. Kaplan made multiple million-dollar-plus stock trades in 2020, according to a financial disclosure form provided by his bank, in contrast with other regional Federal Reserve leaders who reported more modest financial holdings and smaller transactions, the report said. Eleven of the 12 regional Federal Reserve banks have provided disclosures of their presidents' 2020 financial profiles since Friday, sharing information that gives insight into the holdings of officials who help set the central bank's monetary policy, the report said. Kaplan had a total of 27 individual stock, fund or alternative asset holdings each valued at more than \$1 million, and included Apple Inc., Amazon.com Inc., Boeing Co., Alphabet Inc., Facebook Inc. and Marathon Petroleum Corp, the report also said. The disclosures show buying and selling over \$1 million in 22 individual companies including Alibaba, General Electric, Chevron, Tesla and Texas-based EOG Resources, the report added. A more detailed look at Kaplan's holdings shows a stake in the "Big Rub BBQ" and the Kansas City Royals baseball team. He's one of the 22 owners of the team, a stake he purchased in 2019. Kaplan was also active in 2020 and is a part owner of the Kansas City Royals, according to the report. Quantitative easing is a form of monetary stimulus whereby a central bank purchases predetermined amounts of government bonds or other financial assets in order to inject money into the economy to expand economic activity. The Federal Reserve has been buying at least \$120 billion of bonds and other assets since March 2020 to shield the economy from the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

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UPDATE 2 - Canada Deportation Hearing for Ex-Nazi Begins After Bid to Keep Proceedings Secret Fails

TORONTO, September 7 (Sputnik) - Deportation hearings against former Nazi Helmut Oberlander by Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) began on Tuesday. In first of the four-day hearing, the defense introduced a motion to conduct the admissibility hearing against the former death squad member in private, barring members of the media and public from observing the proceedings. However, IRB Immigration Division member Karen Greenwood dismissed the motion put forth by Oberlander, the immigration board's spokesperson said in a statement to reporters. In the application, Oberlander's legal counsel, Ronald Poulton cited threats to the former Nazi's family following each publication of stories reporting on the ongoing deportation process. The media reports have triggered a wave of death threats, compelling the family to seek assistance from the Waterloo Regional Police Service, Oberlander's new designated representative, grandson Jamie Rooney, said in a sworn affidavit.

"Each time the media issues a story about my grandfather, we receive unsolicited and often threatening messages by email and on social media platforms. Over the last 8 to 10 months, these messages have become more threatening and frequent," Rooney said.

Additionally, Rooney noted Russian government "interest" in the case and expressed "deep concern" about the "continued inaccuracy and content of Russian media reporting" of the case. Oberlander faces legal scrutiny in Russia, where investigators say that Oberlander was complicit in the World War II massacre of 27,000 civilians, including orphaned children, in Russia's Rostov region. Federal Security Service (FSB) files obtained by Sputnik revealed that Oberlander, a former interpreter for the Sonderkommando SS-10A death squad, played a role in the massacre.

Rooney said the Canadian government "never made this allegation."

Oberlander's legal team also introduced supplementary arguments to the bid to have the former death squad member's deportation hearings halted, claiming his debilitated physical state renders him unable to mount a defense against the allegations he is accused of.

According to a report drafted by Oberlander's physician, the 97-year-old is not expected to "survive much beyond the summer" and has lost most cognitive function.

Oberlander has been embroiled in legal battle with the Canadian government since 1995, when the latter began trying to strip Ukrainian-born ex-SS member of his citizenship, citing his failure to disclose his links to death squads. After a lengthy legal battle, Oberlander was stripped of his citizenship for the fourth time and final time in 2017 and Canada's Supreme Court issued a ruling last December that blocked any possibility for Oberlander to appeal this decision.

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US Special Envoy Malley to Visit Moscow, Paris for Talks With Russia and Europe on Iran
WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) - US Special Envoy for Iran Robert Malley will be holding consultations with Russian and European officials in Moscow and Paris about nuclear negotiations with Iran this week, the State Department said on Tuesday.

"Special Envoy Malley and a small delegation will be travelling to Moscow and Paris from 7-10 September for consultations with our Russian and European partners on Iran's nuclear program and the need to quickly reach and implement an understanding on a mutual return to compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action," the State Department said.

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Texas Governor Signs Republican Election Integrity Bill Into Law

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) - Texas Governor Greg Abbott on Tuesday signed a Republican-backed election integrity bill into law that Democrats view as an effort to restrict voting rights.

"Proud to sign Senate Bill 1 into law, which will uphold the integrity of our elections in Texas," Abbott said via Twitter. "This law will make it easier to vote and harder to cheat in the Lone Star State."

Democrats in the Texas legislature twice denied Republicans a quorum to pass the bill but ultimately failed to keep the measure from being adopted after Abbott called for a special session to convene and threatened to arrest lawmakers who were absent.

The Republican legislation will limit early voting hours, ban drive-through voting, further restrict voting by mail, ban public officials from sending unsolicited absentee ballot applications, make it easier to overturn an election based on fraud allegations and provide poll watchers more access where election activity takes place.

Texas is one of 48 US states that have introduced or proposed 408 voter bills. So far, 25 have been signed into law.

Democrats believe the bill will suppress votes from Black and Hispanic voters in their districts. The new Texas election bill has been compared to racially discriminatory laws that existed in the United States during the 20th Century.

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Some 416,000 People Remain Without Power in US State of Louisiana After Hurricane Ida

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) - More than 415,000 customers in the US state of Louisiana continue to experience power outages ten days after Hurricane Ida made a landfall, the poweroutage.us website reported.

As of Tuesday afternoon, some 416,000 people experience problems with the supply of electricity, the portal, which aggregates information on power outages across the United States, said.

The Category 4 hurricane first hit the southeast of the US on August 29, taking the lives of at least 15 people in Louisiana. The hurricane then moved to the northeastern part of the United States, unleashing flash flooding on the east coast.

The authorities in the states of New York and New Jersey proclaimed a state of emergency amid the devastation from Hurricane Ida.

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US Legal Advocacy Groups Urge Supreme Court to Extend Disability Benefits to Puerto Rico

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) – A brief filed by a coalition of advocacy groups urges the Supreme Court to extend a benefits program for adults and children with disabilities – which Congress limited to 50 states – to the US territory of Puerto Rico, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) said on Thursday.

"The groups' amicus brief argues that Puerto Rico residents should be entitled to enjoy the full protections of the U.S. Constitution, and that by denying SSI [Supplemental Security Income] benefits to residents of the territories, Congress disfavors a group that lacks voting representation in Congress, has historically faced marginalization and disenfranchisement, and overwhelmingly consists of people of color — leaving this group without equal protection under the law," the ACLU said in a press release.

The SSI program provides monthly payments to adults and children with blindness or other disabilities who have income and resources below set financial limits.

The case stems from an attempt by the US Social Security Administration, which administers the SSI program, a lawsuit seeking to recover \$28,000 paid to a resident of New York after the resident moved to Puerto Rico. Lower courts have previously ruled that the defendant can keep his benefits, the release added.

The ACLU was joined in the brief by the group's Puerto Rico affiliate, as well as the racial justice groups Demos, Equally American, and the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, according to the release.

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Biden Faces Pro-Trump Protesters During Trip to New York, New Jersey Hit By Hurricane Ida

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden on Tuesday faced opposition from protesters who are supporters of former President Joe Biden during his visit to the states of New York and New Jersey affected by Hurricane Ida.

Biden was visiting a neighborhood in Manville, New Jersey, to tour the damage done by Hurricane Ida amid ongoing disaster relief efforts when he encountered a group of protesters holding a Trump flag.

"The pro-Trump group screaming at Biden got a contingent of USSS [US Secret Service] agents to focus on them as Biden continued his walk, speaking with more residents, including a small boy who Sen. [Cory] Booker had engaged with minutes earlier," a White House pool reporter said.

An earlier pool report stated that the protesters called Biden a tyrant and called for his resignation. They also made reference to the Americans remaining in Afghanistan following the end of the Biden administration's evacuation efforts from that country. The protesters also said that having left some Americans behind in Afghanistan, he will leave other Americans behind.

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Three Former American Football Athletes Admit Guilt in Healthcare Fraud - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) – Three former National Football League (NFL) players pleaded guilty in a scheme to defraud a health care benefit program for retired NFL players, the Justice Department said on Tuesday.

“Clinton Portis, 40, of Fort Mill, South Carolina, and Tamarick Vanover, 47, of Tallahassee, Florida, pleaded guilty on Friday, Sept. 3. Robert McCune, 40, of Riverdale, Georgia, pleaded guilty on Aug. 24,” Justice said in a press release.

The former players admitted to participating in a scheme to defraud the Gene Upshaw NFL Player Health Reimbursement Account Plan, the release said.

The plan provides tax-free reimbursement of out-of-pocket medical care expenses not covered by insurance, and that were incurred by former players, their spouses, and their dependents – up to a maximum of \$350,000 per player, the release added.

Portis obtained \$99,264 and Vancouver won \$159,510 in benefits for medical equipment that was not actually provided. McCune received payouts of \$2.5 million, according to the release.

A total of 15 defendants have pleaded guilty in connection with the scheme, the department said.

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Former Inmate Sentenced to 5 years for Jailhouse COVID-19 Benefit Fraud - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) – A former prison inmate who submitted fraudulent applications for unemployment benefits on behalf of current prisoners will return to jail for five years, the Justice Department said on Tuesday.

“Christina Smith, 38, who was formerly incarcerated at the Central California Women’s Facility (CCWF) in Chowchilla, was sentenced today to five years in prison for conspiracy and aggravated identity theft charges for the submission of fraudulent unemployment insurance claims to the California Employment Development Department (EDD) in the names of current CCWF inmates,” the department said in a press release.

According to court documents, a CCWF inmate sent Smith her own and several other inmates’ personal identifying information to submit the unemployment insurance claims in their names, the statement said.

The scam cost California’s EDD more than \$250,000, which Smith split with the jailed recipients, with the funds coming from the sum allocated under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act.

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White House Urges Congress to Allocate \$6.4Bln for Afghan Refugee Resettlement

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) - The White House is asking Congress to approve an additional \$6.4 billion to fund Afghan refugee resettlement efforts, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) acting Director Shalanda Young said on Tuesday.

"The operation to move out of danger and to safety tens of thousands of Afghans at risk, including many who helped us during our two decades in Afghanistan, represents an extraordinary military, diplomatic, security, and humanitarian operation by the US Government," Young said in a White House statement. "We urge Congress to appropriate \$6.4 billion to enable the success of this multifaceted, historic mission."

Young said a majority of the requested funding would be used by the Department of Defense and Department of State to support processing sites overseas and in the United States, including for transportation of Afghan refugees to the United States.

The White House also requests \$14 billion to address natural disasters that occurred prior to Hurricane Ida, Young said.

The White House wants Congress to provide this funding through a new short-term funding bill that will need to be approved by September 30 in order to avert a government shutdown.

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Canada Immigration Board Rejects Bid by Ex-Nazi to Conduct Deportation Hearing in Private

TORONTO, September 7 (Sputnik) - Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) has dismissed former Nazi Helmut Oberlander's bid to conduct the hearing in private, IRB spokesperson Anna Pape said on Tuesday.

At the start of the proceedings, the defense put forward a motion to conduct the deportation proceedings against the former death squad member in private, barring members of the media and public from observing the proceedings.

"This is to confirm that Counsel's application to make private the proceedings in the matter of Mr. Oberlander has been dismissed. The earlier publication ban ordered today by [IRB] Member [Karen] Greenwood has been lifted," Pape said in a statement.

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US Lawmaker Asks Gallery for Names of Hunter Biden Art Customer

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) - A top Republican on the US House Oversight Committee in a letter released on Tuesday asked the owner of New York City's Georges Berges Gallery to hand over a list of customers who purchased Hunter Biden's artwork because he is concerned about foreign powers evading sanctions.

"Given the history of foreign governments using high value art to evade US sanctions, the unprecedented prices which Hunter Biden - a new, untrained, celebrity artist - is selling for, and

the Biden family's historic precedent of using proximity to political power for self-gain, Ranking Member [James] Comer is demanding information and communications between the gallery and Hunter Biden, including the individuals who have purchased the art or indicated an interest in purchasing his art via attendance at his art shows," a press release accompanying the letter said.

Comer also cited a New York Times report that the gallery will sell 15 works by Hunter Biden for \$75,000 to \$500,000 each.

In the letter, Comer also raised concerns about Hunter Biden's connection to the White House, his network of foreign associates, and the fact Berges had expressed a desire to be the "lead guy" in China's burgeoning art world.

The lawmaker requested documents "sufficient to show" who attended the opening of Biden's shows, and documents sufficient to show who purchased Biden's artwork.

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Blinken Invites Israeli Counterpart to Discuss Bilateral Relations - US State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has invited Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid to visit Washington soon to discuss the two countries' bilateral relations, the State Department said on Tuesday.

"Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken spoke with Israeli Alternate Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Yair Lapid yesterday to continue conversations following Prime Minister Bennett's recent visit and to exchange Rosh Hashanah greetings. The Secretary and the Minister discussed the importance of the US- Israel bilateral relationship, and Secretary Blinken invited Minister Lapid to visit Washington soon," the State Department said in a release.

Both diplomats have underscored the importance of holding consultations on regional and security topics, including on Afghanistan, Iran and China, the release added.

During a meeting with US President Joe Biden in August, the new Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said Washington and Tel Aviv had developed a comprehensive strategy to halt Iran's aggressive behavior in the Middle East to permanently prevent Tehran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

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UN in Touch With Guinea, Neighbors to Ensure Coordinated Response to Crisis - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, September 7 (Sputnik) - The United Nations is in contact with national actors in Guinea, its neighboring countries and the international community to ensure coordinated response to the political crisis there following a military coup, UN spokesperson Farhan Haq said on Tuesday.

"The Head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel, Mahamet Saleh Annadif, is coordinating with the UN system and is in touch with national actors in Guinea and immediate neighbors... in order to ensure a coordinated UN-ECOWAS [Economic Community of West African States]-AU [African Union] response," Haq said during a press conference.

The UN spokesperson said Annadif has been in contact with the president of the ECOWAS Commission, the Foreign Minister of Ghana, the ECOWAS chair and the president of the AU Commission.

Annadif will also participate in the ECOWAS extraordinary summit scheduled for Wednesday and hold additional meetings at ECOWAS headquarters on September 9, Haq added.

On Sunday, a group of Guinean military led by Mamady Doumbouya stormed the presidential palace and detained President Alpha Conde. Doumbouya declared the parliament dissolved and the constitution void, imposing a nationwide curfew.

Later on Sunday, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the takeover and demanded that the rebels release Conde.

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US Adds Sri Lanka, Jamaica to List of Countries With Very High Risk of COVID-19 - CDC

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) - The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) warned Americans on Tuesday to avoid visiting Sri Lanka and Jamaica by adding them to the list of countries with very high risk of COVID-19.

Sri Lanka and Jamaica joined around 75 other states designated as Level 4 (very high) - which is the highest rating possible.

"Avoid travel to these destinations. If you must travel to these destinations, make sure you are fully vaccinated before travel," an updated recommendation said.

At the same time, the CDC moved the Netherlands, Malta, Guinea-Bissau and United Arab Emirates down from Level 4 to Level 3 (high). Australia was raised from Level 1 (low) to Level 2 (moderate).

Russia remains in the Level 3 group, the notice said.

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Biden Extends Trade, Remittance Restrictions on Cuba for 1 Year - Memorandum

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) - The United States is extending the trade and remittance restrictions imposed on Cuba for another year, US President Joe Biden said in a memorandum sent to Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday.

"I hereby determine that the continuation of the exercise of those authorities with respect to Cuba for 1 year is in the national interest of the United States. Therefore, consistent with the authority vested in me by [the Trading With the Enemy Act], I continue for 1 year, until September 14, 2022, the exercise of those authorities with respect to Cuba, as implemented by the Cuban Assets Control Regulations," Biden said.

The Cuban Assets Control Regulations restrict transfers of money, gold, securities and other property between US and Cuban entities, including remittances.

Cuba has been experiencing supply shortages amid an economic crisis that came as a result of the coronavirus pandemic measures and the intensification of the US economic restrictions on the island nation.

Some countries like Russia, China, Vietnam, Mexico, Bolivia and the Dominican Republic have recently provided Cuba with medical and humanitarian supplies in light of the economic crisis the island nation has experienced.

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Former Trump Adviser Jason Miller Detained at Airport in Brazil - Statement

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) - Former Trump adviser Jason Miller said on Tuesday that he and his team were temporarily detained at an airport in Brazil for questioning.

"This afternoon my traveling party was questioned for three hours at the airport in Brasilia, after having attended this weekend's CPAC Brazil Conference," Miller said in a statement.

Brazil's Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) took place from September 3 to 4.

Miller said they were not accused of any wrong doing and were eventually released to return to the United States.

Miller did not specify if they were detained by the Brazilian or US authorities.

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Kabul Airport Among Top Issues UN Discussed With Taliban - Relief Chief

UNITED NATIONS, September 7 (Sputnik) - UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths said on Tuesday the reopening of Kabul airport for international commercial flights was among the top issues he had discussed with the head of the political office of the Taliban (banned in Russia), Abdul Ghani Baradar.

"It was one the first issues that Abdul Baradar raised with us, the importance of Kabul Airport," Griffiths said during a press briefing when asked about the reopening of the airport.

"Commercial flights are a little while away, but I know all of the countries in the region... are working hard to make that happen quickly. It is a real priority."

The Taliban leadership, in turn, raised the importance of those Afghans who have left the country to return to the Islamic Republic, Griffiths pointed out.

As the international air service with the Afghan capital remains suspended, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said earlier the movement will not allow people to travel abroad until a new cabinet is formed and the Kabul airport is fully prepared.

Earlier on Tuesday, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said that Turkey is working with the United States and Qatar to resume flights from the Kabul airport, stressing that airlines will not start performing flights until security is guaranteed.

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UN Says Needs \$606Mln to Maintain Humanitarian Aid for Afghans in 2021

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) - The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said on Tuesday that it needs \$606 million to continue to provide assistance to people in Afghanistan through 2021.

"We seek US\$606 million to assist nearly 11 million people in the four remaining months of 2021," the UN agency said in a report.

The funding is needed to provide food, water, health services, shelter, and other livelihood necessities, the report said.

The fall of the Afghan government worsened needs and further complicated a very challenging operation, the report added.

The takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban (designated as a terrorist organization and banned in Russia) has raised multiple concerns among members of the international community regarding terrorism and the increased risk to global security.

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UN Peacekeeping Chief to Visit Ethiopia, Sudan September 6-9 - Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, September 3 (Sputnik) - UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix will travel to Ethiopia and Sudan next week to discuss with senior government officials issues related to the United Nations peacekeeping in the region, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Friday.

Lacroix will be joined by UN Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Parfait Onanga-Anyanga.

"The head of our peace operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, will be traveling to Ethiopia and Sudan. He will be there starting Monday until September 9," Dujarric said during a press briefing. "In Addis Ababa, they [Lacroix and Onanga-Anyanga] will meet with senior Ethiopian government officials as well as African Union officials to discuss peacekeeping issues."

Dujarric said on Thursday, the two UN officials will travel to Khartoum, Sudan, to discuss the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and meet Sudanese authorities and the Co-Chairs of the Abyei Oversight Committee.

Lacroix and Onanga-Anyanga will then will visit Abyei, where they will engage with local leaders and UNISFA staff.

Lacroix will also travel to South Sudan, where he will stay until September 12, Dujarric added. UNISFA was established in June 2011 in response to the outbreak of violence over the disputed between Sudan and South Sudan oil-rich Abyei area.

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UN Believes Only Negotiated Settlement Will Bring Peace to Afghanistan - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, September 7 (Sputnik) - The United Nations believes that only a negotiated settlement will bring peace in Afghanistan and it is up to the member states to decide on the international recognition of the new government formed by the Taliban (banned in Russia), UN spokesperson Farhan Haq said on Tuesday.

"The UN Secretariat and the UN do not engage in active recognition of governments; that is the matter that is done by member states, not us," Haq said during a press briefing. "From our standpoint, regarding today's announcement, only an inclusive and negotiated settlement will bring sustainable peace to Afghanistan."

Haq also said the United Nations remains committed to contribute to a peaceful solution, promote the rights of all Afghans, including women and girls, promote sustainable development in line with Agenda 2030 and provide lifesaving humanitarian assistance to civilians in need.

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US Waives Some Fuel Emission Limits to Ease Post-Hurricane Shortages - Environment Agency

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) – An emergency waiver for a major port hit by Hurricane Ida in the US state of Louisiana will ease pollution limits for diesel fuel to address storm-related shortages, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) said on Tuesday.

"EPA issued a waiver of the ultra-low sulfur diesel (ULSD) fuel requirements at Port Fourchon to help improve the fuel supply circumstances caused by Hurricane Ida," an agency press release said.

Specifically, this fuel waiver will help support critical marine operations in and around Port Fourchon. The waiver begins September 7, 2021, and ends September 16, 2021, the release said.

As required by law, EPA and the Department of Energy (DoE) evaluated the situation and determined that granting a short-term waiver was consistent with the public interest, the release added.

EPA and DoE continue to monitor fuel supplies and will address other extreme and unusual circumstances in the wake of Ida, according to the release.

The waiver comes amid recovery efforts more than a week after the category 4 hurricane made landfall in Louisiana and flooded portions of the eastern US as the storm weakened.

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Biden Authorizes \$47Mln in Assistance to Lebanese Armed Forces - White House

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden authorized Secretary of State Antony Blinken to direct up to \$47 million in assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces, Biden said in a memorandum to Blinken published by the White House on Tuesday.

"I hereby delegate to the Secretary of State the authority... to direct the drawdown of up to \$25 million in commodities and services from the inventory and resources of any agency of the United States Government to provide immediate assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces," Biden said. "I also hereby delegate to the Secretary of State the authority... to direct the drawdown of up to \$22 million in defense articles and services from the Department of Defense to provide immediate assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces."

After years of economic hardship, Lebanon's economy further declined in 2019 as the population has faced shortages of fuel, medical supplies and other essential items while the value of the national currency has fallen by more than 90 percent.

The Jordanian government has been supporting the Lebanese military for several months, with the most recent shipment of medical aid having arrived on Monday.

The situation has been exacerbated with the spread of the novel coronavirus Delta variant, prompting officials to consider implementing a new round of lockdowns. However, Mohammad Makkawi - governor of the central Mount Lebanon province - told Sputnik in August that such measures may prove difficult to enforce amid the current economic crisis.

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Trudeau Says Gravel Throwing Incident 'Absolutely Unacceptable,' Slams 'Anti-Vaxxer Mobs'

TORONTO, September 7 (Sputnik) – Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Tuesday condemned protesters who hurled gravel at him during a campaign stop and tore into those rallying against public health measures.

On Monday, Trudeau was pelted with small stones during a campaign stop in London, Ontario, the latest incident in an increasingly inflammatory national election season.

"It is absolutely unacceptable for people to be throwing things and endangering others at a political rally," Trudeau said during a campaign stop in Montreal, noting that protesters' actions put Liberal Party supporters, journalists and first responders at risk of injury.

The Prime Minister also had harsh words for protesters vocally campaigning against public health measures aimed at combating the novel coronavirus disease, including near-mandatory vaccination and implementation of vaccine passports across the country, which Trudeau supports.

"That's not how we do things in Canada," Trudeau told supporters and members of the press, branding dissenters at his rallies and those impeding work at hospitals around the country "anti-vaxxer mobs."

Trudeau has been besieged by vocal, and often rowdy, protesters at many of his campaign stops since the August 15 election call and was forced to cancel an event in Bolton, Ontario last month to avoid a sizable crowd of protesters hurling obscenities directed at the Prime Minister and the governing Liberals.

In recent weeks, protesters have also descended upon hospitals in protest of the existing and proposed public health measures and reportedly accosting healthcare workers.

Monday's incident received condemnation from across the political spectrum, including People's Party of Canada leader Maxime Bernier, who has vocally opposed the measures and has been on the receiving end of an attack himself, having been "egged" last week.

Canadians go to the polls on September 20.

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Biden to Address Americans on Plan to Stop Spread of Delta Variant Thursday - White House

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden will address the nation on his administration's plan to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus Delta variant and strengthen efforts to vaccinate Americans, White House spokesperson Jen Psaki told reporters.

"On Thursday the President will speak to the American people about his robust plan to stop the spread of the Delta variant and boost vaccinations," Psaki said during a press briefing on Tuesday.

Psaki noted that Biden has promised since his first day in office to take all possible steps to get the coronavirus pandemic under control, adding that he will lay out a six-pronged strategy on Thursday to do just that.

Speaking of possible timeline on implementing booster shots, Psaki said the Biden administration will make decisions based on recommendation by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

FDA Acting Administrator Janet Woodcock along with CDC Director Rochelle Walensky warned their agencies need at least several weeks to determine whether to recommend booster shots only for those who were vaccinated with the Pfizer vaccine and just for a limited number of people, according media reports.

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UN Registers 300 Unaccompanied Afghan Children, Some Flown to Germany, Qatar

WASHINGTON, (September 7) – The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) dispatched teams to Germany and Qatar to aid efforts by authorities to locate families from some of the 300 unaccompanied children from Afghanistan who were placed on evacuation flights without their parents, Executive Director Henrietta Fore said on Tuesday.

"UNICEF and our partners have registered approximately 300 unaccompanied and separated children evacuated from Afghanistan. We expect this number to rise," Fore said in a statement. UNICEF teams in Germany and Qatar are providing technical support to governments who have evacuated children and those who are hosting them, Fore said.

"Right now, our teams are on the ground at the Doha air base in Qatar and the Ramstein air base in Germany, working with authorities and our partners to register unaccompanied children, provide them with appropriate care and protection, and support tracing to bring them back together with their families," Fore added.

UNICEF is also seeking unimpeded humanitarian access to Afghanistan to determine numbers of unaccompanied and separated children among more than a half-million Afghans internally displaced by conflict – most in recent weeks, Fore said.

The agency estimates that about 10 million Afghan children are in urgent need of humanitarian aid.

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Biden Authorizes \$47Mln in Assistance to Lebanese Armed Forces - White House

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden authorized Secretary of State Antony Blinken to direct up to \$47 million in assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces, Biden said in a memorandum to Blinken published by the White House on Tuesday.

"I hereby delegate to the Secretary of State the authority... to direct the drawdown of up to \$25 million in commodities and services from the inventory and resources of any agency of the United States Government to provide immediate assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces," Biden said. "I also hereby delegate to the Secretary of State the authority... to direct the drawdown of up to \$22 million in defense articles and services from the Department of Defense to provide immediate assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces."

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US in No Rush to Recognize New Taliban Government - White House

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) – The Biden Administration is not rushing to recognize the newly announced government formed by the Taliban (banned in Russia), White House Jen Psaki said on Tuesday.

"There is no rush to recognition [of the Taliban]. It is really going to be dependent on what steps the Taliban takes. The world will be watching, the United States included," Psaki said at a press briefing. "I don't have a timeline for you. It depends on what behavior they exhibit on the ground."

Earlier in the day, the Taliban has announced the composition of a new Afghan government formed after the terrorist group took power in the country.

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Biden Says Expects to Meet With Some Afghan Refugees in US

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Tuesday that he expects to meet with some of the Afghan refugees being resettled in the United States at some point in the future.

"Well, they're all over the country, obviously, I'm sure I'll be seeing some of them," Biden told reporters while departing for states in New York and New Jersey.

On Friday, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said the United States has so far admitted more than 40,000 Afghan evacuees. The Afghans are being temporarily housed at eight military facilities across the United States.

Biden also said he hopes to see the infrastructure damage caused by Hurricane Ida permanently fixed by the government.

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Canada Deportation Hearing for Ex-Nazi Begins, Defense Seeks to Conduct Hearing in Private

TORONTO, September 7 (Sputnik) - Deportation hearings against former Nazi Helmut Oberlander by Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) have begun on Tuesday. The defense has put forward a motion to conduct the deportation proceedings against the former death squad member in private, barring members of the media and public from observing the proceedings.

"There is a preliminary application... the application from Mr. Oberlander to make this a private proceeding - to have it held in the absence of the public and the media," Karen Greenwood, a member of the Immigration and Refugee Board's (IRB) Immigration Division said.

Members of the media have asked that proceedings be delayed to allow time for journalists to seek legal representation to appeal the decision, should the adjudicator rule in favor of the defense's motion.

The 96-year-old Oberlander has been embroiled in legal battle with the Canadian government since 1995, when the latter began trying to strip Ukrainian-born ex-SS member of his citizenship, citing his failure to disclose his links to death squads. After a lengthy legal battle, Oberlander was stripped of his citizenship for the fourth time and final time in 2017 and Canada's Supreme Court issued a ruling last December that blocked any possibility for Oberlander to appeal this decision.

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Pretrial Hearings for Alleged 9/11 Plotters Resume at Guantanamo Bay Prison - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) - The pretrial hearings for five Guantanamo detainees who are accused of plotting and executing the deadly 9/11 attacks have opened the Expeditionary Legal Complex (ELC) at Camp Justice on Tuesday, media reported.

At the hearing, which is the first since February 2020, military judge Colonel Matthew McCall announced that the military commission would have its attendance discussion and would start voir dire of the judge's qualifications, according to ABC News. The sessions on Wednesday and Friday are due to be closed, while the Thursday session will be a half-day open session, the outlet reported.

According to journalists, four out of the five defendants are vaccinated against COVID-19.

The most high-profile defendant is Khalid Sheikh Mohammed who, according to the report of the 9/11 Commission, was the central figure in the 9/11 attacks. Mohammed was a member of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda (terrorist group, banned in Russia), and reportedly directed the group's propaganda operations from 1999-2001.

Established by the George Bush administration in 2002, the facility has long been criticized for mistreatment and abuses of prisoners, with human rights activists and international organizations calling for its closure. Former US President Barack Obama vowed to close the camp but faced strong pushback from Congress. His successor, Donald Trump, signed an order to keep the detention camp open indefinitely, while incumbent President Joe Biden has promised to close the facility.

The US authorities have since shut down secretive Camp Seven, where the highly classified prisoners were kept, and transferred the detainees to other accommodation blocks. Yet, no announcements on the full closure of the camp, which once kept over 700 people — mostly without charges — followed. In July, the White House announced that the Biden administration is aiming to close down the detention facility for good and that it works to transfer its remaining detainees out, but it has set no deadline to effectuate its closure.

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Americans' Confidence in CDC Erodes Over Pandemic 'Plan of Action' – Poll

WASHINGTON, September 7 (Sputnik) – More US adults now disagree than agree with the statement that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has a clear plan for responding to the coronavirus pandemic.

An August 16-22 tracking survey asked more than 3,500 US adults whether they “agreed” or “disagreed” with the statement: “The CDC has communicated a clear plan of action in response to the coronavirus,” a press release summarizing the poll said.

“In August 2021, 32% agreed and 41% disagreed,” the release said.

The latest poll marked the first time Gallup asked the question since July, when the CDC advised vaccinated Americans to wear face masks indoors due to the delta variant, the release said. The advisory came weeks after the CDC said that vaccinated individuals were able to be without face masks even indoors, contributing to the confusion.

The public's opinions about CDC communication have varied throughout the pandemic and have been more critical than positive at other times, the release said.

These include September 2020, when there was concern about premature approval of COVID-19 vaccines, and January 2021, when infections and deaths peaked and the federal government struggled with the initial vaccine rollout, according to the release.

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