

11/1/21 Monday

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'We Have No Authority': Texas Tells Supreme Court DOJ, Abortion Clinics Can't Sue Them Over New Law

By - Morgan Artyukhina

The high court heard two related arguments on Monday about whether the state of Texas can use private citizens to enforce its extremely restrictive anti-abortion law, SB 8, which has banned most abortions in the state and was designed to evade challenges to its legality.

The two hour-long arguments before the nine Supreme Court justices both [concern the same topic](#) but from different perspectives. One, Whole Woman's Health vs. Jackson, brought by abortion providers in Texas, concerns "whether a state can insulate from federal court review a law that prohibits the exercise of a constitutional right by delegating to the general public the authority to enforce that prohibition through civil actions."

The other, United States vs. Texas, is a challenge to the law by the US Department of Justice and seeks to answer whether the federal government may "bring suit in federal court and obtain injunctive or declaratory relief against the state, state court judges, state court clerks, other state officials or all private parties to prohibit SB 8 from being enforced."

Texas Law Bans Majority of Abortions

Signed into law in April by Texas Governor Greg Abbott, SB 8 does something many laws have sought to do, but does it in a completely new way.

The law is a so-called "heartbeat law" that bans abortions about what opponents call a heartbeat in the embryo is capable of being detected. [According to women's](#) health experts, what is being detected is not an embryonic heartbeat, but electrical signals being sent by a cluster of cells with the potential to develop into a heart, but which have not yet done so.

Those electrical signals are detectable as early as five or six weeks after conception, at a point that many women are not even aware they are pregnant. [According to Planned](#) Parenthood, approximately 85% to 90% of people who get abortions in Texas do so after 6 weeks of pregnancy.

The Texas Policy Evaluation Project at the University of Texas at Austin [on Friday published](#) data from the first month of the ban, which took effect on September 1. Their data found that just 2,164 abortions were performed in Texas between then and October 1. Compared to the previous month, August 2021, that was a 60% drop from 5,377; compared to the September 2020, which had 4,313 abortions, it was a 49.8% drop.

Heartbeat bills are nothing new: 14 other states have passed such laws in the last three years, with federal courts striking down or suspending all of them as violations of the 1973 Roe vs. Wade ruling, which established the legal right to an abortion and laid out a framework for its regulation, including that abortions could not be restricted during the first 13 weeks of pregnancy. The most recent to be blocked was Oklahoma's, which was set to take effect on

Monday before the Oklahoma [Supreme Court suspended](#) it last week, pending the results of ongoing litigation.

#### Law Designed to Frustrate Legal Challenges

However, Texas' SB 8 isn't enforced in the traditional way laws are - in fact, the state is legally barred from doing so. Instead, it provides for third-parties to sue for damages those who "aid and abet" an abortion. The vaguely-worded law could open up a wide array of people for lawsuits, including doctors and staff at abortion clinics, but also, for example, someone who drives the abortion recipient to the clinic, all of whom can be hit with \$10,000 fines under SB 8. "The issues before this court are far more sweeping" than just the Texas law itself, Marc Hearn, a lawyer with the Center for Reproductive Rights, told the justices.

"To allow the Texas scheme to stand would provide a road map for other states to abrogate any decision of this court with which they disagree," he argued. "At issue here is nothing less than the supremacy of federal law."

Texas Solicitor General Judd Stone, who defended the state against the abortion providers' challenge, said both they and the DOJ had sued the wrong people, as Ken Paxton, the state's attorney general, no longer had the power to stop private citizens from filing lawsuits under the law. Instead, he argued they should wait for someone to actually sue an abortion clinic in a state court and use that suit to adjudicate whether SB 8 is a valid law.

Justice Elena Kagan, one of three liberals on the high court and a strong critic of SB 8, pressed Stone on why Paxton could no longer halt the actions of litigious, anti-abortion Texans.

"If every private citizen here has been deputized by the state to enforce this law for the bounty, then why wouldn't an injunction against the AG bar those citizens from going into court?" she asked.

Stone replied that the attorney generals' office has "no control" over the actions of private individuals. "Unless this court were to say that private individuals are somehow agents, acting in concert with the attorney general," Stone argued, "we have no authority over them."

#### Battle Over Abortion Heats Up

Exactly one month after hearing the two cases on SB 8, the US Supreme Court will hear another case concerning a Mississippi anti-abortion law that could prove even more consequential.

Dobbs vs. Jackson Women's Health Organization will see the court weigh not just the Roe case, but also a later case that upheld Roe's reasoning: Planned Parenthood vs. Casey (1992). The 2018 Mississippi law bans abortions after 15 weeks, and abortion advocates fear that because the high court's conservative majority allowed Texas SB 8 to take effect, it may use the Dobbs case to strike down the right to an abortion entirely.

If that happens, [so-called "trigger laws"](#) in 12 US states dominated by Republican politics would automatically take effect, banning abortion in those states the moment it becomes legal for them to do so.

However, Democrats have also attempted to fight back by [pushing a federal bill](#) that would codify Roe v. Wade into US law. The Women's Health Protection Act passed the Democrat-dominated House in September, but is unlikely to get through the Senate, where Republicans can use the filibuster to block it from ever coming to a vote.

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Convicted Killer Robert Durst Indicted on Murder Charges Over 1982 Disappearance of Wife  
By - Morgan Artyukhina

Imprisoned real estate heir Robert Durst was charged for another murder on Monday - this time of his wife, Kathie, who disappeared in 1982.

Following a [criminal complaint](#) filed last month accusing Durst of killing his wife in South Salem, New York, in January 1982, a Westchester County Grand Jury indicted Durst on one count of second-degree murder on Monday.

"When Kathleen Durst disappeared on Jan. 31, 1982, her family and friends were left with pain, anguish and questions that have contributed to their unfaltering pursuit of justice for the last 39 years," Westchester County District Attorney Miriam E. Rocah [said in a statement](#).

"The District Attorney's Office reinvigorated its investigation into Robert Durst just 10 months ago when I took Office, launched the Cold Case Bureau, and dedicated the resources and skill that I thought this case deserved. Thanks to the incredible hard work of our Assistant District Attorneys, the District Attorney's Criminal Investigators and the New York State Police, we have taken a huge step forward in the pursuit of justice for Kathie Durst, her family and victims of domestic violence everywhere."

"For nearly four decades there has been a great deal of speculation about this case, much of it fueled by Robert Durst's own highly publicized statements," she added. "An indictment is a crucial step in the process of holding wrongdoers accountable for their actions."

Kathie disappeared on January 31, 1982, without a trace. The mystery has fueled decades of speculation, but her body was never found. In a 2015 documentary on his life called "The Jinx: The Life and Deaths of Robert Durst," the [real estate heir admitted](#) to a physical argument with his wife the night she disappeared, but has always denied any involvement in her death.

However, at the end of the series, unaware that he was still being recorded, Durst is heard saying, "What the hell did I do? ... Killed them all, of course."

Last month, Durst was [sentenced to life](#) in prison without the possibility of parole for the 2000 murder of his friend Susan Berman because he feared she was about to reveal to police what she knew about Kathie's death. He was arrested for the murder based on his admission in the documentary.

He was also acquitted in 2003 of the death and dismemberment of his neighbor, Morris Black, in Galveston, Texas, in 2001, despite admitting to accidentally shooting Black in the face during a struggle and then cutting up his body and dumping it in Galveston Bay. Durst pleaded guilty to bail-jumping and tampering with evidence, however, and served one year of a five-year sentence before being pardoned with certain stipulations. He was soon jailed for another year, however, after violating those stipulations.

Investigators have also been looking into connections between Durst and multiple other missing women ranging from [1971](#) to [1997](#).

Durst, 78, is the oldest son and heir of New York real estate mogul Seymour Durst. He is worth an [estimated \\$65 million](#).

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Meta Deletes Over 1,000 Nicaraguan Accounts It Claims Were FSLN 'Troll Farm' Days Before Election

By - Morgan Artyukhina

Just days before nationwide elections in Nicaragua, Meta has deleted more than a thousand accounts on Facebook and Instagram it claims were part of a disinformation "troll farm" run by the ruling Sandinista party. It's just the latest example of the social media giant taking concerted actions against US enemies alongside the US government.

On Monday, Ben Nimmo, the head of [Facebook-turned-Meta's](#) global threat intelligence strategy, announced that the social media giant had taken down [what he claimed](#) was a "a troll farm run by the government of Nicaragua and the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) party."

The takedown included 937 Facebook accounts, 140 Pages, 24 Groups and 363 Instagram accounts in Nicaragua.

The [Meta report claimed](#) the accounts were "one of the most cross-government troll operations we've disrupted to date, with multiple state entities participating in this activity at once," but primarily run by employees of the Nicaraguan Institute of Telecommunications and the Post (TELCOR) in Managua.

"Additional smaller clusters of fake accounts were run from other government institutions, including the Supreme Court and the Nicaraguan Social Security Institute," the report said.

"They posted positive content about the government and negative commentary about the opposition, using hundreds of fake accounts to promote these posts," it added. "The campaign appeared to aim at flooding the cross-internet environment in Nicaragua with pro-government messages."

The report goes on to state that the effort began in April 2018, "as the Nicaraguan government repressed a wave of student-led nationwide protests."

As [Sputnik reported](#) at the time, those protests, which followed the passage of a reform law, quickly revoked, that increased social security contributions by employers and employees while lowering the program's benefits, were both driven and amplified by US meddling, which portrayed them as a bloodbath at the hands of Nicaraguan police. Independent Nicaraguan researcher [Enrique Hendrix demonstrated](#) that the death toll uncritically repeated across the Western press had been vastly inflated using duplicated names, unconfirmed deaths, and deaths wholly unrelated to the protests.

In fact, armed gangs backed by the US Agency for International Development (USAID), a US State Department agency, and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a CIA front group, were targeting Sandinistas for violence even as police attempted to deescalate the situation by temporarily disarming, Grayzone journalist Max [Blumenthal told Sputnik](#) from Nicaragua at the time.

Loyal Arm of Washington

That Meta, which recently pivoted its corporate structure to focus on the “metaverse” virtual reality project it pioneered in conjunction with the Pentagon’s Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), would repeat such a line should be unsurprising. The social media giant has [buttressed its senior ranks](#) in recent years with right-wing think tank academics who are closely aligned with the US National Security State.

Nimmo, who heads the company’s “influence operation threat” department, is a former spokesperson for NATO, a former writer on retainer for UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office [cutout Integrity Initiative](#) - of which then-Facebook was also a [major financial backer](#) - and senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, a hawkish Washington think tank funded by a bevy of defense contractors, Gulf monarchies and - yep, NATO.

Nimmo’s colleague, security chief Nathaniel Gleicher, is also a [senior associate](#) at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), another think tank with major influence on US foreign policy that’s funded by many of the same donors as the Atlantic Council, and a former senior counsel at the US Department of Justice.

Similarly, Facebook’s director of “threat disruption,” [David Agranovich](#), was formerly director of intelligence for the White House National Security Council in 2017 and 2018 under then-US President Donald Trump, covering the period in which the US offensive to undermine Nicaraguan democracy began.

‘I’m Not a Bot!’: Victim of US Attack Speaks Out

However, shortly after the takedown, those whose accounts had been deleted began speaking out.

“I’m not a bot; I’m not a troll,” Ligia Sevilla, an activist in Managua whose Facebook and Twitter accounts were both disabled in the last few days, told journalist Benjamin Norton on Monday afternoon. “Maybe Facebook doesn’t allow us to be Sandinistas?”

Another person whose account was deleted, Darling Huete, a journalist for Canal 4 Nicaragua, replied to Nimmo’s tweet announcing the takedown by saying: “I am not a troll! I had my personal account for more than 10 years, and your company deleted my profile and all of my years of photos with my friends, simply because I do not write what you want. This is what you call ‘democracy’?”

I am not a troll! I had my personal account for more than 10 years, and your company deleted my profile and all of my years of photos with my friends, simply because I do not write what you want. This is what you call "democracy"?

— Darling Huete (@DarlingHHuete) [November 1, 2021](#)

“I want to show you I’m not a troll. That’s why I’m asking Facebook: why did you suspend me?” Tyler Moreno Diaz, another Sandinista activist from the Caribbean coast, said in a statement on Twitter.

“That is meddling,” Moreno added. “That is violating our right to free expression. They won’t be able [to defeat us] and they won’t!”

Just days earlier, [Twitter also disabled](#) the accounts of numerous popular Sandinista users, for which it has still given no explanation.

Indeed, it seems that Meta regards being a Sandinista or supporting Sandinistas on its platform is itself against the rules.

Meta, Twitter, Google, and other US-based tech giants have taken similar positions toward other US official enemies in recent years, [accusing accounts](#) that post from countries like Venezuela,

Iran, Russia, [Cuba, and China](#) of being bots or paid trolls and defined their opposition to the US State Department's official narrative as being "coordinated inauthentic content."

When the US government uses their platforms to undermine those nations, however, as [happened in Cuba](#) in July, they look the other way.

#### Undermining Nicaragua's Elections

Meta's actions come amid a larger offensive by the Biden administration aimed at undermining support for the democratic socialist Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) and Nicaragua's elections this coming weekend.

On Friday, [Reuters reported](#), citing "a senior State Department official," that the White House was coordinating an international sanctions regime it intends to foist upon the Central American nation "in response to the November 7 election."

According to the report, the Biden administration is reviewing Nicaragua's membership in the CAFTA-DR regional trade agreement, looking for legal barriers to removing it if Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega "rigs the elections in his favor," Reuters says. Roughly 60% of Nicaragua's exports go to the United States, most of which are apparel, rolled tobacco, and produce such as raw sugar and coffee, [according to data](#) collected by the OEC.

The administration has been preparing a [Venezuela-like blockade](#) against Nicaragua for months. The Reinforcing Nicaragua's Adherence to Conditions for Electoral Reform ([RENACER Act](#)), introduced into Congress in March, would impose crippling limitations on Nicaragua's ability to access financial resources by accusing Ortega and other Nicaraguan government officials and functionaries of complicity in human rights abuses, "including arbitrary detentions, torture, and sexual violence as a form of intimidation" and suppression of the press. RENACER would also provide for increased US espionage efforts inside Nicaragua on top of already-existing efforts, continuing a trend lasting 40 years.

In September, the House Foreign Affairs Committee held a hearing on what it called "Ortega's Destruction of Democracy" after more than two dozen Nicaraguan opposition [figures were arrested](#), including some who were election candidates.

However, those arrested [played leading roles](#) in the 2018 riots, including Lester Alemán, a former student leader; Juan Sebastian Chamorro, a US-trained economist and head of the FUNIDES think tank who heads the group Civic Alliance for Justice in Democracy, which [united with other](#) opposition groups, including Alemán's, last year to "reinvigorate the fight" and "rebuild the country."

Also arrested was Cristiana Chamorro Barrios, whose Violeta Barrios de Chamorro Foundation for Reconciliation and Democracy has long served as a third-party ["pass-through" for CIA money](#) to cultivate an anti-Sandinista opposition movement in Nicaragua.

#### Four Decades of US Counter-Revolution

Ortega, who heads the FLSN, originally seized power in 1979 when it threw out the corrupt Somoza family's dictatorship, an entity that enjoyed close US support for its anti-communist and anti-populist credentials. However, right-wing guerrillas known as the Contras, who enjoyed extensive US backing, waged a guerrilla campaign in the countryside against institutions of the Sandinista government, including clinics and schools, the centerpieces of the government's social welfare program. By the time of elections in 1990, Nicaraguans voted the FLSN out of power in order to escape the US economic blockade and murderous proxy war.

However, the FLSN returned in 2006 when Ortega won a plurality of the presidential vote and he has won re-election twice since then, in 2011 and 2016. Under his leadership, Nicaragua has partnered with regional left-wing governments like Venezuela, Bolivia, and Cuba, to build institutions like the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America – Peoples' Trade Treaty (ALBA TCP), which promoted regional trade and self-reliance over an unequal, US-centered relationship.

When neighboring Honduras attempted to join the bloc in 2009, the US helped orchestrate the removal from power of President Manuel Zelaya, who was replaced by a [neoliberal police state](#) that has produced a huge exodus of poor, indigenous, and LGBTQ people.

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Manchin Refuses to Back Biden's \$1.75 Trillion Spending Plan, Decries 'Political Games' of Lawmakers

By - Evan Craighead

Congressional Democratic leaders have as yet been unable to sway their moderate colleagues to back a \$1.75 trillion framework for US President Joe Biden's social spending package. The framework was trimmed from its initial \$3.5 trillion price tag following criticism from centrist Democrats like Senators Joe Manchin (D-WV) and Krysten Sinema (D-AZ).

On Monday, Manchin expressed to reporters that he was not prepared to back a reconciliation package until he receives clarity on the \$1.75 trillion framework's impact on inflation and the US federal deficit. The updated framework was released late last week.

"I will not support a bill that is this consequential without thoroughly understanding the impact that it will have on our national debt, our economy, and most importantly, all of our American people," the US senator from West Virginia said during an afternoon news conference.

Manchin stated that "political games have to stop" and House Democrats should cease holding the infrastructure bill "hostage" by tying the legislation to the reconciliation package.

"There are some House Democrats who say they can't support this infrastructure package until they get my commitment on the reconciliation legislation," he said. "It is time to vote on the [infrastructure] bill, up or down, and then go home and explain to your constituents the decision you made."

"Holding this bill hostage is not going to work in getting my support for the regular reconciliation bill," Manchin proclaimed.

Nevertheless, the White House appears confident that both Manchin and Sinema will ultimately support the \$1.75 trillion package.

"Senator Manchin says he is prepared to support a Build Back Better plan that combats inflation, is fiscally responsible, and will create jobs," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki [said in a statement](#) issued after Manchin's comments. "The plan the House is finalizing meets those tests—it is fully paid for, will reduce the deficit, and brings down costs for health care, child care, elder care, and housing."

Psaki added that 17 Nobel Prize-winning economists have thrown their support behind the package as a means to reduce inflation.

The bill was significantly trimmed down from Biden's initial \$3.5 trillion framework. The new plan abandons efforts to lower prescription drug costs, paid family leave funding and free community college.

As for the American public, [a new ABC News Ipsos poll](#) found that those in the US are evenly divided, with 34% of the 514 respondents stating they think the bills would hurt the US economy and another 34% saying they believe the legislation will help stimulate the economy.

Around 68% of Democrats polled said they thought the bill would help the economy, while only 7% of Republicans surveyed responded the same.

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US Air Force's Secretive RQ-180 Stealth Drone Reportedly Photographed Over Area 51  
By - Evan Craighead

Back in September, an aircraft that appeared to be the US Air Force's secret RQ-180 drone was spotted over the Philippines. Recent stealth drone sightings come nearly a year after the emergence of the first reported photos of the Northrop Grumman-made unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV).

Amid rumors that the RQ-180 had become operable, a new photo was published by Dreamlandresort.com on Sunday, showing what appears to be a stealth drone conducting a test flight above Area 51, the top-secret facility located within the Nevada Test and Training Range. Joerg Arnu, who maintains the unofficial website, claimed that the aircraft was at an altitude of approximately 70,000 feet (21,336 meters) when the photo was taken by him and another unnamed witness.

"A friend who wishes to remain anonymous and I were at the Groom Lake Road gate yesterday. I heard a faint aircraft noise and noticed a contrail straight above us, inside the Area 51 restricted airspace, heading roughly SSW," Arnu recounted, [as reported by The Drive](#).

The highly-classified USAF facility is also referred to as Homey Airport or Groom Lake, and is remotely administered by Edwards Air Force Base, itself situated in southern California. Using image-stabilizing binoculars, Arnu got a closer look at the aircraft and ruled out that what he was looking at was a B-2, as the stealth bomber notably has a pointed tail, while the aircraft he was looking at had a serrated tail.

"It is clearly a twin-engine aircraft," he added, noting the photo was captured with a Canon 20Mpix camera.

Almost exactly one year ago, the [first photos said to be of the stealth drone began circulating online](#), creating a buzz around the USAF's secret and elusive UAV.

Aviation Week's Guy Norris determined that the image, captured by photographer and actor Rob Kolinsky, showed an RQ-180 occupying the skies above Edwards AFB.

However, doubt was cast on the outlet's identification of the aircraft, as it is believed that RQ-180 operations were being conducted out of Beale AFB - located more than 350 miles (563 kilometers) from Edwards AFB.

With the USAF remaining tight-lipped about anything related to the RQ-180, The Drive suggested that the photograph in question could be the P-175 Polecat, an unmanned aerial vehicle developed by Lockheed Martin.

The aircraft was created as part of an effort to promote the development of High Altitude Long Endurance-Demonstrator (HALE) class drones, or "atmospheric satellites," which are designed to operate in the tropopause, at a range between 60,000 feet and 65,000 feet (18,288 meters and 19,812 meters).

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Virginia Election: What to Know About the Crucial, Close Race for the Governor's Mansion  
By - Evan Craighead

Former US Presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump were among the many political heavyweights who reached out to Virginia voters ahead of Tuesday's gubernatorial election between Republican nominee Glenn Youngkin and Democratic nominee Terry McAuliffe, who served as the Commonwealth's governor from 2014 to 2018.

Americans' eyes are set on Virginia as its gubernatorial election officially kicks off Tuesday - more than a month after early, in-person voting was made available at various registrar's offices and satellite voting locations across the state.

Tensions are particularly high during this election, as polls have suggested that the results of the race could be neck-and-neck. Many view the November 2nd election as a barometer for how Democrats and Republicans will fare in the 2022 midterms.

Youngkin wrapped up his "[Win With Glenn](#)" [tour on Monday](#), with stops in southwest Virginia, Virginia Beach, and the state's capital city.

"This is a moment for Virginians to push back on this left, liberal, progressive agenda", Youngkin told attendees at a rally in an airport hangar near Richmond, Virginia.

The tour's final stop was in Leesburg, Virginia, for the "Loudoun Parents Matter" rally. Virginia's Loudoun County was recently at the centre of a GOP-backed critique of the state's K-12 curriculum, including efforts to ban critical race theory and other related courses in public schools.

McAuliffe also made stops in Richmond and Roanoke, Virginia, on Tuesday before ending his election eve in Fairfax. Governor Ralph Northam (D), who cannot seek another term, was notably in attendance at the Richmond rally.

"We've had eight great years, tremendous progress, progress people never thought possible eight years ago", McAuliffe declared, speaking of how the once-Red (Republican) state has made progressive advancements under his and Northam's leadership.

"We've got to keep it going. We cannot go back", the former Virginia governor said.

Concerns in the Commonwealth

For many Virginia voters, education is the most pressing issue at the ballot box, according to a [Washington Post-Schar School poll](#) conducted between 20-26 October.

Relatedly, the gubernatorial candidates have been focused on conversations related to the banning of "Beloved", the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Toni Morrison that follows a Civil War-era Black woman struggling to escape her past.

While the 1987 book is a staple for Advanced Placement (AP) English courses in high school, parents have argued that children should not be exposed to the book's graphic descriptions of sex and violence.

Around 24% of those polled listed education as their top voting issue, while a close 23% said the US economy was the most pressing issue. "Something else" took third place, accounting for 16% of responses.

The recent survey also showed raised concerns of Democrats' standing in the gubernatorial race, as a Washington Post-Schar School poll from weeks prior showed that McAuliffe was ahead of Youngkin by six points. That edge has since narrowed to 47% of registered voters favouring McAuliffe and 44% of registered voters backing Youngkin.

Trump Holds Tele-Rally in Support of Youngkin

Donald Trump held a virtual rally on Monday, urging supporters in Virginia "to get out and vote for Glenn Youngkin", who would be "great on jobs and taxes" and "make Virginia really the envy of the world".

"This is your chance to break the grip on the radical Left, that they have on the Commonwealth", Trump said during the call. "You can send a very strong message to Joe Biden, [House Speaker] Nancy Pelosi, [Senate Majority Leader] Chuck Schumer, AOC plus three. You've got to send a message to this really corrupt media".

AOC plus three refers to "The Squad", comprised of progressive Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), Ilhan Omar (D-MN), Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), and Ayanna Pressley (D-MA). Trump claimed that it was important for Virginia Republicans to have a massive showing at the polls to counter what he characterised as mainstream media narratives.

"The fake news media would like to say something else because they'd like our big, giant, beautiful base like there has never been before, to not vote as much as they're going to", the former US president proclaimed.

Trump also suggested that McAuliffe would "abolish the suburbs as you know them today" via a ban on single family home zoning. He said the move will "turn beautiful residential neighbourhoods into apartment towers".

Youngkin did not appear on the call with Trump, and shied away from mentioning the former US president's name when asked about the Trump event.

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Nearly One-Third of Republicans Believe Violence Necessary to 'Save' America, Poll Reveals  
By - Nevin Brown

An alarming Public Religion Research Institute poll has indicated that 30% of US Republicans believe violence is justified to restore what they consider to be their version of America.

The findings emerged as political violence in the United States has become a pressing concern in the wake of the deadly January 6th Capitol attack that is being analysed by US lawmakers as part of an ongoing commission.

[The poll asked if participants](#) in the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) poll agreed with the statement, "Because things have gotten so far off track, true American patriots may have to resort to violence in order to save our country". The poll found that 30% of Republican respondents, 17% of Independents, and 11% of Democrats agreed with the statement.

The poll further determined that among Republicans that got their news and opinions from right-wing sources including Newsmax and One America News, their agreement with the question increased to 40%. Republicans who trust Fox News saw that figure decrease to 32%, and those that mostly trust mainstream news sources dropped to 22%.

The poll also found that 39% of participants who believe that the 2020 election was stolen from former US President Donald Trump agreed that "true American patriots may have to resort to violence".

Two other significant markers were respondents agreeing "that things have changed so much they feel like strangers in their own country", and that "those who think American culture has mostly changed for the worse since the 1950s".

For those participating in the political survey that feel like "strangers in their own country", 29% agreed that resorting to violence may be necessary, and for those who thought American culture had changed for the worse, 23% agreed political violence could be justified.

Robert Jones, CEO and founder of PRRI, [described the poll's results](#) as an "alarming finding". He continued, "I've been doing this a while, for decades, and it's not the kind of finding that as a sociologist, a public opinion pollster, that you're used to seeing".

Jones said he believes that Trump's rhetoric following the 2020 election is largely to blame for the normalisation of political violence among Republicans. Mark Pitcavage, a senior research fellow at the Anti-Defamation League's Centre on Extremism, said the percentage of Democrats and Independents who expressed support for this idea is also "enough to be concerning".

Results of the poll show that while Republicans appear to be more comfortable with political violence, the issue is a concern for both political parties.

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Then & Now: How the World Reached 5 Million COVID-19 Deaths and Counting  
By - Nevin Brown

Over the course of two years, the onset of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic has claimed 5 million lives worldwide, according to the latest tally released by Johns Hopkins University.

[Data released](#) by the university on Monday highlights that the US continues to hold the highest number of confirmed COVID-19 deaths, with over 746,000 fatalities officially recorded since the start of the pandemic. Rounding out the top four countries with the highest death toll are Brazil, India and Mexico.

Experts have noted that the death toll is probably much higher, as the official global tally largely depends on confirmed cases. "It's quite possible that the number of deaths is double what we see," Amber D'Souza, professor of epidemiology at the Bloomberg School of Public Health, [told Nat Geo](#).

"Five million is such a staggering number on its own," the official said. "No country has been able to escape it."

[The Economist](#) used statistical modeling to show that deaths from COVID-19 in many countries are likely underreported.

COVID-19 Consumes 2020

Covid-19 was first detected in Wuhan, China, in November 2019. The exact starting point of the virus is still unknown, but a zoonotic origin remains the most likely source, as bats in Southeast Asia have been discovered containing a similar virus.

There had been outbreaks of coronaviruses in China before, but none spread as quickly as COVID-19. The mysterious respiratory virus quickly grew and spread from Wuhan throughout mainland China. In the time it took to fully grasp the severity of the situation, COVID-19 had already started to make its way around the globe.

The delayed onset of symptoms following an infection made the virus the ultimate Trojan horse. From China, COVID-19 spread throughout Asia, Europe and the United States before consuming the rest of the globe.

As a result of the novelty of the virus, many people who went undiagnosed are believed to have died of COVID-19. [The daily death total of COVID-19 hit 4,000](#) by March 30, 2020, a mark it has yet to drop beneath.

The slow trek to [5 million COVID-19 deaths](#) has hardly abated over the past two years, especially as more deadly, transmissible variants of the virus emerged in over the last several months.

Improved safety measures, quarantine, and vaccines have significantly reduced the amount of deaths in developed nations. However, poorer nations are still in the grip of the novel coronavirus pandemic, with little way out.

As it stands, the COVID-19 pandemic is the 6th most deadly pandemic in history. While it pales in comparison to the 1918 influenza pandemic, it cannot be forgotten the vast medical advances that have transpired over the past century.

With a new, faster spreading [Delta variant detected](#), the pandemic is nowhere near close to ending. Some nations have had successful vaccination efforts, but globally there remains much work to be done.

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Is Donald Trump Right That Israel 'Literally Owned Congress' Before Progressive Democrats?  
By - Nevin Brown

US President Donald Trump, on the Ari Hoffman Show, recently mused that Israel “literally owned congress a decade ago,” but that progressive Democrats have eroded Tel Aviv’s influence over US lawmakers.

Trump’s opinion of the changing dynamics between Israel and the United States is representative of changing partisan feelings towards Israel, with the primary driver the conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis. Is the former president correct that Israel’s influence in Congress has diminished?

Over the past decade, Republicans have dramatically increased their support for Israel, while Democrats have displayed a near equal drop in support.

[According to a 2018 Pew Research poll](#), 79% of Republicans participating in the survey were more sympathetic toward Israel than Palestine, compared to 27% of Democrats. While a gulf has always existed, it has never been this pronounced. In 2001, 50% of Republicans were reportedly more sympathetic towards Israel than Palestine, compared to 38% of Democrats. This divergence in partisan opinion is likely what spurred Trump to suggest that “you have between [Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez] and [Rep. Ilhan] Omar — and these people that hate Israel, they hate it with a passion.” He later added that “they’re controlling Congress, and Israel is not a force in Congress anymore.”

Trump’s highlighting of the US representatives both of who are progressive Democrats, is considered by some to be rooted in truth. The pair have been more critical of Tel Aviv, compared to more moderate Democrats.

In September, a group of eight Democrats, including Ocasio-Cortez and Omar, as well as one Republican in the House, [voted against \\$1 billion in funding for Israel’s Iron Dome](#) defense system. While progressives pushed back against the cash gift, the bill still passed by a vote of 420-9, indicating that Trump’s claim - that Ocasio-Cortez and Omar control Congress with regard to Israel - is overstated.

Trump continues to suggest, however, that Israel’s support in Congress has dwindled dramatically, saying, “Israel had such power — and rightfully — over Congress, and now it doesn’t. It’s incredible, actually.”

The United States and Israel remain close allies, but claiming that Congress is less supportive of Israel than it has been in the past is only half of the point. The real change is that, as Republicans have become more supportive of Israel, Democrats have become more supportive of Palestinians.

Support for Israel in the US Congress appears to have not so much diminished as changed, going from an issue Democrats and Republicans could find middle ground on, to a national issue said to be as divisive as gun control. Net support for Israel in Congress has changed little, but there is more resistance to supporting the government in Tel Aviv on all matters. The resistance tends to center on Tel Aviv’s handling of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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'Very Unusual': Thousands of NYC Firefighters Participate in 'Sickout' to Protest Vaccine Mandate

By - Nevin Brown

New York City's COVID vaccine mandate has reportedly sparked a concerning firefighter shortage after some 2,000 first responders took sick leave in protest of the city's job order. Frank Dwyer, the deputy commissioner of the New York City Fire Department, recently revealed [via email](#) that the number of firefighters simultaneously calling in sick was "very unusual." New York City public employees are presently subject to a COVID vaccine mandate that provides no test-out option. The measure went into effect on October 29. It is unclear what percentage of the more than 2,000 firefighters taking sick leave are doing so in protest of the mandate or are simply protecting their pocketbooks before complying with the mandate. Public employees in defiance of the mandate will be placed on unpaid leave, and by going on sick leave they will not face an immediate financial penalty. New York Fire Department Commissioner Daniel A. Nigro has made clear that he is not pleased with [firefighters opposing the mandate](#). Nigro said, "Irresponsible bogus sick leave by some of our members is creating a danger for New Yorkers and their fellow firefighters," adding that, "they need to return to work or risk the consequences of their actions." Protesting the vaccine mandate is not popular among New York City firefighters, as the department employs roughly 11,000 firefighters. According to some estimates, under 20% of the department is participating in the so-called sickout. While the Uniformed Firefighters Association (UFA), the union that represents FDNY firefighters, wants firefighters to defy the mandate, they did not officially call for the sickout. Andrew Ansbro, head of the UFA, said, "I have told my members that if they choose to remain unvaccinated, they must still report for duty." Ansbro instead seeks to pressure the New York City government, suggesting that, "if they are told they cannot work, it will be the department and city of New York that sends them home. And it will be the department and the city of New York that has failed to protect the citizens of New York." While New York is said to be facing a temporary firefighter shortage, the city has made efforts to reward employees that get vaccinated. Any employee that gets a vaccination shot will immediately receive an additional [\\$500 in their paycheck](#). New York City has 8.5 million people and the New York City Fire Department responds to an estimated [2,200 structural fire calls each month](#). According to some critics, however, this is one fire that the department seems unprepared to put out. [Latest figures](#) released by NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio indicate that 91% of city workers have been vaccinated, with some 72% of firefighters being vaccinated.

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'Squid Game' Crypto Plunges to Zero Overnight After Massive Valuation Spike  
By - Adriana Montes

A digital currency inspired by the popular Korean TV series “Squid Game” collapsed on Monday, less than two weeks after investors could start buying tokens. The development has since raised suspicions that the entire venture was a scam.

SQUID token’s website and social accounts disappeared after token’s value had spiked more than 310,000% and reached a peak of \$2,856 late Sunday before crashing straight to zero, [according to CoinMarketCap](#).

Additionally, investors were having trouble selling their tokens, and the cryptocurrency’s white paper describing SQUID was hampered with grammatical errors.

A number of [repeated warnings](#) across social media and the crypto community also appeared to warn investors away from the latest meme coin sensation due to the risk involved.

“Remarkably, many such coins rapidly catch investors’ fancy, leading to wildly inflated valuations,” Cornell University economist Eswar Prasad [told](#) the BBC. “Naïve retail investors who get caught up in such speculative frenzies face the risk of substantial losses.”

Investors continued to pile money into the project and risk their capital in the speculative game, despite the warnings. Right before its collapse, Twitter [flagged](#) the cryptocurrency’s account and temporarily restricted it due to “suspicious activity.”

The scam, which was [reported](#) by Gizmodo, is called a “rug pull.” It is a malicious maneuver in which a crypto’s creators abandon the project and cash out of their coins in exchange for real money, quickly devaluing the crypto’s value.

Based on [wallet activity](#), it’s alleged that the creator of the game effectively walked away with approximately \$2.5 million of untraceable [binance coin](#) (BNB) from investors.

The game’s website, Twitter account and other social media platforms have since been deleted.

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Biden’s Vaccine Mandate to US Businesses Expected to Be Published in Coming Days  
By - Adriana Montes

The US Labor Department confirmed on Monday that the Biden administration’s planned rule for a vaccine mandate for businesses developed by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) had been finalized and that details were expected to be released this week.

Some Republicans have [reportedly](#) vowed to challenge the pending rule that requires private-sector employees with 100 or more employees to mandate COVID-19 vaccines or regular testing, but courts so far allowed the mandates to proceed, according to The Hill.

“On November 1, the Office of Management and Budget completed its regulatory review of the emergency temporary standard. The Federal Register will publish the emergency temporary standard in the coming days,” a Labor Department spokesperson said in a [statement](#).

After Biden’s announcement of the sweeping vaccine-or-test mandate in September, OSHA issued an [Emergency Temporary Standard \(ETS\)](#) to implement this requirement, which would impact more than 80 million private-sector employees.

Employers with 100 or more employees will require them to be vaccinated against COVID-19 or else undergo weekly testing.

“Covered employers must develop, implement, and enforce a mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy, unless they adopt a policy requiring employees to choose either to get vaccinated or to undergo regular COVID-19 testing and wear a face covering at work,” the spokesperson said.

Workers will also be provided with time off to get vaccinated, and paid sick leave will be granted to vaccinated employees who suffered any side effects from the shot.

While the planned rule is waiting to be published, the White House is encouraging employers to implement their own vaccination guidelines, with many already having done so.

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Lindsey Graham Urged Police to Shoot Rioters Who Breached Capitol on January 6, Reports Claim

By - Adriana Montes

US Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC) urged law enforcement officials to fire on rioters who stormed the US Capitol on January 6, a new report details.

Graham, a Republican legislator representing South Carolina, [reportedly](#) implored former US Senate Sergeant at Arms Michael C. Stenger to take action against the demonstrators in order to regain control during and after the attack on Capitol Hill.

“What are you doing? Take back the Senate! You’ve got guns. Use them,” Graham told Capitol police, according to an extensive [report](#) from The Washington Post published on Sunday.

Graham was allegedly “irate” that senators were forced to leave their chambers during the storming of the Capitol.

“We give you guns for a reason,” the lawmaker exclaimed. “Use them.”

The Republican legislator is said to have also called Ivanka Trump, daughter of former US President Donald Trump, multiple times in an effort to make suggestions and stop the riot.

“You need to get these people out of here. This thing is going south,” Graham urged on the phone.

“This is not good. You’re going to have to tell these people to stand down. Stand down.”

In previous critiques to the Capitol police, Graham [raged on January 7](#) that anyone in charge of defending the Capitol failed in their duties. If they had been in the military, he said, “they’d been relieved of command, and most likely court-martialed.”

“Yesterday, they could have blown the building up. They could have killed us all,” he said at the time.

“People coming through the windows had backpacks, as big as my desk on the Senate. They should have been challenged, warning shots should have been fired and lethal force should have been used once they’d penetrated the seat of government. Those backpacks could have had bombs, chemical agents, weapons. We dodged a major bullet yesterday.”

Trump [lashed out](#) against on-and-off ally Graham in September as "unwilling to fight for the presidency of the United States," after reports that Graham was "unpersuaded" by Trump's claims of fraud in the 2020 election.

Graham, however, said he hoped for a potential 2024 presidential run by Trump.

"I don't think Trump is listening," Graham said at the Michigan Republican Party's leadership [conference](#) at the end of September. "He might be. I hope President Trump runs again."

Trump's role in the incident is under investigation by a congressional probe, as the former president intends to assert executive privilege into the January 6 insurrection.

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US in Touch With Russia, UAE to Restore Civilian Government in Sudan - Envoy

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - The United States is in contact with several countries, including Russia and the United Arab Emirates, to restore a civilian government in Sudan, US Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Jeffrey Feltman said on Tuesday at a briefing.

"We are in touch with a number of nations, including the UAE to restore the civilian [government] in Sudan," Feltman told journalists.

Speaking about Russia's position on Sudan, Feltman noted that Washington was concerned by the initial Russian statements after the October 25 military takeover in Sudan.

"But if you look at the [UN] Security Council statement that came out subsequently, which the Russians signed on to, you'll see it's much more in line with the international consensus, the concern with stability, the need to get back to the transition and the need to work within the constitutional framework and a dialogue without violence," he said.

The US has been "in touch with the Russians again to compare notes and coordinate positions," according to Feltman.

"I can't say that our positions overlap entirely. There is some similarity in what we want to see - Sudan to be stable and we want to make sure that the situation on the ground remains nonviolent," he concluded.

On October 25, Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and some other members of the government were detained by the military. The same day, Sudanese military leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who is also the head of Sudan's Sovereign Council, declared a state of emergency and dissolved the council and the government of the country.

The same day, the US, the UK, and Norway issued a joint statement condemning the military's actions in Sudan.

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Blinken in Meeting With Lebanese Premier Urges Reforms, Free Elections - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken during his meeting with Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati in Glasgow on Tuesday called for reforms and free and fair elections in the Middle Eastern country, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said in a statement.

"[Blinken] encouraged the Prime Minister to implement reforms to rescue the country and restore international confidence," Price said. "The Secretary also emphasized the importance of holding free and fair elections in the spring of 2022."

In addition, the secretary reiterated Washington's commitment to continue working with Lebanon for peace and prosperity in the region, according to the statement,

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REVIEW - Uncharted Waters: US Gripped by Labor Strikes, Resignations Amid Pandemic

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik), Barrington M. Salmon - Workers in the United States are quitting their jobs in huge numbers as the global pandemic waxes and wanes, while labor unions have called so many strikes in October that some in the media have renamed last month "Striketober."

An estimated 20 million US workers resigned from April to August, according to the latest federal data, a phenomenon that has been dubbed "The Great Resignation."

The rate of resignation was highest among workers in the technology and healthcare sectors and other fields experiencing pandemic-induced spikes in demand for their products and services, a Harvard business school analysis revealed.

Meanwhile, about 40 workplaces across the nation have gone on strike since August 1, according to data compiled by Bloomberg Law - nearly double the number during the same period last year. In mid-October, France24 reported that more than 100,000 workers are currently on strike or about to strike.

Strikes have affected a range of industries - hitting tech firms like Amazon.com to manufacturers like John Deere and food companies like Kellogg's. Tens of thousands of workers have also walked off the job at whiskey distilleries, schools, hospitals and medical facilities.

Although many cite the pandemic as the main driver of the wave of resignations, some experts believe more than just the health crisis itself is to blame.

"This is not about the pandemic or working remotely," Georgia State University business school professor Isabelle Monlouis, told Sputnik. "These just accelerated the pace towards change."

#### **SOCIAL CONTRACT VIOLATED**

Monlouis, who is also the associate director of the HJ Russell Center for Entrepreneurship in Atlanta, said the surge in resignations has been brewing for a while, particularly in academia, as many organizations were incredibly unreasonable with the amount of work they demanded with no reciprocity.

People who have outwardly successful careers and retirement accounts are dissatisfied and that dissatisfaction has resonated for a long time, Monlouis said, while those who were poorly treated will continue to leave or be disengaged.

For example, she said, one issue is the anger of older employees who witness younger peers getting bonuses and salary boosts while they get nothing.

"It's not uncommon to have salary inversion," Monlouis said. "They will continue to make more than you which pisses people off even more."

Hence, many workers realized that it was not a family and that the relationship was a "ruthless proposition."

"The pandemic made people slow down and think about their experiences," Monlouis said.

"There was nothing to numb their experiences."

People are now trying to come up with solutions, but the root causes need to be understood first because the problem is much deeper and structural, she said.

"The social contract between employer and employee has been repeatedly broken," the professor added.

However, Monlouis also said people have learned about the broken social contract and realized that the relationship was very transactional - so they are making a different calculation.

Institute for Policy Studies' Black Worker Initiative Director Marc Bayard said for many workers there is no going back to pre-COVID work conditions. Workers are making choices centered on them and their needs as opposed to what companies demand.

"The most obvious thing is that workers are tired and feeling the economic constraint of the COVID environment," Bayard told Sputnik. "People talk about getting back to normal but I'm sure that bartenders, hospital employees and frontline workers don't want to go back to the 2019, 2020 economy."

Bayard said there is no going back to "normal" because that was not sustainable and now workers are seeking alternatives.

"A lot of workers don't want to go back to low wages. People are putting everything on credit to get by. They can't live off low-wage jobs and have/afford childcare. And they can't have 3 or 4 jobs to pay the rent or live in a place with 5 or more people," he said.

As far as those going on strike, veteran labor organizer Dwight Kirk said their priorities include issues such as better pay and quality of life along with sick leave and more flexibility with shifts.

"Employees no longer want their jobs to dominate their lives. They don't want to live to work, they want to work to live," Kirk said. "They are not becoming unemployed. That's not the story. They are finding something better."

#### STRIKE SURGE: BOOSTING BARGAINING POWER

Similar factors that have fueled the "Great Resignation" are driving the strike and protest movements - and in both cases workers may be gaining leverage.

A comeback by organized labor would certainly mark a historic development considering the decline of unions across the US in the past few decades. The labor statistics bureau has estimated that in 2020 only 10 percent of the US workforce was unionized - about half of what it was in the 1980s. However, labor representatives and experts have warned that it is easy to lose this advantage.

Labor organizer Bill Fletcher Jr. said it is important to remember that the US experienced two things at the same time: a global pandemic - which closed down most economic activity in the United States - and a minor depression that came as a result.

These dynamics, Fletcher explained, have strengthened the bargaining hand of unions and workers as the demand for labor has outstripped the number of people available to fill those positions.

The new power dynamic comes after about 40 years of stagnation and a decline in living standards for workers, Fletcher said. There was an immiserization of the working class and workers were getting more discontented - but now things have changed.

"The bargaining position of unions has increased and of the union rank-and-file," Fletcher said.

"These moments happen periodically but they don't last eternally. It has to do with the economic cycle."

That makes organizing really critical right now, Fletcher added.

"During the George Floyd protests people got into the streets and mobilized but didn't build an organization," he said. "They made demands for the government to change and we won but the other side started pushing back on things like police reform and critical race theory."

And now, he said, the same thing is happening in labor.

"The employer class comes back with a vengeance. The inability of people to organize is a fundamental problem," Fletcher said.

Kirk cited Lenin's writings about spontaneous actions by the working class. Usually these outbursts are rooted in immediate needs not restructuring society, Kirk claimed.

"The vanguard party is responsible for raising consciousness about remaking society," Kirk said.

"We recognize and applaud the spontaneous action by workers against oppression but for it to come to something else what is needed?"

Real and substantive change will not come without strategy and organizing, Kirk argued.

"We need agency for it to become something more. Where is the agenda going to come from?" he asked. "The labor union writ large? Organizations not necessarily a part of labor [movement] like Black Lives Matter or the Immigrant Rights movement? The question is, where does this go?"

Bayard said the job exodus and spate of strikes illustrate that workers are clearly frustrated with the economic system and economic structure that they see is not tilted in their favor.

"There is a normal upside because they're willing to hear arguments about how things can be different. It's a combination of the economy and questioning the structure," Bayard said.

"Workers want to know when things will change for them after a once-in-a 100-year pandemic."

Monlouis said the United States is a unique case because of how little protection workers have had, hence, she is not surprised about the unionizing efforts. Many, she added, fail to understand the scope of what is happening in the United States as more and more workers seek complete independence and greater control over their lives.

And, in the end, Monlouis warned that employers will likely not be able to catch up to the sheer numbers of workers she anticipates will walk out that proverbial door.

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PREVIEW - Minneapolis to Vote on Whether to Replace Police Force With Public Safety Department

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - The US city of Minneapolis on Tuesday will vote on whether to replace their police department with a Department of Public Safety in the wake of civil rights protests sparked by the killing of George Floyd in the city in May 2020.

If passed, the Minneapolis Police Department would be replaced with the Department of Public Safety, which would combine social and medical workers with peace officers to take a comprehensive public health approach to safety.

"Shall the Minneapolis City Charter be amended to remove the Police Department and replace it with a Department of Public Safety that employs a comprehensive public health approach to the delivery of functions by the Department of Public Safety, with those specific functions to be determined by the Mayor and City Council by ordinance," the measure asks.

The measure will need support from 51% of Minneapolis residents in order to pass.

The city has been the epicenter of worldwide racial justice protests following the killing of George Floyd, a 47-year old black man, by former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin. Chauvin was found guilty of second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter, and sentenced to 22 years in prison for his role in the death of Floyd.

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Nuland Says Held Meeting With North European Nations to Discuss Arctic, Russia, China

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland said she recently held a meeting with government officials from several northern European countries to discuss matters concerning the Arctic, Africa, Middle East, Russia and China.

"Wide-ranging discussion today with Enhanced Partnership in Northern Europe member countries on Afghanistan, Belarus, Russia, PRC [China], Middle East, the Arctic, and Africa," Nuland wrote via Twitter on Monday.

Nuland said the United States is strengthening its cooperation with Nordic and Baltic partners through the Enhanced Partnership in Northern Europe forum, which includes Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Nuland visited Russia in October to discuss a range of bilateral and global issues.

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Texas High School Lockdown Lifted After Police Arrest Suspect - Statement

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - The lockdown at a high school in the US state of Texas is lifted after the police arrested a man who threatened a student and then the school, the El Paso Police Department (EPPD) said in a statement.

"Pablo Paredes, wanted for terroristic threat at Parkland High School, was taken into custody at 2 p.m.," the EPPD said on Monday.

The high school was placed on lockdown on Monday morning after Paredes threatened a student and then extended the threat to the school, according to police.

The police department said Paredes is wanted on multiple warrants at this time.

Earlier on Monday, US media reported that several schools in El Paso, Texas, were placed on lockdown while police searched for Paredes who they said was believed to be armed.

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Biden Discusses Baltic Sea Security With Finnish Counterpart in Glasgow - White House

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden discussed the security situation in the Baltic Sea with his Finnish counterpart Sauli Niinisto during a meeting at the UN Climate Change Summit (COP-26) in Glasgow, the White House said.

"President Biden met this evening with President Sauli Niinisto of Finland at COP-26 in Glasgow. President Biden underscored his strong commitment to the bilateral relationship and welcomed continued close cooperation on common challenges... The presidents also discussed the security situation in the Baltic Sea and northern Europe, including Finland's strong partnership with NATO," the White House said in a readout of the meeting on Monday.

The two leaders also discussed the event's primary focus of climate change, the White House said. Biden lauded Finland's commitments to achieve carbon neutrality by 2035, they added.

Niinisto met with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday, during which time the presidents discussed cooperation on political, trade and humanitarian issues.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said last week that Finland, a close partner of NATO and an important regional player, could contribute to establishing a dialogue between the alliance and Russia.

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US Participates in Non-Proliferation Exercise to Counter WMD Threats - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - The United States along with 23 other countries practiced to counter weapons of mass destruction (WMD) interdiction during the latest of the Proliferation Security Initiative's (PSI) DEEP SABRE 21 exercise in Singapore, the US State Department said in a press release.

"The United States and 23 partner countries recently participated in the Proliferation Security Initiative's (PSI) DEEP SABRE 21 exercise, hosted by Singapore, in support of the US commitment to countering global WMD proliferation threats," the release said on Monday. "[The exercise was] to practice their ability to engage in WMD interdiction activities and exchange valuable information on related capabilities and practices."

Since its establishment in 2003, PSI has been endorsed by 107 countries to impede transfers of WMD, delivery systems, and related materials, the release also said.

The United States has called upon all non-endorsers to participate in the Proliferation Security Initiative to interdict WMD-related transfers, the release added.

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US Navy Probe Finds Sub Grounded in Indo-Pacific Hit Uncharted Seamount - Statement

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - The US Navy determined the nuclear-powered USS Connecticut attack submarine that was damaged while submerged in the South China Sea last month had crashed into an uncharted seamount, a spokesperson with the US 7th Fleet said in a statement.

"The investigation determined USS Connecticut grounded on an uncharted seamount while operating in international waters in the Indo-Pacific region," the spokesperson said on Monday. "Commander, US 7th Fleet will determine whether follow-on actions, including accountability, are appropriate."

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Iraqi-Born Man Pleads Guilty to Supporting Islamic State - US Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - Ohio resident Naser Almadaoji has pleaded guilty to providing material support to the Islamic State (banned in Russia) and to intending join the terrorist group in Afghanistan, the US Justice Department said in a press release.

"An Ohio man, who was scheduled to start jury trial today, pleaded guilty Friday evening to one count of attempting to provide material support - himself, as personnel - to foreign terrorist organizations, namely ISIS [Islamic State] and ISIS Wilayat Khorasan (ISIS-K)," the release said on Monday.

The defendant, 22, started to make travel plans in September 2018 to fly to Astana, Kazakhstan the following and was arrested at the airport of Columbus, Ohio, the release said.

It is alleged that Almadaoji was going to be smuggled from Kazakhstan into Afghanistan to join Islamic State to get weapons experts training and other types of training for the sake of the terrorist group, the release also said.

In August 2018, the defendant allegedly told the purported ISIS supporter that he was "always willing" to assist with "projects" in the United States, the release added.

Almadaoji is scheduled to be sentenced on January 31, 2022. If found guilty, he faces a maximum penalty of up to 20 years imprisonment, according to the release.

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### Wall Street Hits Record Highs 2nd Straight Day on Energy, Consumer Stocks Rally

NEW YORK, November 1 (Sputnik) - Wall Street hit record highs for a second day in a row on Monday on a rally in consumer and energy stocks driven by blockbuster US quarterly profits and oil prices, even as the Federal Reserve prepared to lay down a timetable for tapering its long-running pandemic-era stimulus.

All three of the major US equity indexes - the Dow Jones Industrial Average, the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq Composite - hit all-time highs, extending their peaks from October's last trade on Friday.

In Monday's session, the Dow, a blue-chip index which groups mostly industrial stocks, closed up 94 points, 0.3%, at 35,913. It hit a record high of 36,010 after a run-up in consumer discretionary stocks including casino operators Las Vegas Sands, Wynn Resorts and Melco Resorts & Entertainment.

Runaway third-quarter profits for most American corporations in the banking to healthcare, auto and entertainment sectors has helped the Dow gain some 17% this year.

The S&P 500, which consists of the top 500 US stocks, including oil majors Exxon Mobil and Chevron, settled up 8 points, 0.2%, at 4,613. It hit an all-time high of 4,619 earlier.

Oil stocks gained as crude prices continued their upward march on Monday to the drum beat of OPEC and its allies, who indicated they were in no mood to add more barrels to the market than the 400,000 per day they had agreed to previously - despite consuming countries' demands for more.

The S&P 500 has been on a high since October. Year-to-date, it is up 23%.

The Nasdaq index, which groups Big Tech names such as Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix and Google, closed the day up 98 points, or 0.6%, at 15,596, after hitting a record high at 15,599. The tech-heavy index is up 21% for the year.

Monday's rally might, however, be the last before the Federal Reserve's two-day policy meeting beginning Tuesday. The central bank is expected to discuss plans to taper some \$15 billion a month from its monthly bond buying of \$120 billion.

"The US economy has been pumped up higher by what seemed to be a never-ending stimulus, but that will change very soon," Craig Erlam, analyst at online trading platform OANDA, said.

The US economy shrank 3.5% for all of 2020 due to shutdowns and other disruptions caused by the COVID-19 crisis. Growth this year has been spotty, with an annualized 3.5% expansion in the first quarter, 3.6% in the second and 2% in the third.

The Federal Reserve envisions a 6.5% expansion for all of this year, although some officials at the central bank have more ambitious expectations, forecasting growth of up to 7%. Inflation

remains a significant problem for the Federal Reserve as wages and the price of almost everything, from coffee to oil and building materials, have soared from the lows of the novel coronavirus pandemic.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY  
WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) -

#### CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

- \* UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in his opening remarks at the Climate Conference in Glasgow (COP26) on Monday that he will establish a group of experts to set standards to measure net zero commitments made by non-state actors.
- \* US President Joe Biden told the COP26 climate conference that high energy prices underscore the pressing need to diversify sources.
- \* The European Union pledges to provide an additional \$5 billion from its budget for climate action initiatives through 2027, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said.

#### ENERGY CRISIS IN EUROPE

- \* The price of gas futures in Europe fell below \$750 per thousand cubic meters for the first time since mid-September, according to trading data on ICE Futures.
- \* Moldova and Russia's Gazprom did not discuss the issue of debt of unrecognized breakaway state Transnistria, Moldovan Deputy Prime Minister and Infrastructure Minister Andrei Spinu said.
- \* Moldova has reached an agreement with Russia's Gazprom that no sanctions will be applied to Moldovagaz until an audit of the company's gas debt owed to Russia is carried out, Spinu said.
- \* Moldova may purchase Russian gas at less than \$400 per 1,000 cubic meters under the contract with Gazprom in December, as the market price is expected to decline, Spinu said.
- \* Serbia was forced to import five million cubic meters of gas from Hungary and use resources from its own storage facilities after an accident on the pipeline in Bulgaria, Srbijagas CEO Dusan Bajatovic told Sputnik.

#### PUTIN'S REMARKS ON DEFENSE

- \* The Russian military will soon receive a first batch-produced S-500 missiles system soon, President Vladimir Putin said on Monday.
- \* The Russian army received 25 S-400 anti-aircraft missile systems over the past four years under the state armaments program, Putin said.
- \* Russia's upgraded air defense systems should be able to detect hypersonic and ballistic missiles of all types and destroy them along the entire flight path, Putin said.
- \* The Russian navy received 49 new ships and combat boats, 10 aircraft, and nine coastal complexes over the past four years, Putin said.

#### COURT CASE AGAINST VENEZUELA'S ALEX SAAB IN US

\* The US district court for the Southern District of Florida has rescheduled the hearing for Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's ally, Alex Saab, to November 15, a court filing said on Monday.

\* The US government has dismissed the most serious charges of money laundering of \$350 million against Saab, the Department of Justice said.

#### MH-17 COURT CASE

\* The District Court of The Hague has attached the answers of the Russian defense industry major Almaz-Antey to defense questions within the case of the 2014 crash of flight MH17 in eastern Ukraine, in particular, about the alleged missile launch site, as well as information obtained during the survey his expert in the Netherlands, the court's spokeswoman Anja Zandbergen told Sputnik.

\* Sabine ten Doesschate, a lawyer of a Russian defendant in the MH17 crash case, expressed the belief on Monday that the Dutch prosecutor's office could be concealing some important information, as its estimate that witness' testimony that the aircraft could not be shot down by the Buk air defense system was "irrelevant" casts doubt on its criteria for selecting information to be included in the case.

#### COVID-19

\* The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued travel health notices for Russia, Belgium and others on Monday due to very high levels of COVID-19 cases.

\* Russian President Vladimir Putin instructed the Defense Ministry to support the civilian population in the COVID-19 response.

\* The Kremlin believes that it is necessary to accelerate the process of mutual recognition of COVID-19 vaccine certificates between Russia and the European Union, spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

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Rite Aid Company Agrees to Ease Vaccine Portal Online for Disabled - US Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - The US government has negotiated a settlement with the Rite Aid Corporation to ensure its online COVID-19 vaccines portal will be accessible to individuals with disabilities, the Justice Department said on Monday.

"The US Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Pennsylvania and the Justice Department announced an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) settlement agreement with Rite Aid to ensure that people with disabilities can get information about COVID-19 vaccinations and book their vaccinations online," the Justice Department said in a release.

Rite Aid is a publicly owned national drug store chain with its headquarters located in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, the release said.

[A] department compliance review discovered that individuals with vision and mobility impairments could not access a portion of Rite Aid's website known as the COVID-19 Vaccine Registration Portal," the release added.

Under the terms of the agreement, within 30 days Rite Aid must conform its online COVID-19 vaccine content to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines for making information on websites accessible to users with disabilities, according to the release.

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**Whistleblower Frances Haugen Says Meta Unlikely to Change While Zuckerberg Still CEO**

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - Whistleblower Frances Haugen said during an interview at the Web Summit 2021 in Lisbon on Monday that Meta, formerly known as Facebook, is unlikely to change while Mark Zuckerberg remains CEO of the company.

"I think it is unlikely the company will change if he remains the CEO, and I hope that he can see that there's so much good he could do in the world and maybe it's a chance for someone else to maybe take the reigns... I think Facebook would be stronger with someone who is willing to focus on safety," Haugen said.

Haugen, a former product manager at Facebook, leaked internal documents and told the US Congress that the company was allegedly aware it inflicted harm on the mental health of teenagers, but did not do much to prevent content promoting hate and division, choosing to put profit over users' safety.

Zuckerberg dismissed the accusations, saying the company cares deeply about issues like safety, well-being and mental health.

The company rebranded from Facebook to Meta in order to foster a new public image, but Florida University social media professor Andrew Selepak told Sputnik that the move does not change the name of their biggest money-making product and will not significantly change the perception of the company among users.

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**Pentagon Says Pulled Thousands of Photos of Afghans Offline to Protect Their Identities**

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) – The United States has temporarily removed 124,000 photographs and 17,000 videos featuring Afghans who cooperated with American military from public platforms to prevent them from being identified, Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby said on Monday.

"There were approximately 124,000 photographs and about 17,000 videos that remain unpublished," Kirby said during a press briefing. "It was my decision, and I delegated it to the leadership at the Defense Media Activity to use their best judgment. I want it to be unpublished

for a temporary period of time and it is temporary and it was done out of an abundance of caution."

Kirby recommended the Pentagon leadership temporarily archive any imagery that could be used to identify those who cooperated with Americans during their 20-year mission in the country or their family members.

The official underscored that the images and videos were not deleted but merely archived and will be published at the "right time when it is appropriate."

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'Medical Issue' Delays Next SpaceX Launch to ISS Until at Least November 6 - NASA

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - NASA is putting off the next human crew launch of a SpaceX mission to the International Space Station (ISS) for three days from Wednesday, November 3, to Saturday, November 6, the US space agency announced on Monday.

"NASA is delaying the upcoming launch of the agency's SpaceX Crew-3 mission due to a minor medical issue involving one of its crew members," the agency said in a statement. "The issue is not a medical emergency and not related to COVID-19. The launch to the ISS was planned for Wednesday, November 3."

Crew-3 astronauts Matthias Maurer, Thomas Marshburn, Raja Chari and Kayla Barron will remain in quarantine at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida while preparing for their launch, the statement said.

"Teams will continue to monitor crew health as they evaluate potential launch opportunities at the end of the week. The earliest possible opportunity for launch is 11:36 p.m. EDT Saturday, November 6. The SpaceX Crew Dragon spacecraft and Falcon 9 rocket are in good shape," the statement added.

The flight will be the third crew rotation mission with astronauts on the SpaceX Crew Dragon spacecraft and the fourth flight with astronauts, including the Demo-2 test flight, as part of NASA's Commercial Crew Program, according to the statement.

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US Military Starts Nuclear Readiness Exercise Global Thunder 22 - Strategic Command

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - The US armed forces have commenced their annual command and control training exercise of the nuclear air, land and under-the ocean-based triad, dubbed Global Thunder 22 (GT22), the Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) announced in a press release on Monday.

"US Strategic Command commenced its annual nuclear command and control and field training exercise, Global Thunder 22, providing training opportunities in all USSTRATCOM mission areas, with a specific focus on nuclear readiness," the release said.

Global Thunder 22 is designed around training activities against simulated adversaries with the goal of further improving nuclear readiness and strategic deterrent capabilities. The training involves increased bomber flights, missile handling training, and ballistic missile-carrying nuclear submarine readiness, the release said.

"GT22 will employ global operations in coordination with other combatant commands, services, and appropriate US government agencies to deter, detect and, if necessary, defeat strategic attacks against the United States and its allies," the release added.

The Strategic Command has global responsibilities that include strategic deterrence, nuclear operations, joint electromagnetic spectrum operations, global strike, missile defense, and analysis and targeting, according to the release.

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Reformed Global Tax Replaces Race-to-Bottom With Race That Lets Nations Win - Yellen

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - The new global tax structure ends the race-to-the-bottom practice of attracting multinationals with the lowest taxes and introduces a new race where they have to compete and pay fairly for services and talent, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said at an event in Ireland on Monday.

"And unlike the race to the bottom, this new race can have more than one winner," Yellen said, discussing the 'Future of the Global Economy' at an event in Dublin, which she was visiting en route from the Group of 20 meetings in Rome to a United Nations climate change conference in Scotland.

Some 135 nations — representing nearly 95% of the global economy — agreed last month to a minimum corporate tax rate of 15% to end the practice of undercutting one another on taxes in an effort to attract global companies.

Ireland, particularly, had one of the world's lowest company taxes at 12.5% before it agreed to levy at least 15% on firms with a turnover of more than 750 million euros (\$868 million) under the US-advocated tax restructuring supported by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Yellen said there were hundreds of US companies with roots in Ireland and low taxes was not the only reason for that.

"American companies have flocked to Ireland thanks to a welcoming, efficient, and stable business environment; its well-educated workforce; and thanks to Ireland's position in the EU," Yellen said in another event in Dublin earlier Monday. "These factors will continue to make Ireland one of the most open and attractive places in Europe in which to do business."

She thanked Irish authorities for agreeing to a higher corporate tax regime which she described as "a historic, once-in-a-generation global agreement that will support efforts to promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth in all our economies".

With the new structure, "both Ireland and the US are in a position to win that race", she added. The United States mooted the global tax plan after President Joe Biden lamented that some of the richest US companies paid virtually no taxes by exploiting loopholes or basing their tax jurisdictions in countries with excessively generous tax rates.

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US Drops Most Serious Money Laundering Charges Against Venezuela's Saab – Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) – The US government has requested that the most serious charges of money laundering against Venezuelan diplomat Alex Saab be dismissed, the Department of Justice said on Monday.

"As such, to abide by the assurances that the United States made to the Republic of Cabo Verde during the extradition of defendant ALEX NAIN SAAB MORAN, the United States respectfully requests that Counts 2 through 8 of the Indictment against defendant ALEX NAIN SAAB MORAN, and that defendant only, be dismissed," US attorneys Alexander Kramer and Kurt Lunkenheimer said in their motion submitted to the US court.

The court has granted the motion just after its publication.

"Leave of Court is GRANTED for the filing of the foregoing Dismissal of Counts 2 through 8 Against defendant ALEX NAIN SAAB MORAN in the above-captioned criminal case," US District judge Robert Scola said in his ruling.

Earlier on Monday, the US district court for the Southern District of Florida rescheduled the hearing for Saab to November 15.

Saab was detained in Cape Verde in June 2020 on a US extradition warrant in connection with accusations of Iran sanctions violations. He was en route to Iran on a humanitarian mission for the Venezuelan government when he was arrested during a fuel stop. He was extradited to the US in October of this year to stand trial in Florida over corruption and embezzlement charges brought in July 2019.

Maduro said Saab was "kidnapped" without an arrest warrant and vowed to seek the help of international organizations to fight for his freedom. The Venezuelan government has also suspended participation in talks with the opposition over the incident.

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US Public Diplomacy Chief to Visit UAE, Germany This Week - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) – Senior US Official for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Jennifer Hall Godfrey will visit the United Arab Emirates and Germany later this week, the State Department said on Monday.

On November 2-4, Godfrey will visit the USA Pavilion at Expo2020 in Dubai.

"She will also meet with senior officials from the Emirati government to discuss cultural cooperation and promote mutual understanding," the statement read.

Traveling to Berlin on November 4-6, Godfrey will meet with think tank, social media, and civil society leaders to discuss common values and strengthen the transatlantic relationship, it added.

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**Biden, Putin Reaffirming Gorbachev-Reagan Formula Will Benefit Next NPT Conference – UN**

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - Presidents Vladimir Putin and Joe Biden reaffirming commitment to the Gorbachev-Reagan formula that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought will contribute to a more positive atmosphere for the next Review Conference for the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), UN Under-Secretary-General of Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu said on Monday.

Nakamitsu stressed that it is a positive development that Russia and the United States returned to regular strategic stability dialogues.

"While, you know, the discussions must be definitely quite difficult, they seem to be very genuinely and sincerely engaged in very substantive discussions. That's very good," she stated. "The statement by Presidents Biden and Putin of this very famous Reagan-Gorbachev statement - there is no winner in nuclear war, therefore it should never be fought - those things actually provide a better atmosphere for NPT Review Conference also to take place, to produce reasonably good outcome."

The landmark summit in Geneva on June 16 marked the first Putin-Biden meeting, with the two presidents considering it productive. They agreed to launch consultations on strategic stability, and adopted a joint statement reaffirming the commitment to the 1985 formula by Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. President-designate of the 2020 Review Conference for the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), Gustavo Zlauvinen, said in a letter in July that the tenth session was rescheduled and will be held in January 2022 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The NPT Review Conference is the main event in the field of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and takes place every five years.

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**Texas High School on Lockdown After Man Threatened Student, School - Police**

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - A high school in the US state of Texas is currently on lockdown after a man threatened a student and then the school, the El Paso Police Department (EPPD) said on Monday.

"Parkland High School is currently on lockdown. At 9 am [MDT] subject threatened a student and extended the threat to the school," EPPD said in a statement.

The police department identified the man they are looking for as Pablo Paredes and said he is wanted on multiple warrants at this time.

Earlier on Monday, US media reported that several schools in the Texas city of El Paso went into lockdown as police were looking for a gunman.

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#### Pentagon Says Will Not Speculate About Turkey's F-16 Request

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby on Monday declined to speculate on whether the United States would approve Turkey's request for F-16 fighter jets.

"I'm not going to get into specifics about potential foreign military sales, that's the realm of the State Department," Kirby said during a press briefing. "I'm not going to speculate one way or the other about the F-16s."

Kirby added that a meeting between US and Turkish delegations in Ankara last week about the removal of Turkey from the F-35 program was productive and professional in tone.

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#### US Drops Most Serious Money Laundering Charges Against Venezuela's Saab – Justice Dept.

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#### US Monitoring Reports of 'Unusual' Russian Troop Activity Near Ukraine – Pentagon

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) – The United States is aware of reports of "unusual" Russian military activity near the Ukrainian border and will continue to consult with its allies and closely monitor the region, Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby said on Monday.

"[W]e are aware of public reports of unusual Russian military activity near Ukraine and we're going to continue to consult with allies and partners on this issue. I can't speak for Russian intentions but we are certainly monitoring the region closely as we always do," Kirby said during a press briefing.

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Pentagon Press Secretary Says Will Not Speculate About Turkey's F-16 Request  
Sputnik

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US CDC Recommends Avoiding Travel to Russia, Belgium Over 'Very High' COVID Levels  
WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued travel health notices for Russia, Belgium and others on Monday due to very high levels of COVID-19 cases.

Russia, Belgium, Slovakia, and Burkina Faso received "Very High" Level 4 COVID-19 designations from the CDC on Monday. The notices include recommendations not to travel to the countries, or to make sure one is fully vaccinated if they must.

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Some 9,000 New York City Workers on Unpaid Leave for Refusing COVID-19 Shots - Mayor

NEW YORK CITY, November 1 (Sputnik) - About 9,000 New York City municipal workers have been put on unpaid leave for refusing to comply with a COVID-19 vaccine mandate, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced on Monday, adding that the city's services were not disrupted.

"Less than 6% of our workforce is on leave without pay today," de Blasio said via Twitter after ordering the vaccine mandate on October 20 for the city's approximately 160,500 public servants. "We're hopeful that they'll do the right thing for themselves, their families and their city and get vaccinated."

About nine in ten city workers have gotten vaccinated, ensuring no disruptions to the city's services, de Blasio said. "We take our obligation to protect every single City worker from #COVID19 seriously," he added in the tweet.

Resistance to COVID-19 vaccines in New York City due to political and religious beliefs has held up the fight against the pandemic, officials say.

Since de Blasio announced the vaccine mandate, municipal workers against the plan had protested outside city hall, holding placards and shouting slogans. The mayor initially offered a

bonus of \$500 for every employee getting their first shot of a COVID-19 dose at a city-run vaccination site.

The head of the union that represents the city firefighters told reporters on Monday that the fire department was prepared to take up to 20% of its fire companies out of service and have 20% fewer ambulances on the road to protect the rights of its members who refused to be vaccinated.

"We're here today because of a mandate that was put not only on our members, but also all New York City employees, given nine days to make a life-changing decision on their career or whether or not they're going to take a vaccine," NBC News quoted the Uniformed Firefighters Association President Andrew Ansbro as saying.

About 12,000 city workers have applied for religious or medical exemptions to the vaccine mandate. They remain on the job while city officials review their applications.

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Biden Admin. Announces \$199Mln to Fund Electric Trucks, Charging Stations - Energy Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - US Vice President Kamala Harris alongside Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm has announced nearly \$200 million in funding for the development of electric trucks and vehicle charging infrastructure, the Department of Energy said in a statement on Monday.

"[The] US Department of Energy (DOE) has awarded \$199 million to fund 25 projects aimed at putting cleaner cars and trucks on America's roads, including long-haul trucks powered by batteries and fuel cells, and at improving the nation's electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure," the statement said.

The switch to electric trucks will protect the health and well being of communities, as well as provide them opportunities, Harris said during remarks about the matter in New York on Monday, the statement said.

Some \$127 million of the funding will go toward developing electrified, zero-emissions truck and freight systems with higher efficiency, the Energy Department said. Companies including Ford, General Motors, and Volvo will receive the funding over a five-year period. They will also match the federal government funding dollar-for-dollar, the Energy Department added.

Harris and Granholm also announced on Monday an Energy Department initiative to work with private industry on cold climate electric heat pump systems - a green alternative to gas-powered heating systems.

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UN Envoy Says Doctors in Sudan Report People Shot Dead During Protests

UNITED NATIONS, November 1 (Sputnik) - Doctors in hospitals in Sudan reported that people were shot dead during the weekend's nationwide protests opposing the military takeover of power, UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sudan and Head of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the African country Volker Perthes said on Monday. On Sunday, the Sudanese central medical committee said 12 people were killed during the anti-coup October 30 demonstration.

"I cannot personally confirm this," Perthes said when asked during a press briefing whether Sudanese security forces used live ammunition against protesters.

"But what we have from the doctors association in the hospitals is that people died of gunshot wounds and that some people were in critical conditions," Perthes stated.

Other injuries were caused by the use of tear gas canisters, Perthes said, citing the medical workers.

"I have no... means to establish what were the causes of injuries and deaths," the diplomat, who was speaking from Khartoum, said.

On Saturday, hundreds of people took to the streets across Sudan to protest the takeover that took place last Monday and saw the detention by the military of Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and some other members of the transitional government.

The same day, Sudan's army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who was also the head of Sudan's Sovereign Council, declared a state of emergency and dissolved the council and the country's government.

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UN to Increase In-Office Presence November 15 as Over 88% of Staff Vaccinated-  
Spokeswoman

UNITED NATIONS, November 1 (Sputnik) - The United Nations Headquarters in New York will increase the number of staff working from the office this month as more than 88% of employees have already been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, UN associate spokesperson Florencia Soto Nino said on Monday.

"The overwhelming majority of staff have reported that they have been fully vaccinated. Given this, starting on November 15, staff members will no longer telework for up to four days a week," Soto Nino said in a press briefing.

When asked for details on numbers, Soto Nino said, "88.17% of UN staff in New York have been fully vaccinated."

The decision to bring employees back to the compound in Midtown Manhattan after 20 months of working remotely was made considering additional factors, including the improving epidemiological conditions in New York and the United States' reopening for international travel on November 8, Soto Nino said.

She pointed out that managers were asked to afford flexibility according to "lessons learned over the past 20 months" on adaptability and flexibility of UN working methods.

Inside the UN premises, all personnel will still be required to wear masks in common areas, such as enclosed meeting spaces, corridors, elevators and restaurants. However, vaccinated staff will no longer be required to be masked while working in their offices or individual stations, Soto Nino said.

Since New York's full reopening for business on July 1, the United Nations compound on Manhattan has remained relatively empty after the COVID-19 pandemic severely hit the city in March 2020 and made it the epicenter of the world's health crisis for months ahead.

The majority of UN personnel opted to work from remote locations instead of commuting to the office as the organization adapted virtual means to continue its work.

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California Man Charged With Assault, Interference With Flight Crew - US Justice Dept. WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - California resident Brian Hsu has been charged with interference with a flight crew and assault aboard an aircraft bound for Santa Ana on October 27 that resulted in the authorities diverting the flight to Denver, Colorado, the US Justice Department said on Monday.

"Brian Hsu, age 20, of Irvine, California, has been charged by criminal complaint with interference with a flight crew and assault within the special aircraft jurisdiction of the United States," the Justice Department said in a press release.

The Justice Department alleges that the defendant assaulted a flight attendant on October 27 while being aboard American Airlines flight 976 traveling from New York City to Santa Ana, the release said.

Hsu is scheduled for an initial court appearance in the US District Court for the Central District of California later in the day, the release added.

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NASA Merging Strategic Assessments, Technology Offices - Administrator

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - NASA Administrator Bill Nelson has announced the merging of the organization's strategic planning and technology oversight departments into a single body, the US space agency said in a press release on Monday.

"NASA Administrator Bill Nelson is announcing new leadership roles, as well as the merging of two offices into the Office of Technology, Policy, and Strategy (OTPS), in support of Biden-Harris Administration priorities and the focus on space strategy," the release said.

NASA also said it named top executives to run the office with Bhavya Lal serving as Associate Administrator, Melanie Saunders as Chief Resilience Officer, Casey Swails as Deputy Associate Administrator for Business Operations and Tom Cremins as Associate Administrator for Space Security Interests.

"OTPS is being established to provide data- and evidence-driven technology, policy, and strategy advice to NASA leadership. ... OTPS will support NASA leadership in developing and guiding the agency's activities across its six mission directorates," the release said.

Douglas Terrier, NASA's Chief Technologist, will serve in a new position as Associate Director for Vision and Strategy at the Johnson Space Center (JSC) in Houston, Texas. In the interim, Lal will serve as Acting Chief Technologist. All appointments are effective immediately, NASA said.

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Biden, Indonesian President Discuss Myanmar, Urge Military to Cease Violence - White House  
WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden and his Indonesian counterpart Joko Widodo discussed the situation in Myanmar and urged that nation's military rulers to cease violence against their own people, the White House said in a statement on Monday.

"They expressed concern about the coup in Burma [Myanmar] and agreed the Burmese military must cease violence, release all political prisoners, and provide for a swift return to democracy," the statement said.

Biden expressed support for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' (ASEAN) efforts to hold the Myanmar military accountable to the ASEAN Five Point Consensus, the statement said.

The two leaders also discussed bilateral cooperation and ways to strengthen their countries' partnership. They also talked about strengthening of global health security amid the COVID-19 pandemic and different regional issues, the statement added.

On February 1, the Myanmar military assumed power after it accused the then-ruling National League for Democracy party of rigging the November 2020 general election. The military coup triggered a civil protests, resulting in the death of several hundred people.

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US Court Postpones Arraignment of Maduro Ally Saab Until November 15 – Court Filing

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) – The US district court for the Southern District of Florida has rescheduled the hearing for Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's ally, Alex Saab, to November 15, a court filing said on Monday.

"Counsel Hearing reset for 11/15/2021 10:00 AM in Miami Division before ...Duty Magistrate," the document said.

Judge Edwin Torres, who presided during the conference, ruled that the time until the next hearing should be excluded from the deadline for trial according to the law. "The Court finds that

the ends of justice served by granting this continuance outweigh the interests of the defendant and the public in a speedy trial," the filing added.

Saab was detained in Cape Verde in June 2020 on a US extradition warrant in connection with accusations of Iran sanctions violations. He was en route to Iran on a humanitarian mission for the Venezuelan government when he was arrested during a fuel stop. He was extradited to the US in October of this year to stand trial in Florida over corruption and embezzlement charges brought in July 2019.

Maduro said Saab was "kidnapped" without an arrest warrant and vowed to seek the help of international organizations to fight for his freedom. The Venezuelan government has also suspended participation in talks with the opposition over the incident.

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Facebook Says Removed 'Inauthentic' Network in Nicaragua Targeting Domestic Audiences

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - Facebook has removed an "inauthentic" network in Nicaragua which targeted domestic audiences and was allegedly linked to the government, the social media company announced on Monday.

"Nicaragua: We removed a network of 937 Facebook accounts, 140 Pages, 24 Groups and 363 Instagram accounts in Nicaragua. This operation targeted domestic audiences in that country and was linked to the government of Nicaragua and the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) party," Facebook said.

One portion of the network was located via Facebook's internal investigation, while another portion was found "as a result of reviewing public reporting about some of this activity," it added.

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Macron Urges Major Emitters At COP26 to Scale-Up to Hold Warming to 1.5 Degrees Celsius

UNITED NATIONS, November 1 (Sputnik) - French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday called on the world's largest greenhouse emitters to scale up their efforts over the next two weeks of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow to reach the target of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

"The largest emitters, whose national strategies do not match our strategy of 1.5 [Celsius degrees] increase, must scale up in the next two weeks," Macron said in his remarks at the climate summit.

The French president also said the international community must act in unity to keep the average climate warming rise to the 1.5 Celsius degrees target.

The goal to limit the mean global temperature was set out in the Paris Climate Agreement adopted by 196 parties during the UN Climate Change Conference in France in 2015.

From October 31 to November 12, the world leaders, including US President Joe Biden, are participating in COP26 in Glasgow to address issues pertaining climate change, including global warming.

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EU Pledges Extra \$5Bln for Climate Action Up to 2027 - Von der Leyen

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - The European Union pledges to provide an additional \$5 billion from its budget for climate action initiatives through 2027, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on Monday.

"We pledge an additional \$5 billion up to 2027 from the EU budget," von der Leyen said during remarks at the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow.

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US COVID-19 Hospitalizations, Death Toll Down 10% to 1,100 Per Week - CDC Director

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - The US seven-day average death toll from the COVID-19 pandemic fell by 10% last week to about 1,100 per day, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Rochelle Walensky said on Monday.

"The seven day average of daily deaths is about 1,100 - a decrease of about 10% over the prior week," Walensky told a White House briefing. "The seven day average of hospital admissions [during that same period] was about 5,100 per day and that's a decrease of about 10% over the prior week."

At the end of last week, the seven day average of new COVID-19 cases across the United States was about 69,000 per day, a decrease of about 3% over the previous week, Walensky noted.

White House COVID-19 Response Coordinator Jeffrey Zients told the briefing that 70% of all US adults are fully vaccinated against the novel coronavirus and the number of adults who had received at least one vaccination shot was now up to 80% or four out of five of the total adult population.

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UN Disarmament Chief Says World Needs Multilateral Discussions on Hypersonics

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - The world should seriously think about launching multilateral talks on hypersonic technology, UN Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, said on Monday.

"One area that has always been in my view ... has not been sufficiently is the missiles," Nakamitsu said. "We all see that news of hypersonic weapon, hypersonic missiles being tested in different parts of the world. That's also new technological development in the whole area of missiles. We don't have a global norm. At the moment we do not have multilateral discussions taking place, and I think this is an area where we need to start having some serious reflections on."

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Pfizer Now Shipping 15Mln COVID-19 Vaccine Doses for Children in US - White House

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - Pfizer is shipping the first seven million of 15 million doses of its COVID-19 vaccine for children aged five to eleven following Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval for it last Friday. White House COVID-19 Response Coordinator Jeffrey Zients said on Monday.

"We have secured enough vaccines for all 28 million kids aged five to eleven," Zients told a White House briefing. "The FDA authorization was the trigger regulator-ally. ... Seven million doses are already en-route: Within the next week, 15 million doses will be around the country at convenient trusted sites."

Zients said more than 20,000 pediatricians, pharmacies and other medical care facilities are now in the process of preparing to administer the vaccines nationwide starting next week.

"Starting [the] week of November 8, the children's vaccine program will be up and running. We have been planning for this moment. ... Our vaccination program for children will be running at full strength. We are making important progress," he added.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Rochelle Walensky told the briefing that a Pfizer clinical review showed only three cases of COVID-19 among 1,300 who had received the vaccine and added that its efficacy on them was nearly 91%.

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US Service Sector Up 16 Months in Row, Manufacturing Shrinks - ISM Data

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - The US service sector grew for the 16th month in a row in September, while manufacturing contracted last month from the challenges of a labor-poor market and supply chains disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic, the Institute for Supply Management said Monday.

ISM said its September Services Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) registered a 61.9% reading, up 0.2 percentage point from August. "The September reading indicates the 16th straight month of growth for the services sector, which has expanded for all but two of the last 140 months," it said in a statement.

ISM noted its October Manufacturing PMI contracted by 0.3 percentage point to 60.8%, despite "the overall economy achieving a 17th consecutive month of growth".

Feedback from ISM surveys of different US industries noted an increase in transportation bottlenecks, constraints on logistics and long lead times in supply of electronics and computer chips.

The US economy shrank by 3.5% for all of 2020 due to shutdowns and other disruptions caused by the COVID-19 crisis. Growth this year has been spotty, with an annualized 3.5% expansion in the first quarter, 3.6% in the second and 2.0% in the third.

The Federal Reserve has targeted a 6.5% expansion for all of this year, while some officials at the central bank have more ambitious expectations, forecasting growth of up to 7.0%. The problem for the Fed though is inflation as wages and the prices of almost everything have soared from the lows of the pandemic.

US automakers, including General Motors and Ford, have also slashed production this year due to microchip shortages emanating from labor and other disruptions caused by the pandemic. On the employment side, the United States lost more than 21 million jobs between March and April 2020, at the height of business lockdowns forced by the coronavirus. At least 5.0 million of those jobs have yet to return, officials say.

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#### **Billionaire Michael Bloomberg Launches Effort to Stop Coal Use in 25 Countries**

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - Billionaire businessman and former US presidential candidate Michael Bloomberg launched new efforts to end the use of coal in 25 countries in an attempt to combat climate change and transition to clean energy, Bloomberg Philanthropies said in a statement on Monday.

"Over the last decade, Bloomberg Philanthropies has helped shut down two-thirds of coal-fired power plants in the US and half in Europe - and that work continues. But around the world, too many coal plants are driving climate change and making people sick, so we are expanding our efforts to 25 more countries and setting an ambitious new goal: working to close a quarter of the world's coal plants by 2025 and cancel all proposed coal plants by that year, too," the statement said.

The proposed campaign would work to close one quarter of the world's 2,445 remaining coal plants and stop all 519 proposed ones by 2025, the statement said.

The announcement came at the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, where the world leaders are currently meeting to discuss the international climate agenda.

Bloomberg Philanthropies will try to help end coal power and enable clean energy transition by convening private companies, public sector entities, philanthropy and non-governmental organizations to deliver a whole-of-society response, the statement said.

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Only 33% of Registered Republicans Trust US National Elections Process - Poll

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - Only a third of registered Republican Party voters in the United States trust the current national election process and a bipartisan consensus of more than four out of ten believe there is a serious threat to democracy in the country, a new National Public Radio (NPR)/Public Broadcasting System (PBS) NewsHour/Marist Pol poll revealed on Monday.

"A majority of Americans (62%) say they will trust the results of the 2024 election even if the candidate they support loses, which includes 82% of Democrats but only one third of Republicans (33%)," NPR and PBS said on the results of the poll.

More than eight in ten Americans - 81% - believe there is a "serious threat" to the nation's democracy including 89% of Republicans, 80% of independents, and 79% of Democrats, the poll said.

However, that opinion is split along partisan lines with 42% blaming the Democrats, 41% Republicans, and only 8% blaming both parties, the poll said.

The poll was conducted from October 18 through October 22 with 1,032 participants and had a margin of error (MOE) of plus/minus 4.3%.

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Trial of Kenosha Riots Shooter Kyle Rittenhouse Begins, Jury Selection Underway

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - Jury selection began at the Kenosha County Circuit Court on Monday morning for the trial of Kyle Rittenhouse, who is being charged with six criminal offenses for shooting three people, killing two, during Black Lives Matter riots in August 2020.

Judge Bruce Schst started off with the jury selection process on Monday. The legal teams will narrow down the pool of 34 potential jurors to a group of 20 who will sit through the trial that is expected to last several weeks.

Rittenhouse is facing six charges, including first-degree reckless homicide with a dangerous weapon, recklessly endangering safety with a dangerous weapon, failure to comply with an emergency management order and possession of a dangerous weapon by a person younger than 18 years.

Rittenhouse, who was 17-years-old at the time of the incident, shot and killed Anthony Huber and Joseph Rosenbaum, as well a injured Gaige Grosskreutz while being attacked during the Black Lives Matter riots in Kenosha, Wisconsin in August 2020. Rittenhouse's defense team argues that he shot the three men in self-defense.

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Biden Apologizes for US Withdrawal From Paris Climate Accord During Trump Administration

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden on Monday apologized that the United States withdrew from the Paris Climate Agreement in 2017 during the Trump administration.

"I do apologize for the fact the United States in the last administration pulled out of the Paris Accords and put us sort of behind," Biden said during the United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow, Scotland.

The United States returned to the Paris climate deal in February, soon after Joe Biden became president. Biden had vowed to double the nationally determined contribution announced under former President Barack Obama amounting to a cut of up to 28% of US emissions by 2025. In April, Biden announced that the United States would halve greenhouse emissions by 2030 as part of its new commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement that his predecessor quit in 2017.

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US to Meet Commitments to Reduce Emissions 50-52% By 2030 as Compared to 2005 - Biden

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - The United States will meet its commitment of reducing greenhouse gas emission in half by the end of the decade as compared to the 2005 levels, US President Joe Biden said on Monday.

"We [the United States] have set ambitious goals reducing us greenhouse gases, emissions by 50 to 52% below 2005 levels by 2030," Biden said during the UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26).

In April, Biden announced that the United States would halve greenhouse emissions by 2030 as part of its new commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement that his predecessor Donald Trump withdrew the country from in 2017.

The United States returned to the Paris Climate Agreement in February soon after Biden became president. He vowed to double the nationally determined contribution announced under former President Barack Obama that amounted to a cut of up to 28% of US emissions by 2025.

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UK, US, Germany Request UN Human Rights Council Session on Sudan - UK Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, November 1 (Sputnik) - The United Kingdom, joined by the United States, Germany and Norway, has requested the UN Human Rights Council to gather for a special session over the recent military takeover in Sudan, Ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva Simon Manley said in a statement on Monday.

"The actions of the Sudanese military are a betrayal of the revolution, the transition [and] the hopes of the Sudanese people," Manley wrote on Twitter. "Along with 47 other countries, we are requesting a Special Session of the UN Human Rights Council."

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Biden Tests Negative for COVID-19 After Press Secretary Psaki Infected - White House

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden has tested negative for the novel coronavirus after White House spokesperson Jen Psaki contracted the virus, Principal Deputy Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Monday during a briefing aboard Air Force 1.

"Independently of Jen being tested - PCR tested yesterday and testing positive - the President was tested as well... yesterday and he tested negative," Jean-Pierre said. "But this was required for entry into the United Kingdom."

Psaki said in a statement earlier that she had tested positive for the novel coronavirus. Psaki noted that on Wednesday, in coordination with senior officials at the White House and the medical team, she decided not to travel to Europe with Biden as members of her household had tested positive and she quarantined herself.

While her tests came out negative on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, she noted, she tested positive on Sunday, she said.

Psaki emphasized that she has not had close contact in person with Biden or senior members of the White House staff since Wednesday.

The White House spokesperson said she only has mild symptoms, had been vaccinated and continues to work from home. She plans to return to work after a ten-day quarantine following a negative test.

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Biden Says High Energy Prices Reinforce Need to Diversify Sources

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden told the COP26 climate conference on Monday that high energy prices underscore the pressing need to diversify sources.

"High energy prices only, only reinforce the urgent need to diversify sources, double down on clean energy development and adapt promising new clean energy technologies," Biden stated.

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Novavax COVID-19 Vaccine Gets First Emergency Use Approval in Indonesia - Statement

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - US drug maker Novavax said on Monday that the COVID-19 vaccine it jointly developed with the Serum Institute of India has received the first authorization for emergency use in Indonesia.

"The first authorization of Novavax' COVID-19 vaccine exemplifies our commitment to equitable global access and will fill a vital need for Indonesia, which despite being the fourth most populous nation on earth, continues to work to procure sufficient vaccines for its population," President and CEO Stanley Erck said in a statement.

Shipments of the vaccine to Indonesia are expected to begin imminently, the statement said.

"This is a landmark moment for Novavax and our partner, Serum Institute of India, and it is the first of many authorizations that Novavax expects in the coming weeks and months for our vaccine globally," the statement added.

Separately, Novavax announced on Monday that it had filed for authorization for the vaccine in Canada and has also completed submissions for a review by the European Medicines Agency. The Indonesian approval for the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine comes almost a year after the first announcement of efficiencies for Pfizer's coronavirus shot that marked the beginning of the global turnaround against the novel coronavirus, which has killed about 5 million people worldwide since it was first reported in China in 2019.

The Novavax vaccine's storage temperature of 2 to 8 degree Celsius - the standard temperature of refrigerators - will enable it to be stored more easily, potentially increasing its access in hard-to-reach areas, the statement said.

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Biden, Estonian Prime Minister Discuss Defense, Efforts to Strengthen NATO - White House

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden and Prime Minister of Estonia Kaja Kallas discussed bilateral defense relations and joint efforts to strength NATO's deterrence capacity, on the sidelines of the United Nations climate conference in Glasgow on Monday, the White House said.

"President Joseph R. Biden, Jr., met today with Prime Minister Kaja Kallas of Estonia," the White House said in a press release. "The leaders discussed their cooperation on global challenges, including climate change. They also talked about continued close bilateral defense ties and ongoing work to strengthen NATO's deterrence and defense posture."

Biden also expressed his support for Kallas' plan to promote connectivity and high-standards infrastructure investment across Europe and around the world, the release added.

Biden and world leaders from over 100 countries are participating in the UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26), which commenced today in Glasgow. The event is seen as one of the last chances to implement meaningful steps to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit), in compliance with the 2015 Paris Agreement.

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#### Ireland Should Do Well Despite Agreeing to US-Led Higher Tax Plan - Secretary Yellen

WASHINGTON, November 1 (Sputnik) - Ireland's stable business environment and well-educated workforce should keep its economy competitive despite Dublin raising corporate taxes under a global agreement, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Monday.

Ireland had one of the world's lowest company taxes at 12.5% before it agreed last month to a minimum of 15% for firms with a turnover of more than 750 million euros (\$868 million) under a US-advocated tax restructuring supported by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

"American companies have flocked to Ireland thanks to a welcoming, efficient, and stable business environment; its well-educated workforce; and thanks to Ireland's position in the EU," Yellen said in a statement on her visit to Dublin. "These factors will continue to make Ireland one of the most open and attractive places in Europe in which to do business."

She added that the Irish corporate tax hike will be "a historic, once-in-a-generation global agreement that will support efforts to promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth in all our economies".

Some 135 nations – representing nearly 95% of the global economy – joined the OECD plan to prevent a so-called race to the bottom, where countries consistently dropped tax rates, undermining one another, in an effort to attract global companies.

The United States mooted the global tax plan after President Joe Biden lamented that some of the richest American companies paid virtually no taxes by exploiting loopholes or basing their tax jurisdictions in countries with excessively generous tax rates.