

2/21/22 Monday

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South Korean Presidential Candidate Warns North Korea May Perform ICBM Test as US Focuses on Ukraine
By - Evan Craighead

On Friday, US President Joe Biden declared that Washington believes Russian President Vladimir Putin has already decided to proceed with an invasion of Ukraine. The decision, backed by the Pentagon, has been rebuked by the Russian ambassador to the US, who stated that Russian troops at the border are on sovereign territory.

The US and NATO's laser-focus on escalating tensions in Ukraine could be a perfect storm for the government of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to conduct another intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) test, warned Yoon Seok-youl, a former public prosecutor running for presidential office under South Korea's conservative People Power Party (PPP).

"While the United States is focusing on Europe, there is a possibility that North Korea will close its strategy, such as the launch of a [random] missile test, and national leadership near the border," Yoon wrote in a translated Facebook post, citing Biden's comments from Friday. Yoon called on the governments of South Korea and the US to develop a contingency plan that incorporates a "combined defense posture."

The candidate also asserted that the two nations should "strengthen the extended deterrence capable of responding to nuclear and missile threats from North Korea.

"Peace cannot be achieved by words but by powerful force," the PPP nominee added.

Yoon, who served as Prosecutor General of South Korea from 2019 to 2021, is up against several candidates in the upcoming March 3 presidential election, including Minjoo party nominee Lee Jae-myung, as well as Justice Party nominee Sim Sang-jung and Ahn Cheol-soo, of the People Party.

At the same time, Yoon urged Seoul to ensure that the remaining South Koreans in Ukraine are protected in the event of an invasion.

"What's urgent is the safety of our people remaining in Ukraine," he said. "The government should immediately come up with measures to ensure their safety."

As of Thursday, some 74 South Korean nationals remained in Ukraine.

Officials in Washington and Seoul have expressed fears about North Korea's Hwasong-12 launch on January 30, arguing that the firing could serve as a precursor to Pyongyang resuming tests of its intercontinental ballistic missiles or even nuclear weapons. North Korea notably carried out seven rocket launches just last month, firing an estimated 11 missiles toward the sea to the east.

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Biden, Putin Have Accepted 'the Principle' of a Summit to Discuss Ukraine - Elysee
By - Evan Craighead

Following a 105-minute discussion with French President Emmanuel Macron on Sunday, Russian President Vladimir Putin declared that the US and NATO should "take Russian demands for security guarantees seriously." Macron made a similar call to US President Joe Biden earlier in the day, although their discussions lasted about 15 minutes.

US President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin have agreed on the principle of a proposed summit to lay out issues related to strategic stability and security in Europe, according to a Sunday release by Élysée.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov are slated to meet on Thursday, February 24, to begin the diplomatic effort.

"It can only be held at the condition that Russia does not invade Ukraine," the memo read.

Biden has committed to work with all relevant stakeholders in preparation for the summit.

The move came following French President Emmanuel Macron's brief chat with Biden, and a significantly longer call in which Macron spoke with Putin.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz were also phoned by their French counterpart.

Commenting on the diplomatic pursuit, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki repeatedly stressed that the summit, as well as the Thursday Blinken-Lavrov meeting, will only proceed if no invasion occurs.

"We are also ready to impose swift and severe consequences should Russia instead choose war," Psaki declared. "And currently, Russia appears to be continuing preparations for a full-scale assault on Ukraine very soon."

As Blinken meets with Lavrov later this week, Biden will conduct a same-day, virtual meeting with G7 leaders in preparation for the summit, according to the White House.

This diplomatic development follows a CBS broadcast in which Russian Ambassador to the US Anatoly Antonov pointed out that Russian troops are on sovereign territory and "are not threatening anyone."

"We are not trying to seize any territory of another country. I would like to confirm that Donetsk and Lugansk are part of Ukraine," Antonov said.

He also highlighted that the Kremlin "publicly expressed readiness to continue diplomatic efforts" regarding the situation.

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Same Destination, Different Reasons: Prince Andrew Likens Himself to Prince Harry, May Move to US

By - Evan Craighead

Last week, Prince Andrew, Duke of York, settled a lawsuit filed by Virginia Giuffre, a woman who testified that she was raped by Andrew when she was 17. A day later, Jean-Luc Brunel, another longtime crony of convicted child sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, died in an apparent suicide in his single-occupancy cell, quashing hopes of a trial.

After agreeing to pay an unspecified amount to accuser Virginia Giuffre's charity, Prince Andrew is reportedly attempting to move on with life, according to biographer Ingrid Seward, editor-in-chief of Majesty magazine.

The biographer detailed in a new article that Andrew, who has been stripped of his royal titles and patronages, has been likening his situation to that of his nephew, Prince Harry, although their situations are very different.

"Both were confident, mischievous little boys who enjoyed getting into scrapes and both were spoilt children," Seward wrote of the two men, downplaying the charges of rape and sexual abuse leveled against Andrew.

Although Andrew has been accused of multiple sex crimes, the 62-year-old reportedly believes that there could be a future career for him in "broadcasting, public speaking, television and even publishing."

In order to fulfill this ambitious desire, Andrew would have to move to the US, Seward wrote.

"It is possible Andrew could even attempt to reinvent himself as a supporter of abused women and appear on TV chat shows in the States. Imagine if Oprah got hold of him to tell his side of the story," she gushed.

A possible move to the US, however, would not come until Queen Elizabeth II vacates her throne.

It is likely that he also wants to avoid the ongoing and active Federal Bureau of Investigation probe into Epstein.

This report comes alongside reports that Andrew may soon be forced to vacate his £30m 31-bed Royal Lodge home in Windsor.

If kicked out, the disgraced Duke of York could pocket £7.5million in taxpayer funds due to a 2005 National Audit Office report that tied the funds to an early 2000s refurbishment.

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'Little Bit Frozen': Finnish Cross-Country Skier Treated With Heat Pack to Thaw Penis

By - Evan Craighead

The men's cross-country 50 kilometer freestyle competition was delayed and shortened to 30 kilometers last week due to snowfall at the Zhangjiakou National Cross-Country Skiing Centre. The International Ski Federation claimed the decision was made "to reduce the time of exposure of athletes in extreme conditions."

Finnish cross-country skier Remi Lindholm disclosed that his 'personal equipment' suffered a minor injury after traversing the 30-kilometer course amid freezing winds and extreme low temperatures for approximately one hour and 16 minutes.

"You can guess which body part was a little bit frozen when I finished," quipped Lindholm to Finnish media after placing 28th in the race.

The Finnish skier described the delayed competition as "one of the worst" in his life.

"It was just about battling through," he said.

Despite the race being shortened due to fears of frostbite, Lindholm was still forced to treat his injury with a heat pack.

"When the body parts started to warm up after the finish, the pain was unbearable," he added.

The gold medal in the February 19 match went to the ROC's Alexander Bolshunov, who amassed three cross-country skiing gold medals during the 2022 games.

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US Navy's Fifth Fleet Planning to Launch Middle East-Based Drone Task Force Alongside Allies
By - Evan Craighead

US Navy Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, who heads the Middle East-based US Fifth Fleet, announced Monday that it would launch an unmanned naval drone task force to support allied nations in the region and patrol key oil and shipping areas. The fleet's area of operations includes the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal, and Yemen's Strait of Bab el-Mandeb.

Speaking to the Associated Press, US Navy Vice Adm. Brad Cooper expounded on the Fifth Fleet's latest endeavor, emphasizing that Iran is considered by the US to be the "primary regional threat" in the Middle East.

"By using unmanned systems, we can just simply see more. They're high-reliability and remove the human factor," Cooper told the outlet on the sidelines of the Unmanned System Exhibition and Conference in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

He added that the systems are the "only way to cover on whatever gaps that we have today."

"It's been well-established that Iran is the No. 1, in the primary regional threat we are addressing," Cooper said.

"There's the ballistic missile, cruise missile and UAV (drone) component, both in their capability and their mass proliferation, as well as the proxy forces."

The joint fleet of unmanned drones is said to be made up of some 100 aircraft that incorporate artificial intelligence, both sailing and submersible, to put more "eyes and ears on the water."

The head of the Fifth Fleet added that while there have been a series of encounters between US and Iranian forces in recent months, most encounters have been tame.

"If you look back over the last couple of months, I would say it's status quo," Cooper said.

"There have been some periods where they have had an uptick in activity. ... The overwhelming majority of these interactions are safe and professional."

He also noted that Israel would likely join the US Navy's Middle East-based unmanned naval drone task force.

"I would expect exercises in the future where we would work side by side," he told the outlet.

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Zelensky: Ukraine's Int'l Border Will Remain Intact Regardless of Russia's LPR, DPR Recognition
By - Evan Craighead

On Monday, the Russian Security Council and Russian President Vladimir Putin held a news conference in which they recognised the independence of the People's Republics of Donetsk and Lugansk. Putin called on Kiev to cease hostilities in the new states, warning that blame for continued regional conflict will be on "the regime ruling Ukraine".

In an early Tuesday address to the public, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky declared that Ukraine's internationally recognised borders will remain unchanged, despite Russian President Vladimir Putin's decision to recognise the independence of the People's Republics of Donetsk and Lugansk.

Zelensky argued that Russia's move translates to its withdrawal from the Minsk agreements and legalises Russian troops in the area, which, according to him, have been in Donbass since 2014.

Since the announcement, Ukraine has called for an emergency Normandy Format talk, according to Zelensky, who claimed that previous peaceful efforts and existing negotiations have been nullified.

While the Ukrainian president called for peace, he also noted that his country is prepared for anything that comes.

The Ukrainian government is reportedly awaiting responses from allies before proceeding with further steps.

Zelensky's address comes hours before an emergency United Nations Security Council meeting on the Russia-Ukraine situation. The meeting was called by French President Emmanuel Macron.

In recent months, Moscow has consistently denied US allegations that Russia is staging an invasion of Ukraine under the guise of a false-flag attack that could act as a pretext for the move. Since his announcement, the Russian president has ordered a peacekeeping mission into the DPR and LPR.

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World Reacts to Russia Recognising the Independence of Donbass Republics
By - Evan Craighead

After consulting with senior security officials, ministers, and other members of the government, Russian President Vladimir Putin has announced that Russia officially recognises the

independence of the People's Republics of Donetsk and Lugansk. Putin said the move should have occurred "long ago", and called on Ukraine to cease regional hostilities.

Russia's recognition of the Donbass Republics' independence sent a shockwave around the world, triggering reactions from leaders of many countries and other high-ranking government officials.

Not long after the announcement, Josep Borrell Fontelles, the high representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, [announced that the EU and its international partners](#) "will react with unity, firmness, and determination in solidarity with Ukraine".

The EU has since discussed the "next steps" with Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs Dmytro Kuleba and Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mélanie Joly, [who condemned Putin's move](#) and asserted that Canada was on board to impose economic sanctions on Russia.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg issued a statement arguing that the recognition of the Donetsk People's Republic and Lugansk People's Republic "undermines Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, erodes efforts towards a resolution of the conflict, and violates the Minsk agreements, to which Russia is a party".

The NATO release added that Moscow is fuelling the conflict in eastern Ukraine via financial and military support to separatists.

"It is also trying to stage a pretext to invade Ukraine once again", reads the NATO release.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has [met with the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine](#), and discussed the ongoing "situation" in separate calls with US President Joe Biden and [UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson](#).

Lt. Gen. Valery Zaluzhny, commander-in-chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, also conducted a phone call with US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley, the highest-ranking and most senior military officer in the US Armed Forces.

"The military leaders continued to exchange perspectives and assessments of the security environment in Eastern Europe", according to [a readout from the call](#). "The chairman once again reaffirmed unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity".

The UK announced that it would coordinate a response with its allies and stated it would "not allow Russia's violation of its international commitments to go unpunished".

"President Putin's recognition of 'Donetsk People's Republic' and 'Lugansk People's Republic' as independent states shows flagrant disregard for Russia's commitments under the Minsk agreements", [wrote UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss](#). "This step represents a further attack on Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, signals an end to the Minsk process and is a violation of the UN Charter".

Truss additionally asserted that the move shows that Russia is choosing "a path of confrontation".

White House press secretary [Jen Psaki noted](#) that the US had "anticipated" the move, and as a result, US President Joe Biden was preparing to sign an executive order that would implement additional sanctions on Russia.

The EO will "prohibit new investment, trade, and financing by US persons to, from, or in the so-called DNR and LNR regions of Ukraine".

It will also provide the authority to impose sanctions on those believed to operate from within those regions.

The sanctions will be just the beginning of Washington's new economic pressure on Russia, the White House noted.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken [also promised a "swift and firm response"](#).

French President Emmanuel Macron moved to call an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council, along with the "adoption of targeted European sanctions", according to a translated release.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, who recently expressed that Poland was prepared to provide more defensive weapons to Ukraine, also noted that his country intends to impose "immediate sanctions" on Russia, [according to a translated statement](#).

"This is the only language Putin can understand", Morawiecki asserted.

In the face of international opposition to Putin's move, Draginja Vlk, a member of the Belgrade City Parliament, expressed to Sputnik that she believes the move "will help prevent further escalation of conflict and save the people from the danger they are in", referring to the tens of thousands of refugees currently pouring into Russia.

"No one in the 21st century, almost 77 years after World War II, should feel insecure economically or even be at life risk, and no one should tolerate US and NATO claims", Vlk said.

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Canadian Lawmakers Extend Emergency Act Powers to Tackle 'Freedom Convoy' Blockades
By - Evan Craighead

During a Monday news conference, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told protesters who had engaged in the 23-day protest that although 'Freedom Convoy' demonstrators have a right to disagree with him and other elected officials, they cannot "hold a city hostage."

With a 185-154 vote, Canada's lower legislative house has voted in favor of extending the use of special emergency powers invoked by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau last week.

The measure, which requires approval in the upper house, authorizes authorities to designate areas as 'no-protest zones,' subjecting violators to possible jail time. It also allows certain services, such as tow truck companies, to remove vehicles from those areas.

A vote in the Canadian Senate is expected as early Tuesday.

If invoked, the extension would be one of the most severe responses by a Western government to protests launched in opposition to COVID-19-related public health orders.

"The situation is still fragile, the state of emergency is still there," Trudeau said on Monday, days after hundreds of Canadian police officers in riot gear cleared demonstrators from the streets near the besieged capital's Parliament buildings.

"After these illegal blockades and occupations received disturbing amounts of foreign funding to destabilize Canada's democracy, it became clear that local and provincial authorities needed more tools to restore order," Trudeau said, pointing out the "flood of misinformation and disinformation washed over Canada" amid the 'Freedom Convoy' protests.

The Canadian government has also moved to freeze bank accounts of those caught participating in illegal demonstrations.

"The list that was provided to Financial Institutions included identities of individuals who were influencers in the illegal protest in Ottawa, and owners and/or drivers of vehicles who did not want to leave," the Royal Canadian Mounted Police said in a statement. "At no time did we provide a list of donors."

The RCMP statement came in response to a viral tweet from Canadian MP Mark Strahl, who claimed without providing evidence that a single mom's bank account was frozen after providing \$50 to the 'Freedom Convoy' protest.

Emergency Preparedness Minister Bill Blair noted on Sunday that the emergency act is not "targeted at small donations."

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US, NATO 'Far More Concerned' About Russian Maneuvers Than Safety of Those in DPR & LPR - Expert
By - Evan Craighead

Several countries, including the US, have committed to imposing sanctions on Russia in response to Russian President Vladimir Putin recognising the independence of the People's Republics of Donetsk and Lugansk. According to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, the move translates to Russia's withdrawal from the Minsk Agreements.

As the world awaits the announcement of further sanctions over the recognition of the DPR and LPR's independence, a number of questions have been raised regarding diplomacy, civilian lives, anti-Russian hysteria, and the primary focus of involved Western nations.

Dr Matthew Crosston, professor of political science at Austin Peay State University and the inaugural director of the Institute of National Security and Military Studies at Tennessee's Austin Peay Centre, spoke with Sputnik regarding several of these queries following Putin's announcement.

Although Russia has remained vocal about its red lines with regard to Ukraine, the West is attempting to send a message to Russia that its red lines, along with the security concerns and political questions coming out of the country, are not relevant, according to Crosston.

As a result, the DPR and LPR, which have "very little influence", have somewhat become secondary pawns in a larger chess game between the US and Russia.

"In real terms, some could argue it's been Ukraine itself that is the pawn in a game of chess between America and Russia, the far bigger players", Crosston noted, adding that he has no intention of being "harsh or heartless" regarding the matter.

He went on to claim that the US and NATO appear "far more concerned about Russian maneuvers" related to DPR and the LPR than about the safety and well-being of those living in the states.

"This is just the innate cruelty that sometimes happens in what we used to call Great Game Strategy", he noted.

However, Crosston remains optimistic that the West does not want to engage in a "direct and expansive military conflict with Russia", although there may be some smaller skirmishes or misunderstandings down the road.

Of course, the US will likely compensate for its lack of military action via the imposition of further sanctions, as already announced by Washington and other Western-allied nations.

Either way, civilians lose out without efforts toward a compromise or other diplomatic attempts.

"Anything on the diplomatic front, even if just symbolic, would be far better than the posturing and competing aggressive declarations currently being hurled back and forth across various media microphones", he said, adding that the primary goal is to prevent a war from starting.

Crosston raised that the "knee-jerk reaction" from the West was expected, but the true measure of Putin's decision will come a few months down the road, "when observers can truly see what consequences shake out from this Moscow acknowledgement".

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Fourth COVID-19 Shot May Be on the Horizon for Americans ... Likely This Fall

By - Nevin Brown

The possibility of a fourth COVID-19 shot for the general public is being weighed by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Pfizer began testing the efficacy of a fourth dose in January.

Israel and Sweden have already recommended fourth doses of a COVID vaccine for vulnerable individuals.

[FDA spokesperson Alison Hunt wrote in an email](#), that the FDA "is indeed continually looking at the emerging data on the pandemic and variants in the United States and overseas in order to evaluate the potential utility and composition of booster doses."

The rapidly changing landscape of COVID, from new variants to the waning effectiveness of boosters, will be crucial to the FDA decision.

"As more data become available about the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines, including the use of a booster dose, we will continue to evaluate the rapidly changing science and keep the public informed," Hunt wrote.

She added, "Any determination that additional booster doses are needed will be based on data available to the agency."

[According to a study published by the CDC](#), the effectiveness of the booster on the Omicron variant was 91% against hospitalizations in the two months following a third dose. However, that number fell to 78% by the fourth month.

If the FDA does authorize a fourth booster dose it will be up to the CDC to recommend who it is available to first and how the rollout will proceed.

The current COVID trend suggests that boosters and vaccinations are effective in limiting the severity of spikes and maintaining an overall downward trajectory of the virus in the United States, [according to Dr. Anthony Fauci](#), director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Fauci said that the need for a fourth dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech or the Moderna mRNA vaccine, or a third dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, is being "monitored in real time." The CDC has yet to make a recommendation for a fourth dose but individuals who are immunocompromised can [opt for a fourth dose](#).

An area of concern for public health officials in the United States is the slowing pace of those receiving a third dose of the COVID vaccine.

While 65% of Americans are fully vaccinated with the initial series of jabs, only 28% of the population has received a third booster dose.

Lori Tremmel Freeman, CEO of the National Association of County and City Health Officials, warns that "As time goes on, if there is the necessity of a fourth dose, we're already behind with people getting the third dose," adding, "So all of a sudden, we could have a fairly large segment of the population that is not up to date on vaccines because they're behind by two doses, potentially, and more people could get sick."

It is believed that if a fourth dose of the COVID vaccine is needed it will be rolled out in the fall to coincide with the flu and respiratory virus season.

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Basketball Star LeBron James Wants to Play His Final NBA Season With His Eldest Son
By - Nevin Brown

In an interview with The Athletic, basketball star LeBron James said that he plans to play his final season in the NBA with his son LeBron James Jr, who is more commonly known as Bronny. Bronny is a high school senior and will be draft-eligible in the 2023 NBA draft.

[James said in an interview on his future plans in the NBA](#): "My last year will be played with my son."

James, 37, is currently under contract with the Los Angeles Lakers through the 2022-23 season. Although James is playing at a high level this season, he views the opportunity to play with his son as more important than chasing championships or money.

"Wherever Bronny is at, that's where I'll be. I would do whatever it takes to play with my son for one year. It's not about the money at that point," James said.

By the time James' contract with the Lakers expires he will have earned nearly \$435 million playing in the NBA, which doesn't include his many endorsement deals and investments.

The four-time Most Valuable Player winner finishing his career with his eldest son may be one of the toughest challenges of his career, however. James remains an elite player, his points per game of 29.1 is third in the league, but few players in history have played into their 40s.

James was the first overall pick out of high school in the 2003 draft, but his son Bronny may have to wait a few years to reach the NBA. Bronny is the [43rd ranked recruit in the class of 2023, according to ESPN](#), and the NBA has barred players from entering the league directly out of high school.

Players ranked outside of the top-35 in their recruiting class rarely make it to the NBA and are more likely to spend multiple years in college if they do play in the NBA.

The earliest Bronny could make it to the NBA would put his father at the age of 38, headed to 39. In all likelihood, the elder James' will be forty by the time Bronny is in the NBA. James sticking it out until his son is ready for the NBA may be worth it. He'd still likely command a lucrative salary, and he could secure the all-time scoring record. James recently set the all-time regular season and playoff scoring record, but he is a little less than 2,000 points short of passing Kareem Abdul-Jabbar for the career regular-season record.

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Retirements for Congressional Democrats Hit 30-Year High Ahead of US Midterm Election
By - Nevin Brown

New York Congresswoman Kathleen Rice's announcement that she won't seek reelection marks the 30th House Democrat to call it quits ahead of the 2022 midterm elections. That number is a 30-year high, and with more announcements to step away expected, Congressional Democrats are bracing for a tough election cycle.

The last time Congressional Democrats saw an exodus this large was 1992, when 41 House Democrats retired, and it marks the third time since 1978 that either party has seen at least 30 members retire in a single election cycle.

The spike in Democratic retirements has analysts pointing to several factors. Redistricting has altered congressional maps and made certain seats more vulnerable. US President Joe Biden's poor approval ratings, [41.8% according to FiveThirtyEight](#), coupled with the trend of a president's party losing seats at midterms, may be sending Democratic politicians into retirement.

"The 2022 elections are coming up quick, and Democrats need to decide now whether they want to retire or stick around and get fired," [said Calvin Moore](#), a spokesman for the Congressional Leadership Fund, a deep-pocketing lobbying group that works to get Republicans elected to the US Congress.

The general toxicity on Capitol Hill has also been cited by some politicians as a driving factor. Not all of the Congressional Democrats deciding not to run for reelection are doing so to get out of politics, however, as eight of the 30 will run for another political office.

A mass of retirements from one party has usually preceded that party suffering heavy losses. In 2018, 34 House Republicans retired and the party lost 41 seats and the majority in the House. Kyle Kondik, the managing editor of Sabato's Crystal Ball, does not have rosy forecasts for Democrats. "There are a lot of signs that this is not going to be a good year for Democrats," he said.

He elaborated that the mass of retirements could make losses for the party even more severe. "Incumbency is not as electorally valuable as it used to be, but a party still would rather have an incumbent running, generally speaking, than not." He added, "Open seats are still easier for the opposition party to flip than incumbent-held seats."

The precarious position Democrats find themselves in has Republicans feeling like they're mere months away from retaking a majority in the House.

Mike Berg, a spokesman for the National Republican Congressional Committee, crowed: "Thirty House Democrats have called it quits because they know their majority is doomed."

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Video: Manchester City Star Phil Foden Attacked Backstage at Boxing Event
By - Nevin Brown

Phil Foden and a woman believed to be his mother, Claire Foden, were attacked backstage while attending a boxing event headlined by Amir Khan and Kell Brook at Manchester's AO Arena.

Video emerged of the Manchester City star forward Saturday night. Directly before the filmed incident, Foden and his family were allegedly harassed by a group of men. The video captures Foden and a woman believed to have been his girlfriend entering a private box to elude the harassment.

Seconds later, a woman believed to be Foden's mother, Claire Foden, exited the private box to confront the harassers. Claire yelled at the group of men to, "f*** off," and an indistinct response was heard from the group.

The response was enough to spark Claire to push one of the men, which sparked a brawl. The video captured a man striking her in the face. A few moments later, as the fight continued, Phil Foden rushed to the aid of his mother.

The incident has sparked an inquiry by the Greater Manchester Police.

"GMP are aware of a video circulating on social media showing a disturbance at the AO arena last night (19 February 2022). We are conducting some further enquiries into the circumstances surrounding the incident" a Greater Manchester Police statement read.

Manchester City also made a statement over the incident.

"The club is aware of a video which has circulated on social media showing Phil Foden and his family being harassed and abused. We are shocked and appalled [by] the nature of the abuse and ensuing assault on one of Phil's family members. We will continue to give Phil and his family all the support and assistance they need."

It is unclear what sparked the harassment. Earlier in the day, City lost a thrilling match to Tottenham 3-2.

Foden, 21, has had a meteoric rise at Manchester City. He made his first-team debut as a substitute against Dutch side Feyenoord at 17, scored his first goal for the club at 18, and won the PFA Young Player of the Year award following the 2020-21 season.

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Videos: Celebrations Erupt in Donetsk After Russia Recognises Its Sovereignty
By - Nevin Brown

Celebrations erupted in the city of Donetsk after Russian President Vladimir Putin formally recognised the independence of the Donetsk People's Republic and Lugansk People's Republic on Monday. The regions declared their independence in the wake of the February 2014 Maidan revolution in Ukraine.

The Russian Federation's recognition of the two states makes the former the first United Nations member country to do so. An announcement by Russian President Vladimir Putin was captured on video.

Following their 2014 declaration of independence from Ukraine, the region, known as the Donbass, became mired in war as Kiev sought to reclaim the territory. After nearly eight years of conflict, residents of Donetsk celebrated the news that Russia had formally recognised their sovereignty.

The US and its allies have largely condemned the development. A meeting by the United Nations Security Council is expected to take place later Monday.

The Donbass region is predominantly Russian-speaking, and, according to a 2001 census, ethnic Russians make up [38.2% of the population of Donetsk](#).

Dating back to the 1990s, shortly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the politics of the Donbass have been at odds with those of Kiev, Ukraine's capital city. The region voted to have their official language be Russian, a measure which was rejected in Kiev.

Since 2014, separatists have for much of the past eight years maintained control of the city of Donetsk, the largest city in the region

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Biden Signs Order Blocking US Economic Activity in Autonomous LPR, DPR Regions
Recognised by Russia
By - Nevin Brown

US President Joe Biden has issued an executive order prohibiting Americans from engaging in economic activity in the Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic. The two breakaway regions of Ukraine were formally recognised as sovereign nations by Russia earlier on Monday.

[Section 1 of the executive order prohibits](#) "new investment" in the region, "the importation into the United States, directly or indirectly, of any goods, services, or technology" from the region, "the exportation, reexportation, sale, or supply...of any goods, services, or technology" from the region, and "any approval, financing, facilitation, or guarantee by a United States person...would be prohibited".

The order also places economic penalties on individuals who breach Section 1 of the order, stating that they will be "blocked and may not be transferred, paid, exported, withdrawn, or otherwise dealt in". It also bars immigration and non-immigration entry into the United States of anyone found to have violated the order.

The order is predominantly an expansion of a series of four executive orders ([Executive Order 13660](#), [Executive Order 13661](#), [Executive order 13662](#), [Executive Order 13685](#)) signed by then-US President Barack Obama in 2014, following the start of the conflict in Donbass in eastern Ukraine, and an executive order from 2018 ([Executive Order 13849](#)) signed by then-President Donald Trump.

The Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic were recognised by Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday after declaring their independence from Ukraine in 2014. The two regions are predominantly Russian-speaking, and ethnic Russians are a sizeable minority throughout the region.

Russia is the first member of the United Nations to recognise the sovereignty of the two regions. The Biden administration's executive order casts doubt that other nations will follow Russia's lead.

Analysts believe that Russia's formal recognition of the two regions could see tensions between the United States, Ukraine, and Russia increase. The US and its NATO allies and Ukraine have for weeks been accusing Russia of preparing an invasion of Ukraine.

Russia has sent troops into the regions to help maintain peace in the regions, an order by the Russian president that was part of the earlier signed agreement with regional leadership.

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Biden Administration Reportedly Discussed Plans to Move Zelensky From Kiev If Russia 'Invades'

By - Nevin Brown

Officials in the Biden administration have discussed with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky plans to evacuate him from the country's capital, Kiev, in the event of an alleged Russian invasion, according to sources.

[Details of the plan](#), including the relocation of Zelensky and what conditions would prompt an evacuation have not been reported. Zelensky has been Ukraine's president since May of 2019. Before his foray into politics, he created and starred in a popular Ukrainian television show where he played the Ukrainian president.

Kiev is the largest city in Ukraine, with a population of nearly three million, and is located in the north-central part of the nation. The city sits on the Dnieper River and is approximately 236 miles from the Russian border and 95 miles from Belarus.

Reports of the United States and Ukraine formulating contingency plans in the event of a Russian "invasion" come on the heels of Russian President Vladimir Putin formally recognising the two breakaway states of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic. The two eastern Ukraine regions have maintained their independence from Ukraine since 2014. The move to recognise the two states added another layer of tension between Russia, Ukraine, the United States, and its NATO allies. For weeks, the United States, Ukraine, and NATO have pushed intelligence suggesting a Russian invasion of Ukraine was imminent.

Moscow has consistently denied the claims, and, thus far, an "imminent invasion" has yet to occur. The tensions have, however, seen the United States and Russia engage in talks on averting an armed conflict.

Russian and American officials have discussed Russian security concerns in the region, with NATO's eastern expansion and courtship of Ukraine a prime concern.

French President Emmanuel Macron earlier spoke with both US President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin to organise a summit between the two leaders. The two parties agreed [in principle](#) to a meeting, but only if Ukraine is not invaded.

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Fourth COVID-19 Shot May Be on the Horizon for Americans ... Likely This Fall

By - Nevin Brown

The possibility of a fourth COVID-19 shot for the general public is being weighed by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Pfizer began testing the efficacy of a fourth dose in January.

Israel and Sweden have already recommended fourth doses of a COVID vaccine for vulnerable individuals.

[FDA spokesperson Alison Hunt wrote in an email](#), that the FDA "is indeed continually looking at the emerging data on the pandemic and variants in the United States and overseas in order to evaluate the potential utility and composition of booster doses."

The rapidly changing landscape of COVID, from new variants to the waning effectiveness of boosters, will be crucial to the FDA decision.

"As more data become available about the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines, including the use of a booster dose, we will continue to evaluate the rapidly changing science and keep the public informed," Hunt wrote.

She added, "Any determination that additional booster doses are needed will be based on data available to the agency."

[According to a study published by the CDC](#), the effectiveness of the booster on the Omicron variant was 91% against hospitalizations in the two months following a third dose. However, that number fell to 78% by the fourth month.

If the FDA does authorize a fourth booster dose it will be up to the CDC to recommend who it is available to first and how the rollout will proceed.

The current COVID trend suggests that boosters and vaccinations are effective in limiting the severity of spikes and maintaining an overall downward trajectory of the virus in the United States, [according to Dr. Anthony Fauci](#), director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Fauci said that the need for a fourth dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech or the Moderna mRNA vaccine, or a third dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, is being "monitored in real time."

The CDC has yet to make a recommendation for a fourth dose but individuals who are immunocompromised can [opt for a fourth dose](#).

An area of concern for public health officials in the United States is the slowing pace of those receiving a third dose of the COVID vaccine.

While 65% of Americans are fully vaccinated with the initial series of jabs, only 28% of the population has received a third booster dose.

Lori Tremmel Freeman, CEO of the National Association of County and City Health Officials, warns that "As time goes on, if there is the necessity of a fourth dose, we're already behind with people getting the third dose," adding, "So all of a sudden, we could have a fairly large segment of the population that is not up to date on vaccines because they're behind by two doses, potentially, and more people could get sick."

It is believed that if a fourth dose of the COVID vaccine is needed it will be rolled out in the fall to coincide with the flu and respiratory virus season.

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Basketball Star LeBron James Wants to Play His Final NBA Season With His Eldest Son
By - Nevin Brown

In an interview with The Athletic, basketball star LeBron James said that he plans to play his final season in the NBA with his son LeBron James Jr, who is more commonly known as Bronny. Bronny is a high school senior and will be draft-eligible in the 2023 NBA draft.

[James said in an interview on his future plans in the NBA](#): "My last year will be played with my son."

James, 37, is currently under contract with the Los Angeles Lakers through the 2022-23 season. Although James is playing at a high level this season, he views the opportunity to play with his son as more important than chasing championships or money.

"Wherever Bronny is at, that's where I'll be. I would do whatever it takes to play with my son for one year. It's not about the money at that point," James said.

By the time James' contract with the Lakers expires he will have earned nearly \$435 million playing in the NBA, which doesn't include his many endorsement deals and investments. The four-time Most Valuable Player winner finishing his career with his eldest son may be one of the toughest challenges of his career, however. James remains an elite player, his points per game of 29.1 is third in the league, but few players in history have played into their 40s. James was the first overall pick out of high school in the 2003 draft, but his son Bronny may have to wait a few years to reach the NBA. Bronny is the [43rd ranked recruit in the class of 2023, according to ESPN](#), and the NBA has barred players from entering the league directly out of high school.

Players ranked outside of the top-35 in their recruiting class rarely make it to the NBA and are more likely to spend multiple years in college if they do play in the NBA.

The earliest Bronny could make it to the NBA would put his father at the age of 38, headed to 39. In all likelihood, the elder James' will be forty by the time Bronny is in the NBA.

James sticking it out until his son is ready for the NBA may be worth it. He'd still likely command a lucrative salary, and he could secure the all-time scoring record.

James recently set the all-time regular season and playoff scoring record, but he is a little less than 2,000 points short of passing Kareem Abdul-Jabbar for the career regular-season record.