GOP Lawmakers Express ‘Concern’ Over Biden Supreme Court Pick Representing Guantanamo Prisoners

With a 6-3 majority, conservatives wield decisive control over the US Supreme Court, the ostensibly nonpartisan high court that exercises final and discretionary appellate jurisdiction over federal courts, and reviews laws and cases for constitutionality. Several conservative lawmakers have fretted in recent days over news that US President Joe Biden’s nominee for an open seat on the US Supreme Court, Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson, served as legal counsel for detainees at the US prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

“We did talk about her representation of Guantanamo Bay detainees. I expressed some concern about this,” US Sen. Josh Hawley (R-MO) said recently, according to The Hill. “I imagine that that will be something we’ll want to ask her about. [...] I’m going to have some more questions about that,” Hawley added.

Jackson was nominated by Biden last month to replace Justice Stephen Breyer on the high court after Breyer announced his retirement. She is presently a federal judge on the US Court of Appeals in Washington, DC, and if her nomination is confirmed, Jackson would become the first Black woman to sit on the Supreme Court.

The road to the high court is long and grueling, however, requiring her to run a gauntlet of criticism and examination in the US Senate, which is divided evenly between Republicans and Democrats.

One major subject of scrutiny in Jackson’s career has been her defense of Khi Ali Gul, an Afghan man who was arrested in 2002 and transferred to the Guantanamo Bay detention camp the following year, according to US documents published by WikiLeaks. When Gul sued the Bush administration in 2008 in an attempt to obtain a writ of habeas corpus - a legal right for US prisoners to hear the charges against them - in 2008, Jackson assisted in his representation. At the time, she worked as a public defender, a lawyer in the US legal system who is employed by the court to represent defendants who cannot afford their own legal representation.

Gul’s appeal was denied and he was released and repatriated in 2014 without having been charged with a crime.

Since opening the War on Terror in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the US has held hundreds of people at the Guantanamo Bay prison under a legal fiction of being “enemy combatants” as a means of denying them the legal rights and protections ordinarily afforded to prisoners, including prisoners of war, under US law. Many have been tortured at the hands of US agents and almost none have been charged with crimes.

After Jackson entered private practice, she submitted an amicus brief in at least one other case involving a Guantanamo detainee.

Jackson has been scrutinized for these actions before. At a confirmation hearing in 2012, when she was nominated to be a district court judge, Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IA) suggested that her
record raised "some concern about how you will handle terrorism cases that may come before you."

"In all of those situations, the views that were expressed were the views of my clients that I represented," Jackson told Grassley about the Guantanamo detainee cases. "The briefs did not necessarily represent my personal views with regard to the war on terror or anything else."

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Omicron Outbreak in Jilin, Hong Kong, is China’s Largest Since Spring 2020

Instead of learning to "live with the virus," Beijing has for three years maintained a "Zero Covid" policy of social lockdowns and mass testing to curb COVID-19 outbreaks, sparing the country the massive outbreaks and deaths seen elsewhere.

In an effort to limit its largest outbreak of COVID-19 since the spring of 2020, China has locked down some 51 million people, including all of Jilin Province, the epicenter of the outbreak. The cities of Shenzhen and Dongguan, in the Pearl River delta, have also been locked down. However, in nearby Hong Kong, the outbreak is reported to be out of control.

According to the China National Health Commission (NHC), on Monday the mainland counted 2,125 new cases across 19 provinces, although nearly all were concentrated in Jilin in the northeast and Guangdong in the southeast. Most cases have been identified in the city of Jilin and the regional capital of Changchun, but all 24 million people in Jilin Province have been locked down. Another 17 million in Shenzhen and 10 million in Dongguan were also locked down, although only a few dozen cases had been found there.

Transit around the country has been paralyzed by the outbreak, as officials struggle to limit the spread of the deadly virus. According to the South China Morning Post, residents in Shenzhen will be tested three times before March 20.

China’s response to Covid outbreaks has become the stuff of legend: in January, as the United States saw daily new cases spike to over 1 million per day, Chinese health officials claimed that they had tested entire cities in less than a day. In Xi’an, residents were locked down for weeks to control a raging outbreak. As in Xi’an, officials in Jilin were fired for their negligence after the outbreak was discovered.

"The general strategy to prevent imported cases and internal rebounds and the general policy of dynamic zero-Covid are fully effective in dealing with the Omicron outbreak," Lei Zhenglong, deputy director of the National Health Commission’s disease prevention and control bureau, told state-owned China Central Television (CCTV).

The latest outbreak is being driven by a sublineage of the Omicron variant named BA 2, which the World Health Organization (WHO) identified last month as a variant of concern because of its increased transmissibility.

According to Chinese officials, the variant is more difficult to detect, especially in less developed areas that lack sophisticated testing facilities, because such a large number of infections are asymptomatic. The outbreak in Jilin was only detected in the last week, after several hundred cases had proliferated at a university.
The outbreak is the worst since China's initial wave of COVID-19 that began in December 2019, which was the world's first outbreak of the virus and set in motion the ongoing pandemic. The lockdowns being implemented now were pioneered in the government's response to the outbreak in Wuhan, which declined from 3,000 cases per day to 16 cases in the space of about six weeks. China has only reported about 141,996 cases on the mainland, and 4,636 deaths, according to the New York Times. By comparison, the United States, which has about one-fourth of the population of China, has recorded 79.3 million cases and 965,300 deaths from COVID-19.

However, as severe as the outbreak on the mainland is, it pales in comparison to that seen in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), which is adjacent to Shenzhen at the mouth of the Pearl River.

On Monday, Hong Kong officials reported 26,908 new cases and 249 deaths, the majority of whom had not been vaccinated against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. In the wave that began several weeks ago, Hong Kong officials have recorded 721,154 cases, accounting for 98% of all Covid cases yet seen in the city.

The city lacks the testing facilities to conduct comprehensive mass testing like on the mainland, and officials have been hesitant to order a mass social lockdown. The mainland began offering SAR aid last month.

"It is going to take a long time for the number of cases to come down. People will continue to live in a state of confusion and worry for a while," Professor Lau Yu-lung, who chairs the government's Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases, said on local radio.

The material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

WikiLeaks' Julian Assange Denied Right to Appeal Extradition Decision to UK Supreme Court


The UK Supreme Court has denied Assange's appeal of a December 2021 decision by the London High Court to allow his extradition to the United States. The decision now falls to UK Home Secretary Priti Patel to authorize the extradition, WikiLeaks said in a Twitter statement.

According to a statement by Birnberg Peirce, Assange's solicitors, the Supreme Court decided that "the application does not raise an arguable point of law."

"We regret the opportunity has not been taken to consider the troubling circumstances in which requesting states can provide caveated guarantees after the conclusion of a full evidential hearing," the legal firm said. "In Mr. Assange's case, the court had found that there was a real risk of prohibited treatment in the event of his onward extradition."

The DOJ has accused Assange of violating the 1917 Espionage Act because WikiLeaks printed documents revealing US war crimes in Iraq, including a 2007 incident in Baghdad in which a US Army helicopter was filmed shooting unarmed civilians, including two Reuters journalists, which the Pentagon had tried to cover up. The video, along with a slew of other documents, was found
and given to WikiLeaks by then-US Army analyst Chelsea Manning, who was sentenced to 35 years in prison for doing so in 2013. Manning was later pardoned in 2017 by outgoing US President Barack Obama.

Assange faces 18 charges in the US that could give him a maximum sentence of 175 years in prison. He has already served three years in London’s Belmarsh Prison while awaiting extradition, where he has faced conditions that United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment Nils Melzer described as psychologically torturous.

In January, the high court decided to allow Assange to appeal their decision to the Supreme Court. The high court had hesitated at first to extradite Assange due to conditions in US prisons, initially rejecting the US request before granting it following an appeal by the Biden administration.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Idaho Lawmakers Send 'Texas Copycat' Anti-Abortion Bill to Governor’s Desk

Twelve US states have passed “trigger laws” that would automatically take effect if the US Supreme Court overturns the 1973 Roe vs. Wade ruling, which legalized abortion in the US. The laws would immediately ban abortion in those states at that time.

The Idaho House voted on Monday to pass a bill that would ban abortions after six weeks of pregnancy and uses an enforcement mechanism similar to the law Texas passed last year. Lawmakers in the Gem State voted 51-14 to pass Senate Bill 1309, sending it to Governor Brad Little’s desk. A Republican, Little has supported similar abortion bans in the past, but has not commented on the present bill.

This bill is like another Little signed last year, both of which ban termination of a pregnancy after a so-called “fetal heartbeat” can be detected. That time, which can occur as early as five weeks after conception - before many would know they were even pregnant - was chosen because anti-abortion activists believe it is the time the embryo becomes a separate entity from its mother, but in reality what is termed a “heartbeat” is nothing more than electrical impulses where the embryo’s heart would form much later in gestation. In fact, it’s not until week 8 of pregnancy that medicine begins to refer to it as a fetus.

However, that bill, HB 366, requires a favorable court ruling on a similar law elsewhere in the country before it can take effect.

The Texas bill, SB 8, was also passed last year and similarly bans abortions at roughly the fifth week of pregnancy. It wasn’t the first bill to ban abortion so early, but it was the first to introduce a new enforcement method designed to evade being struck down by the US Supreme Court, and Idaho’s SB 1309 effectively copies that method.

Under Idaho SB 1309, the father and the people who would have become the grandparents, siblings, aunts and uncles of the fetus if it had been born, can sue an abortion provider for a minimum of $20,000 in damages up to four years after performing an abortion.

A rapist who caused a pregnancy could not sue under the law, but the rapist’s relatives could.
“This will absolutely lead to an almost complete elimination of abortion access in Idaho,” said Lisa Humes-Schulz, vice president of policy and regulatory affairs for Planned Parenthood Northwest. The organization operates the only three abortion clinics in Idaho and said it will stop offering abortion services after six weeks if the bill becomes law, according to The 19th.

Still it is not quite as broad as the Texas law, which allows any third party to sue anyone who “aids and abets” an abortion, ostensibly including a taxi driver who takes a patient to a clinic where an abortion is performed. The law has had a chilling effect on abortions, which fell by 60% in the first month after the restriction took effect.

Texas SB 8 has stood up to several court challenges since it was passed in April 2021, including a request at the US Supreme Court level to block it from taking effect on September 1. In December 2021, the high court punted on the question of SB 8’s constitutionality, but said abortion providers could continue to bring challenges in lower courts, and in January rejected an appeal to revive the litigation.

The Supreme Court legalized abortion in the US in 1973 in Roe v. Wade, but the right has never been codified in US law, and a desperate 11th-hour attempt by Democrats to do so has been stalled by Republicans in the Senate. Roe created a regulation structure for abortion that banned any kind of restriction on access before the 13th week of pregnancy and only allowed certain forms of restrictions until the 24th week.

On its face, both the Texas law and the Idaho bill appear to violate the court’s 1973 ruling. However, with a powerful 6-3 conservative majority, many fear its unwillingness to strike down SB 8 signals a willingness to overturn Roe completely - something the state of Mississippi directly asked the high court to do in the December 2021 case Dobbs vs. Jackson Women’s Health Organization. A decision is expected by the summer of 2022.

Abortion Rights, Trans Rights Dovetail

Like Texas and Mississippi, Idaho’s crackdown on abortion rights has been paralleled by a crackdown on LGBTQ rights, both of which are championed by many of the same advocacy groups and legislators. Last week, the Idaho House passed a felony ban on providing health care for transgender youth, including hormone therapy, puberty blockers, and trans-related surgeries. Republican Rep. Bruce Skaggs, who sponsored the bill, was also sponsor of HB 366, the abortion bill Little signed last year.

Idaho is also the first state to pass a ban on trans girls competing on girls’ sports teams in 2020, although a federal judge struck that law down.

Texas similarly has banned trans girls from girls’ sports and most recently, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton issued a legal opinion that affirmative health care for trans youth was a form a child abuse. GOP Governor Greg Abbott then ordered the state’s Child Protective Services to investigate parents of trans children for signs that they affirm their child’s gender identity, which could lead to the child being taken by the state and placed in a home or institution that would force them to adhere to the gender they were assigned at birth. On Friday, a Texas judge ordered a halt to the practice.

Likewise in Mississippi, bans on trans youth health care and trans athletes have become law in recent years, and most recently, a ban on allowing trans people to change their names on legal documents has advanced in the state legislature.
The issues have also dovetailed in Poland, where nearly all abortions are banned and large parts of the country have declared themselves "zones free of LGBT ideology," and in Guatemala, where a bill passed last week both increases penalties for abortion and bans same-gender marriages.

Invasive Insects May Kill 1.4 Million Urban Trees in US by 2050, Study Says
By - Evan Craighead

Per the survey, approximately 82% of the US population lives in urban environments where trees are at high risk of mortality from insect pests. With the number of Americans in urban areas rising, researchers have become more focused on preserving street trees, as the plants provide many benefits, including improved air quality and cooling. Between 2020 and 2050, an estimated 1.4 million urban trees will be killed by invasive insects, and communities will see some $900 million in associated costs, according to a first-of-its-kind study published on Sunday by the British Ecological Society.

Within the survey, researchers from McGill University, as well as the US Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service Southern Research Station and North Carolina State University, found that 90% of the 1.4 million tree deaths are projected to be caused by the emerald ash borer. By mid-century, the emerald ash borer—a green buprestid or jewel beetle native to the northeast region of Asia—is expected to kill every ash tree in more than 6,000 urban areas, researchers believe.

“These results can hopefully provide a cautionary tale against planting a single species of tree throughout entire cities, as has been done with ash trees in North America,” said study lead Dr. Emma Hudgins, of McGill University.

To examine the threat of invasive insects, researchers combined four models: the street tree populations in 30,000 communities; the predicted spread of 57 insect species; the insects’ deadliness/impact on various tree species; and the costs associated with the removal and replacement of dead trees.

Hudgins emphasized that expanding the diversity of street trees boosts resilience against pest infestations.

“As while we know this more intuitively for monocultures of crops, many cities continue to plant what are essentially monoculture urban forests,” Dr. Hudgins added.

The study is the first nationwide spatial forecast of street tree mortality due to invasive insects. Street trees notably provide multiple benefits for their urban environments, including improved air quality, carbon capture, the cooling of streets and pedestrian walkways, and measurable improvements in the mental and physical health of humans. Asian wood-boring insects, such as the citrus long-horned beetle, are believed to pose the highest threat to urban trees, according to the research. New establishments of these insects could potentially cost $4.9 million over a 30-year period.
"This paper shows that unless we plant a variety of tree species in our cities, urban trees are seriously at risk from invasive pests," said University of Bristol professor Jane Memmott, who was not involved in the study. "The take home message to urban planners, is to plant multiple species in cities rather than focus on just a few familiar species; It'll keep trees wonderful, and it will keep them in our cities."

Researchers determined that 95% of tree mortalities will occur in 25% of urban areas—with hotspots in New York City, New York, Chicago, Illinois, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin—where conditions allow for the invasive species to spread.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Kanye West Slams Kardashian For ‘Alienating Him’ as Parent, Changing Kids’ Schedules ‘Last Minute’
By - Svetlana Ekimenko

Kim Kardashian, who was declared legally single earlier this month, filed for divorce from rapper Kanye West last year. She has since embarked upon a new romance with Saturday Night Live star Pete Davidson, prompting her ex-husband to vent his frustration against the two in various erratic, since-deleted posts on social media.

Rapper Kanye West appears to show no sign of letting go of his feud with ex-spouse Kim Kardashian, this time accusing her of introducing "last minute" changes to their children’s schedules.

After the reality show Keeping Up With the Kardashians star filed to divorce the Yeezy fashion designer last February, their four children - North, 8, Saint, 6, Chicago, 4, and Psalm, 2 - invariably found themselves drawn into the messy split.

"My kids were not allowed to go to Sunday Service yesterday and there’s multiple times where the schedules were changed last minute... Which alienated me as a parent which is illegal thank God," the rapper and record producer wrote via Instagram on 14 March.

He accompanied his post with a screenshot of a news story covering his social media trench war with the shapewear company Skims founder.

"My family has been broken... My name has been dragged and dropped," added West.

Not content with targeting, his ex, the hip-hop icon then levelled yet another barrage against Kardashian's boyfriend, Saturday Night Live comedian Pete Davidson.

Referencing a text exchange with Davidson that became public this weekend after comedian Dave Sirus shared screenshots of it via Instagram, West said:

- "The boyfriend been trying to play with me since SNL skits. I was called a stalker by random has-beens. There’s multiple attempts to gas light me SKETE called this ‘legally single’ person my wife."

On Sunday, Sirus, who used to collaborate with Davidson on SNL, captioned his post, "A message from Pete."

"Yo it's Skete. Can you please take a second and calm down. It's 8am and it don't gotta be like this," read the screenshots shared by Sirus.
"Kim is literally the best mother I've ever met. What she does for those kids is amazing and you are so f**king lucky that she's your kids mom. I've decided I'm not gonna let you treat us this way anymore and I'm done being quiet. Grow the f**k up," the text from Davidson to West supposedly said.

As the rapper asked, "Where are you right now?" in response to the text, Davidson is shown replying with a selfie of his shirtless self, himself, saying, "In bed with your wife."

'Driving Him Over the Edge'

Kanye West also alleged in his latest post that Kim Kardashian finds it “funny” to “try to drive [him] over the edge” by flaunting the fact that she and Davidson had gone Instagram-official last week.

"...But I didn’t let them. Y’all can’t judge my state of well being based on the amount of time I leave an Instagram post up or me using my platform to ensure that I stay consistent in my children’s lives," insisted the rapper who recently changed his name to Ye.

Not to be outdone, Kim Kardashian also went on Tuesday, addressing West’s claims that she does not allow him to see their children.

"Please stop with this narrative, you were just here this morning picking up the kids for school," she wrote in a comment to a post by the musician that featured a photo of North’s backpack.

"This was on my daughter’s backpack when I was ‘allowed’ to see her last week," West had written under the post.

He had added that he was “wired” to protect his family “at all cost.”

West had previously chided Kardashian for allowing North to post on TikTok.

In one music video West had even memorialised the SNL star, kidnapping and burying a cartoon version of the sketch comedy actor.

“I made those videos because she ignored my text about bringing my children to church then had her boyfriend text me and brag about being in bed with ‘my wife,’” he wrote. “Then tell me ‘he could help me.’”

A judge declared Kim Kardashian legally single earlier in March, after she filed for divorce in February 2021 after seven years of marriage. Last October, speaking on Saturday Night Live, Kardashian lavished praise on her soon-to-be ex, saying:

“I married the best rapper of all time… the richest Black man in America, a talented, legit genius, who gave me four incredible kids.”

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trump Denies Spending Campaign Contribution Cash for New Personal Jet

By - Evan Craighead

In a recent fundraiser email former US President Donald Trump informed supporters he and his team were “building a BRAND NEW Trump Force One.” The ‘Save America PAC’ email, issued days after a privately-owned jet transporting Trump made an emergency landing, actively encouraged donors to contribute “ANY AMOUNT IMMEDIATELY.”
Trump, in a Monday phone call, asserted that he is not using his campaign cash to construct a new plane, despite weekend reports from The Hill and other US outlets claiming otherwise. “The story was incorrect,” Trump told The Hill, referring to their article on Trump’s recent email to his supporters. “I already have a plane, the same one I used on the 2016 campaign.”

The former US president detailed that ‘Trump Force One,’ his personal plane, is being serviced in Louisiana and is slated to return to the skies within 90 days. “It is owned by me and financed by me, with no debt,” Trump said of his personal aircraft. He emphasized that he was required to fly on Air Force One, which is a call sign given to any aircraft transporting the US president. At the moment, the primary Air Force One jets are both Boeing 747-200s. ‘Trump Force One’ is a Boeing 757.

“I need to trust that you won’t share it with anyone: my team is building a BRAND NEW Trump Force One,” reads an email issued to subscribers of his ‘Save America PAC.’ "The construction of this plane has been under wraps — not even the fake news media knows about it — and I can’t wait to unveil it for everyone to see. The email notably included a poll asking supporters if they were familiar with Trump using his personal aircraft to travel across the nation before he became “the greatest President of all time.” The survey linked respondents to a donation page requesting donations of “ANY AMOUNT IMMEDIATELY” for those who want their response delivered to the former US president.

Trump was unable to provide an explanation about why an email soliciting donations also included information about repairs to his personal jet. “I don’t know. I never saw the email [before it went out],” Trump told The Hill.

The email in question was issued just days after a Dassault Falcon 900 transporting Trump, Secret Service agents, advisers, and other staffers made an emergency landing in New Orleans, Louisiana, shortly after taking off from a Four Seasons Hotel. The Florida-bound aircraft was attempting to take Trump to his Mar-a-Lago resort when it reportedly suffered engine failure over the Gulf of Mexico.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Detainee at CIA Black Site Sustained Brain Damage After Serving as Live Prop for Interrogators
By - Evan Craighead

Ammar al-Baluchi, also known as Ali Abdul Aziz Ali, is a 44-year-old Pakistani citizen who was born in Kuwait and presently remains in US custody at Guantanamo Bay detention camp in Cuba. Al-Baluchi is one of five detainees facing capital charges related to allegations that they conspired in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Newly declassified documents have revealed that Guantanamo detainee Ammar al-Baluchi sustained brain damage after serving as a live prop for trainee interrogators at a secret CIA black site in Afghanistan.
The 2008 report, declassified amid his lawyers’ attempt to get an independent medical examination, detailed that the now-44-year-old detainee was subjected to a CIA-approved “enhanced interrogation technique” called walling.
During the practice, a detainee’s heels are placed against a specially designed plywood board “which had flexibility to it.” A rolled up towel is then placed around the detainee’s neck. “The interrogators would then grab the ends of the towel in front of and below the detainee’s face and shove [Baluchi] backwards into the wall, never letting go of the towel,” according to the report.
One interrogator detailed that the goal was to “bounce” the detainee off the wall.
Al-Baluchi was “naked for the proceedings,” the report noted.
The CIA’s so-called “enhanced interrogation techniques,” many of which are now deemed as torture, were approved by the Pentagon and developed by so-called ‘psychologists’ James Mitchell and John Jessen, who were compensated some $81 million for their efforts to invent and implement the tactics into common practice.
These abuses included rectal feeding, hanging by handcuffs, and waterboarding.
“In the case of ‘walling’ in particular the [Office of the Inspector General] had difficulty determining whether the session was designed to elicit information from Ammar or to ensure that all interrogator trainees received their certification,” the report detailed.
It also noted that the CIA’s logic in justifying the detention was “fuzzy and circular,” and treatment did not yield useful intelligence.
As al-Baluchi and others await drawn-out pre-trial hearings, questions have arisen regarding the legal admissibility of testimony obtained by the US following acts of torture.
The report acknowledges that the CIA is aware that al-Baluchi’s 2003 rendition was conducted “extra-legally,” as he was in Pakistani jurisdiction and was not a terrorist threat at the time.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

'People's Convoy' Truckers Finally Arrive in Washington DC, Prompt Major Traffic Delays
By - Mary Manley

Folks in the DC area have for weeks been dreading a notorious “trucker convoy” that will worsen the traffic in what is already a prominently disastrous area. A convoy of motorists, which includes some heavy commercial semi trucks, has made its way onto I-395 north, predictably causing traffic to come to a grinding halt.
Monday evening’s rush hour proved even more jammed than usual after a so-called ‘trucker convoy’ took to the highways surrounding Washington, DC to cause major traffic delays in protests of COVID-19 restrictions.
The drivers made their way onto I-395, I-695 and I-295 after circling Maryland’s beltway once on March 3.
“I believe we’re making a good statement today,” asserted one driver, who suggested that they were “right in the swamp now and creating a horrible mess down here.”
Added road closures have not helped to alleviate the situation.
DC's Metropolitan Police (MPD) shut down streets and highway exits to limit the group's access to the downtown DC's area. Alert DC tweeted road closures, which were lifted some hours later, at around 3:30 p.m. local time. The traffic app suggested delaying travel or using the metrorail, as alternatives to the heavy onslaught of traffic. Some of the participants in the event claimed that they would not leave the highway, adding that police were responsible for traffic delays.

On February 23, a group of drivers made their way from California to Washington, DC, in an attempt to protest COVID-19 restrictions, despite the fact that most governments have already lifted those restrictions. Some state governors have denied US President Joe Biden's vaccine mandate for federal employees by barring a requirement of proof of a COVID-19 vaccine. The so-called convoy applied to hold a two-week protest at the National Mall, starting Monday but were partially denied. The National Park Service said that the area had already been booked by other events, and reportedly said they would work with the group to find them another location. The group then withdrew their application on Sunday night.

The optimistically-named 'People's Convoy' which includes private and commercial vehicles decked out in pro-Trump or anti-Biden signage, American flags and writing on their car windows, caused tension on the highway. Reporter Zachary Petrizzo said he witnessed the protesters boxing in commuters on the Beltway early Monday, as well as observing one truck driver who allegedly punched a commuter's car window.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Cops Evacuate New York City Church as Manhunt for MoMA Stabbing Suspect Rages On
By - Mary Manley

Police evacuated a church in Manhattan on Monday while searching for 60-year-old Gary Cabana, who allegedly stabbed two 24-year-old employees at the Museum of Modern Art on Saturday afternoon. Over the past two days, the accused attacker has been active on social media, manically posting about why he attacked two innocent people.

A 911 call prompted police to evacuate the St. Francis of Assisi Church on West 31st Street around noon. Investigators searched for Cabana but were unsuccessful. No arrests have yet been made.

"Somebody calls 911 and says, 'Hey, the guy you’re looking for the museum thing, I just saw him go into the church,'" a police source told The New York Post. "And then somebody else says, ‘He went into this building and he didn’t come out.’"

"They find the guy and it turns out not to be the right guy. It’s just a guy who looks like the MoMA guy. We’re looking for him. We’ll get him," the source added.

Cabana is accused of stabbing two 24 year-old employees at MoMA on Saturday. The incident unfolded after he had his museum membership revoked on Friday following two reported outbursts. Barred from the grounds, his attempt to enter the museum on Saturday to watch a
film proved problematic. Cabana told The Post that he received a letter from the museum's
security director stating he was "aggressive [and] disruptive".
Unfortunately, suspicion from the museum's staff proved to ring true. Surveillance video shows
the man barging through the entrance, jumping over the front counter, and cornering three
cowering employees. The security guard threw random objects at the enraged man and the
victims were able to escape.
Both the victims were rushed to Bellevue hospital and treated for their non-fatal stab wounds.
They have since then been released.
Cabana fled the scene and has been on the lam, but contacted a reporter from The Post to
share his insight as to why he stabbed the two individuals who are less than half his age.
In a deranged message on Facebook, Cabana wrote, "What is worse? Hackers or Journos.
Right now, I LOVE MY HACKERS for taking my mind off this frame job by MoMA." Cabana
believes he is being falsely accused and said he was neither warned nor escorted on the two
occasions he allegedly caused disruptions that led to his membership being revoked.
"Bipolar disorder is a tough road to hoe. Dr. Jekyll to Mr. Hyde," wrote the suspect, who says a
woman named "Barbara" is responsible for the "frame job". In a message on Instagram to The
Post, Cabana blames the young women he stabbed for conspiring with "Barbara".
He then told The Post he was heading to Mar-a-Lago, a resort in Palm Beach belonging to
former President Trump.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise
Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file
with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Kim Kardashian on Ex-Husband Kanye: He Told Me My Career is Over
By - Mary Manley

Kim Kardashian and Kanye West have finally ended their brutal divorce, but the downward
spiral may have been even nastier than previously thought.
In a new trailer for Hulu's "The Kardashians" (not to be confused with E's "Keeping Up With the
Kardashians" which ended in June 2021) Kim can be heard narrating, "It is really hard with
Kanye."
The scene cuts and she tells her sister Kourtney: "He told me my career is over."
Kim has been gracious in regard to discussing her divorce, opting to keep things private despite
her ex-husband's incessant activities online.
"I don't think I would ever criticize the father of my children on my TV show," she told Variety.
"That's just not really what I'm about, and I just don't think that would ever make me feel good."
Kim and Ye's divorce was finalized on March 2, 2022. But that hasn't elevated Kanye's activities
over social media. The star went on a full Instagram tirade, which began with him accusing Billie
Ellish of taking a jab at rapper Travis Scott, asking her to apologize or else he would boycott his
performance at Coachella. That same weekend he called comedian Pete Davidson, Kim's new
beau, a 'd***head'.
He then claimed a debunked story of how Davidson, 28, sent intimate photos of him with singer
Ariana Grande to her (now deceased) ex-boyfriend Mac Miller before he died. Then he posted a
photo of Davidson with Machine Gun Kelly, both with their pants pulled down (but with underwear on) and a caption that reads, “NO YOU WILL NEVER MEET MY CHILDREN.” Then on Valentine’s Day, Ye, 44, sent Kim a truck filled with roses that read, “MY VISION IS KRYSTAL KLEAR”. While repeatedly referring to her as his, “wife” on social media. And finally, on March 6, Ye released his music video “Eazy” which portrays a Claymation version of Pete Davidson being kidnapped and buried alive. Ye defended his video over backlash, claiming “freedom of speech”.

Davidson hasn’t been scared off just yet. A source told Entertainment Tonight that Davidson was “almost flattered by it all because it is so ridiculous to him.”

Davidson finally broke his silence once Ye started commenting on his ex-wife’s parenting skills, including allowing their daughter North, 8, on TikTok against his wishes. Davidson said Kim was “literally the best mother I’ve ever met” and then criticized Ye for his own parenting.

“What she does for those kids is amazing and you’re f*****lucky that she’s your kids’ mom,” he wrote. Davidson went on to say that he has stopped SNL, where he works, from making joke at Ye’s expense for “months”.

“You have no idea how nice I’ve been to you despite your actions towards me,” wrote Davidson in a text to Ye. “I’ve had your back even though you treat me like s*** because I want everything to be smooth. But if you continue to press me like you have for the past 6 months, I’m gonna stop being nice.”

Kim has opted to keep things private while her ex chooses to air out their, and mostly his, dirty laundry.

“Being in the public eye and having disagreements publicly is never easy. But I do believe in handling it all privately. I believe in championing publicly and criticizing privately,” the reality star and business mogul said.

“The Kardashians” premieres April 14 on Hulu.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Canada Imposes Sanctions on 15 Senior Russian Officials – Global Affairs

TORONTO, March 14 (Sputnik) – Canada is introducing sanctions against 15 Russian government officials in response to Moscow’s ongoing military operation in Ukraine, the country’s foreign ministry announced on Tuesday.

“These new measures impose restrictions on 15 Russian officials who enabled and supported President [Vladimir] Putin’s choice to invade a peaceful and sovereign country,” Global Affairs Canada said in a statement.

The latest round of sanctions targets deputy commander in chief of the navy Vladimir Kasatonov, Minister of Economic Development Maxim Reshetnikov, Federal Guard Service Director Dmitry Kochnev, and Ministry of Defense spokesman Igor Konashenkov among others.
US Wants All Countries Including China to Outline Position on Ukraine Crisis - NATO Envoy

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - The United States wants all nations, including China, to clearly outline their stance on the Ukraine crisis, as this is not a time for countries to "pretend like they can stay neutral," envoy to NATO Julianne Smith said on Tuesday.

"Maybe this would be a good time to say something about Jake Sullivan's engagement that he had yesterday with the Chinese officials in Rome," Smith said. "I've heard it were very serious, very intense discussions. They obviously were focused on Russia's war in Ukraine. And the National Security Adviser stressed the importance of maintaining an open line [of communication] with the US and China on this particular conflict. But I think the goal of that engagement was to really send a pretty clear message that the United States is keen to see every country around the world and that includes the PRC, to make clear in this moment, where they stand with respect to this conflict in Ukraine, and that they need to stand on the side of the rules-based order."

"This is not a time for countries to sit on the sidelines. This is not a time for countries to pretend like they can stay neutral on this particular conflict," she added.

US Continues to Assess What Other Forms of Air Defense It May Provide to Kiev - NATO Envoy

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - The United States will continue to assess what other forms of air defense it might be able to provide to Ukraine amid Russia's military operation, envoy to NATO Julianne Smith said Tuesday.

"You've heard the President and Secretary of Defense talk about the fact that we are continually assessing what additional needs our friends have. We will continue looking at what other aspects of or other forms of air defense we might be able to provide to Ukraine," Smith said. "And of course, you've no doubt seen the news that Congress just recently approved an additional $13.6 billion of support for Ukraine. So this is an evolving story."

No-Fly Zone in Ukraine Would Take Things in Wrong Direction - US Envoy to NATO
WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - NATO does not want the conflict in Ukraine to spread beyond its current context, and a no-fly zone would take things in the wrong direction, US envoy to the alliance Julianne Smith said on Tuesday.

"The message coming from the NATO alliance and from the folks back in Washington, including the President, is that a no-fly zone is not on the table right now, it's not something that the alliance is looking at," Smith told a briefing. "We don't want to expand this conflict, we do not want to see it spread above and beyond the current context. And so the feeling is that if we were to consider something like a no-fly zone, that would take us in the wrong direction."

Ukraine's Defense Minister to Join NATO Ministerial on Wednesday - US Envoy

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov is expected to take part in the NATO ministerial slated for March 16, US envoy to the alliance Julianne Smith said on Tuesday.

"Finland and Sweden will join us at the table and we'll also be joined by the Ukrainian minister of defense, that's my understanding," Smith told a briefing.

US Studying Which Nations Have Soviet-Made S-300 to Transfer Systems to Ukraine - Reports

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - The US State Department is working to identify which countries have Soviet-made S-300 air defense systems and studying how they could be transferred to Ukraine, CNN reported on Tuesday, citing sources in the know.

The Congress and Volodymyr Zelenskyy are reportedly pressuring the White House to facilitate the transfer of heavier Soviet-era weaponry to Kiev, including S-300 and MiG fighter jets.

This is the message Zelenskyy may deliver during his speech in Congress on Wednesday, the report said, adding that the White House is very concerned about Russia's reaction to the transfer of weapons.

RPT - US Surgeons to Set Up New Pediatric ‘Heart Project’ in Angola, Operate on Children in DRC
WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - An international group of pediatric specialists from the US-based Cardiac Alliance plans to operate on young patients in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Angola later this month, Cardiac Alliance leader Bill Novick told Sputnik. "The operational part of the trip will be starting on March 21 and will last until April 3. I would predict that on this very first trip we will probably do between 15 and 17 surgeries," Novick said.

Novick explained that the hospital where Cardiac Alliance doctors will operate has never done heart surgeries and it will take several days to get everybody into a "systematic flow."

"We already scheduled the second trip to the DRC for October. They want us to make four trips next year, and four trips per year at least for three years," he said.

Novick noted that after the trip to the DRC, he will then visit Angola to set up a project there. "Angola’s Ministry of Health and a local hospital have contacted me, and they want us to come over and set up a program there. It is the newest and biggest public hospital in Angola," he said. The Novick Cardiac Alliance is comprised of medical specialists from different countries around the world who help develop pediatric cardiac care in low- and middle-income countries.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

RPT: FEATURE - US Doctor on Cooperation With Russia, Ukraine: ‘Politics Does Not Matter’

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - Prominent American doctor Bill Novick, whose international team from the Cardiac Alliance operates on pediatric heart patients all around the world, told Sputnik he is ready to continue work both in Russia and Ukraine despite any possible circumstances between the two countries.

"We always try to adhere to the rule that politics, gender, race, religion do not matter. We are going to teach doctors and help children," Novick said. "My answer is, for me, personally, I am not going to change my attitude. We are here to help children, we are here to teach doctors, and politics should not be a problem."

The next trip of the Cardiac Alliance was scheduled for April, but their colleagues from the Siberian city of Kemerovo canceled it, he said. "They sent me an email several days ago, and they said 'you know, we have significant financial problems. We are afraid we have to cancel this trip but we hope to see you by the end of 2022,'" Novick shared with sadness in his voice.

The doctor added that he did not ask members of his team whether they are ready to go to Russia because the trip is no longer on the schedule. He expressed the hope that the trip in December would happen even if political tensions remain and both the US and Russia refuse airspace to each other.

"We can fly through Turkey, we can fly through the UAE, there are ways around that," he said. The alliance members are going to visit Ukraine in May, but Novick said they have to wait and see what happens.

"It is extremely difficult for me to watch what is happening in Ukraine but that does not change my mind about helping Russian children. I am hoping this war will cease soon without any craziness happening, and Ukrainians will be happy, Russians will be happy," he said.
Novick recalled that he was working under US bombins in Yugoslavia in the 1990s. "And remember, I went back to Belgrade after that, we spent another two years there," he smiled. Cardiac Alliance specialists have been visiting Ukraine and Russia for many years and maintain pediatric cardiac projects in different cities in both countries. Novick has expressed readiness to work in Donbas if requested. Russia launched an operation in Ukraine on February 24 after the breakaway Donbas republics appealed for help in defending themselves against the Ukrainian military. The Russian Defense Ministry said the special operation is targeting Ukrainian military infrastructure only. Several days into the operation, the Russian armed forces said the Ukrainian military were using typical terrorist methods, such as shielding behind civilians and civilian quarters.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Breonna Taylor's Mother Meets With US Justice Dept, Calls for Charges Against Officers

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - Two years after Breonna Taylor was shot and killed in her apartment by Louisville police officers on a drug raid and using a no-knock warrant, her mother Tamika Palmer met with officials from the Justice Department asking them to press federal charges against the officers. "I'm here at the Department of Justice asking them to do the right thing," Palmer said on Monday at a presser as quoted by CNN. "This is bigger than Breonna. If no one addresses this issue, they'll keep kicking in our doors and murdering us." Family attorney Benjamin Crump said he and Palmer met with Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke and other attorneys in the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division for 45 minutes, the report said. A Justice Department spokesperson said "the matter is under investigation," according to the report. "For the nation, it's been two years and one day. For me, I'm trapped in March the 13th, 2020. I don't know how people think I should just move on; that I should just walk away from this thing," Palmer said at the presser. "Half my life has been spent being Breonna's mother. It's the only thing I've learned to do well in my life. It's the thing that I'll die for - fighting to make sure she gets justice." The most important thing to remember, Palmer added, is that her daughter did not deserve this, saying Breonna was in her own home minding her business when police officers kicked in her door and murdered her. Taylor, then 26 and an emergency medical technician, was killed on March 13, 2020 by plainclothes officers Jonathan Mattingly, Myles Cosgrove and Brett Hankison. They were executing a "no knock" search warrant for Taylor's ex-boyfriend for allegedly dealing drugs but he wasn't at the home. Taylor's boyfriend, Kenneth Walker, fired one shot at what he thought were intruders. He hit Mattingly in the leg and the trio fired 32 bullets into the apartment, hitting and killing Taylor, who was in bed.
The press conference took place outside the offices of the National Council of Negro Women. After, Taylor's family, social justice advocates and members of Black Lives Matter walked to the Justice Department to hand-deliver 18,000 signatures from the public demanding that the officers be held accountable.


WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - The United States sanctioned Russian National Guard Director Viktor Zolotov, Military Technical Cooperation Director Dmitry Shugaev, and Rosoboronexport Director General Alexander Mikheev, along with eight deputy defense ministers, over the situation in Ukraine, the State Department said in a press release.

The Russian deputy defense ministers on the list include Aleksey Krivoruchko, Timur Ivanov, Yunus-bek Evkurov, Dmitry Bulgakov, Yuriy Sadovenko, Nikolay Pankov, Ruslan Tsalikov, and Gennady Zhidko.

RPT - Every Republican Senator Except Rand Paul Vows to Block Nuclear Deal With Iran - Letter

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - Every Republican member of the Senate except Rand Paul signed a letter publicly opposing a nuclear deal the Biden administration is seeking to strike with Iran, Senator Ted Cruz's office said in a statement.

"Cruz... joined 48 Republican senators today in a statement declaring they will block and reverse any new agreement with Iran that will weaken sanctions and impose fewer restrictions on Iran's nuclear program than the original Iran deal," a press release accompanying the letter said on Monday.

Paul in a statement to Newsweek said condemning the deal was "akin to condemning diplomacy."

The 49 lawmakers in the letter decried media reports that the Biden Administration may soon conclude a deal that includes substantial sanctions relief for Iran in exchange for "merely short-term limitations on Iran's nuclear program."

"The administration appears to have agreed to lift sanctions that were not even placed on Iran for its nuclear activities in the first place, but instead because of its ongoing support for terrorism and its gross abuses of human rights," the letter added.

The senators alleged that the prospective new deal will likely deepen Iran's financial and security relationship with Moscow and Beijing, including through arms sales.
Every Republican Senator Except Rand Paul Vows to Block Nuclear Deal With Iran - Letter

Washington, March 14 (Sputnik) - Every Republican member of the Senate except Rand Paul signed a letter publicly opposing a nuclear deal the Biden administration is seeking to strike with Iran, Senator Ted Cruz's office said in a statement.
"Cruz... joined 48 Republican senators today in a statement declaring they will block and reverse any new agreement with Iran that will weaken sanctions and impose fewer restrictions on Iran's nuclear program than the original Iran deal," a press release accompanying the letter said on Monday.
Paul in a statement to Newsweek said condemning the deal was "akin to condemning diplomacy."
The 49 lawmakers in the letter decried media reports that the Biden Administration may soon conclude a deal that includes substantial sanctions relief for Iran in exchange for "merely short-term limitations on Iran's nuclear program."
"The administration appears to have agreed to lift sanctions that were not even placed on Iran for its nuclear activities in the first place, but instead because of its ongoing support for terrorism and its gross abuses of human rights," the letter added.
The senators alleged that the prospective new deal will likely deepen Iran's financial and security relationship with Moscow and Beijing, including through arms sales.

New York, DC Teaming With Feds to Offer $70,000 for Info on Homeless Shooter Suspect

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - Law enforcement from New York City and Washington, DC are teaming with federal authorities to offer a total of $70,000 in rewards for information that could lead to the arrest of a suspect wanted in connection with a string of attacks on homeless men in the two cities, officials including the mayors of both cities said at a joint press conference.
"That's $70,000 reward: $25,000 in New York City, $25,000 in Washington, DC, and $20,000 from the ATF," DC Mayor Muriel Bowser said on Monday during the press conference alongside New York City Mayor Eric Adams and others.
Law enforcement requested help from the public to identify and find the suspect, several pictures of whom they provided for reference. The man is wanted for allegedly shooting five homeless men who were sleeping in the cities' streets, killing one in each.
City officials also said that they reached out to the homeless populations to warn them, help provide them with shelter, and ask for any information they may be able to provide.
Trucker Convoy Returns to US Capital Amid Traffic Jams - Reports

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - A group of truckers - dubbed the People’s Convoy - who oppose COVID-19 vaccine mandates and other related restrictions, returned to Washington in large numbers and added to the US capital’s notorious traffic jams, NBC reported.

The truckers convoy is back, bringing traffic to a grinding halt in parts of Washington as police block ramps to keep them from entering the city, the report said on Monday.

Police blocked multiple streets and intersections but was unable to provide a specific list as most closures occurred in real-time, the report also said.

Brian Brase, one of the trucker group’s leaders, said the decision to enter Washington was made to claim a “bigger presence” to spread the message against the COVID-19 mandates, the report added.

The group had submitted an application to stage a two-week long protest at the National Mall in downtown Washington, however, the National Park Service denied the request, according to the report.

US Tells Allies China Signaled Willingness to Provide Military Aid to Russia - Reports

(Updates with more details, background in paras 3-6)

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - The United States told its allies that China has indicated that it is ready to provide military aid to Russia, the Financial Times reported.

The report said on Monday, citing officials familiar with US diplomatic cables, that they did not mention whether China had already started providing assistance or plans to do so in the future.

Russia had requested from China surface-to-air missiles, drones, armored vehicles, logistics vehicles and intelligence-related equipment, the report said.

The Chinese embassy in the United States said it had no knowledge of a request by Russia while Russia denied making any request to China, the report added.

Earlier on Monday, the US government said it was deeply concerns about China’s alignment with Russia and noted that National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan communicated to China’s Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission Yang Jiechi the potential consequences of certain actions.

Sullivan and Yang met in Rome on Monday for an intense seven-hour meeting that covered a range of issues, including Russia and Ukraine, the official said.
US Drug Giant McKesson to Pay $1Mln Over Alleged Recordkeeping Violations - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - McKesson Corporation agreed to pay a $1 million civil penalty for hundreds of alleged recordkeeping violations including when inventorying controlled substances, the Justice Department said in a press release.

"The resolution stems from allegations that McKesson's packaging subsidiary, RxPak, located in Memphis, Tennessee, engaged in a continuing pattern of recordkeeping deficiencies. The alleged recordkeeping deficiencies include failing to take an initial inventory of controlled substances received; failing to maintain complete and accurate records of controlled substances received, manufactured, sold, delivered or disposed of; and failing to maintain complete and accurate DEA-222 forms," the release said on Monday.

Investigators from the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), the release added, allegedly identified more than 700 recordkeeping violations during their probe.

The Justice Department warned that potentially addictive medications could be diverted from the legitimate drug supply if companies like McKesson fail to keep exact records of controlled substances.

This is particularly important, the released added, amid the unprecedented opioid epidemic that has swept the United States.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

ISS Crews Prepare for Flow of Visitors, Rotations Over Next Month - NASA Official

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - Crews on the International Space Station (ISS) will cope with almost unprecedented human congestion as 18 astronauts and cosmonauts arrive, work and depart from it over the next month, NASA ISS Operations Integration Manager Dina Contella said.

"[The] Soyuz launch on schedule on Friday [is] bringing three Russian crew members to the ISS and then returning [on March 30] with three ISS crew mates to land in Kazakhstan," Contella told a press conference on Monday. "[In] an incredibly busy spring, 18 people will be living on ISS in the space of a few weeks."

As part of the flow, four private astronauts are then going up to the ISS on an Axiom private scientific mission in early April for eight days and the replacement permanent crew for the station will overlap for some days with the returning one, Contella said.

A maximum of ten people would be on board the ISS at any one time and there was plenty of room for sleeping quarters and general accommodation for them, Contella added.

The Axiom flight will be the company's first private sector manned mission to the ISS and it will carry 26 new scientific experiments, NASA Human Exploration and Operations Mission Directorate Associate Administrator Kathy Leuders said earlier this month.
WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - US Vice President Kamala Harris discussed the situation in Ukraine with the Prime Minister of Bulgaria Kiril Petkov and the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic Petr Fiala, the White House said.

"Following her recent trip to Poland and Romania, these calls were opportunities for the Vice President to further hear perspectives from leaders in Central and Eastern Europe and to discuss next steps in our collective response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine," the statement said on Monday.

Harris reassured the prime ministers of the United States' commitment to the security of NATO allies, the statement said.

The officials also discussed the US and EU efforts to provide assistance to Ukraine and the region, including humanitarian aid to refugees, the statement added.

Harris visited Eastern Europe last week to participate in high-level talks about NATO posture adjustments and other steps being coordinated with allies in response to Russia’s operation in Ukraine.

NEW YORK, March 14 (Sputnik) - US stocks mostly fell for a third straight day as investors fretted over the first pandemic-era rate hike expected from the Federal Reserve this week, and the follow-up action planned by the central bank in thwarting inflation running at 40-year highs. Wall Street’s three major stock indexes - the Dow Jones Industrial Average index, the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq Composite - closed Monday’s trading down between flat and 2% lower. The Nasdaq, which groups high-priced tech stocks, led losses for the day.

"US stocks are trying to stabilize as investors await Fed tightening and as optimism over diplomatic efforts to end the war in Ukraine fades," said Ed Moya, analyst at online trading platform OANDA.

The Federal Reserve’s Federal Open Market Committee, or FOMC, is widely expected to raise rates by 25 basis points, or a quarter percentage point after at its monthly meeting on Wednesday. The FOMC had left rates virtually at zero since the Covid-19 outbreak of March 2020.

Many economists, however, think what the central bank will do will not be enough to counter inflation growing at its fastest pace since 1982.

On top of a maximum of seven potential rate hikes this year - as per the number of FOMC calendar meetings - there is a yet-to-be-specified reduction in the Fed’s balance sheet, which...
now stands at $8.9 trillion after the central bank loaded up on Treasuries and mortgage-backed securities to support the economy since the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020. That action will reduce the cash in the financial system - but it will also bring uncertain consequences for bond and stock markets. The danger is that if inflation does not begin to subside in response to these initial moves, policymakers will end up raising rates too high, sending the economy into a recession and financial markets into a slump. Those concerns were what led to Wall Street’s mostly lower finish for a third day in a row. The Dow Jones Industrial Average, made up mostly of industrial stocks, closed in the flat. The Dow has lost about 19% since the year began. The S&P 500, which groups the top 500 US stocks, settled down 0.7%. For the year, it was down about 12%. The Nasdaq Composite, made of highly-valued tech stocks such as Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Nasdaq and Google, finished down 2%. It has lost almost 20% so far for 2022.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY
WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) -

UKRAINE DEVELOPMNENTS
* Russia expects provocations with chemical substances in Ukraine and has information on 80 tonnes of ammonia brought to a town northwest of Kharkiv overnight, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said on Monday. 
* The Ukrainian forces control the city of Irpin where a US journalist was shot and killed at a checkpoint, Nebenzia said. 
* The Russian missile strikes on the Yaroviv military base will not affect US deliveries of security assistance to Ukraine, a senior Defense Department official said. 
* A total of 20 civilians were killed and 28 others were seriously injured in Donetsk as a result of the Ukrainian Tochka-U missile strike in the center of the city, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said.

SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA
* White House spokesperson Jen Psaki said on Monday there will consequences for Russia should Moscow decide to nationalize US assets in the country. 
* The Committee of Permanent Representatives in the European Union (COREPER) agreed on the fourth package of sanctions against Russia over the situation in Ukraine, the French mission said. 
* Limiting energy imports from Russia will not have the desired effect on Moscow, German Finance Minister Christian Lindner said. 
* Russian state-owned space agency Roscosmos will decide on a timeline for suspending cooperation on the International Space Station (ISS) after it receives answers from the United
States, Canada, and Europe about the possible lifting of sanctions from Russian companies, Roscosmos Director General Dmitry Rogozin said.

US-FR-CHINA RELATIONS
* The United States has deep concerns about China's alignment with Russia, and National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan communicated to China's Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission Yang Jiechi the potential consequences of certain actions, a senior Biden administration official said on Monday.
* Sullivan and Yang Jiechi during a meeting in Rome discussed North Korea and agreed to deep talks on the issue in the near future, the official said.
* Sullivan raised a range of bilateral issues and the Russia-Ukraine crisis during talks with Yang Jiechi, the White House said.
* The United States is watching very closely the extent to which China is providing support to Russia, and added that any such support will be of great concern to Washington, US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said.

IMF REPORT ON UKRAINE, RUSSIA
* Ukraine will suffer a deep recession this year due to the military conflict with a decline of at least 13.5 percentage points in GDP growth outlook, the International Monetary Fund said in a staff report out Monday.
* Elevated inflation will continue for longer than previously expected due to the Ukraine conflict, the IMF said.
* Ukraine's real GDP will drop by 10% this year due to "severe" impact of the conflict with Russia, the International Monetary Fund said.
* Russia will experience a deep recession as a result of the situation with respect to Ukraine, an International Monetary Fund senior official said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Blinken Calls on Armenia, Azerbaijan to Resolve Tensions With More Diplomacy - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken during a phone call with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan called on Armenia and Azerbaijan to show restraint and bolster diplomatic efforts to resolve long-term tensions between the two countries over territorial disputes, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Monday.
"Noting recent reports of escalation between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces, the Secretary called for the sides to show restraint and intensify diplomatic engagement to find comprehensive solutions to all outstanding issues," Price said in a readout of the leaders' call.
Relations between Baku and Yerevan remain tense since the long-standing Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan reignited in September 2020. The sides have made several attempts to conclude a truce, including signing a Moscow-brokered deal in November 2020 that provided for a ceasefire and the exchange of prisoners.
NASA, Roscosmos Continue Mutual Training of Space Crews – American ISS Program Chief

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) – NASA and Russian space agency Roscosmos are still going ahead with mutual training of future astronaut and cosmonaut crews to boost cooperation on the International Space Station (ISS), NASA ISS Program Manager Joel Montalbano said on Monday.

"We still plan to work the crew swap and our team to go over to Star City [at space training facility in Moscow region] and train with the Soyuz ... cosmonauts to come to Hawthorne [in Texas for their US acclimatization training]," Montalbano said. "Today we’re continuing to work those agreements."

Both space agencies need to continue their joint cooperation to keep the ISS, currently scheduled to operate until 2030, effective, Montalbano explained.

"We both need each other to operate the ISS. There is no capability (for the United States) to operate the ISS by itself. ... When you’re in space, there are no borders: The teams continue to work together, the teams are professional: They continue to operate well. There are really no tensions with the team. They have been trained to do a job and they are doing that job," he said.

Roscosmos will decide on a timeline for suspending cooperation on the ISS after it receives answers from the United States, Canada, and Europe about the possible lifting of sanctions from Russian companies, Roscosmos Director General Dmitry Rogozin said earlier on Monday.

Oil Prices Fall Over 5% as Ukraine, Russia Press for Diplomatic Resolution

NEW YORK, March 14 (Sputnik) - Oil prices fell 6% on Monday, with US crude briefly breaking the $100 per barrel support, as Ukraine pressed for diplomacy amid the “special military operation” carried out by Russia on its soil.

Reports of new COVID-19 lockdowns in China’s Shenzhen and Jilin provinces over surging Omicron cases also triggered risk aversion among investors, many of whom had expected the pandemic to be over for all intent and purpose.

Brent, the global benchmark for oil, settled down $5.77, or 5.1%, at $106.90 a barrel. Earlier, Brent fell to $103.52, also its lowest since March 1. Brent has lost 24% since hitting 2008 highs of $139.12 on March 7. For the year though, it remains up 35%.

US crude West Texas Intermediate (WTI) benchmark settled down $6.32, or 5.8%, at $103.01 a barrel. It earlier fell to $99.83, its lowest since March 1. WTI had fallen a total of 21% since hitting 14-year highs of $130.50 on March 7. For the year, the US crude benchmark remains up 35%.
Ukraine had continued talks on a ceasefire with Russia as the special operation entered its 18th day.
The United States has announced a ban on Russian oil imports while Britain plans to phase these out by the end of 2022. Despite this, Russia’s output of oil and gas condensate rose to 11.12 million barrels per day so far in March, according to media reports.
Russia remains the world’s top exporter of crude and oil products combined, shipping about 7 million bpd or 7% of global supplies.
"Oil prices did not stand a chance as Russian crude exports still seem protected and on fears the short-term crude demand outlook will take a hit as China sticks to the 'zero-COVID policy,'" Ed Moya, analyst at online trading platform ONDA, said.
Adding to the weight on oil were headlines suggesting that the on-off possibility for an Iran nuclear deal was “on” again on Monday, with a US official anonymously commenting that negotiators were “close to the finish line”. A deal would end nearly four years of US sanctions on Iran oil and return hundreds of thousands of barrels daily to a market starved of supply.

Pentagon Says Has No Evidence Russian Troops Deliberately Targeting Journalists in Ukraine

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) – The United States has no evidence to suggest Russian troops are deliberately targeting journalists during its military operation in Ukraine, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said Monday.
"I don't have evidence of that specifically," Kirby told a press briefing when asked whether Russian military in Ukraine are deliberately targeting journalists.
On Sunday, American journalist Brent Renaud, 50, was shot and killed at a Ukrainian security checkpoint in the city of Irpin, where he had been working on a video project for American magazine Time. US photographer Juan Arredondo was traveling with Renaud and was injured in the same attack. The city is controlled by Ukrainian forces.
On Monday, Fox News said its reporter was injured in Ukraine while covering the conflict outside Kiev.
On February 24, Russia began a special operation to demilitarize and "denazify" Ukraine, responding to calls for help from the Donetsk and Luhansk people’s republics in countering the aggression of Ukrainian troops. The Russian Defense Ministry said the special operation is targeting Ukrainian military infrastructure only. Several days into the operation, the Russian armed forces accused the Ukrainian military of using typical terrorist methods, such as hiding behind civilians and civilian quarters.

White House Says Supports Leaders of Congress Inviting Zelenskyy to Address All Lawmakers
WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - The White House supports the invitation congressional leaders sent to Volodymyr Zelenskyy to deliver a virtual address to all US lawmakers, Press Secretary Jen Psaki said on Monday.
"We certainly support leaders in Congress inviting him to address a joint session," Psaki said during a press briefing. "We'll all look forward to watching his speech on Wednesday."

US Shale Oil Patch Permian to Hit Record High Output in April - Energy Agency
WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - US shale patch Permian, which straddles the states of Texas and New Mexico and is the biggest crude oil resource in the country, is expected to hit a record high output in April, according to a report released Monday by the government's Energy Information Administration (EIA).
Output in the Permian is expected to grow by 70,000 barrels per day from March to reach a record 5.208 million in April, the EIA said in its Drilling Productivity Report.
Total production from all major US shale basins is expected to rise by 117,000 barrels daily to 8.708 million next month, the most since March 2020, when output began cratering with the demand destruction for oil triggered by the coronavirus pandemic.
In the Bakken, the second biggest shale basin straddling the North Dakota and Montana states, output is expected to rise by 16,000 barrels daily to reach 1.188 million in April, the most since December 2020.
Total natural gas output from shale gas basins is likely to rise by 0.6 billion cubic feet per day in March to reach a record 92.3 billion cubic feet daily in April, according to the EIA outlook.

White House Says There Will Be 'Consequences' if Russia Nationalizes US Companies
WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - White House spokesperson Jen Psaki said on Monday there will consequences for Russia should Moscow decide to nationalize US assets in the country.
"We've also conveyed, as we did publicly I think on Friday, that there would be, we would certainly look to consequences should that happen," Psaki said.

No Final Decision on Possible Biden Trip to Europe - White House
WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - There is no final decision on a possible trip by US President Joe Biden to Europe, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said on Monday. "We, of course, are closely engaged with our NATO partners and European allies but there has not been any final decision about the trip," Psaki told a briefing. Earlier in the day, NBC reported, citing sources, that the White House is weighing the possibility of a Biden trip to Europe in the coming weeks with a focus on the Ukraine crisis.

US Has Concerns About China-Russia Alignment, Sullivan Raised Issue With Yang - Official

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - The United States has deep concerns about China's alignment with Russia, and National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan communicated to China's Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission Yang Jiechi the potential consequences of certain actions, a senior US administration official said on Monday. "We do have deep concerns about China's alignment with Russia at this time and the National Security Adviser was direct about those concerns and the potential implications and consequences of certain actions," the official said during a conference call. The meeting between Sullivan and Yang was intense and candid given the gravity of the moment, the official said, adding that Russia and Ukraine were a topic in the discussion. The two met in Rome on Monday.

US Defense Secretary Austin to Visit Bulgaria This Week – Pentagon

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) – US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin is going to visit Bulgaria during his trip to Europe this week to meet with military and civilian leadership, Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby said on Monday. "Secretary [Austin] will be leaving on travel tomorrow morning. First stop is Brussels for the NATO defense ministerial. He looks forward to having another discussion to talk with our NATO allies about all the things we're doing as an alliance, to bolster and support our deterrence capabilities on the eastern flank. From there, he will go to Slovakia," Kirby said during a press briefing. "Today, the Secretary has added a third stop in Bulgaria. So, he will extend the trip by a day. He will have a chance to meet with senior civilian and military leaders in Bulgaria, also a key stop in terms of the eastern flank of the alliance."
NASA ISS Program Manager Says Nothing Has Changed in Terms of Cooperation With Russia

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - US astronauts and Russian cosmonauts continue to cooperate on the International Space Station (ISS) and nothing has changed in their relationship, NASA ISS Program Manager Joel Montalbano told a press conference on Monday.

Earlier, Russia space agency Roscosmos denied allegations it would leave US astronauts at the ISS.

"Nothing has changed in terms of US-Russia ISS cooperation," Montalbano said. "There is no indication from our Russian partners that they want to do anything different so we are planning to continue as we are today. ...We both need each other to operate the ISS."

Also, plans remain on schedule for veteran NASA astronaut Mark Vande Hei to return to Earth with two Russian colleagues from the ISS at the end of this month, Montalbano added.

Vande Hei will travel back home in the Soyuz MS-19 spacecraft together with Russia's Anton Shkaplerov and Pyotr Dubrov on March 30, Roscosmos said in a statement earlier on Monday, according to TASS.

Over the weekend, Roscosmos chief Dmitry Rogozin said the agency sent appeals to its International Space Station (ISS) partners requesting the lifting of illegal sanctions imposed on Russian enterprises amid the country's special military operation in Ukraine.

Sullivan, China's Top Diplomat Discuss N. Korea, Agree to Deepen Talks in Near Future

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and China's Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission Yang Jiechi during a meeting in Rome discussed North Korea and agreed to deep talks on the issue in the near future, a senior US administration official said on Monday.

"The two sides discussed DPRK because that is also an escalating situation that demands our attention," the official said during a conference call. "We agreed that officials with responsibilities on this issue of the two sides will deepen their conversation in the near future."

Biden Says Gasoline Price Will Continue to Increase Because of Embargoes on Russia
WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - Prices for gasoline and heating oil in the United States will continue to rise as a result of the embargoes on Russian oil and other items imposed in response to its special military operation in Ukraine, President Joe Biden said on Monday. "Gasoline prices, home heating oil prices are going to continue to go up because of these embargoes on Russian oil and other things," Biden said while addressing the National League of Cities Congressional City Conference.

Last week, US President Joe Biden announced a ban on Russian oil, natural gas and coal imports, and the UK followed suit declaring a halt of imports of Russian oil and petroleum products starting early 2023.

The US gasoline market responded to Biden's decision with a rapid rise in fuel prices, which are increasing daily despite the fall in oil prices. Current average gas price in the United States is $4.325 per gallon, up from $3.48 only a month ago.

Russia provides 10 percent of the world's crude oil needs and 40 percent of Europe's gas requirements. However, the US buys a limited amount of crude and petroleum products from Russia compared to Europe.

The United States and its allies have imposed comprehensive sanctions against Russia in response to its special military operation in Ukraine. The sanctions have slowed but not entirely eliminated the ability of Russian exporters of oil and gas to transact deals that require world financial networks and especially US dollars.

Sanctions on Russia to Have Bigger Impact on Global GDP Than Conflict Itself - World Bank

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - Sanctions imposed by the West against Russia will have a bigger impact on global gross domestic product than the conflict itself, World Bank President David Malpass said on Monday. "I think the even bigger impact for global GDP is the Russia sanctions themselves," Malpass said during a virtual conversation with The Washington Post.

He also said that if Moscow will find a way to end the conflict in Ukraine, the international community will be able to find what to for Russia.

On February 24, Russia launched a special operation in Ukraine after the Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics requested help to defend themselves from intensifying attacks by Ukrainian troops. The Russian Defense Ministry has said the operation seeks to solely destroy Ukraine's military infrastructure and the civilian population is not in danger. In response, the United States and its allies imposed comprehensive sanctions against Russia.

Fox News Says One of its Journalists Injured in Ukraine
WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - Fox News on Monday said one of the network's journalists has been injured while covering the conflict outside Kiev but no details are available yet about his condition.

"A Fox News journalist has been injured while news gathering outside of Kiev," network co-host John Roberts said. "Very few details but teams on the ground are working as hard as they can to try to gather more information."

The name of the injured journalist is Benjamin Hall and he has a wife and three young children, his colleague Fox News reporter Garrett Tenney said in a Twitter message.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Surgeons to Set Up New Pediatric 'Heart Project' in Angola, Operate on Children in DRC

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - An international group of pediatric specialists from the US-based Cardiac Alliance plans to operate on young patients in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Angola later this month, Cardiac Alliance leader Bill Novick told Sputnik.

"The operational part of the trip will be starting on March 21 and will last until April 3. I would predict that on this very first trip we will probably do between 15 and 17 surgeries," Novick said. Novick explained that the hospital where Cardiac Alliance doctors will operate has never done heart surgeries and it will take several days to get everybody into a "systematic flow."

"We already scheduled the second trip to the DRC for October. They want us to make four trips next year, and four trips per year at least for three years," he said.

Novick noted that after the trip to the DRC, he will then visit Angola to set up a project there.

"Angola's Ministry of Health and a local hospital have contacted me, and they want us to come over and set up a program there. It is the newest and biggest public hospital in Angola," he said. The Novick Cardiac Alliance is comprised of medical specialists from different countries around the world who help develop pediatric cardiac care in low- and middle-income countries.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

FEATURE - US Doctor on Cooperation With Russia, Ukraine: 'Politics Does Not Matter'

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - Prominent American doctor Bill Novick, whose international team from the Cardiac Alliance operates on pediatric heart patients all around the world, told Sputnik he is ready to continue work both in Russia and Ukraine despite any possible circumstances between the two countries.

"We always try to adhere to the rule that politics, gender, race, religion do not matter. We are going to teach doctors and help children," Novick said. "My answer is, for me, personally, I am not going to change my attitude. We are here to help children, we are here to teach doctors, and politics should not be a problem."
The next trip of the Cardiac Alliance was scheduled for April, but their colleagues from the Siberian city of Kemerovo canceled it, he said.

"They sent me an email several days ago, and they said 'you know, we have significant financial problems. We are afraid we have to cancel this trip but we hope to see you by the end of 2022,'" Novick shared with sadness in his voice.

The doctor added that he did not ask members of his team whether they are ready to go to Russia because the trip is no longer on the schedule.

He expressed the hope that the trip in December would happen even if political tensions remain and both the US and Russia refuse airspace to each other.

"We can fly through Turkey, we can fly through the UAE, there are ways around that," he said.

The alliance members are going to visit Ukraine in May, but Novick said they have to wait and see what happens.

"It is extremely difficult for me to watch what is happening in Ukraine but that does not change my mind about helping Russian children. I am hoping this war will cease soon without any craziness happening, and Ukrainians will be happy, Russians will be happy," he said.

Novick recalled that he was working under US bombings in Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

"And remember, I went back to Belgrade after that, we spent another two years there," he smiled.

Cardiac Alliance specialists have been visiting Ukraine and Russia for many years and maintain pediatric cardiac projects in different cities in both countries. Novick has expressed readiness to work in Donbas if requested.

Russia launched an operation in Ukraine on February 24 after the breakaway Donbas republics appealed for help in defending themselves against the Ukrainian military. The Russian Defense Ministry said the special operation is targeting Ukrainian military infrastructure only. Several days into the operation, the Russian armed forces said the Ukrainian military were using typical terrorist methods, such as shielding behind civilians and civilian quarters.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.


WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - The United States has charged Russian national Andrey Muravyov with making illegal political contributions and conspiring with Lev Parnas and Igor Fruman to meddle in the 2018 elections, the Justice Department announced in a release on Monday.

"Damian Williams, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and Michael J. Driscoll, the Assistant Director-in-Charge of the New York Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"), announced the unsealing of an indictment against ANDREY MURAVIEV, a/k/a "Andrey Muravyov," a Russian citizen, charging him with making illegal political contributions as a foreign national, and conspiring to make illegal political contributions as a foreign national in the names of straw donors," the release said. "Muraviev is charged with
conspiring with Lev Parnas, Andrey Kukushkin, and Igor Fruman, and others, who were convicted at trial or have pleaded guilty to these crimes."
The US in the release also alleged that Muravyov attempted to influence the 2018 elections by conspiring to push funds to candidates and campaigns.
The Justice Department explained that the indictment alleges as well as proven during the trial against his co-conspirators, in the spring of 2018, Muravyov, 47, Kukushkin, Fruman, and Parnas agreed to start a business aimed at acquiring retail cannabis and marijuana licenses in the United States.
"As part of that plan, Muraviev agreed to wire $1 million, through a series of bank accounts, to Fruman and Parnas to fund hundreds of thousands of dollars in political contributions they had made or promised to make before the elections in November 2018," the release said. "The purpose of the donations was to curry favor with candidates that might be able to help Muraviev and his co-conspirators obtain cannabis and marijuana licenses."
The Justice Department went on to say in the release that Muravyov’s money was used to reimburse and fund federal and state political donations in the US states of Florida, Nevada, and Texas.
Moreover, the release added, he agreed that the funds would pay for donations to politicians in New York and New Jersey.
"Muraviev traveled to Nevada as part of these efforts, and received regular updates from Kukushkin about the co-conspirators’ progress politically," the release added. "To obscure the fact that MURAVIEV was the true donor of the money, the funds were sent to a business bank account controlled by FRUMAN’s brother, and then the donations were made in FRUMAN’s and PARNAS’s names."
The department said that Muravyov is believed to be in Russia and remains at large.
Fruman is an associate of former President Donald Trump’s former personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani. Fruman was sentenced to one year and one day in prison by a US judge for campaign finance violations. Fruman, who pleaded guilty in September to one count of soliciting campaign contributions from a foreign national, will have to serve one year and one day in prison beginning on March 14 and pay a $10,000 fine, the report said.
Fruman admitted to soliciting $1 million in donations from a Russian businessman to Republicans to gain their support for a recreational marijuana business.
The Soviet-born businessman was charged by US authorities in October 2019 alongside Lev Parnas, Andrey Kukushkin and David Correia for funneling donations from foreign nationals to political campaigns and providing false statements and records to election authorities.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

NASA’s ISS Program Manager Says ‘Nothing Has Changed’ in Terms of Cooperation With Russia
WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - US astronauts and Russian cosmonauts continue to cooperate on the International Space Station (ISS) and nothing has changed in their relationship, NASA ISS Program Manager Joel Montalbano told a press conference on Monday. Earlier, Russia space agency Roscosmos denied allegations it would leave US astronauts at the ISS.

"Nothing has changed in terms of US-Russia ISS cooperation," Montalbano said. "There is no indication from our Russian partners that they want to do anything different so we are planning to continue as we are today. ...We both need each other to operate the ISS."

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Sullivan Discusses Russia-Ukraine Crisis, Bilateral Issues With China's Top Diplomat

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan raised a range of bilateral issues and the Russia-Ukraine crisis during talks with China's top diplomat Yang Jiechi on Monday, the White House said.

"National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met today with Chinese Communist Party Politburo Member and Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission Yang Jiechi in Rome, Italy. Their meeting followed up on the November 15, 2022 virtual meeting between President Biden and President Xi," the statement said.

Sullivan raised "a range of issues in U.S.-China relations, with substantial discussion of Russia's war against Ukraine. They also underscored the importance of maintaining open lines of communication between the United States and China," the statement concluded.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

World Bank Hopes to Finalize $3Bln Package for Ukraine in 6 to 8 Weeks - President

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - The World Bank hopes to finalize a $3 billion package to aid Ukraine in the next six to eight weeks, President David Malpass said on Monday. "We have a concrete set of projects that add up to $3 billion, that would that would be possible over the next six to eight weeks," Malpass said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - The United States has charged Russian national Andrey Muravyov with making illegal political contributions and conspiring with Lev Parnas and Igor Fruman to meddle in the 2018 elections, the Justice Department announced in a release on Monday.

"Damian Williams, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and Michael J. Driscoll, the Assistant Director-in-Charge of the New York Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"), announced the unsealing of an indictment against ANDREY MURAVIEV, a/k/a "Andrey Muravyov," a Russian citizen, charging him with making illegal political contributions as a foreign national, and conspiring to make illegal political contributions as a foreign national in the names of straw donors," the release said. "Muraviev is charged with conspiring with Lev Parnas, Andrey Kukushkin, and Igor Fruman, and others, who were convicted at trial or have pleaded guilty to these crimes."

The US in the release also alleged that Muraviev attempted to influence the 2018 elections by conspiring to push funds to candidates and campaigns.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Closely Watching Extent of China's Support to Russia - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - The United States is watching very closely the extent to which China is providing support to Russia, and added that any such support will be of great concern to Washington, US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Monday.

"We are watching very closely the extent of which the PRC [the People's Republic of China] provides any from of support - whether it is material support or economic support, or financial support to Russia, any such support will be of great concern to us," Price told journalists.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

World Bank Making $923Mln in Financing Available for Ukraine - Malpass

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - The World Bank is making $923 million in financial aid available for Ukraine, World Bank President David Malpass said on Monday.

"We actually made disbursements last week of $325 million, and we have a press release going out today showing that we now have $923 million that's been made available over the last two weeks including including that first disbursement for Ukraine," Malpass said.

The government of Ukraine can use this cash to the most needed services, including pensions, he added.
US Tells Allies China Signaled Willingness to Provide Military Aid to Russia - Reports

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - The United States told its allies that China has indicated it is ready to provide military aid to Russia, the Financial Times reported on Monday. The report said, citing officials familiar with US diplomatic cables regarding the exchange, noted that the cables did not mention whether China had already started providing assistance or plans to do it in the future.

Dual Registration of Russian-Leased Aircraft Inconsistent With Chicago Convention – ICAO

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) – The dual registration of air fleet leased by Russian airlines would be inconsistent with the Chicago convention, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) said in an e-mailed statement to Sputnik. On Monday, President Vladimir Putin signed a law allowing foreign aircraft leased and operated by Russian airlines to be registered in Russia while still registered in other states. The move is a response to sanctions that require foreign plane lessors to suspend leases with Russian airlines. At the moment, hundreds of planes operating in Russia are registered in Bermuda, Cyprus, and Ireland. "The Russian Federation appears to have issued notices to affected airlines requesting them to have those aircraft added to the Russian Federation aircraft registry, so that an airworthiness certificate can be issued. This dual registration would not be consistent with Article 18 of the Chicago convention," the statement said. ICAO has reached out to the Russian authorities to request confirmation but has not received any response yet, according to the statement.

Sherman, European Counterparts Discuss Further Measures Against Russia, Aid to Ukraine

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman discussed with her French, German and Italian counterparts imposing additional measures against Russia and providing additional aid to Ukraine, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Monday.
"The participants discussed further measures to hold Russia accountable for a war of Moscow’s choosing, including by imposing further economic costs. They discussed the provision of additional coordinated security and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine," Price said in a statement.

Ukrainian Troops Control City of Irpin Where US Journalist Was Killed - Nebenzia

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - Ukrainian forces control the city of Irpin where an American journalist was shot and killed at a checkpoint, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said Monday.

"We regret all people who die in the conflict but I would like to make two clarifying points," Nebenzia said. "Firstly, he is not a journalist, that was something that The New York Times itself stated ... Secondly, Irpin is fully controlled by the Ukrainian armed forces and Ukrainian units. Given what his colleague, who survived the incident, is saying, it was them who opened fire on their vehicle."

US journalist Brent Renaud, who died near the Ukrainian capital of Kiev, had been working on a video project for Time, the American magazine’s television and film production division said. The New York Times said on Sunday that it was very saddened to learn about the death of US journalist Brent Renaud, 50, in Irpin, a suburb of Kiev, but added that he was not on any assignment for the newspaper there. US photographer Juan Arredondo was traveling with Renaud and was injured in the same attack near a Ukrainian security checkpoint. According to the newspaper, Renaud was wearing a journalist press badge, which had been issued to him by The New York Times "many years ago."

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said on Sunday that the US was going to work with the Ukrainians to investigate Renaud’s death "to determine how this happened and then to measure and execute appropriate consequences as a result of it."

Russia Warns of Chemical Attacks by Ukraine, Tonnes of Ammonia Stockpiled by Nationalists

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - Russia expects provocations with chemical substances in Ukraine and has information on 80 tonnes of ammonia brought to a town northwest of Kharkiv overnight, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said on Monday.

"According to the information of the Ministry of Defense of Russia, Ukrainian armed formations are actively preparing for provocations with the use of chemical substances in order to accuse Russia of reportedly using chemical weapons," Nebenzia said. "On the night of March 9, Ukrainian nationalists transported to Zolochiv to the northwest of Kharkiv about 80 tons of
ammonia. On the March 10, the Ukrainian media started to disseminate information about how to protect yourself from a chemical attack."

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Nebenzia Slams UN’s DiCarlo for Failing to Mention Deadly Cluster Bomb Attack on Donetsk

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia on Friday slammed UN Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo for failing to mention the cluster bomb attack on Donetsk by Ukraine’s military in which at least 20 people were killed.

"The Under-Secretary General didn’t manage to find any word to report about the strike by the Tochka-U missile by the Ukrainian armed forces that was filled with cluster munitions and hit the heart of Donetsk as a result of which 20 people died and 35 civilians were injured,” Nebenzia said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Russia Records Ukraine Using Phosphorus-Filled Ammunition, Cluster Bombs - Envoy to UN

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - Moscow has data of phosphorus-filled ammunition and cluster bombs being used by the Ukrainian armed forces, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said on Friday.

"We’ve also recorded broad scale use by the Kiev regime of phosphorus-filled ammunition - this is counter to the third protocol of the UN Convention dated 1980 - and cluster bombs being used by the Ukrainian army," Nebenzia said at a UN Security Council meeting.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

High Price for Wheat to Have Spillover Effect on Corn, Other Food Items - IMF Official

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - The high price of wheat will have a spillover effect on other food items, including corn and maize, and will impact global food markets such as in heavily importing countries in Africa, an International Monetary Fund (IMF) official said on Monday.

"As wheat is becoming more expensive, it will have spillovers to add other food items, including corn, maize etc. So, it will affect global food and that will impact food importers and in particular
food importers in Africa and it will have social consequences when countries are faced with higher food prices," the official said during a press briefing.

Food prices are rising mainly because of high oil prices, which in turn lead to high inflation and have a negative impact on the population, the official said.

Russia and Ukraine are the world's top wheat producers. The United Nations Food Program says they account for 30% of global wheat exports, 20% of corn sales and 76% of the global export of sunflower seeds, making the Black Sea region the world's breadbasket.

Last Monday, trading in US wheat futures was suspended for the week after prices surged above the 7% limit allowed in a day to reach 14-year highs amid worries the Russia-Ukraine confrontation would affect global supplies.

On February 24, Russia began a special operation to demilitarize and de-Nazify Ukraine, responding to requests for assistance from the Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics to defend against intensifying attacks by Ukrainian troops. The Russian Defense Ministry said the special operation is solely targeting Ukrainian military infrastructure and the civilian population is not in danger. Moscow has repeatedly stressed that it has no plans to occupy Ukraine.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

RPT - Pentagon Declines to Confirm Reports That Russia Asked China for Military Aid in Ukraine
(Repeats to correct attribution in second para)
WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - A senior US Defense Department official on Monday declined to confirm reports that Russia requested military assistance from China for its special operation in Ukraine.

"I don't have anything specific to speak to with respect to actual material support," the senior Defense Department official said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

RPT - World Does Not Need New Cold War, Should Reject Bloc Confrontation - China Envoy to UN
(Repeats to correct placeline)
UNITED NATIONS, March 14 (Sputnik) - The world does not need a new Cold War and should reject bloc confrontation amid rising tensions between Russia and the collective West over Moscow's special operation in Ukraine, China's Ambassador to the United Nations Zhang Jun said on Monday.

"Cold War mentality based on bloc confrontation should be completely rejected... This world does not need a new Cold War. This world can live with common growth and progress," Zhang said during a UN Security Council meeting.
Pentagon Says Strike on Yaroviv Base Not to Affect US Security Aid Deliveries to Ukraine

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - The Russian strikes on the Yaroviv military base will not affect US deliveries of security assistance to Ukraine, a senior US Defense Department official said on Monday.

"I would just tell you that the strikes on Yaroviv will not affect that effort," the official said.

Pentagon Declines to Confirm Reports That Russia Asked China for Military Aid in Ukraine

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - A senior US Defense Department official on Monday declined to confirm reports that Russia requested military assistance from China for its special operation in Ukraine.

"I don't have anything specific to speak to with respect to actual material support," the official said.

World Does Not Need New Cold War, Should Reject Bloc Confrontation - China Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, March 14 (Sputnik) - The world does not need a new Cold War and should reject bloc confrontation amid rising tensions between Russia and the collective West over Moscow's special operation in Ukraine, China's Ambassador to the United Nations Zhang Jun said on Monday.

"Cold War mentality based on bloc confrontation should be completely rejected... This world does not need a new Cold War. This world can live with common growth and progress," Zhang said during a UN Security Council meeting.

Zelenskyy Asks Biden to Deny Russia Access to International Waterways - Reports
WASHINGTON, March 11 (Sputnik) - Volodymyr Zelenskyy spoke by telephone with US President Joe Biden and requested the United States to impose more sanctions against Russia, including denying that country access to international waterways, CNN reported on Monday. Zelensky asked Biden to impose additional sanctions in order to cut Russia off from international trade as well as to continue sanctioning the Russian elite, the report said, citing multiple sources familiar with the call.
The two officials spoke for 49 minutes during which time Biden detailed the latest US sanctions imposed on Russia, the report said.
On February 24, Russia launched a special operation in Ukraine after the Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics requested help to defend themselves from intensifying attacks by Ukrainian troops. The Russian Defense Ministry has said the operation seeks to solely destroy Ukraine's military infrastructure and the civilian population is not in danger. In response, the United States and its allies imposed comprehensive sanctions against Russia.

UN to Allocate $40Mln From Central Emergency Response Fund to Ukraine - Guterres

UNITED NATIONS, March 14 (Sputnik) - The United Nations is launching a Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance amid conflict, climate change and the pandemic, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Monday.
"Against the backdrop of these immense inter-connected challenges, I am announcing today the establishment of a Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance in the UN Secretariat," Guterres said during remarks to the press.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.
UNITED NATIONS, March 14 (Sputnik) - The United Nations will allocate an additional $40 million to Ukraine to secure aid for the most vulnerable populations amid the current crisis in the country, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Monday. "I am announcing today that the United Nations will allocate a further $40 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund to ramp up vital assistance to reach the most vulnerable as we wait for the nations to come," Guterres said during remarks to the press.

Guterres Says Prospect of Nuclear Conflict Back Within 'Realm of Possibility'

UNITED NATIONS, March 14 (Sputnik) - The prospect of nuclear conflict is again in the realm of possibility as the Ukraine crisis places nuclear facilities on the frontlines and prompts military force posture changes, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Monday. "The prospect of nuclear conflict, once unthinkable, is now back within the realm of possibility, The security and safety of nuclear facilities must also be preserved," Guterres said during remarks to the press.

CORRECTION - IMF Forecasts Ukraine's Annual Economic Output Could Shrink by 35% - Report

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - Ukraine's annual economic output could shrink by as much as 35%, as has happened in other conflict-ridden countries such as Lebanon, Syria and Yemen, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said in a Staff Report on Ukraine on Monday. "Data on wartime real GDP contraction (Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen) suggest that annual output contraction could eventually be much higher, in the range of 25-35 percent," the Staff Report said. "Accordingly, the financing gap estimates presented in the report should be seen as a bare minimum."

Ukraine Fiscal Deficit to Rise by 3% Percentage Points of GDP Amid Conflict – IMF
WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - Ukraine's fiscal deficit is projected to surge by 3 percentage points of GDP this year due to the conflict with Russia, the International Monetary Fund said in a staff report out Monday.

"Under the baseline, the fiscal deficit is estimated to rise significantly this year, by about 3 percentage points of GDP, subject to a great degree of uncertainty. The deep recession is projected to result in a drop in tax revenues of about 4 percent of GDP compared to last year," the report said.

White House Mulls Biden Trip to Europe With Focus on Ukraine - Reports

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - The White House is considering organizing a trip by President Joe Biden to Europe that will focus on Ukraine, NBC reported on Monday. The White House is in discussions on the possible Biden trip to Europe that can take place in the coming weeks, including a visit to Brussels, Belgium, the report said citing five sources familiar with the matter.

IMF Forecasts Output Contraction in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria to Increase by 25%-35% - Report

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - The annual output contraction in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen could be higher than expected as per available data and reach a range of up to 35 percent, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said in its Staff Report on Monday.

"Data on wartime real GDP contraction (Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen) suggest that annual output contraction could eventually be much higher, in the range of 25-35 percent," the Staff Report said.

Russia to Experience 'Deep Recession' Due to Events in Ukraine - IMF Official

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - Russia will experience a deep recession as a result of the situation with respect to Ukraine, an International Monetary Fund senior official said on Monday.

"Russia will actually see a deep recession as part of that," the official said.
IMF Expects Conflict to Cost Ukraine's GDP Growth at Least 13.5 Percent Points in 2022

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - Ukraine will suffer a deep recession this year due to the military conflict with a decline of at least 13.5 percentage points in GDP growth outlook, the International Monetary Fund said in a staff report out Monday.

"The economy is set to experience a deep recession this year," the report said. "There is massive uncertainty around the baseline, but at a minimum, staff expects a deterioration in the growth outlook of at least 13.5 percentage points relative to a pre-war baseline, with output falling 10 percent this year assuming a prompt resolution of the war and substantial donor support."

Elevated Inflation Likely to Persist for Longer Than Expected Due to Ukraine Crisis - IMF

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - Elevated inflation will continue for longer than previously expected due to the Ukraine conflict, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said in its staff report on Monday.

"Elevated inflation is likely to persist for longer than previously expected. Single digit levels are likely only in 2023 and the 5 percent target level in 2025 due to supply disruptions and spending pressures to address needs arising from the conflict," the IMF said.

Ukraine Real GDP to Decrease by 10% in 2022 Due to Conflict – IMF Report

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) – Ukraine’s real GDP will drop by 10% this year due to "severe" impact of the conflict with Russia, the International Monetary Fund said in a staff report out Monday.

"The conflict is expected to decrease real GDP in 2022 by 10 percent," the report said. "The baseline assumes that the economic impact of the conflict will be upfront and severe, particularly impacting consumption, which has driven recent activity, and investment, and will only gradually unwind with a de-escalation over the course of the year."

The economy of Ukraine is expected to start recovering in 2023-2024 and substantial efforts and support will be required to return to the pre-conflict economy growth, the report added.
Over Third of Blacks, Hispanics in US Say They Feel Significant ‘Inflationary Pain’ - Poll

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - Inflation in the United States is causing a significant financial strain for more than a third of Black, Hispanic and Asian-American voters just months ahead of the 2022 mid-term elections, a new Wall Street Journal poll revealed on Monday. “Eight months before the mid-term elections, 35% of Black, Hispanic, Asian-American and other voters who said they were something other than white expressed that level of inflationary pain, compared with 28% for White voters,” the release about the poll said. “Black women and Hispanic men, both at 44%, reported the highest proportions of major strain among various demographic and gender combinations.”

Almost two-thirds of the surveyed voters said the US economy is headed in the wrong direction, the release said.

The prices of food, energy and other services increased to 7.9 percent in February compared to a year ago. In addition, the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which measures the cost of goods and services, is only eclipsed by the 8.4 percent set in January 1982.

Fifty-nine percent of poll respondents said they disapprove of the way President Joe Biden is handling the US economy and 63% said are unsatisfied with his handling of rising inflation. Along party lines, 90% of Republican voters said they think the US economy is headed in the wrong direction while only 36 percent of Democrats said the same.

Overall, 58% of respondents said they blame the Biden administration’s poor handling of inflation for the financial strain they experience.

The issue of inflation can have a profound influence on the mid-term elections as 47% of voters say they believe Republicans can get a better handle on inflation compared to 30% who said they believe Democrats can.

Among independent voters - seen as a key constituency in most close elections - 71% say the economy is going the wrong direction and 78% of Hispanic voters say the same.

Zelenskyy to Deliver Virtual Address to US Congress on Wednesday - Democratic Leaders

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - Volodymyr Zelenskyy will address the US Congress on March 16 via video conference, Democratic leaders announced on Monday. The address is scheduled for March 16 at 9:00 a.m. (13:00 GMT).

"The Congress remains unwavering in our commitment to supporting Ukraine as they face [Russian President Vladimir] Putin’s cruel and diabolical aggression, and to passing legislation to cripple and isolate the Russian economy as well as deliver humanitarian, security and
economic assistance to Ukraine," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said.
They added that Congress is looking forward to the "privilege" of welcoming Zelenskyy's address to the House and Senate and to "convey our support to the people of Ukraine as they bravely defend democracy."
On February 24, Russia began a military operation in Ukraine, responding to calls for help from the republics of Donetsk and Luhansk in countering the aggression of Ukrainian troops. The Russian Defense Ministry said the operation is targeting Ukrainian military infrastructure only. Several days into the operation, the Russian armed forces accused the Ukrainian military of using typical terrorist methods, such as hiding behind civilians and civilian quarters.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Pfizer Says Will Continue Deliveries of Medicines to Russia, But Donate Profits to Ukraine

WASHINGTON, March 14 (Sputnik) - US pharmaceutical giant Pfizer announced on Monday that it will continue to supply medicines to Russia, but all profits from them will be directed to humanitarian aid for the Ukrainian people.
"The international community has implemented unprecedented sanctions to Russia. As with all previous instances, for humanitarian reasons, medicines were excluded from these sanctions. Pfizer concluded that a voluntary pause in the flow of our medicines to Russia would be in direct violation of our foundational principle of putting patients first. Ending delivery of medicines, including cancer or cardiovascular therapies, would cause significant patient suffering and potential loss of life, particularly among children and elderly people," the company said.
While the company is maintaining the supply of medicines to Russia, it does not mean that it will continue doing business as usual in the country.
"Today we are announcing that effective immediately Pfizer will donate all profits of our Russian subsidiary to causes that provide direct humanitarian support to the people of Ukraine. This will be in addition to all other recently announced donations from Pfizer to Ukraine. Additionally, we will no longer initiate new clinical trials in Russia, and we will stop recruiting new patients in our ongoing clinical trials in the country. Pfizer will work with FDA and other regulators to transition all ongoing clinical trials to alternative sites outside Russia. Consistent with our commitment to putting patients first, we will continue providing needed medicines to the patients already enrolled in clinical trials," it said.
Since the company does not operate any manufacturing sites in Russia, it will cease all planned investments, the company added.