

7/12/22 Tuesday

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Protests Await Biden in Upcoming Ramallah Visit for 'Ignoring the Palestinian Issue'

Upon arrival at Israel's Ben Gurion International Airport on Wednesday, US President Joe Biden will view a demonstration of Israeli air defense systems, including the Iron Dome and David's Sling, which protect against rockets fired by Palestinians from Gaza, among other threats. Biden will make the first visit of his presidency to the Middle East later this week, stopping in Israel, the West Bank and Saudi Arabia to discuss a list of American foreign policy priorities. However, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in the West Bank reportedly feels it [isn't among those priorities](#), and that the Palestinian cause has suffered as a result.

When Biden stops in the West Bank's administrative center of Ramallah on Thursday to meet with PNA President Mahmoud Abbas, there will be Palestinian protesters waiting to tell him that ignoring their interests further damages regional stability and security.

"The Palestinian issue is not at the top of Biden's agenda," a PNA official [told the Jerusalem Post](#) on Tuesday. "Ignoring the Palestinian issue will only increase tensions and undermine security and stability in the region."

"We are fed up with empty promises," the official added. "If the Americans continue to ignore our demands, the situation will further deteriorate. We want the Palestinian cause to return to the center of the world's attention."

Under Biden's predecessor, Donald Trump, the US pivoted sharply in its relationship with Israel and the Palestinians, supporting Israel's long-standing claim that Jerusalem is its capital as well as its annexation of the Golan Heights. Several US-orchestrated peace deals between Israel and Arab states, dubbed the "Abraham Accords," are credited with saving parts of the West Bank from being annexed by Israel, but the Palestinians have criticized the accords as selling out their cause by effectively shredding any possibility of a two-state solution.

Since taking office in 2021, Biden has reaffirmed the US' commitment to the creation of a Palestinian state as agreed in the 1994 Oslo Accords, but taken no practical steps toward unringing the bell of Trump's actions. The PNA has demanded Biden [reopen the US Consulate in Jerusalem](#), which served as Washington's de facto embassy to the Palestinians, and remove the Palestine Liberation Organization from the State Department's list of foreign terrorist organizations.

The official who spoke with the Jerusalem Post also said Abbas would ask Biden at their meeting to increase his pressure on Israel "to halt all unilateral measures, including settlement construction."

In May, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, a right-wing figure who favors annexation of the West Bank and the expulsion of Palestinians, compelled his hodgepodge coalition government to go forward with [construction plans for thousands](#) of new units in the West Bank. However, the Biden administration has broken from Trump's uncritical support of settlement construction and

expansion, sharply criticizing several plans by noting that they go against United Nations resolutions.

Instead, Biden's trip is more aimed at [shoring up the US' relationship](#) with Israel and Saudi Arabia in the face of a stalled attempt to [revive the Joint Comprehensive](#) Plan of Action, a 2015 deal with Iran that Jerusalem and Riyadh have never been satisfied with.

Last month, the US [orchestrated a secret meeting](#) in the Egyptian resort city of Sharm el-Sheikh between Arab and Israeli military leaders to explore the idea of regional military cooperation against Iran.

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US Liable for \$2 Trillion in Damage to Global Economy via Climate Change-Driven Pollution - Study

According to a new study by climate scientists at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, the United States' production of climate change-amplifying greenhouse gasses has caused roughly \$1.9 trillion in damage to other nations' economies. This, they said, prepares the ground for liability claims for the damages.

Published in the [journal Climatic Change](#), the research describes how the planet's warming climate, driven to higher temperatures by industrial gasses that trap sunlight, has caused one disaster after another, many of which have occurred in the world's poorer and less industrialized nations.

"For the first time, we have been able to show clear and statistically significant linkages between the emissions of specific countries and historical economic losses experienced by other countries," said Christopher Callahan, the study's lead author, [in a news release](#). "This is about the culpability of one country to another country, not the effect of overall global warming on a country."

The researchers looked at a 25-year period from 1990 until 2014 and the heat waves, crop failures, droughts, and flooding judged to have been made worse by climate change. That was no easy task, since there are no new natural disasters caused by climate change, just exacerbated ones. According to a Dartmouth news release, the scientists "combined historical data with climate models in an integrated framework to quantify each nation's culpability for historical temperature-driven income changes in every other country."

"The study sampled 2 million possible values for each country-to-country interaction. In total, 11 trillion values were calculated on a supercomputer operated by Dartmouth's Research Information, Technology and Consulting," the release explained.

However, they didn't just tally up the US' impact: they called out the five nations that emit the most greenhouse gasses, which include carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxide, and methane: in addition to the US, that's China, Russia, Brazil, and India. Together, they've caused an estimated \$6 trillion in damage to other nations' economies, with the US bearing the most responsibility, having been an industrial nation for nearly two centuries. In the time frame

encompassed by the study, that amounts to about 11% of annual gross domestic product for the planet.

Judged by raw carbon output, China is the world's worst offender. However, with 1.4 billion people, or 17% of humanity within its borders, Beijing has argued that carbon emissions per capita is a fairer way to judge a country's impact on global warming. By that metric, the US, with one-quarter the population of China, is twice as pollutive as the East Asian socialist republic. In addition, China's industrialization only began in the second half of the 20th century, and only really began to accelerate in the last two decades of it.

According to [the World Bank](#), US carbon emissions per capita were at 14.7 metric tons per American citizen in 2019, the most recent year for which there is data. That is the 11th-highest in the world, with Australia, Canada, Saudi Arabia, and a handful of small oil-producing nations ahead of the US. China ranks at 28th, with 7.6 metric tons of carbon emitted per person in 2019. "Greenhouse gasses emitted in one country cause warming in another, and that warming can depress economic growth," said Justin Mankin, an assistant professor of geography at Dartmouth and senior researcher of the study. "This research provides legally valuable estimates of the financial damages individual nations have suffered due to other countries' climate-changing activities."

A [global climate summit](#) in April 2021 saw nations around the globe [pledge steep cuts](#) to their carbon emissions over the next several decades, with the aim of reaching "carbon neutrality." Without action, greenhouse gasses will continue to drive the Earth's surface temperature higher, destabilizing the weather systems that make agriculture and aquaculture possible, and even more dangerously, causing [glaciers and the polar ice caps](#) to melt, which will cause the world's seas to rise.

A 2021 study [published in Nature Communications](#) found that at least 410 million people live in areas threatened by rising ocean levels, living in regions that would be reclaimed by the sea if global sea levels rose by one meter, as they are projected to do by the year 2100.

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French Court Sentences Rwandan Genocidaire Laurent Bucyibaruta to 20 Years in Prison

A French court on Tuesday sentenced Laurent Bucyibaruta, the former prefect of Rwanda's Gikongoro Province, to 20 years in prison for his role in the 1994 genocide of Rwandan Tutsis and Twa.

Bucyibaruta, 78, was found guilty of complicity in the massacres of nearly 1 million people in 1994 by the Hutu Power movement.

In particular, he was found responsible for leading thousands of Tutsis to [take refuge in the Murambi Technical School](#), promising that French troops there would protect them from the violence. Instead, the refugees were denied food and water for days. The weakened refugees defended themselves with rocks for several days, but were overrun on April 21, 1994, when the French troops disappeared. At least 20,000 Tutsis were executed at the school, while those who escaped were found and killed at a nearby church a few days later.

The school is now a [memorial and museum](#) about the genocide, which ended that summer, roughly 100 days after it began, when the Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) led by now-President Paul Kagame overthrew the Hutu Power government.

The French court also looked at Bucyibaruta's responsibility for another smaller massacre at a school in Kibeho, and the execution of several Tutsi prisoners in Gikongoro prison. In the trial, the former prefect denied all responsibility or connection, saying he “was never on the side of the killers.”

Bucyibaruta is the highest-ranking Rwandan official who has been taken to trial in France in connection with the genocide. In May, [Protais Mpiranya, who was commander](#) of the Rwandan presidential guard at the time of the genocide and played a key role in drawing up and executing the “kill lists” of officials during its initial stages, was found to have died in Zimbabwe in 2006, where he hid under a false name.

The killing was the product of decades of divide-and-rule colonial policy by German and then Belgian rulers, and continued by France after Rwanda gained independence in 1960. The teachings pitted the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups against each other, with Hutus being taught that the Tutsis were invaders occupying their land. The Hutu Power ideology elevated this attitude to genocidal proportions, and after then-Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana's aircraft was shot down on April 6, 1994, his Hutu allies sprung into action, blaming Tutsis as well as moderate Hutus for the attack.

Roughly 10,000 Twa people, a separate ethnic group, were also killed in the genocide, amounting to one-third of the Twa population.

In February, [a French court blocked an attempt](#) by families of the victims of the crash to reopen an investigation that had ended inconclusively. The crash also killed Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira; both men were Hutus.

In May 2021, French President Emmanuel [Macron met with Kagame](#) in Kigali, but while he did not apologize for France's support for the Rwandan government at the start of the genocide, he did acknowledge “the magnitude of our responsibilities.”

Two other French reports from earlier that year found the government of then-French President Francois Mitterrand bore [“overwhelming responsibilities”](#) for the genocide for continuing its divide-and-rule tactics while being fully aware of Hutu preparations for a genocide of Tutsis, as well as [arming, advising and protecting](#) the Hutu-led Rwandan government.

After the Hutu government was overthrown in July 1994, its remnants fled across the western border into Zaire, and soon began mounting new attacks. When the Rwandan military, now Tutsi-led, intervened in Zaire to hunt down the Hutu militias, it helped set in motion the destruction of Zaire, the foundation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the decadelong Congo Wars that drew in half of Africa and killed more than 5 million people.

The present-day tensions between DR Congo and Rwanda over [militia groups in Congo's North Kivu](#) Province is part of the continued fallout of that conflict, with Kigali claiming that Kinshasa backs the Hutu Power group Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and Kinshasa saying Kigali backs the Tutsi M23 militia that is fighting them.

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'It Takes a Lot of Work': Ex-Trump Adviser Bolton Says He's 'Helped Plan Coups D'Etat'

Former US national security adviser under the Trump administration John Bolton said in an interview on Tuesday that he has planned coups in other countries and knows that the process takes "a lot of work."

Speaking to CNN reporter Jake Tapper, Bolton casually admitted to planning a coup d'etat while discussing the [latest revelations in the public hearings](#) by the House January 6 committee.

"It's also a mistake," Bolton told Tapper, "that somehow this was a carefully planned coup d'etat aimed at the Constitution. That's not the way Donald Trump does things: it's rambling from one-half vast idea to another, one plan that falls through and another comes up - that's what he was doing. As I said, none of it defensible."

"It's not an attack on our democracy, it's Donald Trump looking out for Donald Trump, it's a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence," he added.

Bolton then spoke in defense of the practice of carrying out coups in other countries and underscored the complexity involved after Tapper argued that it does not require brilliance to attempt a coup d'etat.

"I disagree with that as somebody [who has helped plan coups d'etat](#) - not here, but you know, other places - it takes a lot of work," Bolton said.

Tapper then asked Bolton what he was referring to, and the former White House adviser said he wouldn't "get into the specifics" but let slip that he was referring, at the very least, to the 2019 effort to overthrow democratically-elected [Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro](#) by backing a no-name opposition politician named Juan Guaidó. However, he then claimed that the US didn't have "all that much to do with it."

"The notion that Donald Trump is half as competent as the Venezuelan opposition is laughable," Bolton added.

Bolton went on, claiming that in launching the January 6, 2021, insurrection at the US Capitol, Trump had "stumbled around" to buy himself more time to send electoral matters back to the US states for review, but said that Trump did not attempt to overthrow the Constitution that day. The US select committee that is investigating Trump's role in the January 6 events risks overreacting by believing that Trump planned to effect a coup, he added.

Bolton wrote a book - ["The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir"](#) - following his time working with Trump. The book's publication was initially blocked by a US Justice Department probe into whether it contained classified information, but lawsuits against Bolton over the material were dropped by the Biden administration.

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It's Official! Twitter Sues Elon Musk for Backing Out of \$44 Billion Deal

By - Evan Craighead

Tesla CEO and SpaceX owner Elon Musk announced last week that he would be stepping away from his April binding merger agreement to purchase Twitter. The decision came after Musk publicly chastised the social media service's claim that some 5% of its active users are bots. Twitter, Inc. is pursuing legal action in response to Elon Musk's decision to not "honor his obligations to Twitter and its stockholders because the deal he signed no longer serves his interest," the social media service said in [a Tuesday filing with Delaware's Chancery Court](#). The company's 62-page complaint accused Musk of turning the situation into a "public spectacle" and standing in violation of Delaware contract law.

The Tesla CEO's "repudiation follows a long list of material contractual breaches by Musk that have cast a pall over Twitter and its business," Twitter said in its filing against Musk, 'X Holdings 1, Inc.' and 'X Holdings 2, Inc.'

The two holdings corporations were created for the sole purpose of the merger.

Twitter is arguing that Musk, who owns 9.6% of Twitter stock, falsely asserted "that consummation of the merger depends on the results of his fishing expedition" regarding spam bots.

"Musk's strategy is also a model of bad faith," Twitter attorneys wrote. "Musk has been working furiously — albeit fruitlessly — to try to show that the company he promised to buy and not disparage has made material misrepresentations about its business to regulators and investors."

Musk has repeatedly claimed that his primary issue in the Twitter deal relates to the disclosure of information on spam bots, or fake accounts, on the platform.

The billionaire tweeted a preemptive response to the lawsuit on Monday, seemingly celebrating the forthcoming litigation. As of this article's publication, Musk's account has more than 100.9 million followers.

The outcome of the monthlong ordeal will likely hinge on the court's interpretation of the 73-page agreement between Musk and Twitter back in April.

While Twitter and other major media companies are headquartered in California, it is incorporated in Delaware, which has courts of equity, rather than law. Chancery Court chancellors (judges) have historically dealt with cases of plaintiffs seeking compensation or relief. No juries are assembled.

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Steve Bannon Says He's Going 'Medieval' After Agreeing to Testify Before Jan. 6 Panel
By - Evan Craighead

Newly released audio obtained by Mother Jones features ex-White House chief strategist Steve Bannon proclaiming on October 31, 2020, that then-US President Donald Trump was planning to declare victory in the upcoming 2020 presidential election. "That's our strategy," Bannon disclosed.

Steve Bannon, who faces two counts of criminal contempt of Congress, appears to be going on the offensive against the 9-member House select committee probing the January 6, 2021,

insurrection at the US Capitol, despite his recent decision to change course and cooperate with the investigation.

“Pray for our enemies, okay? Pray because we’re going medieval on these people. We’re going to savage our enemies,” Bannon said in the latest broadcast of his War Room podcast.

Bannon’s rallying rhetoric and somewhat sacrilegious rant came in response to media reports that he is now cooperating with the congressional probe due to fears of prison time.

“[P]ut our enemies in front of me, because that’s who’s really going to need prayers. Okay. Because we’re going medieval,” he reiterated. “And we’ll see about this committee what happens this afternoon,” he said, referring to the public hearing on July 12.

Tuesday’s public hearing on the January 6 insurrection focused partly on two phone calls between Trump and Bannon on January 5, 2021.

The first call lasted about 11 minutes, per White House call logs, and took place before the broadcast of Bannon’s podcast in which he teased that January 6 would be a chaotic day.

“All hell is going to break loose tomorrow,” Bannon said in the clip played during Tuesday’s hearing. “It’s all converging, and now we’re on, as they say, the point of attack.”

“I’ll tell you this: It’s not going to happen like you think it’s going to happen,” he added. “It’s going to be quite extraordinarily different, and all I can say is strap in.”

The clip in question was [notably referenced by Rep. Liz Cheney \(R-WY\) in October 2021](#).

Additional audio obtained and released this week by Mother Jones captures a moment in which Bannon plainly lays out Trump’s strategy.

“He’s gonna declare himself a winner,” the ex-White House adviser said.

Bannon is slated to begin trial on Monday.

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Paying the Price -Cartoon

By - Ted Rall/Evan Craighead

The US is liable for nearly \$2 trillion in damages to the economies of other nations due to its production of greenhouse gases between the years of 1990 and 2014, according to a new study from Dartmouth College, which also found China liable for comparable damages.

The analysis, published on Tuesday in the [peer-reviewed scientific journal Climatic Change](#), determined the US ranks above China for global damages related to greenhouse gas emissions.

More worrying is the fact that the world’s top-five greenhouse gas contributors—the US, China, Russia, India and Brazil—have caused a total of \$6 trillion in losses worldwide.

“There is this huge inequity,” said co-author Justin Mankin, a geographer at Dartmouth.

“Countries like the US have disproportionately damaged low-income countries in the global south and disproportionately benefited cooler, higher-income countries in the global north.”

With a growing focus on climate change, identifying contributors and quantifying their impact is more of a call to action than an effort to place blame. Most countries possess sovereign immunity against legal action regarding such matters.

“The costs of climate damages are mounting and ultimately someone will have to pay that cost,” [said Carroll Muffett](#), chief executive of the Center for International Environmental Law. “The question is who will that be and how it will be done.”

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Graphic New Footage Shows Uvalde Police Waiting Inside Hallway for 77 Minutes During Shooting

By - Evan Craighead

WASHINGTON (Sputnik) - The Austin Statesman newspaper obtained surveillance video of the shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, which showed police officers entering the schools minutes after the gunman but taking more than an hour to breach the classroom to take the suspect down.

The gunman killed 19 children and two teachers in the shooting at Robb Elementary School on May 24.

The video released on Tuesday starts off by showing the suspect crash his vehicle near Robb Elementary School and shooting at two men who were walking to the scene of the incident.

The gunman enters the school and walks down a hallway with an AR-15 rifle and then opens fire into a classroom as he walks inside.

Be advised the footage below contains scenes some may find offensive.

The gunman is heard firing numerous rounds inside two classrooms for two and a half minutes. About seven police officers, including one armed with a rifle, are seen entering the school about three minutes after the gunman, the video shows. Three police officers move toward the classroom but retreat back to the end of the hallway after receiving gunfire.

More than a dozen heavily armed police officers, including US Border Patrol agents, are seen entering the school over the span of about an hour but making no real rescue attempt until 77 minutes after the gunman entered the school, according to the video footage.

The gunman can be heard firing several rounds inside the classroom as police officers waited at the end of the hallway to breach the classroom, the video shows.

The video invoked an already-incensed community, prompting outrage at a city hall meeting. According to local outlets, Mayor Don McLaughlin referred to members of the media as "chicken" and "unprofessional" for releasing the footage before families were able to see it. One resident reportedly questioned whether the mayor believed the responding officers were "chicken."

The school district has announced that it will hold a special election on November 8 to replace Pete Arredondo, an ex-member of the city council and the suspended chief of the Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District Police Department.

Many have even called for the school to be torn down, arguing that it's going to be difficult for many young children with trauma to return to a normal school environment.

“It would be hard for them to go back,” [said Hector Gomez, a student of Robb Elementary back in 1968](#). “They’re going to have that same old feeling about what happened.”

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State Dept. Says to Work With Congress on Extra \$4.5Bln in Ukraine Budget Support

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The US State Department will work with the Congress to allocate additional \$4.5 billion in direct budget support for Ukraine over the next five months, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs Molly Montgomery told reporters on Wednesday.

"We intend to work with Congress to provide the Government of Ukraine with an additional \$4.5 billion in direct budget support over the next five months, as it continues to fight the Russian invasion," Montgomery said.

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US to Set Oil Price Cap at 'Profitable' Level for Russia to Produce - Yellen

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The United States is likely to set a price cap for Russian oil that will make it profitable for Russia to continue producing oil, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen told The Wall Street Journal in an interview.

"We would expect to set the price cap at a level that would clearly be profitable for Russia to continue to produce," Yellen said in the interview held in Tokyo. She said this in relation to reports that Russia may simply stop producing oil as a result of the price cap.

Earlier, Yellen said she had discussed the proposed Russian oil price cap with Chinese Vice Premier Liu He during a virtual meeting with him.

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UPDATE - US National Security Advisor Misspoke About US Wish for East Jerusalem Consulate – Reports

(Updates to change attribution, explain in para 2-3 that Sullivan meant to say Jerusalem, not East Jerusalem)

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan misspoke to reporters on Wednesday about a US desire for a consulate in East Jerusalem, according to the White House pool report, citing NSC Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby. Kirby clarified that there was no change in US policy and Sullivan had meant to say Jerusalem, not East Jerusalem.

Sullivan had told reporters onboard Air Force One while en route with US President Biden to Jerusalem that "We would like a consulate in East Jerusalem."

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IMF to Further Downgrade Global Growth Projection Later in July - Managing Director

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) plans to further downgrade its global growth projection later in July, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said on Wednesday.

"Recent indicators imply a weak second quarter - and we will be projecting a further downgrade to global growth for both 2022 and 2023 in our World Economic Outlook Update later this month," Georgieva said in a blog post.

The IMF Managing Director said while inflation remains higher than expected, major central banks have to announce further monetary tightening to address raise in prices.

Such a move is necessary but it will weigh on the process of economic recovery, Georgieva added.

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IMF Chief Warns of 'Tough' 2022, 2023 With Increased Risk of Recession

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) – The International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicts that the global economic situation will continue to be difficult in 2022 and 2023 with a growing risk of a recession, Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said on Wednesday.

"It is going to be a tough 2022—and possibly an even tougher 2023, with increased risk of recession," Georgieva said in a blog post.

The entire outlook is "extremely uncertain," and further disruption to the natural gas supply to Europe could plunge many economies into a recession and trigger a global energy crisis, she added.

"This is just one of the factors that could worsen an already difficult situation," Georgieva added.

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Yellen Says Discussed Russia Oil Price Cap With Chinese Vice Premier

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen told The Wall Street Journal she has discussed the likelihood of placing a cap on the price of Russian oil during a virtual meeting with Chinese Vice Premier Liu He.

"They listened and were prepared to have further discussions with us about it," Yellen said in an interview held in Tokyo, adding that it was one of the first signs of American efforts to pitch China on a plan to limit Russia's revenue from oil sales.

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US Consumer Prices Up 9.1% in Year to June, Biggest Growth Since 1981 - Labor Dept

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - US consumer prices jumped by more than 9% over the year to June, keeping up with the greatest pace of inflation since 1981, the Labor Department said in data on Wednesday that signaled no let up in aggressive interest rate hikes by the Federal Reserve to bring inflation lower.

"The all items index increased 9.1 percent for the 12 months ending June, the largest 12-month increase since the period ending November 1981," the department said in a news release referring to the all-items reading in the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Economists polled by US media had expected an 8.8% growth in the annual CPI reading, versus a year-on-year growth of 8.6% in May.

For June itself, the CPI grew by 1.3%, versus a previous 1% growth in May. Economists had projected a 1.1% month-on-month growth.

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US National Security Advisor Misspoke About US Wish for East Jerusalem Consulate – Reports

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik/Prime) - US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan misspoke on Wednesday about a US desire for a consulate in East Jerusalem, Reuters reported, citing NSC Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby.

Kirby clarified that there is no change in US policy. Sullivan had told reporters onboard Air Force One while en route with US President Biden to Jerusalem that "We would like to see a consulate in Jerusalem."

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Russian Oil Price Cap Plan Being Refined, Process Will Not Be Completed in Days - Sullivan

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The modalities of the G7's plan to impose a price cap on Russian oil is being refined and the process will not be completed in days, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said on Wednesday.

During the G7 meeting in Germany on June 28-30, the leaders of the seven most economically advanced countries issued a communique saying that the oil price cap scheme could be implemented through the options such as allowing Russian seaborne crude oil and petroleum products to be shipped worldwide only if they are purchased at or below an agreed price threshold.

"On the issue of the price cap, there are detailed discussions unfolding, particularly between the European Union and the United Kingdom and the United States," Sullivan said during a press gaggle aboard Air Force One enroute to Israel. "With respect to the modalities of this, the specifics of this, how this will work, that will continue to get refined, this is not a process that will be completed in days."

Sullivan said the proposed plan on a price cap on Russian oil will take time because of the number of elements that have to be worked through, but the United States has already been engaging with a number of key oil consuming countries, including China and India.

Sullivan declined to get into further details about the discussions on the plan because of the sensitivity of the matter.

In March, 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 European Union has said it will block most Russian oil imports by the end of 2022.

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US Would Like to See Consulate in Jerusalem - Sullivan

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The United States would like to see a consulate in Jerusalem, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Wednesday.

"We would like to see a consulate in Jerusalem, it requires engagement with both sides, we will continue this engagement," he told reporters aboard the Air Force One en route to Jerusalem, In September 2021, then-Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid called the possible reopening of the US consulate a "bad idea," which could send a wrong message and destabilize the region.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced in May that the US is planning to reopen its Jerusalem consulate exclusive to the Palestinian territories.

The US consulate had been operating in East Jerusalem for decades, being the country's de facto diplomatic mission for the Palestinians. Under the presidency of Donald Trump, it was merged with the US Embassy in Israel, which was moved to Jerusalem.

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RPT: PREVIEW - Biden to Visit Israel, Saudi Arabia With Oil, Iran, Normalization on Agenda

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden will visit Israel, the West Bank and Saudi Arabia on July 13-16 in an effort to reset engagement in the region by bolstering partnership with Israel, mending frayed relations with Saudi Arabia and rallying support of Gulf allies to ease surging oil prices.

The trip will "start a new and more promising chapter of America's engagement there," Biden said in an op-ed published Saturday in *The Washington Post*, adding that it "comes at a vital time for the region, and it will advance important American interests."

Biden will "reinforce the United States' iron-clad commitment to Israel's security and prosperity" and attend a summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council plus Egypt, Iraq, and Jordan (GCC+3), according to a release.

ISRAEL

Biden argued in his op-ed that the Middle East had become "more stable and secure" during the 18 months of his administration thus far. His visit will begin in Israel, where he will discuss its security, prosperity, and its increasing integration with the Middle East.

Biden said his administration had already "helped end a war in Gaza — which could easily have lasted months — in just 11 days," in reference to the events of May 2021. He also said it had "rebuilt U.S. ties" with Palestinians, restoring about \$500 million in aid. At the same time, it also approved more than \$4 billion in military aid to Israel in May — what Biden called the "largest support package for Israel ... in history."

The trip may also produce "interesting" announcements as the US is working to expand the Abraham Accords on normalization between Israel and Arab states, the State Department's top policy official for the Middle East said in June.

WEST BANK

On his second stop, Biden will meet with the Palestinian Authority president in the West Bank and "reiterate his strong support for a two-state solution," according to the White House.

SAUDI ARABIA

The US president's final stop will be in Jeddah, which is also the venue for the GCC gathering. The president is expected to try to recalibrate relations with Saudis amid speculation over a deepening political rift between the allies under the current US administration.

During his 2020 presidential campaign, Biden labeled Saudi Arabia a "pariah state" over what he said was the crown prince's purported role in the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. Media alleged that the differences have only deepened during the Ukraine crisis, which reportedly saw Saudi and Emirati leaders decline calls with Biden amid his effort to contain oil prices and reduce costs at the pump for Americans.

Biden's op-ed was titled "Why I'm Going to Saudi Arabia" in recognition of the "many who disagree" with his decision to travel there. The US president argued that his "aim was to reorient — but not rupture — relations with a country that's been a strategic partner for 80 years."

Biden said his administration had "reversed the blank-check policy we inherited," and taken actions to hold Saudi Arabia accountable for Khashoggi's murder, including declassifying the US intelligence community's report, issuing sanctions on the team that killed him and visa bans on those harassing other dissidents overseas. He also said his administration had advocated for US citizens wrongfully detained in Saudi Arabia before he took office, adding that they had since been released.

He argued that engaging directly with countries such as Saudi Arabia that could help counter Russian "aggression" and Chinese competition was critical to maintain the strength and security of the United States. He said his aim during his upcoming trip was to "strengthen a strategic partnership going forward that's based on mutual interests and responsibilities."

White House confirmed Thursday that Biden will have a bilateral meeting with Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and his leadership team, including Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. This would be Biden's first face-to-face meeting with the Saudi leadership since assuming the presidency.

The president is expected to address energy issues during the meeting. US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan has confirmed that Biden will also have the opportunity to discuss energy security with leaders of other OPEC nations, but declined to discuss specific details or what the administration deemed sufficient capacity in order to bring down gas prices. He said the administration believed it was necessary to have an "adequate supply in the global market" both to protect the global economy and American retail consumers, while noting there was no quick fix.

In his op-ed, Biden noted he would be the first US president to fly from Israel to Jeddah, calling it "a small symbol of the budding relations and steps toward normalization between Israel and the Arab world, which my administration is working to deepen and expand."

OTHER CHALLENGES

Biden noted that the Middle East still faced many challenges, including Iran's nuclear program and support for proxy groups, Syria's war, food security exacerbated by Russia's special operation in Ukraine, terrorism, human rights, and political gridlock in Iraq, Libya, and Lebanon. Regarding Iran, he said his administration had managed to regain pre-Trump alliances in order to isolate the country and would "continue to increase diplomatic and economic pressure" on Iran to resume compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal.

Biden argued that the region was nonetheless "less pressurized and more integrated" in the 18 months of his administration and he would seek to make progress in these various challenges during his meetings with regional leaders.

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Mexico to Invest \$1.5Bln on Infrastructure on US-Mexico Border in Next 3 Years - Statement

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - Mexico has committed to invest \$1.5 billion on infrastructure on the US-Mexico border over the next three years, US President Joe Biden and Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said in a joint statement.

"Mexico has committed to invest \$1.5 billion on border infrastructure between 2022 and 2024," Biden and Lopez Obrador said in the statement on Tuesday.

Biden's bipartisan infrastructure law includes \$3.4 billion to fund 26 major construction and modernization projects at US ports of entry on the southern and northern borders, the statement noted.

Moreover, the statement said Mexico will buy up to one million tons of fertilizer from the United States to distribute to subsistence farmers.

The United States and Mexico will hold a high-level dialogue in September that will focus on strengthening trade and commerce ties between the two countries, the statement added.

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Video Released of Uvalde School Shooting Shows Police Officers in Hallway for 77 Minutes

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The Austin Statesman newspaper obtained surveillance video of the shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, which showed police officers entering the schools minutes after the gunman but taking more than an hour to breach the classroom to take the suspect down.

The gunman killed 19 children and two teachers in the shooting at Robb Elementary School on May 24.

The video released on Tuesday starts off by showing the suspect crash his vehicle near Robb Elementary School and shooting at two men who were walking to the scene of the incident.

The gunman enters the school and walks down a hallway with an AR-15 rifle and then opens fire into a classroom as he walks inside.

The gunman is heard firing numerous rounds inside two classrooms for two and a half minutes. About seven police officers, including one armed with a rifle, are seen entering the school about three minutes after the gunman, the video shows. Three police officers move toward the classroom but retreat back to the end of the hallway after receiving gunfire.

More than a dozen heavily armed police officers, including US Border Patrol agents, are seen entering the school over the span of about an hour but making no real rescue attempt until 77 minutes after the gunman entered the school, according to the video footage.

The gunman can be heard firing several rounds inside the classroom as police officers waited at the end of the hallway to breach the classroom, the video shows.

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English Football Legend Wayne Rooney Becomes DC United Head Coach - Statement

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The former captain of the English national football team, Wayne Rooney, has become a new head coach of the DC United team based in Washington, where he spent two seasons as a player, the club said in a statement.

"DC United announced today that Wayne Rooney has been named as the club's new Head Coach," the statement said on Tuesday.

Rooney was a captain of the DC United team in the 2018 and 2019 football seasons.

Rooney needs a requisite visa to be able to work in the United States and until he receives it, interim coach Chad Ashton will remain in charge of the DC United team.

DC United Co-Chairmen Jason Leven and Steve Kaplan called Rooney a football legend who has an understanding of the the US Major League Soccer.

"The passion he showed while wearing Black-and-Red electrified our city and our club and we are so excited to welcome him back as our Head Coach," they said.

Rooney made his professional debut in Everton FC in England in 2002 at the age of 16. He was selected to play for the English national team a year later. Rooney has won 16 trophies during his career as a football player.

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Wall Street Near Bear-Market Territory Anticipating 'Elevated' June Inflation

NEW YORK, July 13 (Sputnik) - Wall Street tumbled on Tuesday, revisiting bear-market territory, as investors lightened their holdings of stocks ahead of the monthly release of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) report, which officials say was likely to show another elevated reading for June.

The S&P 500 index, representing the top 500 US stocks, closed down almost 2%, declining for a third day in a row. For the year, the Wall Street benchmark was down 20%. The S&P was also down 21% from its January record high of 4,818. By general market definition, any asset or index that is down 20% from its most recent peak is categorized as being in a bear market.

The Nasdaq Composite, which comprises marquee technology names such as Amazon, Apple, Netflix and Google, was the outlier of the three indices, also fell 1% on the day. For the year, the tech barometer was down 28%.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average, comprising stocks of 30 large US corporations, fell 0.6% on the day. For the year, it was down 15%.

US inflation has been persistently running at four-decade highs since late last year, with the closely-watched CPI growing at an annualized rate of 8.6% as of May. The June update, due on Wednesday, is expected to show a 8.8% increase.

The Federal Reserve's tolerance for inflation is 2% per year and the central bank has vowed to raise interest rates as much as necessary to achieve that.

"The June inflation report will be a scorcher and help cement market expectations that the Fed will deliver another massive rate hike at the Fed policy meeting at the end of the month," Ed Moya, analyst at online trading platform OANDA, said.

Many economists has said the Federal Reserve kept rates "too low for too long" and could push the United States into a recession in its fight to bring inflation under control quickly.

US gross domestic product already declined 1.6% in the first quarter. A negative second quarter GDP is all that is decided to send it into recession.

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Twitter Sues Musk to Compel Him to Complete \$44Bln Acquisition Deal - Court Document

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - Twitter filed a lawsuit against Tesla CEO Elon Musk to compel him to fulfill his legal obligations and complete the \$44 billion deal to acquire the social media company, court documents revealed.

"In April 2022, Elon Musk entered into a binding merger agreement with Twitter, promising to use his best efforts to get the deal done. Now, less than three months later, Musk refuses to honor his obligations to Twitter and its stockholders because the deal he signed no longer serves his personal interests," Twitter said in the complaint on Tuesday. "Twitter brings this action to enjoin Musk from further breaches, to compel Musk to fulfill his legal obligations, and to compel consummation of the merger upon satisfaction of the few outstanding conditions."

Twitter further said Musk has committed a long list of material contractual breaches that have cast a pall over the company and its business.

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Ex-US National Security Advisor Bolton Says Helped Plan Coups as They Take 'Lot of Work'

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - Former US National Security Advisor under the Trump administration John Bolton said in an interview on Tuesday that he has planned coups d'etat in other countries and knows that the process takes "a lot of work."

Bolton's comment came in defense of the practice of conducting coups d'etat and in recognition of their difficulty after CNN anchor Jake Tapper argued that it does not require brilliance to attempt a coup.

"I disagree with that as somebody who has helped plan coups d'etat - not here, but you know, other places - it takes a lot of work," Bolton said on Tuesday.

Bolton was discussing accusations that former president Donald Trump planned a coup to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election, ultimately resulting in some protesters breaching the US Capitol on January 6, 2021.

Bolton said Trump "stumbled around" to buy time to send electoral matters back to the US states for review but did not attempt to overthrow the Constitution.

The US Select Committee that is investigating Trump's role in the January 6 events risks overreacting by believing that Trump planned to effect a coup, he added.

Bolton wrote a book - "The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir" - following his time working with Trump. The book's publication was initially blocked by a US Justice Department probe into whether it contained classified information, but lawsuits against Bolton over the material were dropped by the Biden administration.

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January 6 Committee Presents Evidence Linking Trump Rhetoric to Supporters' Actions

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - The US House Select Committee investigating the events at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, on Tuesday held its seventh public hearing to present evidence linking former President Donald Trump's rhetoric about the 2020 election and the January 6 protest to his supporters' actions.

The panel heard from two witnesses, Stephen Ayers and former Oathkeepers spokesman Jason Van Tatenhove. Ayers testified to his experience following Trump via social media and eventually attending the rally on January 6. Van Tatenhove recounted his time working for the Oathkeepers, which he claimed radicalized further to the political right over time.

"For me personally, I was pretty hardcore into the social media," Ayers said. "I followed President Trump on all the websites. He basically put out, 'come to the Stop the Steal rally,' and I felt like I needed to be down here."

Ayers said the group he went with, which was not associated with any particular organization, did not initially plan on going to the US Capitol that day, but joined the march after Trump called to do so in his speech on January 6. The group then left the Capitol immediately after Trump tweeted asking supporters to leave.

Van Tatenhove, who worked as a spokesman for the Oathkeepers before eventually leaving and condemning the group, said that its leadership believed Trump could legitimize them as a paramilitary organization using the Insurrection Act - an 1807 law authorizing the president to call up militia troops to suppress civil disorder or rebellion.

The Oathkeepers radicalized further to the political right over his time working for them, eventually leading Van Tatenhove to leave the group after hearing members engaged in Holocaust denial, according to his testimony.

"I think we need to quit mincing words and just talk about truths, and what it was going to be was an armed revolution," Van Tatenhove said. "This could've been the spark that started a new civil war, and no one would have won there."

The Select Committee also showed online social media activity following Trump's announcement of the January 6 rally, including allusions to violence against law enforcement and white nationalist rhetoric.

An anonymous Twitter moderation employee interviewed by the panel said they had concerns about Trump's rhetoric and the potential for violence leading up to January 6. Trump's position as president kept him not banned from the social media platform longer than others would have been, the employee said.

The Select Committee also showed portions of former White House legal counsel Pat Cipollone, who expressed disagreements with Trump and several of his associates about the veracity of the claims that the 2020 presidential election was fraudulent.

The panel heard the testimony as part of its seventh public hearing in a series meant to showcase an alleged plot by Trump to overturn the 2020 election results.

Trump has condemned the committee's work, calling the panel "Unselet Committee" and arguing that the hearings are a show trial intended to score political points before midterm elections in November.

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'Restrictive' US Interest Rates Needed as CPI Seen Elevated for June - Fed Official

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - US interest rates need to be high enough to restrict inflation, which is seen rising again in the June Consumer Price Index (CPI) report due on Wednesday, the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond President Tom Barkin said.

"Rates will almost certainly need to be raised into restrictive territory," Barkin told a live-streamed event on Tuesday. "Another elevated CPI report is expected."

Inflation in the United States has been persistently running at four-decade highs since late last year, with the closely-watched CPI growing at an annualized rate of 8.6% as of May. The June update, due on Wednesday, is expected to show a 8.8% increase.

The Federal Reserve's tolerance for inflation is 2% per year and it has vowed to raise interest rates as much as necessary to hit that target.

The Federal Reserve left interest rates at between zero and 0.25% for two years during the coronavirus pandemic and only raised them this year in March this year. It began with a hike of 25 basis points, or quarter-percentage point, then raised it by 50 basis points, or a half percentage point, in May. In June, it imposed an increase of 75 basis points, or three quarters of a percentage point - its highest in 28 years - bringing current rates to between 1.5% and 1.75%. Most economists have said they expect the US central bank to impose another 75 basis point hike for this month. The Federal Reserve has more interest rate revision opportunities before the year ends.

Barkin declined to be pulled into speculating what the July interest rate hike will be.

"We will reserve our decision on a 50bps or 75bps hike until the July meeting," he said. "I expect a lot of volatility in inflation before it settles down."

Barkin reiterated the Federal Reserve's view that it was not out to crash the economy with high interest rate hikes, although it needed to slow demand to bring prices lower.

"I would take seriously a negative second quarter GDP figure," he said. "I definitely see signs of economic softening, particularly among low-income consumers, in goods sectors that experienced pandemic demand spikes."

Many economists have said the Federal Reserve kept interest rates "too low for too long" and could push the United States into a recession in its fight to bring inflation under control quickly. US gross domestic product already declined 1.6% in the first quarter. A negative second quarter GDP is all that is decided to send it into recession.

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US Economy Faces More Difficulties in Calibrating Inflation to Avoid Recession - IMF

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) Board of Directors said on Tuesday that the US economy faces additional difficulties as the authorities try to calibrate the response to runaway inflation and avoid a recession.

"The directors recognized that calibrating the response to inflation comes with high stakes and that misjudging the policy mix - in either direction - will result in sizable costs at home and negative spillovers to the global economy," the IMF said in a statement. "They concurred that avoiding a recession in the United States is becoming increasingly challenging and that the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the lingering COVID-19 pandemic and supply side constraints create additional challenges."

The IMF issued the statement upon the conclusion of the so-called Article IV consultations with the United States.

The IMF praised the resilience of the US financial system and the Federal Reserve efforts to maintain the smooth functioning of the financial markets, the statement read.

"In this context, the directors encouraged the authorities to implement the remaining FSAP [Financial Sector Assessment Program] recommendations to further strengthen the financial system," the statement said.

The IMF recommended that the US government roll back its trade restrictions and tariff increases it had introduced over the past five years as well as to work actively with trading partners to strengthen the rules-based multilateral trading system centered around the World Trade Organization, the statement added.

The IMF warned that despite a quick recovery from the coronavirus pandemic and the relatively positive effects of the policy stimulus, the US economy continues to face significant inflation challenges caused by rising energy prices and ongoing global supply disruptions.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) -

UKRAINE DEVELOPMENTS

* Ukrainian ambassador to the Netherlands Maksym Kononenko said on Tuesday that the Hague will host an international conference on July 14 involving 20 foreign ministers and judiciary to ensure legal justice in Ukraine and render Kiev practical assistance, while not specifying which states are intending to join the event.

* The EU intends to allocate an additional 500 million euros (\$500 million) for military assistance to Ukraine through a special fund, within which an allocation of two billion euros has already been agreed, European External Action Service (EEAS) Secretary General Stefano Sannino said.

* Poland is trying to cover up its expansion into Western Ukraine by deploying massive camouflage propaganda for this, the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) said.

UK POLITICAL CRISIS

* Outgoing UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government will block the opposition's bid to hold a vote of no confidence in the conservative UK cabinet, the Daily Mirror newspaper reported on Tuesday.

* The registration of candidates for the post of UK Prime Minister has been completed, eight applicants will compete for the post in the first round of voting, all of them managed to secure support of at least 20 members of the Conservative faction of the UK House of Commons.

GLOBAL ENERGY MARKETS

* Moscow and Brasilia are actively negotiating the supply of Russian energy, Russian Ambassador to Brazil Alexey Labetskiy said.

* The oil production in OPEC countries has increased by 234,000 barrels per day to 28.7 million barrels per day in June, the OPEC report said.

* OPEC still expects the oil and condensate production in Russia to decrease by 0.2 million barrels per day in 2022, according to its report.

* OPEC has kept its forecast on the world oil demand growth in 2022 unchanged and still expects it to reach 3.4 million barrels per day, according to a new report.

FOOD SECURITY

* Food security will feature prominently at the upcoming second Russia-Africa Summit, the Russian Foreign Ministry's ambassador-at-large Oleg Ozerov said on Tuesday.

* A way to go still remains in order to achieve an agreement between Russia and Ukraine on exporting grain and fertilizers to the global markets, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in an update the situation.

* A meeting of military delegations of Turkey, Russia, Ukraine, and the UN to discuss the grain exports issue will take place in Istanbul on July 13, Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said.

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RPT - Canada Telecom Regulator Orders Rogers to Provide Detailed Explanation for Outage (Repeats to include date in para 5)

OTTAWA, July 12 (Sputnik) - The Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) on Tuesday issued a statement that it has ordered Rogers Communication to provide a thorough explanation about the nationwide outage last week that affected the network.

"Today, the CRTC ordered Rogers Communications Canada Inc. (Rogers) to respond to detailed questions and provide a comprehensive explanation regarding the national service outage millions of Canadians experienced on Friday July 8, 2022," the statement said. "The

CRTC is requesting a detailed account from Rogers as to 'why' and 'how' this happened, as well as what measures Rogers is putting in place to prevent future outages."

The telecommunications regulator has given Rogers until July 22 to provide all the requested explanations after which it will evaluate them and take further steps as necessary.

On Monday, Minister of Innovation, Science, and Industry Francois-Philippe Champagne met with the heads of the major telecommunication companies to agree on a worksheet for future outages, such as mutual assistance, emergency roaming and closer cooperation the public and authorities.

On July 8, Rogers, a telecommunications giant with more than 10 million wireless subscribers and 2 million internet customers, reported a massive 19-hour outage that affected the entire Canadian network and brought the systems of police, banks, and businesses offline.

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Webb Telescope Images Show Benefits of Scientific Collaboration - Space Foundation

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - The newly released images taken by the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) demonstrate how scientific collaboration can expand our understanding of the universe, Space Foundation CEO Tom Zelibor said on Tuesday. "On behalf of the Space Foundation team, I congratulate all the global partners from the government, industry and research communities on the tremendous success of the JWST team," Zelibor said in a statement. "Collectively, these partners have shown us what great things are possible when we work together to better understand the universes that surround us. We cannot wait to see what they share next."

On Monday and Tuesday, NASA, the European Space Agency and Canadian Space Agency released some of the first images captured by the JWST, the largest and most powerful telescope ever launched into space.

"What the global JWST team revealed to us with the release of these first images has opened an entirely new chapter of knowledge and inspiration that will forever change our lives and history," Zelibor said. "Like its predecessor Hubble, JWST will transform astronomy and space science while delivering new inspiration and imagination to every generation and corner of our planet. This is another unparalleled achievement for the global space community."

NASA, the ESA and CSA collaborated to launch the telescope into space on December 25, 2021. Since then the telescope has traveled some 1.5 million kilometers away from Earth.

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RPT: PREVIEW - Biden to Visit Israel, Saudi Arabia With Oil, Iran, Normalization on Agenda

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden will visit Israel, the West Bank and Saudi Arabia on July 13-16 in an effort to reset engagement in the region by bolstering partnership with Israel, mending frayed relations with Saudi Arabia and rallying support of Gulf allies to ease surging oil prices.

The trip will "start a new and more promising chapter of America's engagement there," Biden said in an op-ed published Saturday in The Washington Post, adding that it "comes at a vital time for the region, and it will advance important American interests."

Biden will "reinforce the United States' iron-clad commitment to Israel's security and prosperity" and attend a summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council plus Egypt, Iraq, and Jordan (GCC+3), according to a release.

ISRAEL

Biden argued in his op-ed that the Middle East had become "more stable and secure" during the 18 months of his administration thus far. His visit will begin in Israel, where he will discuss its security, prosperity, and its increasing integration with the Middle East.

Biden said his administration had already "helped end a war in Gaza — which could easily have lasted months — in just 11 days," in reference to the events of May 2021. He also said it had "rebuilt U.S. ties" with Palestinians, restoring about \$500 million in aid. At the same time, it also approved more than \$4 billion in military aid to Israel in May — what Biden called the "largest support package for Israel ... in history."

The trip may also produce "interesting" announcements as the US is working to expand the Abraham Accords on normalization between Israel and Arab states, the State Department's top policy official for the Middle East said in June.

WEST BANK

On his second stop, Biden will meet with the Palestinian Authority president in the West Bank and "reiterate his strong support for a two-state solution," according to the White House.

SAUDI ARABIA

The US president's final stop will be in Jeddah, which is also the venue for the GCC gathering. The president is expected to try to recalibrate relations with Saudis amid speculation over a deepening political rift between the allies under the current US administration.

During his 2020 presidential campaign, Biden labeled Saudi Arabia a "pariah state" over what he said was the crown prince's purported role in the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. Media alleged that the differences have only deepened during the Ukraine crisis, which reportedly saw Saudi and Emirati leaders decline calls with Biden amid his effort to contain oil prices and reduce costs at the pump for Americans.

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First Webb Images of Jupiter Out This Week, More 'Sensational' Photographs Coming - NASA

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - NASA is going to release the first images of Jupiter taken by the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) later this week and they will be followed by lots more "sensational" images already recorded and transmitted to earth, space agency officials told a press conference at the Goddard Space Flight Center in Beltsville, Maryland on Tuesday. "We have already pointed [the Webb Telescope] at Jupiter," NASA astrophysicist Jane Rigby told reporters. "There are programs to study Jupiter as well [in the first year of telescope operations] ... The first Jupiter images will go public this week and they are beautiful." European Space Agency scientist Klaus von Pontoppidan said the Jupiter and other Solar System images would be released on Thursday this week and that would be remarkable. "There have already been solar system observations taken. These will be released on Thursday. No doubt we will be seeing sensational things in the Solar System soon," he said. Canadian Space Agency exoplanets expert Professor Rene Doyon told the press conference the telescope would focus on far off images of the earliest observable galaxies in the Universe and that unexpected new discoveries were certain to come in great numbers with "a lot of surprises" among them.

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Two Foreign Nationals Charged for Allegedly Laundering Money From PDVSA - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - Two foreign nationals have been charged for allegedly laundering money that was corruptly obtained from Venezuelan energy firm Petroleos de Venezuela SA (PDVSA), the US Department of Justice said on Tuesday. "Two financial asset managers have been charged with money laundering as part of a \$1.2 billion international scheme to launder funds corruptly obtained from Venezuela's state-owned

and state-controlled energy company, Petroleos de Venezuela S.A. (PDVSA)," the Justice Department said in a press release.

Ralph Steinmann, 48, of Switzerland, and Luis Fernando Vuteff, 51, of Argentina, each face one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering and if convicted could face up to 20 years in prison, the release said.

Vuteff has been arrested and is pending extradition to the United States from Switzerland, but Steinmann remains at large, the release said.

The release said that between December 2014 and August 2018, Steinmann and Vuteff allegedly laundered more than \$200 million in the US financial system and through various bank accounts abroad. They also opened accounts for at least two Venezuelan public officials so they could receive bribe payments related to the scheme, the release added.

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UN Condemns Attack on Chasiv Yar, Yet Makes No Mention of Nova Kakhovka

UNITED NATIONS, July 12 (Sputnik) - The acting UN humanitarian coordinator for Ukraine condemned on Tuesday the missile attack on Chasiv Yar in the Donetsk region, but did not mention the attack on Nova Kakhovka in the Russian-controlled Kherson region.

"I am appalled by the latest attack that hit a municipal dormitory for vulnerable people in the town of Chasiv Yar in Donetska oblast, on the evening of 9 July. At least 34 civilians were killed, including a child, when the building where they had been seeking shelter was hit and collapsed. Another nine people were rescued from the debris and are now hospitalized," Sebastian Rhodes Stampa said.

On Saturday, the Russian Defense Ministry said that in a high-precision strike in Chasiv Yar, it had destroyed a warehouse storing US-made 155-mm M777 howitzers and up to 30 Ukrainian militants who were shelling residential areas of Donetsk.

On Monday night, Ukrainian forces struck Nova Kakhovka, leaving seven people dead and about 40 injured. The attack caused explosions at warehouses with saltpeter and damaged a hospital, residential houses, a church and other buildings. The attack was carried out using the US-supplied multiple rocket launcher HIMARS (High Mobility Artillery Rocket System), according to local authorities.

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US Army Takes Possession of First M270A2 Multiple Launch Rocket System - Lockheed Martin

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - Lockheed Martin has handed over its first operational Multiple Rocket Launch System (MLRS) to the US Army, the company announced in a press release on Tuesday.

"Lockheed Martin delivered the first Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) M270A2 launcher to the US Army in a ceremony today at the Precision Fires Center of Excellence in Camden, Arkansas," the release said.

The company is working in partnership with the Red River Army Depot to upgrade the launcher with a more powerful new 600 horsepower engine, an improved armored cab and Common Fire Control System, the release said.

"This upgrade provides compatibility with future munitions like the Extended-Range GMLRS and the Precision Strike Missile (PrSM). The complete restoration ensures the M270-series launcher remains highly effective and reliable to serve the US Army and partner nations through 2050," the release said.

The MLRS can be carried on heavy military airlift carriers and are designed to destroy artillery, air defense concentrations, trucks, light armor and personnel carriers at greater distances than previously possible and to be able to relocate at high speed, the release added.

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Maryland Man Found Guilty of Felony on January 6-Related Charges - US Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - A Maryland man, who was one of the first people to enter the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, has been found guilty on a felony charge of destruction of government property and on six misdemeanor offenses, the US Justice Department said on Tuesday.

"On Jan. 6, 2021, (Nicholas) Rodean illegally entered the grounds of the Capitol. He was part of a group of rioters who pushed past law enforcement officers stationed on terrace stairs next to scaffolding set up on the northwest side of the building," the Justice Department said in a press release. "After getting to the top of the stairs, this group pushed past additional officers and bike racks, reaching an area just outside a door to the Senate Wing of the Capitol Building."

Some protesters began attacking the door and adjacent large windows of the Capital building and Rodean joined in, breaking glass in a window next to a door with a flagpole and a small round object, then climbed inside the building, the release said.

Rodean, 28, of Frederick, Maryland, and a small group of protesters ran up two flights of stairs chasing a Capitol Police officer and walked along a hallway, known as the Ohio Clock corridor, near the Senate Chamber, where he stayed for more than half an hour. He caused more than \$1,000 in damage to the windows - a felony offense.

Rodean was arrested on January 13, 2021, in Washington, DC and will be sentenced on October 21. The felony destruction of government property charge carries a statutory maximum of ten years in prison and potential financial penalties. The six misdemeanor offenses carry a combined statutory maximum of 54 months in prison and potential financial penalties.

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Oil Tumbles \$8 in Second Major Drop in a Week That Sends Barrel Below \$100

NEW YORK, July 12 (Sputnik) - Crude prices tumbled more than \$8 a barrel at the height of Tuesday's selloff after the dollar's surge to a two-decade peak and new social and business restrictions put in place by China to fight fresh coronavirus infections from the Omicron subvariant threatened to send oil below \$90 a barrel.

New York-traded West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude was down \$8.16, or almost 8%, to \$96.30 a barrel by 2:00 PM ET (18:00 GMT). The US crude benchmark plumbed a session low \$95.83, after losing more than \$8 at one point. It was the second major drop in WTI since a \$10 drop the previous Tuesday. WTI has also lost more than 9% since the start of July.

London-traded Brent crude was down \$7.31, or 6.8%, to \$99.79, after a session bottom of \$99.48. The US crude benchmark has lost more than 8% since this month began.

"Seven percent down moves in a day is big," John Kilduff, partner at New York energy hedge Again Capital, said in an email seen by Sputnik, where he referred to Tuesday's action. "Will some of this get retraced? I have to believe that. But we have a nice downtrend. The two-day moving average is in the neighborhood of \$88."

The Dollar Index, which pits the US currency against six other majors, hit its highest since 2002, reaching almost 109 points. The dollar has rallied with few stops since November on bets that the Federal Reserve will aggressively raise US interest rates through 2022 and past spring of next year to tame inflation growing at its fastest in four decades.

A stronger dollar typically makes commodities priced in the currency, which includes crude, more expensive for non-dollar holders.

In China, coronavirus measures put in place to curb more infections from the highly infectious BA.5.2.1 subvariant of the Omicron led to fears over growth and demand for oil in the world's second largest economy.

This month's selloff in oil has placed global oil exporters' alliance OPEC+ in a spot it hasn't been in for most of this year.

After a 17% drop in November, Brent tacked on a compounded 54% between December and May, rallying six months non-stop mostly on the Western sanctions imposed on Russia over the Ukraine conflict.

That uptrend was broken finally by June's near 6% drop on fears of a potential US recession. July's declines have added to the downward momentum, with Brent's \$99.31 low on Tuesday coming almost 30% below its March peak of \$139 that technically placed it in a bear market.

The White House on Monday pressured OPEC+ to put out even more oil, saying it believed the 23-nation oil exporters alliance had the capacity to do so.

"We do believe there is a capacity for further steps that could be taken," White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said days before US President Joe Biden is set to visit the Middle East, where he will hold talks with leaders of the top OPEC oil producers.

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Canada's Chrystia Freeland to Attend G20 Finance Ministers Meeting in Bali - Statement

OTTAWA, July 12 (Sputnik) - Canada's Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland is set to attend the G20 Finance Ministers meeting in Bali, Indonesia, from July 15-16, the Ministry of Finance said on Tuesday.

"This week, on July 15 and 16, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the Honourable Chrystia Freeland, will participate in the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting in Bali, Indonesia," the Ministry of Finance said in a news release.

Canada's agenda at the G20 Finance Ministers meeting include Russia's ongoing special military operation in Ukraine, the release said.

"Canada and our allies will use these meetings to continue standing up for the rules-based international order as we work together to hold Russia accountable for its barbaric invasion of Ukraine," Freeland was quoted as saying in the release.

Other items of discussion include what Canada calls "key priorities" like reducing inflation, ensuring post-pandemic international tax fairness and economic recovery and climate change, the release said.

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Biden Vows to Be 'Relentless' in Bringing to Justice Terrorists Threatening US

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden on Tuesday promised to bring to justice terrorists who threaten the United States and its interests after the US military conducted airstrike that killed a leader of the Islamic State terror group (banned in Russia).

Earlier in the day, the US Central Command said it conducted an airstrike in northwest Syria that killed the leader of the Islamic State in that country, Maher al-Agal.

"His [al-Agal's] death in Syria takes a key terrorist off the field and significantly degrades the ability of ISIS to plan, resource, and conduct their operations in the region," Biden said in a press release. "And, like the US operation in February that eliminated ISIS's [Islamic State's] overall leader, it sends a powerful message to all terrorists who threaten our homeland and our interests around the world. The United States will be relentless in its efforts to bring you to justice."

Biden also said that Tuesday's airstrike demonstrates the United States does not require thousands of troops in combat missions to identify and eliminate threats to its interests. In June, US forces killed a senior leader of the al-Qaeda-linked terror group Hurras al-Din (banned in Russia), Abu Hamzah al Yemeni, in a drone strike in Syria.

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Brazil Says Depends on Fertilizers From Russia - Foreign Minister

UNITED NATIONS, July 12 (Sputnik) - Brazil's Foreign Minister Carlos Alberto Franca said on Tuesday that Brazil depends on fertilizers from Russia and confirmed that Brazil wants to buy less costly Russian diesel fuel.

"We are partners at BRICS. We rely heavily on fertilizer exports from Russia," Franca said after a debate on peacekeeping held by Brazil at the United Nations.

The Foreign Minister also said Brazil has to make sure it has enough diesel for its agriculture needs and intends to buy as much fuel as possible.

"Russia is a great provider of oil and gas," Franca added.

On Monday, Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro announced his country intends to buy less expensive diesel from Russia.

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Democrat Lawmakers Push Biden to Support \$650Bln in IMF Aid for Ukraine Impact - Reports WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - Democrats in the US Senate and House of Representatives are pushing President Joe Biden and his administration to support \$650 billion in aid from International Monetary Fund (IMF) reserve assets for Ukraine and other countries impacted by Russia's special military operation, Bloomberg reported on Tuesday, citing a letter the lawmakers sent to Biden.

The letter, which was also sent to Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, called on the Biden administration to support an injection of at least \$650 billion in assistance funding for Ukraine and other countries impacted by the secondary effects of the situation there using IMF special drawing rights (SDRs), the report said.

The funding would support countries experiencing issues such as rising energy prices and food shortages, the report said.

Signatories of the letter include Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal and Senators Elizabeth Warren, Patrick Leahy and Ron Wyden, the report said.

The IMF created a \$650 billion in SDRs to address challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, but Ukraine already used its share of the funds, the report said.

The United States would have to propose the new SDR creation to the IMF board - an action the Biden administration can take without congressional approval, the report added.

The action would require support from 85% of the IMF's voting share, held by 190 member economies, according to the report.

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US First Lady Jill Biden Faces Criticism for Saying Latinos as Unique as Breakfast Tacos

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - First Lady Jill Biden is facing significant criticism from a wide range of people and organizations for saying the Latino residents of the United States are as unique as breakfast tacos - the traditional Mexican food that consists of a tortilla topped with a filling.

The First Lady said on Monday during a speech in praise of civil rights activist Raul Yzaguirre that the diversity of the Latino community is as unique as the breakfast tacos in San Antonio, Texas.

Shortly afterwards, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists took to social media to encourage the First lady and her communications team "to take time to better understand the complexities of our people and communities."

"We are not tacos. Our heritage as Latinos is shaped by various diasporas, cultures and food traditions. Do not reduce us to stereotypes," the statement said.

US Senator Marco Rubio, himself of Cuban origin, changed in protest his profile picture on the social media platform Twitter to a taco.

"New Profile Pic," Rubio wrote.

US Congressman Andy Biggs, a Republican from Arizona, was among many who also criticized Biden's comment, alluding to the exodus of Latinos from the Democratic Party due to their dissatisfaction of how they are being treated in addition to the difficult socio-economic situation.

"No wonder Hispanics are fleeing the Democratic Party!" Biggs said via Twitter.

Meanwhile, Biden's press service sought to defuse the criticism by offering an apology for her statement.

"The First Lady apologizes that her words conveyed anything but pure admiration and love for the Latino community," Michael LaRosa, Biden's press secretary, said via Twitter.

The First Lady's controversial remark comes as President Joe Biden's approval rating has hit an all time low ahead of the midterm elections in November. The comment also comes as Biden and his Mexican counterpart Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador are due to meet on Tuesday amid declining bilateral relations.

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Intel Urges US Congress to Pass CHIPS Act to Fund Semiconductors Industry Amid Shortage

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - Intel CEO Pat Gelsinger on Tuesday called upon the US Congress to rapidly pass the CHIPS Act to fund the American semiconductor manufacturing capacity amid widespread shortages following the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I think it's embarrassing that the US has started this process [funding in semiconductors industry] a full year before the Europeans and the complex 27-member state Europeans have moved forward more rapidly," Gelsinger said in an event hosted by the Washington Post. "There is good support [among] Republicans, Democrats, bicameral, that CHIPS [Act] needs to get done ... But we're stuck in a complex political process ... We need this done now."

Gelsinger pointed out that back in 1990, about 40% of the semiconductor industry was located in the United States alongside a similar share in Europe, while today 80% of this industry is in Asia, and just 12% in the United States and 8% in Europe.

Earlier in the day, Gelsinger said in a tweet that Intel is ready to start building its new semiconductor mega-factory in Ohio once the Congress acts on the CHIPS Act.

"Ten days ago, we took delivery of the land in Ohio for our new Mega fab. We have equipment in place and have started prep work for beginning major construction, but ... we are still waiting on Congress to act," the tweet said.

The CHIPS Act is aimed at boosting American semiconductor capacity and stimulating the flow of private capital investment in the semiconductor industry. If enacted, the Act would provide American-based chip manufacturers with \$52 billion in grants and subsidies.

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Obrador Offers Americans Living Close to Border to Come in Mexico for Cheaper Gasoline
WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador on Tuesday offered Americans who live close to the US border with Mexico to enter his country and purchase gasoline at lower prices than that sold in the United States.

"Since the energy crisis started, Mexico has used 72 percent of its crude oil exports to the United States," Obrador said. "While we're waiting for prices or gasoline to go down in the United States, we have decided that it was necessary for us to allow Americans who live close to the border... to go and get their gasoline on the Mexican side at lower prices."

Obrador made the remarks before his bilateral meeting with US President Joe Biden at the White House.

Over the past months, the United States has been experiencing accelerating inflation, which the Biden administration has dubbed "Putin's price hike" and blamed on many additional factors. However, the majority of Americans see inflation as a result of the Biden administration policies and consider it the top problem, given the increasing energy, food and other prices cutting deep into consumer's spending power.

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Former South Carolina Sheriff, Two Deputies Going to Prison for Abuse of Office - DOJ

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) – Three former South Carolina law enforcement officers were sentenced, among other things, for enriching themselves, obstructing justice, unlawfully detaining a man who filmed their response to an accident, and using on-duty employees from the sheriff's office to do manual labor or other services, the US Department of Justice said Tuesday.

"Former Chester County Sheriff George Alexander Underwood, 59, of Chester; Chief Deputy Robert Andrew Sprouse, 47, of Ridgeway; and former Chester County Sheriff's Office Lieutenant Johnny Ricardo Neal Jr., 42, of Lancaster, were convicted of conspiracy to violate federal law and to commit federal program theft in April 2021 following a 10-day jury trial," prosecutors said. "Underwood and Neal were additionally convicted of deprivation of rights and wire fraud. Sprouse and Neal were additionally convicted of falsifying records, and Sprouse was found guilty of making false statements."

Prosecutors said Underwood, Sprouse, and Neal conspired to use their positions to steal money and then attempted to cover up their illegal actions and hinder investigations into what they had done.

As it relates to the incident where a citizen filmed sheriff's officers response to a crash scene, prosecutors said that on November 20, 2018, Neal and Underwood violated the Chester County resident's rights and arrested and detained him without cause.

When the FBI began investigating these civil rights violations, Sprouse and Neal created false incident reports, while Sprouse made false statements to the FBI to cover up the officers' misconduct. Prosecutors also said that the trio used on-duty employees from the Sheriff's Office to do manual labor or other services that benefited Underwood and Sprouse. This included having the employees assist with extensive renovations of a barn on Underwood's property adding a bar, a television viewing area, and other amenities to the space.

At different times, Underwood and Sprouse also took their families on a trip to a conference in Reno, Nevada, and charged the costs to the sheriff's office. In addition, Underwood and Neal stole money from payments owed to other sheriff's office employees for off-duty work at public safety checkpoints, prosecutors explained.

The men were fired from the Chester County Sheriff's Office in May 2019 after they were indicted by a federal grand jury. Underwood and Neal were each sentenced to 46 months, and Sprouse was sentenced to two years in prison.

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Webb Telescope Finds Water on Distant Gas Giant Exoplanet, Starts New Era - NASA

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - The James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) orbiting one million miles from Earth has captured the signature of water on a giant gas planet which orbits a star 1,150 light years away, first images from the telescope released by NASA revealed on Tuesday.

"JWST has captured the distinct signature of water, along with evidence for clouds and haze, in the atmosphere surrounding a hot, puffy gas giant planet orbiting a distant Sun-like star," NASA said in a press release. NASA identified the planet as WAP-96 b.

The image is the most detailed of its kind ever taken and it confirms the JWST's unprecedented ability to analyze atmospheres hundreds of light-years away, NASA said.

The space agency described the impact of the first Webb images as "the dawn of a new era in astronomy."

Another image, called by NASA "Cosmic Cliffs and Sea of Stars," reveals baby stars in the Carina Nebula where ultraviolet radiation and stellar winds shape colossal walls of dust and gas," the space agency said.

On Monday, NASA released a Webb image of galaxy cluster SMACS 0723, known as Webb's First Deep Field that was revealed personally by President Joe Biden during a White House event, filled with thousands of galaxies including the faintest objects ever observed in the infrared.

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Russia Says Won't Object to Extending Syria Cross-Border Aid If Effort to Help 'Genuine'

UNITED NATIONS, July 12 (Sputnik) - Russia is ready to consider the extension of cross-border aid mechanism for Syria in January if it sees genuine efforts from UN Security Council members to help the Arab republic, deputy Russian envoy to the UN Dmitry Polyanskiy said Tuesday. "Depends on the collective work of the Council. We specifically made several safeguards this: IID [Informal Interactive Dialogue], Secretary-General Report. If there are genuine efforts to improve the humanitarian assistance to Syria, I don't think that anyone should worry about it," Polyanskiy said after the UNSC vote.

Earlier in the day, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution to extend humanitarian aid delivery to Syria through the Bab al-Hawa border crossing from Turkey. Twelve member states voted in favor, with the US, the UK and France abstaining. The three nations wanted to extend cross-border deliveries by 12 months. Russia was prepared to adopt extension for just six-month period.

The current resolution allows for an extension for another six months in January if all members agree on a new resolution.

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Paul Whelan Thanks Biden for Continued Support While Serving Sentence in Russia - Family

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - Paul Whelan, who is serving a 16-year prison sentence in Russia for espionage, has thanked President Joe Biden for his continued support, the Whelan family said in a statement on Tuesday.

"Paul was able to communicate through a phone call yesterday to our parents his thanks to President Biden for reaffirming the administration's commitment to secure Paul's release and bring him home [7/11/2022]. Paul also thanked Secretary of State [Antony] Blinken and National Security Advisor [Jake] Sullivan for their continued focus on his case," the statement said.

On Wednesday, the Whelan family expressed frustration that Biden did not call them but solely spoke with the relatives of US basketball player Brittney Griner, who is tried in Russia on

charges of drug possession and sought help in her case by writing a letter to the White House. Paul's family accused the Biden administration of inaction and lack of concern for his case. Following the criticism, Biden called the Whelans on Saturday.

In addition, the Whelans expressed gratitude to former US Ambassador to the United Nations Bill Richardson for his efforts to release Whelan.

"Richardson... has indicated that he is traveling to Moscow to attempt to secure Paul's release, as well as that of Brittney Griner's," the statement said.

The Whelans expressed hope US officials will act more decisively and create additional shared understandings on which both, the US and Russian governments can move closer to resolving Paul's case.

Paul Whelan is serving his sentence in Russia's Mordovia region after a Moscow court sentenced him to 16 years in June 2020 on charges of espionage. He has denied the charges but did not challenge the verdict in the hope of being part of a potential prisoner exchange between the US and Russia.

The charges in Whelan's case were not disclosed, but a press release from Russia's Federal Security Service said he was detained in Moscow at the end of 2018 during a counter-espionage operation.

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Democrats in US Senate Introduce Bill Protecting Interstate Travel for Abortions

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - Democrats in the US Senators introduced a bill to protect the women's ability to travel across state lines in the United States to receive an abortion, according to a copy of the measure released on Tuesday.

"It shall be unlawful for any person or government to... restrict or in [any] way sanction, hold liable, discriminate against, or otherwise disadvantage any individual from traveling to another state to receive reproductive healthcare," the bill said.

The legislation, dubbed Freedom to Travel for Health Care Act of 2022, would also protect the ability of entities such as nonprofit organizations to assist individuals in traveling to US states where abortion is permitted, according to the bill text.

It would be the responsibility of the US Attorney General to commence civil action against any state or person acting under the color of law in violation of the interstate travel protections, the bill said. The legislation would likewise allow private legal action by individuals, it added.

The bill was introduced by US Senator Catherine Cortez Masto and co-sponsored by Kirsten Gillibrand, Amy Klobuchar and Richard Blumenthal, among others.

US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said last week that the House of Representatives will work to pass similar legislation reaffirming the right to travel between US states for the purpose of receiving an abortion, as well as codifying federal protections for abortions after the US Supreme Court overturned its Roe v. Wade decision and allowed states to decide whether to administer or regulate the procedure.

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UN Chief Says 'Still Way to Go' on Reaching Grain Deal Between Russia, Ukraine

UNITED NATIONS, July 12 (Sputnik) - A way to go still remains in order to achieve an agreement between Russia and Ukraine on exporting grain and fertilizers to the global markets, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in an update the situation on Tuesday.

"We are working hard, indeed, but there is still a way to go," Guterres said.

The UN Secretary-General noted that many people are talking about the possible grain and fertilizer deal, but added that the UNited Nations prefers to "try to do it."

Earlier in the day, Turkey's Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said that the delegations from Russia, Ukraine and Turkey will gather for joint talks on grain exports on Wednesday.

Russian officials have criticized Guterres earlier for insisting on concurrently reaching a grain and fertilizer deal with Russia and Ukraine, saying such an approach may take longer to complete and thus exacerbate the food crisis.

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IMF Chief Says at G20 She Plans to Urge States With 'More Food Capacity' to Help Poor Ones

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said on Tuesday that it is her intention to urge during the upcoming Group of Twenty (G20) meeting countries with sufficient food capacity to support the poorest states in need of food.

"I am going to the G20, and one of the points I will be making there is: Look, we have to pull together, so countries that have more capacity, please, step forward," Georieva said during an online conversation.

The IMF Managing Director expressed concern that about 30 countries in the world continue to impose restrictions on their food exports and urged them to lift them.

"Hunger is the world's most pressing solvable problem, because we produce enough food to feed everybody, but we do not distribute this food to feed everybody," Georgieva said.

Food insecurity and sharing is not only an issue of people who suffer in poor states, but a global security problem as well, Georgieva added.

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UNSC Extends Syria Cross-Border Aid Mechanism Accommodating Russia Concerns

UNITED NATIONS, July 12 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council on Tuesday extended the cross-border aid mechanism in Syria for six months in a compromise resolution that accommodated Russia's concerns.

Twelve member states voted in favor, with the US, the UK and France abstaining. The latter three nations wanted a resolution that provided for an automatic extension of the mechanism after the first six months.

"The world is not limited to the Western countries, or the so-called first golden billion as was imagined in Washington, London and Paris; and it's time for you to get used to respecting the interests of other states first and foremost, just such states who are impacted directly by the Security Council decisions," Russian deputy envoy to the UN Dmitry Polyanskiy said after the vote.

The aid mechanism can be extended for another six months if a separate resolution is approved. It also asks for a special report of the Secretary General on the issue.

US deputy envoy Richard Mills has accused Russia of taking the entire Security Council hostage.

China has said it is pleased with the results of the vote, noting that it shares Russia's position on supporting the sovereignty of Syria.

"The resolution ... provides for the necessary flexibility to allow the council to assess and adjust its mandate in a timely manner. The resolution sets out clear demands for early recovery programs and greater transparency in relief efforts," Chinese Ambassador to the UN Zhang Jun said during the debate.

The resolution, produced by humanitarian penholders Norway and Ireland, largely mirrors Russia's proposal, which had been previously voted down. Western countries wanted to automatically extend the mechanism for 12 months, but Russia made it clear that it could support only a six-month extension.

"We recognize that a six month renewal is shorter than we as pen holders aimed for when we started this negotiation," Irish Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason said before the vote on the resolution.

Russia wants the cross-border mechanism to be gradually substituted by a cross-line mechanism for aid delivery. Russia believes that only cross-line deliveries allow Syria to control its sovereign territory. In addition, cross-border goes through the Bab al-Hawa border crossing from Turkey to Syria's Idlib, which harbors a lot of internationally acknowledged terrorists. There is no full transparency of what's going through this territory and how the aid is delivered to those in need.

A similar situation in the UNSC happened in 2021 when the cross-border mechanism was extended for half a year with a possible extension. The agreement was the result of lengthy discussions between Russia and US negotiators.

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US Airstrike Kills Leader of Islamic State in Syria – Central Command
(Changes attribution, adds quote in para 2, provides details and background)

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) – US military killed a leader of the Islamic State terrorist group (IS, banned in Russia) during an airstrike in Syria, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said on Tuesday.

"U.S. Central Command Forces conducted a UAS strike outside Jindayris, northwest Syria targeting two senior ISIS officials, July 12, 2012. Maher al-Agal, one of the top five ISIS leaders and the leader of ISIS in Syria, was killed in the strike," CENTCOM said in a press release. "A senior ISIS official closely associated with Maher was seriously injured during the strike."

There were no civilian casualties as a result of the strike, CENTCOM added.

CENTCOM believes that al-Agal was responsible for the development of IS networks outside of Iraq and Syria.

"The removal of these ISIS leaders will disrupt the terrorist organization's ability to further plot and carry out global attacks," CENTCOM spokesperson Col. Joe Buccino said, as quoted in the release.

In June, US forces killed a senior leader of the al-Qaeda-linked terrorist group Hurras al-Din (banned in Russia), Abu Hamzah al Yemeni, in a drone strike in Syria.

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US Grants Additional \$1.7Bln in Aid to Ukraine - Prime Minister

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - The United States has granted an additional \$1.7 billion in aid to Ukraine, Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said on Monday.

"1.7 billion dollars of grant aid came to the Ukrainian budget from the Trust Fund of the World Bank and USAID," Shmyhal said referring to the US Agency for International Development.

"This is the second US grant in the last two weeks, the total amount of aid is to 3 billion dollars." Shmyhal pointed out that he was grateful to the United States and its President Joe Biden for what he characterized was their "incredible support" of Ukraine.

In addition to the aid from the United States, the European Union Council of Ministers on Tuesday also approved a loan of \$1 billion for Ukraine.