

7/15/22 Friday

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Doctor Who Performed a 10-Year-Old Rape Victim's Abortion Faces Indiana Attorney General's Ire

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By - Mary Manley

Indiana's Attorney General Todd Rokita is waging a war riddled with false claims against Dr. Caitlin Bernard, who performed an abortion on a 10-year-old rape victim. On Thursday afternoon, Rokita said he was eyeing criminal charges against the doctor for failing to report the procedure, despite the fact that she did.

A 10-year-old was forced to leave her home state of Ohio and travel to Indiana to receive an abortion after she had been raped by 27 year-old Gerson Fuentes, who police said confessed to raping the child on at least two occasions.

[Ohio](#) is one of nine states that make no exception for cases of rape or incest in their anti-abortion laws, even though Ohio reported in 2020 that 52 children under the age of 15 received abortions and 469 children aged 15 to 17 also had abortions in their state. The other eight states with the strictest anti-abortion laws include: Tennessee, Alabama, Florida, Arkansas, Missouri, Texas, Oklahoma, and South Dakota.

Indiana Attorney General Todd [Rokita](#) made false claims that Dr. Caitlin Bernard, who was responsible for the child's medical procedure, failed to properly report the abortion. Documents obtained by a local news station show that Bernard did in fact file the report and also filed it within the correct time frame. Rokita publicly threatened to take away Bernard's medical license and on Fox News referred to her as an "abortion activist acting as a doctor."

"My client, Dr. Caitlin Bernard, took every appropriate and proper action in accordance with the law and both her medical and ethical training as a physician. She followed all relevant policies, procedures, and regulations in this case, just as she does every day to provide the best possible care for her patients," wrote Kathleen [Delaney](#), Bernard's attorney, in a statement.

"She has not violated any law, including patient privacy laws, and she has not been disciplined by her employer. We are considering [legal action](#) against those who have smeared my client, including Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita, and know that the facts will all come out in due time," added Delaney.

Dr. Bernard did not address the attorney general by name but did write a tweet regarding the procedure.

"My heart breaks for all survivors of sexual assault and abuse. I am so sad that our country is failing them when they need us most. Doctors must be able to give people the medical care they need, when and where they need it," Bernard tweeted.

Ohio Governor Mike [DeWine](#) called the child rape case a “tragedy” but refused to comment on the law he signed that denied her an abortion in her home state.

However, Republican [politicians](#) claimed the story was a lie, until the rapist confessed to the crime on Wednesday. Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost, who is endorsed by the Ohio Right to Life PAC, boldly claimed the story was fabricated.

“Every day that goes by the more likely that this is a fabrication. I know the cops and prosecutors in this state. There's not one of them that wouldn't be turning over every rock, looking for this guy and they would have charged him,” said Yost on Fox News. “I'm not saying it could not have happened. What I'm saying to you is there is not a damn scintilla of evidence. And shame on the Indianapolis paper that ran this thing on a single source who has an obvious axe to grind.”

And then, after the rapist was arrested and charged, Yost issued a single statement saying, “We rejoice anytime a child rapist is taken off the streets,” contradicting his initial [statement](#).

Representative Jim Jordan (R-OH) wrote in a since deleted tweet of the child rape victim, “Another lie. Anyone surprised?”

Fuentes has been charged with the rape, which is a first degree felony in the state of Ohio. He is being held on a \$2 million bond at the Franklin County jail.

[President](#) Joe Biden has denounced Republican-led state legislatures—following the overturning of Roe v. Wade by the United States Supreme Court—and condemned the flurry of new abortion restrictions as “extreme.”

“Does anyone believe that it's Ohio's majority view that that should not be able to be dealt with? Or in any other state in the nation? A 10-year-old girl should be forced to give birth to a rapist's child?” Biden said last Friday after he revealed an executive order that will work to preserve abortion rights by protecting persons seeking abortion, traveling for abortion and access to abortion drugs.

“I can tell you that I don't. I can't think of anything that's much more extreme,” said Biden last Friday about the Ohio victim who was denied an abortion in her state.

In response to the Indiana Attorney General attacking Dr. Bernard, Fabiola Carrión, the director of reproductive and sexual health at the National Health Law Program, referred to it as an “intimidation tactic.”

“Certainly, it's an intimidation tactic. It's currently legal in Indiana to offer abortions up to 22 weeks of pregnancy. And even if it wasn't, this is a life-endangerment situation. A 10-year-old with a still-developing body isn't capable of delivering a baby,” said Carrión.

“This is going to have a chilling effect on providers who won't want to risk making that assessment themselves in the future,” she added. “Health care providers are generally very risk-averse. They have to pay a lot of money for liability insurance. And now they're being targeted by people who know far less than they do about complex medical situations.”

According to an [analysis](#) by the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network, less than 1% of rapists will face a felony conviction, while 89% of rape victims will struggle with physical injury caused by the rape, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and substance abuse.

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Skittles is Being Sued for Containing Toxins

By - Mary Manley

Mars Inc. is an American-based multinational manufacturer known for producing tasty treats such as chocolate, candy, gum and even pet food and other pet products. Mars, a \$35 billion firm, is best known for brands M&M's, Snickers, Twix, Milky Way, Royal Canin, Uncle Ben's and Skittles.

An alarmed consumer named Jenile Thames has brought a lawsuit against Mars Wrigley, a division of Mars Inc., because their candy, Skittles, contains known toxins the company had pledged to phase out six years ago.

The small, round, colorful candies are filled with "heightened levels" of titanium dioxide, or TiO₂, according to a proposed class action lawsuit filed on Thursday. Thames has made allegations that the candy manufacturer is selling a product that is toxic and is failing to inform consumers that it is doing so.

"A reasonable consumer would expect that [Skittles] can be safely purchased and consumed as marketed and sold," the [complaint](#) said, which is seeking unspecified damages from the company for fraud and violations of California consumer protection laws. "However, the products are not safe."

Thames, who is from San Leandro, California, said he bought a bag of Skittles at a local QuikStop in April and says he would not have done so had he known they contained toxic ingredients. The suit also claims that the ingredient list on the packaging is difficult to read due to the small, white font size printed on bright red packaging.

According to court papers, Mars Inc. pledged to phase out the food whitener titanium dioxide in February of 2016 and vowed to do so once again in [2019](#) when France banned food products made with the chemical.

The United States Food and Drug Administration has not [downplayed](#) the health risks associated with titanium dioxide, but allows its use in food as long as it does not "exceed 1% by weight of the [food](#)."

The European Union (EU) is phasing out the additive, which is used to whiten candy, gum, and even pastries as well as dairy products. The EU believes the chemical is a [genotoxin](#), a chemical that can cause DNA or chromosomal damage and lead to cancer. The European Food Safety Authority announced in 2021 that the chemical would no longer be considered safe as a food additive.

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Deadly Wildfire Spreads in the Mediterranean Amid Relentless Heatwaves

By - Mary Manley

About 14,000 people have been forced to flee France's south-western Gironde region due to dozens of wildfires that have spread across Portugal and Spain. The fires have been attributed to soaring temperatures not seen since 1757 across Europe.

Skyrocketing heat across [western Europe](#) has left many areas scorched and susceptible to wildfires. On Wednesday temperatures reached 116.6 F (47 C) in Pinhão, Portugal, the highest temperature ever recorded in the country for the month of July. And in the central town of Lousã temperatures reached 115.3 F (46.3 C) setting an all time record high.

Sevilla, Spain has been consistently hot with temperatures exceeding 105 F since July 8 ([AccuWeather](#) reported on Wednesday). On Saturday, La Vanguardia reported that there were more than 360 deaths in Spain caused by the unbelievable heatwaves, and in Portugal, 238 deaths were recorded between July 7 and July 13.

The heatwaves that are threatening the lives of those in Portugal, Spain and France are now bringing with them unrelenting wildfires. In northern Portugal, they are experiencing their worst fires since 2017. A pilot died after his water bombing plane crashed near Vila Nova de Foz Coa, on Friday evening.

At least two fires in Spain have burned about 18,200 acres (7,400 hectares) of land. And in Andalusia, the southernmost province in Spain, at least 3,000 people were forced to flee while 200 firefighters aided by 18 aircrafts worked to contain the blaze.

"What a night. We haven't slept all night," said [Gemma Suarez](#), a Spanish farmer who had to evacuate Casas de Miravete, crying as she spoke to Reuters. "A social worker came to see me to go pick up my elderly uncle. We spent the night in Naval Moral but we didn't sleep at all. I have never seen such a big fire," she added.

Twitter user Emilio Mateos Ortega shared a terrifying video of the wildfire spreading through the Province of Cáceres in western Spain, on the border of Portugal.

At least [14,000 people](#) in France's Gironde region were forced to flee the wildfires, while about 2,300 people were forced to evacuate from southern Spain as the fire began to spread through the Mijas hills.

Around 1,200 firefighters and at least 10 water-bomber planes in France's Gironde region battled the blaze in an effort to bring it under control between Friday and Saturday. At least one fire has been contained thus far, located near the popular tourist resort of Arcachon, but winds and unrelenting temperatures into next week could delay efforts.

"We have a fire that will continue to spread as long as it is not stabilized," [Vincent Ferrier](#), deputy prefect for Langon in Gironde, announced at a news conference. More than 25,000 acres (10,000 hectares) of land were on fire in the Gironde region just south of Bordeaux on Saturday, an increase from the 18,000 acres of land that were on fire on Friday.

"Everything went so fast—the fire too, was big, big, big," said [Manon Jacquart](#), 27, who had to evacuate a campsite where she is working this summer, on Wednesday morning. She is now staying at a shelter near La Teste de Buch.

"I'm just worried, I'm afraid... I'm trying to be as strong as I can but I'm not okay... I want to forget this week," she said.

France is currently on high alert for severe weather this weekend into next week. Italy, Greece, Morocco and the United Kingdom are also [bracing](#) for extreme weather—including fire warnings—attributed to this week's heatwaves. Human-induced climate change has rapidly increased global temperatures with carbon emissions instigated by the industrial era having heated up the planet about 34 F since the industrial era first began.

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Dust Storm Triggers Massive Pileup in Montana Leaving Six Dead Including Two Children
By - Mary Manley

At least six people including two children are dead after a dust storm blew through Montana causing a 21-vehicle pileup. The accident occurred in Big Horn County, Montana, the sixth largest county in the state with 5,023 square miles of land and roughly 13,000 residents. On Friday evening at least six people were killed when a dust storm triggered a 21-vehicle pileup on Interstate 90. Montana Highway Patrol Sergeant [Jay Nelson](#) said emergency crews were deployed to the scene to respond to the massive accident.

"It appears as though there were heavy winds, causing a dust storm with zero visibility," Nelson said.

Montana Attorney General Austin Knudsen added that the first responders are investigating the accident.

"The Montana Highway Patrol is on the scene with other first responders and investigating the incident," Knudsen said. "This investigation is still ongoing. We will release more information as it becomes available and is appropriate out of respect of the lives lost and their loved ones."

The accident occurred just west of the city of Hardin and about 45 miles east of Billings at around 4:30 p.m., and prompted an overnight closure of I-90. The interstate has since reopened, highway patrol reported.

The accident, which occurred on a popular two lane highway, involved personal vehicles such as sedans, trucks, camper vans, as well as large commercial vehicles such as tractor trailers. At least six of the vehicles involved in the crash were tractor trailers. Eyewitness [Ariel Dehart](#) said she saw a camper van ripped open in the pileup while driving past the accident.

"The visibility was so poor and scary," Dehart said. "The air was warm and eerie. It was like wearing sepia-colored glasses. It was so crazy."

"When I saw the ripped-open camper, my gut dropped," she said. "But the owner just was frantically putting his decorative pillows back in the camper, and it was so sad because he was obviously so in over his head with what just happened."

Jose Strickland, another eyewitness, was able to stop his vehicle as the pileup occurred in front of him. He stayed for roughly 45 minutes after the pileup occurred and at one point assisted others in pulling an elderly man from his vehicle and placing him on a stretcher.

"Visibility dropped in an instant," Strickland wrote in a [Facebook](#) post about his experience. "We found ourselves skidding to a stop and everyone scrambling off the road to safety. My heart goes out to the families affected."

"I still can't get over the fact that we were one truck away from disaster. For whatever reason my dad, Raul Joseph Beger, decided to take the wheel after lunch and to say the least I'm glad his experience came into play," wrote eyewitness Strickland.

The [dust storm](#) responsible for the accident was powered by severe winds of up to 60 mph.

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Cat Who Escaped Her Kennel in Logan Airport Finally Captured and Reunited With Family
By - Mary Manley

Rowdy the cat saw her opportunity to escape her kennel and took it. About 20 days ago the frisky feline pounced from her kennel when the door fell off as airport staff were unloading the cargo section of the plane. Rowdy saw a bird and ran off to chase it. A major mission for her capture ensued.

[Rowdy's](#) owners decided to move back to the United States to be closer to family after living in Germany for 16 years. Patty Sahli, one of Rowdy's owners, said she first adopted four-year-old Rowdy as a kitten for her daughter who is currently at college in Pennsylvania.

Sadly, when Sahli arrived at Boston Logan International Airport to pick up her husband---who was bringing Rowdy with him to the family's new home in the United States---he told her the unfortunate news of Rowdy's escape.

"When they unloaded the cargo section, the door of her carrier fell out and she ran out chasing a bird," said Sahli. "Three people tried to chase her but they were not successful."

Following Rowdy's getaway, a widespread community effort to capture her ensued. For about 20 days Sahli contacted local animal shelters as well as animal welfare organizations for assistance in tracking down her "energetic" cat.

"All the kids were like, if any cat got lost, we feel like she's the one most equipped to survive," said Sahli of her black cat with light green eyes.

The airport staff, local animal shelter volunteers and even construction workers in the airport made a collective effort to find Rowdy and return her to her loved ones. They searched for Rowdy as though she really was an escaped convict on the prowl: checking camera footage, setting traps with Temptation treats (Rowdy's alleged favorite), putting out food and water, and even using some of her family's clothes as a familiar scent.

Sahli told [NPR](#) that some of the airport staff went so far as to mark the water level of one of her water dishes in order to track her location. In addition, they set up a hotline that people could call if they needed to report a "Rowdy sighting".

Finally, on Wednesday, Rowdy decided she was tired of being on the lam and allowed herself to be captured. Staff at the Animal Rescue League sent videos of Rowdy to Sahli after she was found. Sahli said her feline looked "cool as a cucumber".

"Everybody took a personal interest and everybody was so happy when it happened," said Sahli, who expressed her appreciation to the Animal Rescue League, airport staff and all of those who helped track down her furry family member. "I can't wait to see her," she added. "I'm so happy that it turned out this way."

Rowdy was reunited with her family on Saturday morning, Logan Airport said.

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Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez Obtain Marriage License in Clark County, Nevada
By - Mary Manley

Jennifer Lopez, 52, was first spotted wearing an engagement ring while furniture shopping with one of her children, 14 year-old Emme. Ben Affleck and Lopez first started dating in 2002 and got engaged later that year. But the couple split in 2004 before they could ever walk down the aisle.

After Affleck and Lopez's initial split, Lopez married Marc Anthony, an American singer and songwriter known for his Latin and salsa music, while Affleck, 49, started a relationship with Jennifer Garner, 50, whom he shared a marriage with for 10 years before an amicable divorce in 2018.

On Saturday, Bennifer, a combination of the couple's first names, finally became official. The couple eloped in Clark County, N.V., home to Las Vegas, the [marriage](#) capital of the world, where around 120,000 couples get hitched every year. A source confirmed to TMZ that the two are officially married and can now begin referring to each other as "husband" and "wife". In April of this year, Lopez and Affleck revealed that they were engaged for the second time two decades following their first engagement! Ben proposed to JLo with an emerald cut, pale green diamond engagement ring—not entirely unlike the ring he used when he first proposed to her in 2002: a rare, pink diamond ring.

Jenny [Luker](#), president of Platinum Guild International USA, estimates that Lopez's bright green engagement ring set with side white diamonds from this year is likely double the cost of her first ring and is allegedly worth around \$10 million.

The couple is reportedly searching for a home together in Beverly Hills. [TMZ](#) reports that at least four moving trucks as well as Lopez's personal vehicle were spotted at a luxurious estate in the city known as a favorite residential area for many celebrities in southern California. The home was reportedly owned by Danny DeVito and Rhea Perlman, and it's estimated to have been sold to the newlyweds for around \$60 million.

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Study Suggests Even Small Amounts of Alcohol for Those Under 40 Risks Health
By - Mary Manley

"Our message is simple: young people should not drink, but older people may benefit from drinking small amounts," said Emmanuela Gakidou, the study's senior author. The study suggests that alcohol consumption recommendations depend on a person's age and location. The study, published in [The Lancet](#), found that males between the ages of 15 and 39 were consuming the most unsafe levels of alcohol. At least 59.1% of individuals between 15 and 39 years of age were consuming unsafe levels of alcohol and 76.9% of those individuals were male. It was also the leading risk factor for mortality among males aged 15-49 years of age.

The disability-adjusted life year (DALY) is a measure of overall disease burden or a person's shortened lifespan. The researchers found five alcohol-attributable outcomes that accounted for a person's DALY, including ischaemic heart disease, ischaemic stroke, intracerebral hemorrhage, type 2 diabetes, and tuberculosis.

However, for those aged younger than 40 years of age, the leading cause of death was injuries, not diseases. For those 15 to 39 years of age, injuries accounted for all alcohol-related DALYS: transport injuries made up 25.9% of alcohol-related DALYs among males and 12.7% among females, while self-harm made up 11.7% of alcohol-related DALYs among male and 12.7% DALYs among females.

Interpersonal violence also comprised 12.4% of DALYs among males and just 6.7% of DALYs among females.

The study, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, said that while the relationship between moderate alcohol use and health is "complex," with some studies arguing that small alcohol consumption could be beneficial to one's [health](#), there were no health benefits to consuming alcohol for any persons aged 15 to 39. The study's findings suggest that "existing low consumption thresholds [of alcohol] are too high for younger populations in all regions." "A win would be if people understand the risks they are taking with their behavior, leading to a culture that promotes moderation in alcohol consumption," said [Dana Bryazka](#), a researcher at the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington's School of Medicine.

Bryazka adds that those aged 40 and under in the U.S. are consuming the most harmful amounts of alcohol and are only outranked by Australia and some countries in Western Europe. "While it may not be realistic to think young adults will abstain from drinking, we do think it's important to communicate the latest evidence so that everyone can make informed decisions about their health," said Gakidou, University of Washington professor of health metrics sciences at the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation.

However, the researchers had some brighter news for those aged 40 and up. Older individuals have the green light to consume small amounts of alcohol, such as one to two 3.4-ounce glasses of red wine a day could reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, and diabetes.

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Britney Spears Posts Dramatic Slowed Down Version of her 1998 Single 'Baby One More Time'
By - Mary Manley

"This is me yesterday doing laundry and separating clothes... I haven't shared my voice in an extremely long time... maybe too long," popstar Britney Spears wrote in the caption of her Instagram post.

The 40-year-old pop star shared a video of her singing a cover of her own song, "...Baby One More Time" (1998), a debut single for the pop star that topped charts in at least 22 countries and is one of the best-selling singles of all time.

Britney's new rendition of the song that first propelled her to fame when she was just 17 years old is a more slowed down, emotional version compared to the original spunky, pop sound of her hit. She even goes so far as to change the hook to, "Give me a f***** sign/ Hit me baby one more time."

The "Toxic" singer also wrote in the post that she had been wanting to do a newer version of the hit for the entirety of her conservatorship but was not allowed to. Fans suggested she should do what American singer and songwriter Taylor Swift did in releasing a recorded album of her original, uncut songs for her album "[Red](#)."

In response to that suggestion, Britney said it's too late.

"Pssss you say go do it NOW after 14 years of asking and telling... I worked my a** off then I was locked up in one place... It's too late... Like I said, they ruined it for me."

A source told People that when the conservatorship from her father ended, Britney was "talking a lot about her career." The post, shared over social media, showing the star singing a haunting melody, may be a sneak peek into what fans could see from Britney if she decides to start recording again.

Britney was freed from the conservatorship of her father, Jamie Spears, in November of last year. The hashtag #FreeBritney began when fans learned about the conservatorship as legal battles between the father and daughter became public. A [conservatorship](#) allows an individual to control another person's finances, assets, and even the health and medicine of that person, most often if they are physically or mentally debilitated and unable to do so themselves.

Despite the [conservatorship](#), which lasted for 13 years, Britney was able to release four albums, headlined a global tour that grossed \$131 million, and conducted a Las Vegas residency for four years.

"...all I knew was 'NO MAAM, SORRY' !!!! They stood at my door and told me I can't have my kets to my car and told me I couldn't leave on my own... 'SORRY MAAM... we have to follow the rules'!!! They made me feel like nothing... every single one of them!!! Like I said before...they took away my rights... my womanhood was ruined!" Britney shared in the post, alluding to the shocking experiences of being under a conservatorship.

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AI Identifies Crater on Mars Where Meteorite Originated From

By - Ian DeMartino

Machine learning has been used to advance science in multiple ways, including training robots to run, generate images from text prompts, and help make advances in the biomedical field. Now, it is being used to unlock the secrets hidden in our solar system.

A Machine Learning program has managed to pinpoint the crater where the ancient Black Beauty meteorite originated from, according to a paper [published in Nature](#) on Tuesday. Black Beauty, which is also known as meteorite NWA 7034, was discovered in Africa in 2011. It is the only Martian meteorite discovered so far that has multiple types of Martian rock fused together. Other Martian meteorites only include one type of rock.

Researchers named the crater Karratha, after the Pilbara city of Karratha, located in Western Australia, where some of the oldest terrestrial rocks have been found.

The discovery tells scientists not only about the origin of Black Beauty but also gives a window into what the earliest environments of planets looked like. Black Beauty originates from 4.48 billion years ago. The researchers [called it](#) “a true window into the earliest environment of the planets, including the Earth, which our planet lost because of plate tectonics and erosion.” Using one of the fastest supercomputers in the Southern Hemisphere, along with a custom-built machine learning algorithm, the researchers hope to eventually discover the origin of other Martian meteorites. Eventually, they want to modify the algorithm and set it towards discovering secrets on the Moon and Mercury.

The project was led by Curtin University in Perth, Australia, but also included experts from Paris-Saclay University, Paris Observatory, Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, the French National Center for Scientific Research, the Félix Houphouët-Boigny University on the Ivory Coast, Northern Arizona University, and Rutgers University.

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The Great Jim Thorpe Restored as the Sole Winner of the 1912 Decathlon and Pentathlon
By - Ian DeMartino

While professional athletes are now a mainstay of the Olympic games, they were banned from participating until 1986.

The late, great Olympic hero Jim Thorpe has had his medals restored, more than a century after they were stripped from him.

Thorpe is to this day considered one of the greatest athletes of all time. [He excelled](#) at over a dozen sports and won gold in both of the events he participated in during the 1912 Stockholm games.

Thorpe, who was Native American, was stripped of his decathlon and pentathlon medals after it was revealed that he previously made \$25 a week playing minor league baseball a few years earlier. While Olympic rules at that time had a strict adherence to amateurism that prevented professional athletes from participating in the games, many felt that the decision was racially motivated.

The decision was [announced on Friday](#) and comes 40 years after the International Olympic Committee restored Thorpe as a co-winner of the events. That never satisfied his supporters who wanted him to be restored as the sole winner.

The change was first reported by [Indian Country Today](#) on Thursday, when the publication noticed that the IOC's website had been updated to make Thorpe the sole winner of the two events.

When the alternative winners were announced after Thorpe was stripped of his medals, both Hugo Wieslander of Sweden and Ferdinand Bie of Norway expressed hesitation before reluctantly accepting the medals. The IOC's decision came after a charity named after Thorpe's

native name, the Bright Path Strong organization, consulted with the National Olympic Committees of both countries and the family of Wieslander. The IOC statement did not mention if they contacted Bie's family or if he has surviving family members.

Thorpe's original name was Wa-Tho-Huk, which translates to "Bright Path."

Bie and Wieslander will now be demoted to co-silver medal winners in their respective events.

The previous silver and bronze medal winners will not be demoted.

"We welcome the fact that, thanks to the great engagement of Bright Path Strong, a solution could be found," said IOC President Thomas Bach in a statement. "This is a most exceptional and unique situation, which has been addressed by an extraordinary gesture of fair play from the National Olympic Committees concerned."

The adjustment will not be limited to the Olympic records. World Athletics, the international sports federation for track and field, will also update its records to reflect the change.

Thorpe passed away in 1953, well before the IOC updated his status to co-winner in 1982 and presented his medals to his children during a ceremony with the US Olympic Committee.

But he did not wallow in the injustice committed against him. After being stripped of the medals, Thorpe returned to baseball, this time playing in the major leagues for six years, suiting up for the New York Giants, Cincinnati Reds, and Boston Braves. Once he finished his baseball career, the multisport athlete then went on to play professional football for the New York Giants and five other teams until the age of 41. He also played for a [traveling basketball team](#) called the "World Famous Indians," though much of his basketball career is lost to history. Jim Thorpe was posthumously inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1963.

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Mexico Arrests Rafael Caro-Quintero, Cartel Leader Convicted of Killing DEA Agent in 1985

By - Ian DeMartino

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has publicly taken a softer stance against the cartels in Mexico, promising to fight poverty rather than wars with drug dealers.

Mexican authorities have arrested an infamous drug cartel leader, years after he walked out of prison, the AP reported on Friday.

Rafael Caro Quintero was convicted of kidnapping and killing DEA agent Enrique "Kiki" Camarena in 1985, but an appeals court overruled his conviction and Quintero was released in 2013 before the Mexican Supreme Court reversed the decision and upheld his conviction. He had spent 28 years in prison.

Since then, according to authorities, Caro Quintero has gone back to trafficking drugs, unleashing a bloody turf war in the northern border state of Sonora.

Caro Quintero was the leader of the Guadalajara Cartel. He is blamed for the majority of marijuana, cocaine and heroin entering the United States during the late 1970s.

The AP stated there are no further details, with their source only speaking on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak on the arrest. Caro Quintero was on the FBI most wanted list, with a \$20 million reward hanging over his head.

According to authorities, Caro Quintero targeted Camarena because of a 1984 raid on a marijuana plantation that Caro Quintero blamed on Camarena. The DEA agent's body was found roughly a month after his disappearance, decomposing and showing signs of torture. However, in 2013, two former DEA agents and a former CIA contract pilot claimed that the CIA was [complicit in the murder of Camarena](#). The CIA pilot claims that he ran guns to the cartel in exchange for tons of cocaine the CIA then sold on US streets to fund Nicaraguan contras. According to their account, Camarena had caught wind of the scheme and threatened to blow the whistle. About five months later, they say the Federal Security Directorate, who they called the CIA's eyes and ears in Mexico, and which was worked with Mexico's most powerful cartels, kidnapped Camarena.

The CIA has denied the accusations.

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Shell CEO: Europe is Headed Towards a Tough Winter, Rationing is Possible
By - Ian DeMartino

Crude oil prices in Europe have already risen significantly this year, jumping 48.41% since the start of this year. Meanwhile, natural gas is up more than 98% from January 3, and the head of Shell is warning that Europe is in for a tough winter.

Shell CEO Ben van Beurden says that gas prices will significantly increase and that in a worst-case scenario, Europe [may have to ration](#) its energy usage.

"Some countries will fare better than others," van Beurden explained, "but we will all be facing a very significant escalation in energy prices."

He places the blame on deteriorating relations between Russia and much of Europe. Mainland Europe gets roughly 40% of its energy supply from Russia. While the UK gets far less, around 4%, the disruptions to global energy markets will undoubtedly raise prices there as well.

Complicating matters further is the Nord Stream 1 gas pipeline that runs from Russia through the Baltic Sea and into Germany. It has been shut down for maintenance that will continue for an estimated 10 days, but many fear it will not be turned back on.

If that happens, Europe will have difficulty meeting its energy goals. The European Union intends to have 80% of its storage capacity filled by November, but without the pipeline reopening, that looks unlikely. Stockpiles currently sit at 62.6%.

Officials and leaders around Europe are already telling their citizens to expect difficult times ahead. In France, President Emmanuel Macron told citizens during Thursday's Bastille Day speech to expect some energy rationing, including turning off street lights at night. He also called for a time of "energy sobriety" in the country.

Elsewhere, in Germany, the head of the country's energy regulator, Klaus Müller said that he expects heating bills to triple next year. They have already doubled in 2022 compared to last year.

Meanwhile, the UK's energy regulator Ofgem has already increased price caps on energy and is expected to do it again in October, [raising prices](#) by as much as 65%.

Shell has seen massive profits this year, and van Beurden has indicated that he plans to boost shareholder returns in an attempt to [increase the company's stock price](#).

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Pence's Former Chief of Staff Does Not Think Congress Should Call Pence To Testify
By - Ian DeMartino

The House Select Committee on the January 6 Attack on the Capitol is attempting to find out if former President Donald Trump directed the attack in a bid to overturn the 2020 Presidential election results.

Former Vice President Mike Pence's Chief of Staff Marc Short said in an interview on Saturday that it would set a "very risky" precedent to have Pence speak to the January 6 committee. Pence has become a central figure in the January 6 committee. Trump publicly pressured Pence to overturn the election results on Twitter and testimony given to the January 6 committee indicated that he pressured Pence privately as well.

Pence was also the subject of the rioters' ire, with chants of "Hang Mike Pence" being heard through the crowd as they stormed the Capitol. Still, Short does not believe it would be in the nation's best interests to have Pence testify.

Short also argues that Democrats may not want to set the precedent, because President Biden may be forced to talk about his family's dealing in Ukraine.

"If you are going to begin having former Vice Presidents come under subpoena to testify, there is a former Vice President sitting in the Oval Office today. And I'm sure when Republicans take control of Congress this November, there will be those who want to have investigations into the Biden family's discussions on Ukraine, what Hunter Biden was doing," Short warned.

Short would then specifically mention the danger of revealing conversations between Vice Presidents and Presidents.

"Do you want a precedent where all the sudden you're allowed to bring former vice presidents to talk about what they were doing when they were vice president, in the Congress to talk about their conversations with the president of the United States?" Adding, "I think it is a very risky precedent."

Though the occasion is rare, both Presidents and Vice Presidents have been asked to speak in front of Congress while in power and afterward.

Vice President Schuyler Colfax spoke to the House Select Committee to Investigate Credit Mobilier after a newspaper claimed he had bought stock in the company, which had received federal subsidies to help in the construction of the Union Pacific Railroad. Those accusations were proven true during the committee.

More relevant, Gerald Ford spoke to the Subcommittee on Criminal Justice and the House Judiciary Committee. Congress wanted to know if his pardon of former President Nixon was prearranged.

The committee was specifically asking Ford about [conversations he had](#) with then-President Nixon while he was a member of Congress and when he was the Vice President, the exact thing Short says doing now would set a new, dangerous, precedent.

Additionally, Woodrow Wilson, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Harry S. Truman [all spoke to Congressional Committees](#) either before or after leaving office.

However, it is worth noting that every Vice President who spoke to Congressional Committees did so without being subpoenaed by Congress.

Three sitting Presidents have been subpoenaed by Congress in the past: Thomas Jefferson, who refused to comply, Richard Nixon who resigned before complying, causing Congress to drop the issue and Bill Clinton, whose subpoena was withdrawn after he agreed to testify voluntarily.

Short would also say in the interview that his conversation with Trump's Chief of Staff Mark Meadows during the riot did not include asking Meadows if Trump was trying to secure the Capitol.

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Mega Millions Jackpot Now Sits at Over Half a Billion Dollars

By - Ian DeMartino

The odds of winning the Mega Millions jackpot are one in 302.5 million, according to the game's official website. Players have a one in 24 chance to win any prize but those odds include the \$2 prize.

Tuesday's Mega Millions drawing will top half a billion dollars, only the tenth time that has happened in the game's history.

No one matched all six numbers for Friday's Jackpot, worth \$480 million, so the Jackpot has been increased to \$530 million, which if won, will be the eighth largest jackpot in Mega Millions history. If the winner takes their prize as a lump sum, they will receive \$304.7 million, still a hefty score.

While no one matched every ball on Friday, a ticket was sold in California that matched five numbers, winning \$973,668. The jackpot has not been won since April 15 when the winner won the minimum jackpot of \$20 million. It was only the second time in Mega Millions history that two consecutive jackpots were won in a row.

While the \$530 million prize is nothing to sneeze at, it has been far exceeded in the past. Three jackpots have been hit that topped \$1 billion. The largest ever Mega Millions jackpot was worth \$1.586 billion in 2016, though it was won by multiple players who had to split the prize. The largest single winner was in 2018 for \$1.537 billion, won in South Carolina. The final and most recent jackpot that topped \$1 billion was in 2021 when a Michigan player hit the \$1.05 billion jackpot.

While it is difficult to feel bad for someone who just won more than \$900,000, the player in California may have lost out on a hefty sum compared to if he played in another state. Mega Millions allows players to spend \$1 to purchase what is called the "Megaplier" which will

increase their prize winnings, excluding the jackpot, by a factor of two, three, four, or five. The Megaplier was 5X for Friday's drawing, meaning if the California player had purchased the Megaplier, their prize would have increased to \$4.868 million. Unfortunately for the player, California is the only jurisdiction that does not offer the Megaplier.

Mega Million Drawings are held every Tuesday and Friday at 11 pm Eastern Time. It can be played in 45 states plus the District of Columbia and the US Virgin Islands.

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Billionaire Who Believes Aliens Live on Earth Gives Ron DeSantis' Reelection Campaign \$10 Million

By - Ian DeMartino

Ron DeSantis has become a polarizing figure in Florida and national politics, hated by Democrats but popular with his party. On nearly every issue, from COVID to sexual education in schools, he has received condemnation and praise in near equal measure.

Space Entrepreneur and Budget Suites of America founder Robert Bigelow [gave \\$10 million](#) to the reelection campaign of Florida Governor Ron DeSantis. It is DeSantis' largest campaign contribution to date.

Bigelow founded a space exploration company, Bigelow Aerospace in 1999, long before it became fashionable for billionaires to do so. He first entered the public's consciousness however after he, during a 60 minutes interview, said that he believes aliens not only exist but are already living amongst us.

He also made headlines when he pledged a million dollars in prizes to anyone who could provide him with evidence of an afterlife. It is not clear if that contest is ongoing.

It is largely expected that DeSantis will run for the Republican nomination for President in 2024, and is seen as the biggest hurdle for Former President Trump, should he decide to run. However, DeSantis has maintained that he has not made a decision and is focused on winning reelection in Florida.

The \$10 million donation will provide a substantial boost to the DeSantis campaign, which now has \$130.4 million in cash on hand for the campaign. He is largely expected to win reelection, with FiveThirtyEight giving him a 95% chance of winning as of July 16, though his [expected Democratic opponent](#), Charlie Crist, has won a [few polls](#) here and [there](#).

As of July 1, the \$10 million donation provided by Bigelow exceeds the amount both of his possible Democratic opponents, Crist and former agricultural commissioner Nikki Fried, have raised combined.

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Napoleon's Fork and Knife Sell for £11,250 at Auction

By - Ian DeMartino

[All materials](#)

Napoleon Bonaparte campaigned through Europe in the 1800s, upending Europe until being defeated for the second time and final at the Battle of Waterloo. Since then, items connected to the former Emperor have become highly sought after by history collectors.

A knife and fork once owned by Napoleon Bonaparte sold for £11,250 or roughly \$13,359 at current exchange rates, on Wednesday.

The Silver-gilt cutlery is embroidered with the former Emperor's initial N, surrounded by a laurel wreath and his imperial arms just above that. It is also possible, though not confirmed, that the knife and fork were taken from Napoleon's carriage after his defeat at Waterloo in 1815.

The silverware [previously belonged](#) to entrepreneur Alfred William Weston who purchased them in 1920. They had remained in his family until being put up for auction recently. They were expected to sell for £3,000 - 5,000 but a bidding war caused the price to more than double what most expected.

Made by Martin-Guillaume Biennais in Paris around 1810, the silversmith provided the Bonaparte family with silver items throughout the Emperor's reign, including the crown and scepter Napoleon wore for his 1804 coronation.

A pair of two-handled wine coolers owned by King George III also sold at auction for £15,000. Both items were sold by the Woolley & Wallis auction house.

"The fact that pieces have survived despite his subsequent ignominious fall from grace indicates that they were highly prized objects even by Napoleon's opponents," Rupert Slingsby, the silver specialist for Woolley & Wallis, was quoted in the Daily Mail as saying. "Today they are wonderful reminders of a turbulent period of history between the English and the French." There is no word if the buyer, who asked to remain anonymous, plans to actually eat with the timeworn heirlooms.

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Siemens Declines to Comment on Reports of Canada Flying Nord Stream Turbine to Germany

OTTAWA, July 18 (Sputnik) – Siemens has declined to comment on media reports that Canada has flown the stranded Nord Stream 1 turbine to Germany from where it will be delivered to Russia by July 24.

"No comment regarding transport," a spokesperson for Siemens Energy told Sputnik, when asked whether they could confirm the reports.

Earlier on Monday, Russia's Kommersant newspaper said that Canada sent the turbine by air on Sunday. The Siemens-built turbine had been stranded in Montreal because of sanctions imposed on Russia.

When asked about the reports, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov referred the question to Gazprom, the Russian energy giant which sent the turbine to Siemens for maintenance.

On July 10, Canadian Minister of Natural Resources Jonathan Wilkinson said that Ottawa had decided to return the Nord Stream 1 turbine to Germany to help Europe have access to "reliable and affordable energy."

On July 17, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he has discussed the turbine issue with Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. He asserted that Ottawa's decision was a violation of the sanctions regime and will never be accepted by the Ukrainian people.

The Ukrainian lobby and Ukraine's government have put pressure on Ottawa over the past months to refrain from sending the turbine back to Gazprom.

In light of the recent developments around the turbine saga, Ukrainians held several small protests in major Canadian cities such as Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto, over the weekend.

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Biden's Approval Ratings Slip Further in Q2, Now Underwater in 44 States - Poll

WASHINGTON, July 18 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden's net approval ratings fell further in the second quarter of 2022, with voters in 44 states more likely to hold an unfavorable rather than positive view of his performance, according to a Morning Consult poll released Monday. This represents an increase of four states from Biden's first quarter report, as well as an overall worse position than Donald Trump's in the 2018 mid-term cycle when the former president's net approval ratings fell below 50% in 27 states.

The poll found that Biden's net approval ratings fell below 50% from the last quarter for the first time in his presidency in the states of Washington, Rhode Island, and Delaware. They also fell in Illinois. They remained unchanged in 23 states, with mostly modest declines in most other states.

The poll, which was based on responses collected from April 1 to June 30 in 50 states, attributed Biden's poorer ratings to attrition among moderate and conservative Democrats, along with increased disapproval from independents and Republicans. Additional nationwide survey data gathered from June 28 to 30 found that his approval rating among Democrats was 77%, with only 38% "strongly approving" of his performance.

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Only 11% of Americans Have Confidence in TV News - Poll

WASHINGTON, July 18 (Sputnik) - The level of trust in media among Americans is at a record low, with only 11% expressing confidence in TV news coverage, a new Gallup poll revealed on Monday.

"Americans' confidence in two facets of the news media -- newspapers and television news -- has fallen to all-time low points. Just 16% of U.S. adults now say they have 'a great deal' or

'quite a lot' of confidence in newspapers and 11% in television news. Both readings are down five percentage points since last year," the pollster said.

Gallup has remeasured the audiences' confidence in newspapers since 1973 and television news since 1993.

The survey was conducted from June 1-30 among 1,015 adults, ages 18+ across all US states. The margin of error is ± 4 percentage points.

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Glorifying Nicholas II, Romanovs Important Not Only for Russia But Whole World - Priest

WASHINGTON, July 17 (Sputnik) - The glorification of Russia's last Emperor Nicholas II Romanov and his family is important not only for Russia, but for the entire world, the rector of the All Russian Saints church in Burlingame, California, Archpriest Stefan Pavlenko told Sputnik.

"I believe that the significance of the glorification and understanding of the truth about the royal family is important not only for Orthodox Russians and Russia, but for all Orthodox people, and ultimately, for the whole world," Pavlenko said.

Nicholas II and his family were assassinated by the Bolsheviks on July 17, 1918, in Yekaterinburg. The Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR) canonized the Romanovs as new martyrs in 1981, while their glorification by the Moscow Patriarchate as passion bearers followed 19 years later.

Emperor Nicholas II was not just a leader but an Orthodox Christian who cared for his nation just as a father would carry for his children, but was misrepresented by the Bolsheviks and even by the entire liberal world, Pavlenko said.

"When the truth was revealed, it turned out that Nicholas II was a magnificent statesman who cared not only for his nation but for the entire world," Pavlenko said.

Those who opposed canonizing Nicholas II tried to link him solely to the relationship he had with his family, yet the leadership he displayed at the helm of Russia showed what a great person he was - an Orthodox Christian and an Orthodox-led decision maker, Pavlenko said.

The Romanovs showed the believers a path to follow just like other saints did, Pavlenko also said.

"If you read the last letter and thoughts of the Empress and children, these are examples to follow by every Orthodox Christian anywhere in the world. That is very, very significant. They have opened the path that regardless of one's position - whether the richest or most powerful person in the world - one can still be a saint," he added.

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Leaked Report Shows US Plans to Add Nearly 60 Central American Officials to Sanctions List

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - The US plans to add almost sixty high-level officials from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua to a sanctions list over corruption allegations, a leaked State Department report revealed.

The updated report the State Department plans to submit to Congress, first obtained by El Faro news agency on Friday, includes a total of 59 officials: 21 from Nicaragua, 16 from Guatemala, 15 from Honduras, and seven from El Salvador.

Sources from the Biden administration confirmed the authenticity of the updated list but said it was not an official document, according to El Faro.

However, a State Department spokesperson told Sputnik that the US has not completed its review of the next report to Congress under Section 353 of the United States-Northern Triangle Enhanced Engagement Act.

The Northern Triangle sanctions report, often referred to as the "Engel's List," was first published by the State Department in May of 2021, around six months after then-House Foreign Affairs chairman Eliot Engel spearheaded the passage of the legislation.

Officials and their families identified in the report could face Magnitsky Act sanctions and/or have their visas revoked, amongst other measures.

"This report includes individuals who the Secretary [of State] has determined have engaged in the relevant activity based upon credible information or allegations of the conduct at issue, from media reporting and other sources," the report said.

Among the top names on the list from El Salvador are Economic Minister Jose Villalobo and Nuevas Ideas Party Chief of Faction Christian Guevara.

The list also includes Salvadoran Presidential Legal Adviser Javier Argueta for allegedly being behind the removal of five Supreme Court magistrates, and Presidential Press Secretary Ernesto Sanabria, accused of using his power to force opposition members into resignation.

The head of Guatemala's Special Prosecutor's Office Against Impunity (FECI), Rafael Curruchiche, made the list for supposedly obstructing legal processes on high-ranking officials' corruption cases, and Supreme Court magistrates Vitalina Orellana and Nery Medina for allegedly undermining democracy.

Honduras Congress Vice-President Rasel Tome is also named over accusations of embezzlement activities during his tenure with the Telecommunications Commission.

Salvadoran officials have reacted to the updated list, with Guevara himself saying he was listed because of his "laws against gangs."

"The real reason for why they sanctioned me, it's for having introduced a law to fight against the gangs, for fighting them, for declaring war to them," Guevara said via Twitter on Friday.

In recent years, US relations with Northern Triangle and Nicaragua have significantly deteriorated. The Biden administration has repeatedly accused the Salvadoran government for taking an "authoritarian" turn and Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei for failing to fight corruption.

The tone of diplomatic relations between Honduras and the US is yet to be set as the country recently held elections in which leftist Xiomara Castro was declared winner.

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Saudis Agree to Support Oil Market 'Balancing' in Talks With Biden in Jeddah - White House (Adds details to headline, lede, paras 6-11 and background throughout)

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - Saudi Arabia has committed to help in balancing the global oil market to help stabilize prices, the White House said after US President Joe Biden's talks with Saudi leaders in Jeddah, where they also finalized bilateral and international deals on 5G/6G development and space exploration, among other areas.

Biden and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman exchanged a fist bump instead of a handshake upon the president's arrival for the meeting in Jeddah, where the president said Saudi officials shared the sense of urgency about global energy security.

Biden is currently visiting the Middle East partly to seek help in boosting oil production to halt rising gas prices, which he has repeatedly blamed on Russia's military operation in Ukraine.

"Saudi Arabia has committed to support global oil market balancing for sustained economic growth. The United States has welcomed the increase in production levels 50 percent above what was planned for July and August. These steps and further steps that we anticipate over the coming weeks have and will help stabilize markets considerably," the White House said in a statement on Friday.

Earlier in the day, National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said there would be no announcement bilaterally on boosting oil production since action like that should be taken by OPEC+ countries.

The White House also said the US and Saudi Arabia are expanding cooperation in all fields of space exploration including human spaceflight and responsible behavior in outer space.

Biden welcomed the signing of a new Memorandum of Cooperation that will connect US and Saudi technology companies in the advancement and deployment of 5G and the development of 6G, the release added. Biden also welcomed bilateral agreements signed to expand sharing information on cybersecurity threats and activities of malicious actors to enhance the shared defense of both countries.

During the talks, Biden also raised concerns about human rights issues, including the 2018 murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, which the US intelligence community has blamed on Saudi officials including the Crown Prince.

"He [Biden] also raised the egregious murder of Jamal Khashoggi, described the accountability measures the United States has put in place in response, and received commitments with respect to reforms and institutional safeguards in place to guard against any such conduct in the future," the White House said.

The two countries also reaffirmed their commitment to preserving the free flow of commerce through strategic international waterways like the Bab al-Mandab and the Strait of Hormuz. The US affirmed it would accelerate cooperation with Saudi Arabia and other partners in the region to counter unmanned aerial systems and missiles, the release added.

In addition, according to the White House, the two delegations held a detailed discussion of the situation in Yemen and committed to taking steps to extend and strengthen the UN-mediated truce.

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US, Saudis Agree to Cooperate on 5G/6G, Space Exploration, Cybersecurity - White House

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - The White House confirmed that President Joe Biden and Saudi leaders during talks in Jeddah agreed the two countries will cooperate in areas such as space exploration, cybersecurity, and 5G/6G deployment and development.

"The US and Saudi Arabia are expanding cooperation in all fields of space exploration, including human spaceflight, earth observation, commercial and regulatory development, and responsible behavior in outer space. President Biden welcomed the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia signing the Artemis Accords and reaffirming its commitment to the responsible, peaceful, and sustainable exploration and use of outer space," the White House said in a statement on Friday.

Biden welcomed the signing of a new Memorandum of Cooperation that will connect US and Saudi technology companies in the advancement and deployment of 5G and the development of 6G. Biden also welcomed bilateral agreements signed to expand sharing information on cybersecurity threats and activities of malicious actors to enhance the shared defense of both countries.

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Biden Welcomes Saudi Opening Airspace to Aircraft Flying To/From Israel - White House

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden has welcomed Riyadh's decision to open Saudi airspace to civilian aircraft flying to and from Israel, the White House said after the president's talks with Saudi leaders in Jeddah.

"To date, civilian aircraft flying to and from Israel, with rare exceptions, could not fly over Saudi Arabia, leading to increased hours of flying time, significant expenses, and unnecessary impact on our climate. Today, President Biden welcomed Saudi Arabia's decision to expand overflight of Saudi Arabia for all civilian aircraft, including airlines flying to and from Israel, based on the principles of the Chicago Convention of 1944. This was an important step forward towards a more integrated Middle East region, interconnected with the world," the release said on Friday.

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White House Says Saudi Arabia Agrees to Support Global Oil Market 'Balancing'

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - Saudi Arabia has committed to help in balancing the global oil market to help stabilize prices in the coming weeks, the White House said in a fact sheet after President Joe Biden's talks in Jeddah with Saudi leaders.

"Saudi Arabia has committed to support global oil market balancing for sustained economic growth. The United States has welcomed the increase in production levels 50 percent above what was planned for July and August. These steps and further steps that we anticipate over the coming weeks have and will help stabilize markets considerably," the release said on Friday.

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G20 Participants Did Not Walk Out During Russian Representative's Speech - Japan Minister

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - The participants in Friday's Group of Twenty (G20) meeting in Bali, Indonesia, did not walk out during the speech of Russia's representative, Japanese Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki said.

On July 15-16, Bali is hosting the meeting of the G20 nation's finance ministers and central bankers to address a number of issues, including global inflation and defaults risks.

Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov participated in the meeting remotely, Kyodo News reported citing a G20 source.

Suzuki, who was cited in the Kyodo News report, shared that no one walked out when Russia's representative spoke.

In April, Suluanov's speech during the G20 ministerial meeting in Washington was boycotted by the representatives of Ukraine, Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom as well as by European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde.

Lagarde and Canadian Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland posted photos of officials who left the G20 meeting room before the Russian minister's address was presented on social media via videolink.

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UK Invests \$2.35Bln to Upgrade Typhoon Fighter Jet Capabilities for Royal Air Force - BAE

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - The United Kingdom will invest \$2.35 billion to upgrade its fleet of Eurofighter Typhoon jets and maintain it as an effective combat force for the next two decades, BAE Systems said.

"The UK Ministry of Defense has announced a \$2.35 billion investment in a package of new capabilities which will be equipped on Royal Air Force Typhoon aircraft," BAE Systems said in a press release on Friday.

UK Minister for Defense Procurement Jeremy Quin announced the decision at the Royal International Air Tattoo (RIAT) show which was held at the Fairford air base, the release said.

The upgrade plan "includes the delivery of the state-of-the-art European Common Radar System (ECRS) Mk 2 radar and work also ensures the aircraft can integrate additional capabilities and weapons later in the decade to counter emerging threats until 2040 and beyond," the release added.

The investment will help support 20,000 jobs across the United Kingdom and will contribute to the training and deployment of a new generation of aerospace engineers, technicians and manufacturers across the country, according to the release.

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None of World Heritage Sites in Ukraine Damaged by Special Military Operation - Diplomat

UNITED NATIONS, July 15 (Sputnik) - The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has confirmed that no world heritage sites have been damaged in Russia's ongoing special military operation in Ukraine, while the Ukrainian military is not able to provide guarantees they don't use cultural property in its operations, Russian mission's diplomat to the world body, Sergey Leonidchenko, said.

"UNESCO confirmed that none of the World Heritage Sites in Ukraine were damaged during the Russian special military operation... the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense that refuses to provide UNESCO with written guarantees that such cultural property or its immediate surroundings will not be used and supported the military effort," Leonidchenko said during a UN Security Council meeting on Ukraine on Friday.

Earlier in the meeting, UNESCO World Heritage Center Director Lazare Eloundou Assomo told the UN Security Council that the organization had dispatched a mission to Kiev from 7 to 10 July to assess the impact of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine on cultural sites.

The meeting was organized by Albania, a member of NATO and close ally of the United States, in a more informal format than the usual debates at the UN Security Council.

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New York Attorney General Postpones Trump Family Depositions After Ivana's Death

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - New York Attorney General Letitia James announced that her office is postponing depositions of former President Donald Trump, Donald Jr. and Ivanka Trump because Trump's former wife and the three children's mother, Ivana, has died.

"In light of the passing of Ivana Trump yesterday, we received a request from counsel for Donald Trump and his children to adjourn all three depositions, which we have agreed to," James said in a statement quoted by NBC. "This is a temporary delay and the depositions will be rescheduled as soon as possible. There is no other information about dates or otherwise to provide at this time."

James said the Attorney General's Office offers condolences to the Trump family.

The Trumps were supposed to answer questions under oath next week as a part of James' continuing investigation into claims of tax fraud by the Trump organization. The investigation is looking into allegations that Trump and the Trump Organization, inflated financial statements. When the deposition takes place, investigators are expected to ask Trump about the statements, which James alleges was boosted by hundreds of millions of dollars and signed off on by the former president.

The former president and Trump Organization officials have denied any wrongdoing, and Trump has characterized James' probe as a political "witch hunt."

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Oil Ends Week Lower as Dollar-Induced Losses Offset Results of Biden Saudi Trip

NEW YORK, July 16 (Sputnik) - Crude markets rose on Friday but fell on the week as heavy losses induced by a strong dollar offset optimism that President Joe Biden's visit to Saudi Arabia will not immediately lead to additional production of oil.

Crude prices also pulled back from the week's lows after key Federal Reserve officials said the central bank was unlikely to impose a record rate hike for July to tame inflation roaring at four-decade highs. Raphael Bostic and James Bullard, Federal Reserve chiefs for Atlanta and St. Louis, respectively, said they preferred a 75-basis point hike for July versus a 100 basis points.

Biden's visit to Saudi Arabia to meet with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and other regional OPEC officials will not immediately result in additional barrels of oil, media reports said. The best the United States could hope is for higher OPEC production from August onward, the reports added.

Even before Biden's trip, there had been questions as to how much more OPEC could produce given reports that the cartel had output constraints from underinvestment in oil fields during the market crash of 2020 triggered by the coronavirus pandemic measures.

At Friday's close, New York-traded West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude settled up \$1.81, or 1.9%, at \$97.59 per barrel. For the week, however, WTI moved down almost 7% after a near five-month low at \$90.58. The US crude gauge has also lost 8% since the start of July.

London-traded Brent crude settled up \$2.19, or 2.2%, at \$101.16 a barrel. The global crude benchmark fell to \$95.42 during the week, marking a low since late February. For the week, Brent was down almost 6% while for July it lost nearly 7.5%.

Brent has fallen for five straight weeks now, losing a total 17%. WTI has been in the negative in four of those five weeks, falling by a net 19%.

Charts for WTI suggested that the US crude benchmark was at an inflection point of either breaking out to \$106 and beyond or falling back to a new multi-month low of \$83.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) -

UKRAINE DEVELOPMENT

- * Russians can come to the table for talks with Ukraine any day they want to, it would be a "positive step," a senior US defense official said on Friday.
- * The United States provides information to Ukraine that they put to use on the battlefield against Russia's special military operation, a senior US defense official said
- * The United Nations Secretariat has a biased position on the Ukraine conflict despite requirements of its own Charter, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.

GLOBAL ENERGY MARKETS

- * The United States is making efforts along with its partners in Asia and the Middle East to end dependence on Russian energy by increasing supply to Europe, but such a development will not happen overnight, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said on Friday.
- * President Joe Biden will address during his visit to Saudi Arabia the issue of energy security in the context of the Ukraine conflict, Sullivan said.
- * No announcement on boosting oil production should be expected during US President Joe Biden's visit to Saudi Arabia since action like that should be taken by OPEC+ countries, Sullivan said.

ANTI-RUSSIA SANCTIONS

- * The European Commission on Friday suggested imposing a ban on imports of Russian gold to the European Union as part of a joint proposal for a new package of anti-Russia measures.
- * The European Commission has offered to extend the economic sanctions against Russia until January 2023 as part of a joint proposal for a new package of anti-Russia measures, President Ursula von der Leyen said.
- * A new package of the European Union's sanctions is not set to target the trade of agricultural products between Russia and third countries, the European Commission said.
- * The European Union's foreign ministers will discuss an issue of imposing a ban on gold imports from Russia on July 18, a EU source said.

ROGOZIN REPLACED AS SPACE AGENCY CHIEF

- * Yuri Borisov, who previously served as Russian Deputy Prime Minister, has replaced Rogozin as the head of Russia's space agency Roscosmos, according to a decree published on Friday on the Kremlin's official website.
- * Rogozin will eventually be employed, the Kremlin will inform about this in a timely manner, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told Sputnik.

NASA-ROSCOSMOS PARTNERSHIP

* Roscosmos and NASA came to the agreement that the only woman in the Russian cosmonaut crew, Anna Kikina, will fly to the International Space Station (ISS) on the US-made Crew Dragon spacecraft and the American astronaut, Francisco Rubio, will fly on the Russian-made Soyuz MS-22 ship, Russian space agency said on Friday.

* Roscosmos and NASA signed an agreement on astronauts and cosmonauts cross flights to the ISS on Russian-made Soyuz ships, the Russian space agency said.

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UNESCO Sends Mission to Ukraine to Assess Conflict Impact on Cultural Heritage - Director

UNITED NATIONS, July 15 (Sputnik) - The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) dispatched a special mission to Ukraine earlier in July to assess the impact of the ongoing conflict on cultural heritage, UNESCO World Heritage Center Director Lazare Eloundou Assomo said on Friday.

"In this context, UNESCO recently, on 7 to 10 July, 2022, dispatched a mission to Ukraine in Kiev," Assomo said during a UN Security Council meeting. "The purpose of this visit was to consolidate the preliminary assessment of the impact and to prepare for large-scale on the ground verification."

Assomo said that 53% of the recorded damaged cultural sites are located in the Kharkiv and Donetsk regions of Ukraine.

The UN Security Council meeting was organized in a more informal format than the usual debates. The discussion on Ukraine was initiated by Albania, a non-permanent member that is a member of NATO and supports the Western position on Ukraine.

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Biden Says Reached Deal With Saudi Arabia on Development of Tiran Island

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The United States and Saudi Arabia reached a deal to move international security forces off of Tiran Island in the Red Sea and open it up for greater tourism and development, US President Joe Biden said on Friday.

"We concluded a historic deal to transform a flashpoint at the heart of the Middle East wars into an area of peace. International peacekeepers, including US troops, will leave Tiran Island in the Red Sea, where they've been for over 40 years since the Camp David Accords," Biden said during a press conference.

The island will become more open to tourism and economic development while retaining necessary security arrangements as a result of the deal, Biden added.

The Egyptian government in 2016 approved a maritime demarcation deal to transfer the islands of Turin and Sanafir to Saudi Arabia. The islands are located at the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba and could potentially be used to construct a bridge across the Red Sea.

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US Approves \$130M In Torpedoes Sale to South Korea - Defense Agency

WASHINGTON, July 15 Sputnik) - The Biden administration has approved the sale of more than 30 Mark 54 lightweight torpedoes costing \$130 million to South Korea, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) announced on Friday.

"The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Republic of Korea of MK 54 Lightweight Torpedoes and related equipment for an estimated cost of \$130 million," the DSCA said in a press release.

The DSCA delivered the required certification notifying Congress of this possible sale earlier in the day, the release said.

South Korea plans to deploy the new torpedoes on their US-manufactured and supplied Sikorsky MH-60R Seahawk heavy helicopters, the release added.

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American Express Agrees to Pay US \$430,000 for Violating Kingpin Sanctions - Treasury

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The US government has negotiated a more than \$403,000 settlement with American Express's National Bank over its alleged violation of sanctions imposed on individuals and entities active in the illegal narcotics trade, the Department of the Treasury announced in a statement on Friday.

"The US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) today announced a settlement with American Express National Bank (Amex), a subsidiary of American Express Company," the statement said. "Amex agreed to remit \$430,500 to settle its potential civil liability for 214 apparent violations of OFAC's Kingpin sanctions."

The Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act, better known as the Kingpin Act, is US federal legislation to address international narcotics trafficking by imposing US government sanctions on foreign persons and entities involved in the drug trade.

The Treasury Department said in the statement that Amex processed transactions for an account whose supplemental card holder was designated in connection with illegal drug distribution and money laundering.

A combination of human error and sanctions compliance program deficiencies enabled the account to engage in \$155,189.42 worth of transactions, the statement added.

The settlement amount reflects OFAC's assessment that the apparent violations were not voluntarily self-disclosed and were also non-egregious, according to the statement.

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Biden Says Saudi Officials Share Sense of Urgency on Global Energy Security

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Friday that Saudi officials share the sense of urgency about global energy security and he expects to see additional steps on the issue in the coming weeks.

"We had a good discussion on ensuring global energy security and adequate oil supplies to support global economic growth. That will begin shortly and I'm doing all I can to increase the supply for the United States of America which I expect to happen," Biden said during a press briefing. "The Saudi share that urgency and based on our discussions today, I expect we'll see further steps in the coming weeks."

Regarding the impact of his visit to the Middle East on gas prices in the United States, Biden said US consumers will not see those for "another couple of weeks."

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Biden Says Reached Deal With Saudi Arabia on Investing in Secure 5G, 6G Networks

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - Saudi Arabia will invest in 5G and 6G network projects led by the United States to help develop such secure and reliable systems around the world, President Joe Biden said on Friday.

"Saudi Arabia will invest in new US-led technology to develop and secure reliable 5G and 6G networks, both here, and in the future, in developing countries," Biden said during a press conference.

The new technology will outcompete other platforms such as those from China, Biden added.

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Biden Says He Does Not Regret Calling Saudi Arabia Pariah Country

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Friday that he does not regret calling Saudi Arabia a "pariah state" for its alleged role in the killing of columnist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018.

"I don't regret anything that I said. What happened to Khashoggi was outrageous," Biden said during a press briefing. "[I]f anything occurs like that again, they'll get that response and much more."

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Biden Says Discussed Khashoggi Murder With Saudi Crown Prince During Meeting

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Friday that he raised the issue of columnist Jamal Khashoggi's murder with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman during their meeting in Jeddah.

"With respect to the murder of Khashoggi, I raised it at the top of the meeting, making it clear what I thought of it at the time and what I think of it now," Biden said during a press conference. The Saudi Crown Prince said that he does not feel personally responsible for the murder of Khashoggi and took action against those who were, Biden added.

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US Approves Possible \$950M In Sale of Advanced Air-to-Air Missiles to Norway - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The United States has approved a possible \$950 million sale of advanced medium-range air-to-air missiles (AMRAAM) to Norway, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) said on Friday.

"The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Government of Norway of AIM-120 C-8 or D Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles and related equipment for an estimated cost of \$950 million," the DSCA said in a statement. The DSCA delivered the required certification notifying Congress of this possible sale, the statement said.

Norway has requested to buy up to 205 AIM-120 D-series AMRAAM missiles; up to 60 AIM-120 C-8 or D-series AMRAAM missiles and four AIM-120D AMRAAM Guidance Sections, the statement said.

"This proposed sale will support the foreign policy goals and national security objectives of the United States by improving the security of a NATO ally that is an important force for political stability and economic progress in Europe, the statement also said.

"The proposed sale of this equipment and support will not alter the basic military balance in the region," the statement added.

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US Not Tracking Weapons Sent to Ukraine – Defense Official

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) – The United States is not tracking weapons being provided to Kiev, but has not seen any indication that they are being used by anyone other than the Ukrainian armed forces, a senior US defense official said on Friday.

"We are not tracking and not knowing where those weapons go. We're not tracking the Ukrainians use of our particular weapons, but we also aren't seeing any indications anywhere else that these weapons have been provided to anybody other than Ukrainian armed forces," the official told a press briefing.

The official added he is unaware of any plans to send people to Ukraine to monitor the fate of American weapons sent to the country.

On February 24, Russia launched a special military operation in Ukraine after the breakaway republics of Donetsk and Luhansk requested help in defending them from intensifying attacks by Ukrainian troops. The Russian Ministry of Defense said the operation targets Ukrainian military infrastructure only. The United States and its allies have since provided Ukraine with offensive and defensive military equipment worth billions of dollars.

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US Approves Possible \$500Mln Sale of HIMARS, Equipment to Estonia - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The US government has approved a possible sale of up to six High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems and related equipment for an estimated cost of \$500 million to Estonia, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) said on Friday.

"The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to the government of Estonia of M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) and related equipment for an estimated cost of up to \$500 million," DSCA said in a press release. "The Government of Estonia has requested to purchase up to six (6) M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System Launchers."

Earlier this month, President Joe Biden authorized a new \$400 million drawdown of additional military assistance to Ukraine. The Defense Department said the aid package includes four HIMARS, 1,000 rounds of 155mm artillery munitions with greater precision capabilities, counter battery systems and other equipment. So far, the United States committed 12 and delivered eight HIMARS systems to Ukraine.

HIMARS rockets supplied to Ukraine have a range of about 50 miles (70km), according to the Defense Department.

Earlier this week, Russian Deputy Envoy to the United Nations Dmitry Polyansky condemned the strike on the city of Nova Kakhovka in the Kherson region carried out by Ukrainian forces by using HIMARS and called it a direct consequence of the United States' policy to supply such weapons to Kiev.

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Senior US Official Heads to UK, Germany, Poland to Discuss Ukraine Military Aid, Security

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - US Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs Jessica will visit the United Kingdom, Germany, and Poland on July 16-22 to discuss military aid for Ukraine, security cooperation and defense trade, the Department of State announced on Friday.

"In the United Kingdom, July 16-19, Assistant Secretary Lewis will attend the Farnborough International Airshow, where she will meet with senior civilian and military officials, as well as advocate for U.S. manufacturers at the one of the world's largest defense and aerospace exhibitions," the press release said. "In Germany, July 19-20, Assistant Secretary Lewis will meet with senior officials at U.S. European Command (EUCOM) and U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) based in Stuttgart to discuss continued U.S. and international military support to Ukraine and address other regional and global security challenges."

In Poland, Lewis will meet with senior civilian and military officials to address regional peace and stability and expand defense cooperation, the release added.

Russia has repeatedly denounced the West for sending Ukraine billions dollars worth of weapons, noting that it adds fuel to the fire and only prolongs the conflict. Moscow warns any cargo that contains weapons for Ukraine will be a legitimate target for the Russian armed forces.

On February 24, Russia launched a special military operation in Ukraine after the Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics requested help in defending themselves from intensifying attacks by Ukrainian troops.

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IMF, WB, WTO Say Progress on Ukraine Grain, Fertilizer to Help Food Availability Globally

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) – Progress in unblocking Ukraine's grain and fertilizer exports will help improve the situation with availability and affordability of food worldwide, the World Bank Group, the World Trade Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization said on Friday.

"In the short term, releasing stocks, as appropriate and consistent with WTO rules, and finding a diplomatic solution to evacuate the grains and fertilizers currently blocked in Ukraine, will help address availability and affordability of food supplies," they said in a joint statement.

By June 2022 the number of acute food insecure people with significantly restricted access to food increased to 345 million in 82 countries, the statement noted.

The four international organizations called on all countries to lift restrictions on food exports and adopt more flexible inspections and licensing processes. These steps will help to minimize supply disruptions and lower prices, they added.

They also urged both developing and developed countries to boost sustainable food production and improve supply chains. "This requires affordable fertilizers, seeds, and other inputs through

the private sector as the primary actor in these markets. Providing working capital for competitive producers is also a key priority," the statement read.

Leaders stressed the importance of supporting vulnerable countries who faced the most significant crisis and helping them to meet their urgent needs.

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US Would See Russia Coming to Table for Talks With Ukraine as a Positive Step – Official
WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) – Russians can come to the table for talks with Ukraine any day they want to, it would be a "positive step," a senior US defense official said on Friday. "[T]he Russians can come to the table [with Ukraine for peace talks] any day they want to. I think you know that. That'd be a positive step," the official told a press briefing.

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US Provides Information to Ukraine They Use Across Battlefield - Defense Official

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The United States provides information to Ukraine that they put to use on the battlefield against Russia's special military operation, a senior US defense official said on Friday.

"We provide information that they're [Ukraine] using across the battlefield," the senior defense official said. "We're helping the Ukrainians. I'm not going to provide particulars as to how that works, but you know, we've been able to give them information and they've been able to use that information the way they choose to do so."

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US House Panel Probing Whether Firms Abuse Veterans Disability Claims Backlog for Profit

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives Oversight Committee is probing whether private records-retrieval companies are using a backlog of records requests for disability claims to profit through paid expedited services, according to letters sent by the panel's lawmakers to the companies on Friday.

"The Oversight Committee is investigating whether companies that retrieve records for veterans... are misusing National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) procedures intended to expedite emergency records requests while charging veterans to obtain government records they are entitled to receive at no cost," the letters said.

The lawmakers sent the letters to DD214 Direct, Aardvark Research Group and Angels Research. The companies charge between \$79 and \$99 to obtain DD214 forms that veterans use to receive benefits.

Veterans are entitled to receive the document at no cost, the letters said, adding that the private records-retrieval companies use emergency requests to prioritize certain cases at the NPRC. The NPRC director identified a pattern in which veterans initially submit non-emergency requests for records but then later submit an emergency request through a private company, the letters said.

Emergency records requests increased from approximately 5,000 per year before the onset of the coronavirus pandemic-related backlog to more than 50,000 in 2021, 70% of which came from private companies, the letters also said.

The companies represent themselves as having particular knowledge of how to navigate government bureaucracy and expedite the records-request process, the letters said.

"NPRC prioritizes these emergency requests above other pending requests, exacerbating the office's backlog by creating duplicate requests, and potentially delaying NPRC's response to actual emergency requests," the letters added.

The lawmakers' letters requested the companies answer questions on their business practices and provide documents pertaining to their work by July 29.

The letters were signed by Oversight and Reform Committee Chairwoman Carolyn Maloney and National Security Subcommittee Chairman Stephen Lynch.

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US House Passes Abortion Defense Bills in Response to End of Roe Protections

(Updates with details in paras 3-4, 6-9)

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives on Friday passed a pair of bills to federally protect women's access to abortions in response to the Supreme Court's decision to overturn the Roe v. Wade ruling and allow state restrictions on the procedure.

Lawmakers passed the Women's Health Protection Act in a vote of 219-210 and the Ensuring Access to Abortion Act in a vote of 223-205. Republican opposition to the first bill was unanimous, with one Democrat joining them in voting against its passage. Three Republicans joined all Democrats in passing the second bill.

The Women's Health Protection Act prohibits governmental restrictions on access to abortion services, including restrictions on requirements to consult with providers or disclose reasons for pursuing an abortion before obtaining one.

The Ensuring Access to Abortion Act similarly prohibits state officials from interfering with people's ability to access out-of-state abortion services, including by preventing, impeding or retaliating against those engaged in interstate travel for the purpose of obtaining or helping someone else obtain an abortion.

The two bills, which are expected to face a greater hurdle to passage in the Senate, came in response to the Supreme Court's decision in June to overturn abortion protections initially granted by the Roe v. Wade ruling and allow states greater freedom to regulate abortion.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Friday praised the the bills as landmark pieces of legislation and affirmed Democrats' commitment to abortion rights.

"As we pass this landmark legislation today, Democrats will not stop ferociously defending freedom for women and for every American. And we want everybody to know, women out there who are concerned about their own personal reproductive freedom and what it means to their health, that the message from the House Democrats and our groups here today is: we are not going back," Pelosi said during a press conference.

Pelosi also reiterated US President Joe Biden's call for Americans to vote for pro-abortion Democratic candidates in November midterm elections.

The House next week will bring to the floor the Right to Contraception Act, which would protect women's ability to access and engage in contraception, Majority Leader Steny Hoyer also said on Friday in a statement.

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US Orders 2.5Mln Monkeypox Vaccine Doses, 131,000 Available Immediately - Health Dept.

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The US Department of Health and Human Services said in a press release on Friday that it has ordered 2.5 million of additional vaccine doses against monkeypox and has made 131,000 doses available for immediate use.

"The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) today placed an order for another 2.5 million doses of Bavarian Nordic's JYNNEOS vaccine to respond to the current monkeypox outbreak and strengthen the country's smallpox preparedness," the release said. "HHS also announced that an additional 131,000 doses of JYNNEOS just arrived in the SNS and the department is making these doses immediately available to states and jurisdictions."

The new order will bring the US government stock of vaccine to treat monkeypox to nearly 7 million doses by the middle of 2023, the release said.

The number of vaccine doses available today has also increased to more than 300,000, the release added.

HHS has so far shipped about 156,000 doses to US states and territories, with approximately 100,000 doses delivered in the past week, according to the release.

As of Friday, there are 1,470 monkeypox/orthopoxvirus cases in the United States, according to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

US doctors have issued statements saying the public should not panic because monkeypox can be identified and is treatable.

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US Economy Likely Fell 1.5% in Q2, Atlanta Fed Says in Deepening Its Recession Call
WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - US gross domestic product likely contracted by 1.5% in the second quarter of 2022 after a first-quarter decline of 1.6%, the Atlanta Federal Reserve said Friday in deepening its call for a recession in the world's largest economy.

"The GDPNow model estimate for real GDP growth in the second quarter of 2022 is -1.5 percent on July 15, down from -1.2 percent on July 8," the Atlanta Fed said in a statement. In its first forecast for the second quarter on June 30, it forecast a 1.0% decline for the second quarter.

US GDP contracted by 3.5% in 2020 in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic. The following year, it posted a growth of 5.7%, its strongest in four decades, as the economy rebounded forcefully from business lockdowns and other restrictions imposed during the height of the pandemic.

Since the start of 2022, inflation expanding at its fastest pace in 40 years has negatively impacted GDP, pushing to a 1.6% decline in the first quarter.

Two straight quarters of GDP decline technically place any economy in a recession.

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US Should Not Move Interest Rates 'Too Dramatically' - Federal Reserve Official

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The United States should not move interest rates too dramatically, Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta President Raphael Bostic said on Friday, after initially suggesting that the US central bank was open to all options in beating inflation that stands at four-decade highs.

"Inflation is too high and the Fed needs to lower it," Bostic said in a live-streamed speech on the economy.

While there is "no historical context for what the US is facing today", Bostic also said that "moving too dramatically on rates could undermine the economy and add to uncertainty." Bostic's latest remarks came after he said on Wednesday that "everything is in play" regarding the Federal Reserve's options to fight inflation. He made the remark after the Labor Department reported that US consumer prices rose by 9.1% during the year to June - the most in four decades.

Subsequent to the data, several Federal Reserve officials commented on the possibility of a record 100-basis point interest rate hike for July, versus earlier bets for a 75-basis point increase. No one at the US central bank, however, openly supported such a dramatic hike, leaving markets to guess what the forthcoming adjustment to rates on July 27 will be.

Bostic said on Friday that "75 basis points was a big move in policy" and that the "Fed wants policy transition to be orderly."

The Federal Reserve has been trying to manage price growth without implementing excessive interest rate hikes, but its task is becoming harder with each galloping print on inflation. The central bank has a tolerance of 2% per year for inflation. Consumer prices, meanwhile, are growing four-and-a-half times faster.

The Federal Reserve left rates at between zero and 0.25% for two years after the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic and only raised them 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 - the highest in 28 years - bringing rates to between 1.5% and 1.75%.

Economists say the Federal Reserve risks pushing the economy into a recession if it accelerate rate hikes any further.

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

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UN Humanitarian Colleagues Helping on Ground After Strike in Ukraine's Vinnytsia - Haq

UNITED NATIONS, July 15 (Sputnik) - Humanitarian colleagues of the United Nations are providing help on the ground to those affected by the recent strike in Ukraine's city of Vinnytsia, UN deputy spokesman Farhan Haq said on Friday.

"Our humanitarian colleagues on the ground are proving help to the victims in Vinnytsia," he told a briefing.

Haq added that UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres condemns the strike and denounces any attacks against civilians and infrastructure.

On Thursday, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said that Guterres was appalled by the strike. The Ukrainian authorities have blamed Moscow for the attack, claiming Russian military deliberately attacked civilians.

Russian media have since published photographs of the House of Officers that was hit by a missile.

On Thursday, Evgeny Varganov of the Russian mission to the UN, confirmed the attack on the House of Officers, where Ukrainian military trained its officers. He stressed that Russia strikes only military targets in Ukraine.

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UN Encouraging All Efforts Around World to Help Alleviate Food Crisis - Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, July 15 (Sputnik) - The United Nations is encouraging all efforts around the globe to ease the global food crisis, UN deputy spokesperson Farhan Aziz Haq said on Friday . "I think for us, the important thing is to encourage all of the efforts being made around the world to see what can be done to help alleviate what could be a serious a worldwide food crisis," Haq said during a press briefing.

Haq's comment came in response to a request for comment on the United States' decision to issue a fact sheet and ease sanctions imposed on Russian food and fertilizer exports.

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Super Hornet Jet Operates 3 Unmanned Drones in Successful Command Flight Test - Boeing

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - Boeing and the US Navy have completed a series of flight tests in which an F/A-18 Super Hornet jet successfully controlled three unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) simultaneously, the company announced on Friday.

"Boeing and the US Navy have completed a series of manned-unmanned teaming (MUM-T) flight tests in which a Block III F/A-18 Super Hornet successfully demonstrated command and control of three unmanned UAVs," the press release said.

In the tests, Boeing system engineers connected the aircraft's adjunct processor, known as the Distributed Targeting Processor – Networked (DTP-N), with a third-party tablet to link up with the UAVs, the release explained.

"This successful MUM-T demonstration represents a significant step toward the Navy's vision for Distributed Maritime Operations. It highlights the potential of unmanned concepts to expand and extend the Navy's reach," Boeing Director for Multi-Domain Integration Scott Dickson said in the release.

Boeing developed new software loads for the DTP-N specific to running the third-party tablet and transmitting commands. During the test flights, F/A-18 pilots entered commands into the tablet, which were processed and transmitted through Block III's hardware. The UAVs executed all commands given by F/A-18 pilots during tests over a two-week period, the release said.

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Justice Breyer to Join Harvard Law School After Retiring From US Supreme Court - Statement

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - Retired US Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer is joining the faculty of Harvard Law School following his departure from the bench at the end of June, Harvard Law Today said on Friday.

"Justice Stephen Breyer '64 has been named the Byrne Professor of Administrative Law and Process at Harvard Law School (HLS), effective immediately. He joins a group of faculty who have become HLS faculty members after illustrious legal careers in the profession and bring deep expertise and excellence to the shared work of this community," Harvard Law Today said. Breyer will teach seminars and reading groups, publish books and other scholarship as well as will engage in the university's broader intellectual life and community, it said.

Breyer is Harvard Law School graduate and has previously served on its faculty, Harvard Law Today noted.

"I am very pleased to return to Harvard and teach there and to write. Among other things, I will likely try to explain why I believe it important that the next generations of those associated with the law engage in work, and take approaches to law, that help the great American constitutional experiment work effectively for the American people," Breyer said in a statement.

Breyer retired from the Supreme Court on June 30, leading the way for Associate Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson to be sworn on to the bench.

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Canada's Freeland Says Russia at G20 Like an 'Arsonist' at Firefighters' Meeting

OTTAWA, July 15 (Sputnik) – The Canadian government does not welcome Russia at G20 sessions, seeing the country as an "arsonist" at a firefighters' meeting, Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland said on Friday.

"Today and tomorrow, I am at the @g20org. Russia should not be at the G20. Their presence here is like an arsonist joining a meeting of firefighters. That was my message to the Russian delegation this morning in Indonesia," Freeland wrote on social media.

Freeland, which also is Canada's minister of finance, is representing the country at the G20 meeting on economy taking place in Bali, Indonesia from July 15-16, with the agenda that includes Russia's ongoing special military operation in Ukraine.

Other topics include reducing inflation, ensuring post-pandemic international tax fairness and economic recovery and tackling climate change.

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Americans Buying Selectively as Consumer Sentiment Near Record Low Amid Inflation - Survey

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - Americans are making major purchases selectively as consumer sentiment remains near record lows amid inflation at four-decade highs, the University of Michigan (UMich) in its latest consumer sentiment survey on Friday. "Buying conditions for durables adjusted upwards, owing both to consumers who cited easing supply constraints and those who believed that one should buy now to avoid future price increases, which would exacerbate inflation going forward," the UMich Consumer Survey said. The latest reading for the Consumer Sentiment Index stood at 51.1 versus last month's all-time low of 50, the survey said.

"Consumer sentiment was relatively unchanged, remaining near all-time lows [but] current assessments of personal finances continued to deteriorate, reaching its lowest point since 2011," the survey said.

Even with the selective purchases by Americans, "buying conditions remained 26% lower than a year ago," the survey added.

The UMich report came on the heels of Friday's retail sales data for June, which showed a growth of 1% last month, suggesting an economy that is still resilient in spite of inflation at its highest since the 1980s.

Consumer sentiment accounts for 70% of US gross domestic product, or GDP. After a 3.5% contraction in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic, GDP grew at its fastest last year since 1982, expanding by 5.7%. But inflation grew even faster, rising 7%.

Since the start of this year, GDP has slowed, contracting 1.6% in the first quarter. If it does not return to the positive by the second quarter, the United States will technically be in a recession.

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Biden, Saudi Crown Prince Exchange Fist Bump Upon US President's Arrival for Meeting

UNITED NATIONS, July 15 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden and the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman exchanged a fist bump instead of a handshake upon Biden's arrival for their meeting in Jeddah on Friday.

On Wednesday, Biden reportedly also used a fist bump to greet Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid.

The manner of greeting and body language often indicate how statesmen feel about one another, but the Biden team has said close contacts will be restricted for the US president due to the the possibility of contracting coronavirus.

Biden is visiting Saudi Arabia as part of his Middle East tour, where he is scheduled to meet with officials from Israel, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. The most pressing issue for Biden is energy security and specifically persuading US partners like Saudi Arabia to increase oil output,

The challenge for Biden was the fact he had previously criticized Saudi Arabia, calling it a "pariah nation," and specifically criticized the Crown Prince for the murder columnist Jamal Khashoggi.

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OSCE Seeking Ways to Get Presence Back to Ukraine Without Bypassing Russia Veto - US Envoy

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The United States and its partners in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) are trying to find ways to return their missions to Ukraine without bypassing Russia's veto, US Permanent Representative to the OSCE Michael Carpenter said on Friday.

"We are in talks here in the OSCE about how to get an OSCE presence back into Ukraine without bypassing Russian veto," Carpenter said during a press briefing.

Carpenter accused Russia of imposing veto on the OSCE missions working in different regions, including in Donetsk, and areas near the Russian border.

Carpenter expressed hope OSCE will be able to renew its "valuable efforts," including providing support for victims of the conflict, civil societies, children and victims of trafficking.

"But we need to find a way to prevent Russia from being capable of stopping the OSCE from doing valuable work," he added.

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Russia's UN Envoy Says Push for Talks With Moscow Would Be West's Best Help for Kiev

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - Encouraging Ukraine to begin meaningful peace negotiations with Russia would be the best help the West could provide to Kiev, Russia's deputy envoy at the UN, Dmitry Polyanskiy, said on Friday.

"I think that the best support for Ukraine that Western countries, including the United States, could render would be to bring some reasoning to the policy planning and to the actions of Ukrainian leadership to start meaningful and serious peaceful negotiations with Russia on the conditions of the ceasefire," Polyanskiy told TNT Radio in an interview.

Russia has repeatedly denounced the West for sending Ukraine billions dollars worth of weapons, noting that it adds fuel to the fire and only prolongs the conflict. Moscow warns any

cargo that contains weapons for Ukraine will be a legitimate target for the Russian armed forces.

On February 24, Russia launched a special military operation in Ukraine after the Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics requested help in defending themselves from intensifying attacks by Ukrainian troops. The two countries have since held several rounds of peace talks but failed to reach an agreement.

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Autopsy of Jayland Walker Finds 46 Gunshot Wounds - Medical Examiner

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The Summit County Medical Examiner's Office has found that Jayland Walker sustained 46 bullet wounds in his fatal encounter with Akron police last month, Chief Medical Examiner Lisa Kohler said on Friday.

"The autopsy determined that Jayland had 46 gunshot wound entrances or graze injuries," Kohler, who reviewed and co-signed the autopsy report, said during a press briefing. "Walker's death was due to blood loss from his internal injuries [caused by] multiple gunshot wounds." On June 27, 25-year-old Walker was killed by Akron police officers who were pursuing him for an alleged traffic violation.

Kohler said Walker's injuries were caused by 15 gunshot wounds to the torso; 17 gunshot wounds to the pelvis and upper legs; one gunshot wound to the face; eight gunshot wounds to the arms and right hand; and five gunshot wounds to the knees, right lower leg and right foot. Twenty-six bullets were recovered from Walker's body, she added.

Kohler clarified that she did not know the actual number or order of shots fired by the police officers, noting that it was possible for a single bullet to cause multiple entrance wounds. She also said they could not determine which bullet killed Walker, noting that he had "several very devastating injuries that would cause death."

The Chief Medical Examiner concluded that Walker's manner of death was "homicide, shot by others" and emphasized that this was a medical, not a legal ruling.

Walker's toxicology screen was negative for drug and alcohol abuse and he was handcuffed when his body was received by the medical examiner's office, Kohler added.

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Russia to Diversify Energy Exports if Europe Does Not Buy Oil, Gas - Deputy Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, July 15 (Sputnik) - Russia will diversify its energy exports if the European countries do not purchase Russian oil and gas, Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy said on Friday.

"If Europe doesn't want cooperation with Russia in energy matters, I think we will make necessary conclusions and we will diversify our exports. This is not an easy process, but is doable, and we will do it. I don't think that Russia will be the side who will suffer because of this," Dmitry Polyanskiy said in an interview with the radio station TNT.

Polyanskiy said he is convinced that if that happens, the European countries will remember the "nice old days" when they were able to obtain inexpensive Russian gas and other energy resources.

The European Union has repeatedly said it is trying to decrease its dependence on Russian oil and gas to punish Moscow for its actions in Ukraine. Until recently, Russia has supplied the EU with about 40 percent of total gas imports.

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US Announces Over \$592Mln in Humanitarian Assistance for Africa - White House

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The United States has announced that it is providing more than \$592 million in humanitarian assistance to countries in Africa, US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Friday.

"The United States... announced today in Kampala, Uganda, more than \$592 million in humanitarian assistance for Africa through the Department of State and the US Agency for International Development (USAID)," Price said.

The spokesperson explained that the assistance will provide lifesaving support to refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, stateless persons, forcibly displaced and persecuted people across Africa, including those affected by crises in the Horn, the Sahel, and other emergency situations.

The aid will help the more than seven million refugees and asylum seekers currently across Africa as well the over 25 million internally displaced, Price said.

The United States is concerned by the diminished global attention to humanitarian crises in Africa, including in Uganda, where the growing number of new arrivals from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan exceeded 71,000 people since the start of the year, Price also said.

"We urge other donors to provide additional support to the growing humanitarian needs on the continent," Price added.

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US 'Very Closely' Following Political Situation in Italy as Draghi Resigns - White House

OTTAWA, July 15 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden is following "very closely" the political developments in Italy as Prime Minister Mario Draghi announced his resignation, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Friday.

"I would say that President Biden has deep profound respect for Prime Minister Draghi, so he's obviously following very closely the unfolding back-and-forth at home, and we'll see what happens," Sullivan said.

On Thursday, the Italian Senate expressed confidence in the government but one of the ruling coalition members, the Five-Star Movement (D5Z), refused to take part in the vote, thus reflecting their internal disagreements.

Draghi proceeded to announce his resignation after the Five-Star movement boycotted the vote, but his resignation was later rejected by Italian President Sergio Mattarella, who asked him to address Parliament for clarifications on his situation.

Draghi is set to appear before the country's Parliament next Wednesday.

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US, Partners Making Efforts to End Europe's Dependence on Russian Energy - White House

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The United States is making efforts along with its partners in Asia and the Middle East to end dependence on Russian energy by increasing supply to Europe, but such a development will not happen overnight, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said on Friday.

"[T]hat doesn't happen overnight, but it does require the concerted common effort of the United States and many other countries working to help increase supply to Europe," Sullivan said during a press briefing. "We're doing that and, frankly, we're doing that along with partners in Asia and partners in the Middle East."

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US to Increase Economic Pressure on Iran, Impose 2 New Rounds of Sanctions – Sullivan

OTTAWA, July 15 (Sputnik) – The United States intends to ramp up economic pressure on Iran and introduce two new rounds of sanctions, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Friday

"The deal is on the table. Should the Iranians choose to take it, we're ready for compliance, for compliance return. But we're also not waiting to continue to impose economic pressure on Iran. Further economic pressure on Iran will include two rounds of sanctions. Designations that we have done to enforce the sanctions and crack down on smuggling and deprive Iran of sources of revenue will continue to do that, even as we work at the negotiating table to try to produce a return to the JCPOA" Sullivan said.

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Biden to Discuss Energy Security With Saudis in Context of Ukraine Conflict - Sullivan

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden will address during his visit to Saudi Arabia the issue of energy security in the context of the Ukraine conflict, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Friday.

"He [Biden] will have a broad conversation about energy security especially in the context of Russia's war in Ukraine," Sullivan said.

Biden is currently visiting the Middle East where he is scheduled to meet with officials from Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, among others.

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Biden's Visit to Saudi Arabia Will Not Produce Announcement on More Oil Output - Sullivan

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) – No announcement on boosting oil production should be expected during US President Joe Biden's visit to Saudi Arabia since action like that should be taken by OPEC+ countries, National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said on Friday.

"I don't think you should expect a particular announcement here bilaterally [on increasing oil output] because we believe any further action taken to ensure that there is sufficient energy to protect the health of the global economy will be done in the context of OPEC+," Sullivan said during a press briefing.

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Biden to Discuss Increasing Oil Output in Saudi Arabia - White House

OTTAWA, July 15 (Sputnik) - The US delegation headed by President Joe Biden will discuss during their visit to Saudi Arabia the possibility of that country increasing oil production, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Friday.

"We will discuss energy security at this meeting. The President [Biden] discusses it when he's in Europe, when he's in Asia and he certainly will be discussing it here in the Middle East and here in Saudi Arabia" Sullivan said.

Biden is currently visiting the Middle East where he is scheduled to meet with officials from Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, among others.

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US House Judiciary Committee Marks Up Assault Weapons Ban Bill Amid Wave of Mass Shootings

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) – The US House Judiciary Committee announced on Friday the first markup in two decades of a legislation banning assault weapons.

"Any weapon that allows for the quick and efficient slaughter of children in our schools has no place in our communities," Committee Chair Jerrold Nadler said. "This markup is another step in our efforts to make our communities safer." He added that the judiciary committee would take up the bill next week.

Sponsored by Rep. David Cicilline, Assault Weapons Ban of 2021 would ban the sale, import, manufacture or transfer of certain types of semi-automatic weapons. Cicilline noted that AR-15-style guns had become "the weapon of choice for shooters looking to kill as many people as possible as quickly as possible," adding that research showed that mass shooting deaths would be reduced by 70% if there was a federal ban on assault weapons.

In the last two months in the US, four gunmen have killed a combined 42 people, including 19 children in Uvalde, with assault weapons.