

8/16/22 Tuesday

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Ex-Israeli PM Netanyahu's Memoir 'My Story' to Hit Shelves Three Weeks After November Elections

Threshold Editions, a division of publisher Simon & Schuster that specializes in conservative non-fiction, announced on Tuesday that it would release an autobiography of former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on November 22.

"Born a year after the founding of the Jewish state, I have dedicated my life to combat the forces that seek its destruction and make peace with those that do not," Netanyahu, 72, [said in the news release](#).

"My story is one of tragedy and triumph, setbacks and successes, lessons learned and loved ones cherished. It is woven with that of Israel, which has proven that faith and resolve can overcome insurmountable odds to forge a brilliant future," he added.

The memoir will be titled "Bibi: My Story," and cover his childhood split between Jerusalem in Israel and the suburbs of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in the United States; his education at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and his service in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) during the War of Attrition, the 1968 raid into Lebanon, the October 1973 war, and the commando raid to free the hostages of Sabena Flight 571, during which he was shot in the shoulder.

It will also cover his entry into politics, including his five terms as Israel's prime minister from 1996 to 1999 and again from 2009 until 2021, both times as head of the conservative Likud - National Liberation Movement. The latter period also saw his waging of three wars against Gaza, attempts to annex parts of the West Bank, opposition to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, and the [signing of the Abraham Accords](#), which more than doubled the number of Arab countries recognizing Israel as a state.

The release did not say if the book would delve into the [ongoing corruption case](#) against him. He is accused of receiving gifts from two rich donors, who believed he would pass policies favoring their business interests, including that of Yediot Acharonot, Israel's largest daily paper. He has denied all the accusations; the trial is set to resume in September.

The book's publication will come just three weeks after Israel's scheduled parliamentary elections, ordered after former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett could no longer keep his coalition majority together. [It's unclear if Netanyahu](#), now the leader of the opposition, will be able to run in the election, much less to assemble an alternative government. [The 2021 coalition](#) assembled by now-Prime Minister Yair Lapid, which saw Bennett become head of government after his Yamina party joined the alliance, was forged out of politically disparate groups who united in opposition to a Netanyahu government.

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US Federal Appeals Court Rules Transgender People Protected by Americans With Disabilities Act

Hundreds of bills restricting the rights of LGBTQ people have been introduced in US state legislatures this year, many of which have since become law, especially those targeting transgender adults, youth, and athletes. US President Joe Biden has pledged to pass the federal Equality Act, which has stalled in the Senate for more than a year.

A federal appeals court has ruled that many transgender people are protected by the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), updating the legal interpretation of the law to be in line with subsequent advances in psychiatric medicine.

According to the US Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit in Richmond, Virginia, the ADA's list of mental illnesses excluded from its protections can no longer be used to deny transgender people equal access to public facilities or medical care, among numerous other things.

Kesha Williams, a transgender woman, was [imprisoned for six months](#) in Virginia's Fairfax County Adult Detention Center in 2018 and 2019. While incarcerated, she was placed in the men's side of the facility, denied access to her hormone replacement therapy (HRT) medications for a period of time, and treated like a man, despite her pleadings to be treated like a woman.

The rules the jail used for placing Williams there derived from a 2018 directive by then-US President Donald Trump's Bureau of Prisons, which reversed a directive by his predecessor, Barack Obama, and ordered prison staff to divide prisoners [based purely on their genitals](#).

Under Biden, this rule [has been changed back](#) and the BoP's manual for transgender inmates revised.

This harassment, Williams later argued in a court case against the prison staff, had violated her rights under the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, the US Constitution, and state common law. A lower court initially threw out her arguments, siding with the sheriff and ruling that she was not protected by the ADA's accommodation requirements for disabled people, but on Tuesday, Williams won her case on appeal.

ADA Originally Excluded Trans People

When the ADA was passed in 1990, it included [a list of conditions](#) that were not protected by the law, including "transvestism, transsexualism, pedophilia, exhibitionism, voyeurism, gender identity disorders not resulting from physical impairments, [and] other sexual behavior disorders," as well as "compulsive gambling, kleptomania ... pyromania; or ... psychoactive substance use disorders resulting from current illegal use of drugs."

At the time, this covered transgender people, whose lives were highly regulated by medical professionals and who, to receive access to transition resources like hormone therapy and surgeries, had to be [diagnosed with the mental illness](#) of "Gender Identity Disorder" (GID).

[In its ruling, the court notes](#) it has not been tasked with adding new conditions to the ADA's lists - that is Congress' job - but also notes that when the ADA was revised in 2008, Congress explicitly directed the courts that the law's definition of "disability" "shall be construed in favor of broad coverage of individuals under this chapter, to the maximum extent permitted by the [ADA's] terms." It also directed the courts to construe the ADA's exclusions narrowly.

'Meaningful Difference' Between Old, New Diagnoses

In 2013, the American Psychiatric Association (APA), which maintains the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) used for codifying and diagnosing mental illnesses, [removed GID from the fifth edition](#) of the manual (DSM-5), and added a [new diagnosis of "gender dysphoria."](#)

"The text of the ADA does not define the term 'gender identity disorders' and does not mention gender dysphoria at all. Thus, although the ADA specifically lists a number of exclusions from the definition of 'disability,' that list does not include gender dysphoria," the court argued.

"The very fact of revision suggests a meaningful difference, and the contrast between the definitions of the two terms - gender identity disorder and gender dysphoria - confirms that these revisions are not just semantic," the court continues.

"In sum, the APA's removal of the 'gender identity disorder' diagnosis and the addition of the 'gender dysphoria' diagnosis to the DSM-5 reflected a significant shift in medical understanding. The obsolete diagnosis focused solely on cross-gender identification; the modern one on clinically significant distress. The DSM-5 itself emphasizes this distinction, explaining that the gender dysphoria diagnosis 'focuses on dysphoria as the clinical problem, not identity per se.'"

"Put simply, while the older DSM pathologized the very existence of transgender people, the recent DSM-5's diagnosis of gender dysphoria takes as a given that being transgender is not a disability and affirms that a transgender person's medical needs are just as deserving of treatment and protection as anyone else's," The court wrote, adding that "nothing in the ADA, then or now, compels the conclusion that gender dysphoria constitutes a 'gender identity disorder' excluded from ADA protection."

"For these reasons, we agree with Williams that, as a matter of statutory construction, gender dysphoria is not a gender identity disorder," the court stated.

However, the appeals court threw out her other two arguments: that the sheriff had exhibited gross negligence of her care in the jail and that she had suffered physical impairment, which would also have been an ADA violation.

LGBTQ Protections Expand, Contract

The ADA includes anti-discrimination protections broadly similar to those in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which banned discrimination based on race, religion, sex, national origin, and other characteristics. However, the ADA also requires employers to provide disabled employees with reasonable accommodations and requires public accommodations to guarantee similar accessibility.

In addition to being included in those protections, the 2020 ruling by the US Supreme Court in [Bostock vs. Clayton County](#) found that the sex-based language of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act extends to sexuality and gender identity as well, since discrimination based on those things is unavoidably discrimination based on sex stereotypes.

However, efforts to explicitly codify anti-discrimination protections for LGBTQ people have stumbled amid Republican intransigence in Congress. When Biden took office in January 2021, he [pledged to pass the Equality Act](#), which would add sexuality and gender identity to the 1964 Civil Rights Act, within his first 100 days in office. While it quickly passed the Democrat-majority House, it has stalled in the Senate, where a GOP filibuster has blocked its passage, even though Democrats have a majority of votes for the bill.

Biden has faced mounting pressure in the months since, as the filibuster is used to block more and more of his agenda, to use his power to remove the filibuster rule. So far, he has hesitated, over fears, it could backfire once Democrats are no longer the majority.

Meanwhile, conservative state legislatures have passed one discriminatory measure after another in recent years, with [more than 200 such bills](#) being introduced in 2022 alone. The majority of these acts have targeted trans people's rights, and the majority of those have focused on trans children and youth, who conservatives allege are being forced into transitioning against their will by adults possessed by what they call "gender ideology" or "wokeness."

Where legislative actions have been blocked, governors have resorted to executive orders, with Texas Governor [Greg Abbott ordering the state's](#) child protective services to investigate parents of trans children for child abuse if they affirm their child's gender identity, and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis [banning the use of Medicaid](#) state-provided health insurance for transition-related care of any kind.

The legal attacks have been paralleled by physical attacks, as Republicans build support for their proposed policies by deriding trans people as "groomers" no different than pedophiles. [At least 25 trans people](#) have been murdered in the US this year, many in brutal ways, and far-right militia groups have [staged attacks on LGBTQ-related](#) events such as Pride celebrations and drag shows. Last year, the US saw an all-time high of 57 known murders of trans people.

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Workers at Amazon Air Freight Facility in California Walk Out in Protest Over Poor Safety, Wages

Several dozen employees at Amazon's largest air freight facility on the West Coast of the US walked out of their jobs on Monday, protesting low pay, unsafe and unhealthy working conditions, and recent retaliation against organizers at the facility.

"We've been organizing for a \$5 pay increase, safe working conditions, and an end to retaliation at the KSBD warehouse," a group calling itself "IE Amazon Workers" [posted on Facebook](#) on Monday. KSBD is Amazon's air freight fulfillment center in San Bernardino, California, part of the state's "Inland Empire" (IE) region.

"Our demands have been ignored by Amazon, and we've had enough," they added. "So today, 160 of us walked off the job. Learn more & support our efforts as we organize to make our workplaces safer, fairer, and better!"

"The Inland Empire is the largest warehouse hub in the US. It is the heart of our country's supply chain, and it is made possible by hundreds of thousands of working people like us," the group said in [a subsequent post](#).

"Amazon is the largest private sector employer in the region. More than 200,000 people work in warehouses in the region, and 1 in 5 of them work in Amazon facilities. Since the start of the pandemic, Amazon has made record-breaking profits and expanded its logistics network. This includes air freight fulfillment centers like KSBD. When KSBD opened in March 2021, Amazon

promised the Inland Empire quality jobs. They failed to deliver. Amazon has forced us to work in extreme heat, barely paid us enough to afford rent, and now we are being retaliated against for speaking up. It's time for Amazon to value the people who make their business possible.” “Amazon could deliver a higher standard for workers, but they don't,” Sara Fee, who has worked at the air hub since it opened in March 2021, told the [Los Angeles Times](#) on Monday. “A warehouse is just a warehouse. A company is just a company. The people are what makes it all work, and we are strong and united to fight for what we deserve.”

The air freight center is adjacent to San Bernardino International Airport and flies 14 flights a day into and out of the facility, which is operating 24 hours a day. Organizers told the LA Times that Amazon wants to increase that to 26 flights per day and that its employment at the facility fluctuates wildly, sometimes being as low as 1,300 workers and as high as 1,800 in peak season.

Workers said heat-related illnesses are common at the facility, as the daytime temperature commonly rises above 100 degrees Fahrenheit and much of the work of loading and unloading aircraft happens outside.

“It's been really hot every day this summer,” Daniel Rivera, a leader of the walkout who unloads freight from aircraft, [told the Washington Post](#). “They say there is air conditioning, but you can only feel it in some sections.”

An internal Amazon memo [leaked in June revealed](#) the company is afraid that its turnover is so high that it will deplete the available labor supply around its facilities by 2024, with some areas reaching that point even sooner. The research specifically noted that California's Inland Empire was expected to do so by the end of 2022. Amazon has 35 facilities in the region.

“We appreciate and respect the direct relationship we have with our employees to discuss and address feedback,” Amazon spokesperson Paul Flanigan told the Post, which is owned by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos. “Through this open-door policy, we have many communication channels we use, including All Hands meetings, which help us address employee concerns.” However, the company's ability to do so has been called into question across the country as workers attempt to win representation in negotiations with the company by labor unions like Amazon Labor Union (ALU), which represents workers at [a Staten Island warehouse](#) and has expanded organizing efforts in the area. Workers at a large fulfillment center in Bessemer, Alabama, have [fought for more than a year](#) to hold a fair union vote, bringing repeated complaints of interference against the company to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

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Earth to be Hit by Two Coronal Mass Ejections at Once on August 18, Posing Danger to Electrical Grid

A pair of large coronal mass ejections (CME) are expected to impact Earth's magnetosphere on Thursday, bringing the potential for disruptions and damage to the electrical grid as well as spacecraft in orbit.

According to the [latest forecast model](#) by the US National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) on Tuesday, two CMEs that left the Sun on Sunday and Monday will reach Earth by Thursday. The first is a cloud of dark plasma, the second is a magnetic filament that could overtake the first and “cannibalize it,” posing a danger of geomagnetic storms. The plumes are blamed on increased activity on the Sun’s surface as the star reaches its 11-year solar maximum. CMEs have [hit our planet](#) several times in [the last few months](#), thanks to the uptick in eruptions.

According to NOAA, the CMEs could cause either minor G1 geomagnetic storms or more serious G2-class storms, with the ability to trigger power grid fluctuations, [blow out transformers](#), and trigger voltage alarms on high-altitude power systems, if it lasts for a long period of time. They are also likely to impact spacecraft operations, radio communications, and of course, produce beautiful aurorae that will light up the night sky.

With the sunspot that produced both CMEs still facing Earth, there’s still a possibility that more flares could soon be on their way. NOAA gives a 30% chance of a medium-sized flare and a 10% chance of a large flare before the end of Wednesday.

However, they will likely pale in comparison to the worst solar storm to ever impact the Earth, known as the [Carrington Event](#) in 1859. That massive storm caused aurorae so powerful they could be witnessed near the equator, caused telegraph lines to spark and to shock their users, and allowed operators to send signals despite their power systems being turned off.

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Study: Nuclear War Between Superpowers Would Starve 5 Billion People

By - Ian DeMartino

The study comes as tensions are rising between the United States and Russia and China, holders of the three largest nuclear arsenals in the world.

While United States war hawks continually push more aggressive stances against fellow nuclear powers Russia and China on the global stage, a new study from Rutgers University reminds us that nuclear war would be bad. Really, really bad.

The study looked at six different nuclear war scenarios. Five of those scenarios looked at smaller nuclear conflicts between Pakistan and India, while the sixth examined what would happen in a large-scale conflict between Russia and the United States.

In a nuclear conflict between the two superpowers, more than 5 billion people would starve to death, according to the study.

They determined this by estimating sun-blocking soot dispersals from the simulated conflicts. The data was entered into the Community Earth System Model, a climate forecasting tool used by the National Center for Atmospheric Research. This allowed them to estimate crop yields by country, along with changes to livestock pasture and marine fisheries.

Even the smallest scale nuclear war scenario the researchers looked at would be disastrous for global food supplies. They estimate that the average caloric production would be reduced by 7%

worldwide within five years, which would be the largest change since the Food and Agricultural Organization started keeping records in 1961.

After a nuclear war between Russia and the United States, the amount of food produced globally would decrease by 90% in three to four years and 75% of the world would be starving within two years.

The study also looked at potential mitigation policies, like utilizing livestock grains to feed humans and increasing fishing operations. Unfortunately, those factors had a negligible effect on global food supplies.

More research is needed to provide a more complete picture of what the Earth would look like after a large-scale nuclear war, but that it would be the greatest disaster in known human history is without a doubt.

“For instance, the ozone layer would be destroyed by the heating of the stratosphere, producing more ultraviolet radiation at the surface,” said Lili Xia, lead author of the study. “We need to understand that impact on food supplies.”

The study comes one month after a cheerful public service announcement was released by NYC Emergency Management telling viewers how to respond [to a nuclear attack](#). It ended with the host smiling and saying, “You got this.”

“The data tell us one thing: We must prevent a nuclear war from ever happening,” said Alan Robock, co-author of the study.

“If nuclear weapons exist, they can be used, and the world has come close to nuclear war several times. Banning nuclear weapons is the only long-term solution,” Robock said. “The five-year-old UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has been ratified by 66 nations, but none of the nine nuclear states. Our work makes clear that it is time for those nine states to listen to science and the rest of the world and sign this treaty.”

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Two Decades After the Final Flight of the Concorde, the Next Supersonic Airliner is Here
B - Ian DeMartino

Supersonic flight has not been available to the public since 2003 when the Concorde was retired, but that may change soon if Boom Supersonic, based in Denver, Colorado, has its way. Boom Supersonic is showcasing their new Overture airliner, which its website says is the world's fastest. The Overture intends to address many of the issues the Concorde faced during its time in use from 1976 to 2003.

Unlike [the Concorde](#), the Overture can operate at slower speeds, so it will not break the sound barrier until it is over the ocean. The sonic boom created when vehicles break the sound barrier led to complaints from those living near airports that hosted Concorde flights. The slower operating speed during take-off and landing will also make Overture flights safer.

While the new plane will be significantly slower than the Concorde, topping out at Mach 1.7 (1.7 times the speed of sound) compared to the Concorde's top speed of Mach 2, that is still

substantially faster than airliners in use today and will cut the time for a flight from Tokyo to Seattle from approximately nine to four and a half hours.

Thanks to the lower operating speed, along with the plane's design that includes gull-style wings and four smaller engines, the noise created during take-off and landing will be comparable to other long-haul flights. Boom says the Overture will be able to carry 65 - 80 passengers at a range of up to 4,888 miles.

The company is also touting Overture's ability to run on 100% Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF), which is part of its plan to get to net zero emissions by 2025. Many airliners already use SAF, though it is normally mixed with conventional jet fuel, much in the same way E85 Ethanol fuel is used in some cars. It is generally created with plant material, though sometimes animal fat is also used.

However, SAF, which is nearly identical to traditional aviation fuel chemically, emits the same amount of carbon. What makes it more eco-friendly is that the plants used to produce it remove carbon from the air while producing oxygen. In theory, this means that the same amount of carbon is removed during production as is created when burning it.

However, that reasoning is [slightly misleading](#). Additional carbon is created when the fuel is refined and transported. Plants require space to grow and making room often requires removing plants that are already removing carbon from the atmosphere. An increase in demand could lead to more plantations and deforestation. There are also other environmental factors, like water use and biodiversity destruction. Still, SAF is preferred by climate activists over traditional aviation fuel, so Boom's environmental pitch is not without merit.

The new plane is already popular, with United Airlines indicating that they will purchase 15 jets once they pass safety and operating tests. Meanwhile, Japan Airlines says it has pre-ordered 20 Overture jets.

The first Overture passenger flights are expected in 2026.

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A New Isopod Was Just Discovered, and it is Giant

By - Ian DeMartino

Researchers estimate that there could be more than 700,000 marine species living in the ocean, including roughly 65,000 unknown species that have been collected but not yet identified or described. Roughly 226,000 ocean dwelling species have been both identified and described.

A new deep sea creature [has been discovered](#) in the Gulf of Mexico.

The newly identified bathynomus yucatanensis is a giant isopod, a type of crustacean that scavenges for food on the ocean floor. It has a segmented body and fourteen legs, much like its smaller relatives, the terrestrial isopod crustacean, the woodlouse, also known as pillbug, roly-poly and dozens of other nicknames.

However, this new species is much larger. Woodlouses tend to be around 10mm long, or about 4/10ths of an inch. By contrast, the newly discovered bathynomus yucatanensis is about a foot long.

The increase in size is attributed to deep-sea gigantism, an evolutionary track that leads to larger versions of species, like the giant squid. The same phenomenon can happen in reverse, as some believe happened with the smaller Borneo elephant, also known as the Pygmy elephant and the prehistoric dwarf elephant.

Researchers from Taiwan, Japan and Australia described the new species and identified it as distinct from the bathynomus giganteus, a previously discovered giant isopod found in tropical regions of the Atlantic ocean.

They determined that this species has unique characteristics, including a yellow color and slender proportions. DNA also backed up their hypothesis that the new species is unique. The researchers noted that there may be more discoveries to find on the ocean floor, including more giant isopods.

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Graham Loses Bid To Avoid Testifying In Front of Grand Jury in Georgia Election Investigation
By - Ian DeMartino

A grand jury in Georgia is investigating potential election interference in the state by former President Donald Trump and his allies.

A federal judge in Georgia has refused Senator Lindsey Graham's request that he be excused from testifying in front of a grand jury investigating interference in the 2020 presidential election in the state.

Graham has been [attempting to use](#) the Speech or Debate Clause to avoid testifying, but Judge Leigh Martin May ruled that Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis has "shown extraordinary circumstances and a special need for Senator Graham's testimony on issues relating to alleged attempts to influence or disrupt the lawful administration of Georgia's 2020 elections."

The Speech or Debate Clause is in Article 1 of the Constitution. It is designed to shield lawmakers from lawsuits for things they say during legislative actions, such as debating the merits of a bill.

However, May ruled that "The Court finds that there are considerable areas of potential grand jury inquiry falling outside the Speech or Debate Clause's protections. Additionally, sovereign immunity fails to shield Senator Graham from testifying before the Special Purpose Grand Jury." May did leave open the possibility that Graham may be able to use the clause to avoid answering certain questions.

Last week, Graham indicated that he is willing to fight against testifying in the case for as long as he can. "We will go as far as we need to go and do whatever needs to be done to make sure that people like me can do their jobs without fear of some county prosecutor coming after you," the senator said.

After the decision, Graham's office issued a statement indicating that they will appeal the decision.

While Graham did vote to certify the election, it is his actions after the election but before the certification that seems to be of interest to the court. According to court documents filed in

support of the subpoena request, Graham called the office of Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger after the election, seeking additional reviews of absentee ballots cast in the state. The news came the same day that Trump's personal lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, was informed that he is a target of the Georgia investigation. Unlike Giuliani, Graham is not considered a target of the investigation and is being called to testify as a witness.

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Samples from Asteroid May Provide Clues to Life on Earth
By - Ian DeMartino

Japan's Hayabusa2 probe was launched in 2014 and returned in 2020, crashing in the Australian outback. It collected a sample from the Ryugu asteroid. Ryugu means "dragon place" in Japanese.

Material brought back to Earth from an asteroid named Ryugu [may provide clues](#) on how the basic building blocks of life ended up on Earth.

How the building blocks required for all life on Earth got here remains a subject of debate among scientists, but asteroids bringing them here has long been a popular theory.

A new study looking at the 5.4 grams of material the Japanese Hayabusa2 probe returned to earth in 2020 after an eight year mission suggests that theory may hold some weight. The researchers, who hail from Japan and other countries, say they found organic material showing that amino acids, an essential building block for life on Earth, may have been formed in space.

They also say that the material may provide clues to how oceans were formed in the early stages of Earth's history.

"Volatile and organic-rich C-type asteroids may have been one of the main sources of Earth's water," the study scientists say.

They further state that it is likely at least some of the volatiles (water and organic material) came from outside of the solar system, but that it is unlikely that it was the only source.

"Ryugu particles are undoubtedly among the most uncontaminated Solar System materials available for laboratory study and ongoing investigations of these precious samples will certainly expand our understanding of early Solar System processes," said the study's authors.

Scientists will soon have more asteroid material to study. NASA's OSIRIS-REx mission collected a sample from a similar asteroid, named Bennu, which will return to Earth in 2023.

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Nine Alleged Mafiosos Charged in Racketeering Case in New York
By - Ian DeMartino

The Bonanno and Genovese crime families are a part of the five powerful crime families that had a grip on New York City in the middle of the 20th century. Their power started to decline in the 1980s and 1990s after an aggressive campaign by federal authorities.

Nine alleged members and associates of Mafia crime families [were arrested](#) in New York on Tuesday, including a Long Island police officer.

The men were allegedly running illegal gambling dens in soccer clubs in Queens, along with a coffee shop and a shoe repair business in Long Island. They were charged in a racketeering case by the US attorney's office in Brooklyn, which is focusing on illegal gambling parlors, along with money laundering and extortion schemes.

They are allegedly members of the Bonanno and Genovese crime families.

According [to federal prosecutors](#), the operation at the coffee shop alone brought in around \$10,000 every week to the family. US attorney for the Eastern District of New York Breon S. Peace said that the arrests "demonstrate that the Mafia continues to pollute our communities with illegal gambling, extortion and violence while using our financial system in service to their criminal schemes."

The arrested police officer, Hector Rosario, had been a member of the Nassau County Police department for more than 15 years, according to his LinkedIn profile. He is accused of arranging police raids at competing gambling dens in exchange for cash. He is being charged with obstructing a grand jury and lying to the FBI.

The other defendants charged include Carmelo "Carmine" Polito, who is alleged to be a captain of the Genovese family, "Joe Fish" Macario, "Sal the Shoemaker" Tubino, Mark Peuer, Agostino Gabriele, "Little Anthony" Pipitone, and Vito Pipitone.

A ninth defendant, Joseph Rutigliano, remains at large.

Polito allegedly also ran an illegal online gambling website.

Seven of the men who appeared in front of a Federal District Court [pleaded not guilty](#) to the charges. They are set to be released on bail, with bonds ranging from \$150,000 to \$2 million. Their release will come with travel restrictions and monitoring. The eighth defendant was arrested in Florida and has not yet entered a plea.

The detective, Rosario, is set to be released on a \$500,000 bond; he has been suspended without pay until he receives a hearing from the department. His lawyer Lou Freeman has not spoken about the case publicly. The Nassau County Police Benevolent Association, the union that represents Rosario, also has yet to comment.

Nassau County District Attorney Anne Donnelly stated that the case "is further proof that organized crime is alive and well in our communities."

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Three Passports and a President
By - Ted Rall

After the FBI raided former President Trump's Mar-a-Lago residence last week, Trump took to his social media site Truth Social to complain that the FBI "stole" three passports.

Trump's complaints led some on social media to wonder if the FBI considered Trump a flight risk, as the former president owns a plane and could leave the country at any time.

After CBS reporter Norah O'Donnell tweeted out that a DOJ official told her the FBI was not in the FBI's possession, Trump spokesman Taylor Budowich posted an image of an email sent from a top Justice Department official Jay Bratt. The email stated that filter agents seized the passports and would be returning them.

In the search of Trump's residence, FBI agents seized 11 sets of classified documents, including some that were marked "top secret."

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Sources Confirm to TMZ That Angelina Jolie Was Behind FBI Lawsuit Against Brad Pitt
By - Mary Manley

It was first reported in late April that Angelina Jolie was allegedly suing the Federal Bureau of Investigation for information on her ex-husband Brad Pitt under the pseudonym 'Jane Doe'. That lawsuit was for information on an alleged domestic abuse incident that took place in 2016 on a private jet.

Sources told [TMZ](#) on Tuesday that Pitt's ex-wife, Jolie, was the one who filed a suit under the Freedom of Information Act in order to gain access to information from an investigation the FBI undertook on the 2016 incident; including why the FBI did not charge Pitt or obtain information that could be used in children's trauma counseling.

The FBI, instead of local law enforcement, was involved in investigating the case because it took place aboard a [flight](#) between France and Minnesota.

"Several years ago, while plaintiff, her then-husband, and their children, who were all minors at the time, were traveling via private aircraft, the husband allegedly physically and verbally assaulted plaintiff and the children," Doe claims in the lawsuit.

Now sources are confirming that Jolie, 47, is the one who filed the lawsuit against her ex-husband, Pitt, 58. Sources close to Pitt claim that Jolie already had access to the information she was seeking from the FBI, accusing her of doing so in order to bring negative media attention to her ex-husband, whom she divorced in August of 2016 after citing "irreconcilable differences."

The lawsuit reportedly claims that Pitt had his hands on Jolie during the flight and at one point poured beer on her. Pitt also allegedly grabbed Angelina by the shoulders, shook her aggressively and yelled, "You're f***** up this family." According to Jolie, the couple's eldest son, Maddox, who was 15 years old at the time, was grabbed by Pitt after he reportedly attempted to intervene. Pitt has denied Jolie's accusation that he hit Maddox.

"It was agreed by all parties that criminal charges in this case would not be pursued due to several factors," stated FBI agents who investigated the incident and met with a representative from the U.S. Attorney's Office.

The divorce between Jolie and Pitt has been acrimonious. The two were together for ten years before they married in 2014, but divorced just two years later in 2016. Since then, legal battles have ensued involving custody of their six [children](#), the selling of a share of the couple's [winery](#), and the FOIA involving the private jet incident.

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Apple Asks Staff to Head Back to the Office- For at Least Three Days a Week
By - Mary Manley

Apple employees were first sent a memo in June of last year, with the company proposing a return to the office for three days a week in an attempt to reconnect employees with each other. Apple's push for a return-to-office policy has already cost them a top executive who left the company for Google, citing a need for "more flexibility."

[Apple](#) has told employees to head back to the office at least three times a week starting in September. Employees who work at the company's headquarters named "Apple Park," which is located in Cupertino, California, will be heading back for Tuesdays, Thursdays and a third day that is to be chosen by the employees themselves.

"For all that we've been able to achieve while many of us have been separated, the truth is that there has been something essential missing from this past year: each other. Video conference calling has narrowed the distance between us, to be sure, but there are things it simply cannot replicate," said Apple's CEO Tim [Cook](#).

"I know I'm not alone in missing the hum of activity, the energy, creativity and collaboration of our in-person meetings and the sense of community we've all built," he added.

Ian [Goodfellow](#), who worked as Apple's director of machine learning, a type of artificial intelligence (AI), quit Apple and began working for Google's DeepMind division shortly after. Goodfellow said he left Apple after Cook sent a memo pushing for employees to return to the office.

"I believe strongly that more flexibility would have been the best policy for my team," Goodfellow wrote in a goodbye note to his coworkers.

Despite losing one of their top executives, Apple is still pursuing their three day work week policy as the [multibillion](#) dollar company, which creates handheld gadgets such as the iPhone—which are used by more than 113 million persons in the United States alone—may view meeting in-person as their preferred approach in familiarizing their employees with the products they create.

Over the summer, Apple was requesting employees to meet just two days a week. The plan to bump those meetings up to three times a week was delayed in May because of rising COVID-19 cases.

Still, Apple's request to have employees enter the office just three days a week is less demanding when compared to other tech giants such as Tesla, whose chief executive Elon [Musk](#) told employees to spend a "minimum of 40 hours in the office per week," or else they would be fired.

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Liz Cheney Loses Wyoming Congressional Republican Primary
By - Mary Manley

The primary elections in Wyoming are a telling moment for the US Republican party. GOP Representative Liz Cheney is vice chair of the January 6 House select committee, whose goal is to investigate the January 6 insurrection. Cheney is one of former President Donald Trump's biggest critics within the Republican party.

With an estimated 47% of the vote in the [Wyoming](#) primaries counted, Cheney stood with only 25,762 votes, her Trump-backed opponent Hageman had nearly double that total, with 50,836 votes. Cheney conceded defeat to Hageman after those overwhelming numbers spelled disaster for the congresswoman.

"This primary election is over, but now the real work begins," Cheney said, referring to her work on the January 6 committee. Cheney had called [Hageman](#) to congratulate her. Hageman is a Wyoming-born-and-raised resident who used her connection to the state and her support of Trump to win a landslide victory over Cheney.

Cheney's decisive defeat in the Wyoming primaries to attorney Harriet Hageman, a Trump-endorsed candidate who used to be a supporter of Cheney and even praised during her first bid for Congress in 2016, is a fervent gesture in a state where Trump won 70% of the vote in 2020.

"Liz, you're fired!" Trump crowed to supporters at a rally in May of this year. "Wyoming deserves a congresswoman who stands up for you and your values, not one who spends all of her time putting you down and going after your president in the most vicious way possible."

The three-term congresswoman and daughter of former Vice President Dick Cheney had a target on her back, placed there by Trump supporters after she became the former president's biggest critic in the Republican party, and vice-chaired the January 6 committee, which opponent [Hageman](#) blasted as politically motivated, and which [Cheney](#) has defended as in pursuit of a truth which she views as worth losing her job over.

"No matter what the outcome, it is certainly the beginning of a battle that is gonna continue and is going to go on, and as a country, we're facing very challenging and difficult times. We are facing a moment where our democracy really is under attack and under threat," Cheney told CBS prior to the Wyoming primary election results.

"And those of us across the board — Republicans, Democrats and independents — who believe deeply in freedom and who care about the Constitution and the future of the country, I think have an obligation to put that above party and, I think that fight is clearly going to continue and clearly going to go on," said Cheney.

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US Circuit Court Says Biden Admin. Can Pause Oil, Gas Leasing in Reversal of Prior Ruling

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) - The US Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals overturned the decision of a lower federal court to block the Biden administration from pausing oil and gas leases on public land, the court said on Wednesday in a ruling.

"The district court issued a nationwide preliminary injunction enjoining President Biden and various Department of Interior officials (the 'Government') from pausing oil and gas lease sales. Because the district court's order and accompanying memorandum lack specificity, we vacate and remand," the circuit court said.

In January 2021, the Biden administration issued an order that mandated a pause on new oil and gas leasing on federal lands, onshore and offshore, prompting 13 states to sue the federal government over the matter.

US Judge Terry Doughty of the District Court for the Western District of Louisiana ruled in June 2021 that the states which sued the Biden administration would face significant problems because of the government's decision to pause oil and gas leases in public land.

The Biden administration appealed the initial ruling and succeeded in getting a reversal from the circuit court. The Department of Interior contends that oil and gas leasing programs on public lands are responsible for significant greenhouse gas emissions and climate impacts.

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Guterres Arrives in Lviv Ahead of Talks With Zelenskyy, Erdogan - Office

UNITED NATIONS, August 17 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has arrived in Ukraine's western city of Lviv for talks with Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, spokesman Stephane Dujarric told Sputnik on Wednesday.

"We are in Lviv," Dujarric said.

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Liz Cheney Vows to Keep Fighting Trump After Wyoming Loss

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) - Rep. Liz Cheney has vowed to keep fighting Donald Trump after conceding defeat in the Wyoming Republican primary to Trump-backed candidate Harriet Hageman.

"This primary election is over. But now the real work begins," she told a crowd of supporters late on Tuesday.

The Wyoming congresswoman has made her name as an anti-Trump Republican and continued to vow Tuesday that she would do whatever it takes to ensure Trump would never be re-elected

as president after the January 6 Capitol riot. She was one of the 10 Republicans who voted to impeach him for inciting the event.

Cheney told NBC that she planned to join a coalition of Republicans, Democrats, and independents, saying a broad, united front was necessary to keep Trump out of office. Her spokesperson also told Politico that she planned to launch an organization in the coming weeks to educate Americans about the "ongoing threat to our republic."

In response to rumors that she is contemplating a run for the presidency herself, Cheney told NBC that she would make a decision "in the coming months."

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US, S. Korea Say to Expand Scale of Military Drills in Response to DPRK Missile Tests

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) - The United States and South Korea will expand the scope and scale of joint military drills in response to recent missile tests conducted by North Korea, and will start with the Ulchi Freedom Shield exercise next week, according to a joint statement.

On August 16-17, the two countries held their 21st integrated defense dialogue in Seoul. The delegations were led by US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asia, Siddharth Mohandas, and South Korean Deputy Minister for National Defense Policy, Heo Tae-keun. "The leaders discussed the DPRK threat, particularly the increased volume and scale of DPRK missile tests over the course of the last year. With this in mind, and considering the evolving threat posed by the DPRK, both leaders committed to expanding the scope and scale of combined military exercises and training on and around the Korean Peninsula—starting with Ulchi Freedom Shield next week—to bolster combined readiness," the joint statement said. On Wednesday, North Korea launched two cruise missiles toward the Yellow Sea, the South Korean military said. Seoul noted it is analyzing additional data in cooperation with the US and maintains defense readiness.

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US to Deploy Strategic Assets to Region If DPRK Conducts Nuclear Test - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) - The United States and South Korea agreed to deploy US strategic assets to the region if North Korea conducts a nuclear test, the two nations said in a joint statement for their 21st integrated defense dialogue.

The 21st South Korea-US Integrated Defense Dialogue was held in Seoul on August 16-17. The delegations were led by US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asia, Siddharth Mohandas, and South Korean Deputy Minister for National Defense Policy, Heo Tae-keun.

"Both sides shared their assessments of activities at the DPRK's Punggye-ri nuclear testing site. The two sides affirmed that, should the DPRK conduct a nuclear test, the ROK and the U.S. will engage in a strong and firm bilateral response, to include options to deploy U.S. strategic assets to the region," the statement said.

On Wednesday, North Korea launched two cruise missiles toward the Yellow Sea, the South Korean military said.

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IMF Recommends Saudi Arabia Continue Vision 2030 Reforms, Diversify Economy

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund recommended on Wednesday that Saudi Arabia go ahead with its Vision 2030 reforms in order to diversify its economy and promote strong economic growth.

"Against the backdrop of the positive economic outlook, with balanced risks, [Executive Directors] underscored the need to continue implementing the Vision 2030 reform agenda, which will serve to diversify the economy and promote strong, inclusive, and greener growth," the IMF said in a statement after the conclusion of the 2022 Article IV consultation with Saudi Arabia.

The IMF welcomed Riyadh's fiscal discipline and underscored the need for energy price reforms, including reconsideration of the cap on gasoline prices.

"[Directors] called for further efforts to strengthen non-oil revenue mobilization through tax policy measures—including by maintaining the current VAT rate [value-added tax] —and enhancing revenue administration," it added.

The fund also commended Saudi authorities for ongoing reforms to strengthen social safety nets and welcomed the continued improvements in public financial management.

The IMF noted the kingdom's strong rebound from a pandemic-induced recession, with 3.2% GDP growth in 2021, noting that non-oil sector mostly leads the recovery process.

The Vision 2030 program, led by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, is a strategic framework designed to reduce the nation's dependence on oil, diversify its economy, and develop public service sectors, including health, education, infrastructure, recreation, and tourism.

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RPT - Russian Convent in US Got 'Angry' Letters Over Ukraine But Monks Praying for All - Dean

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) - The brotherhood of the major Russian English-speaking monastery in the United States, the Holy Cross, received angry letters about the situation in

Ukraine at the beginning of Russia's special military operation there, but the monks were able to explain to the people that the church does not take political sides and prays for everyone, the monastery dean, Gabriel (Hooten), told Sputnik.

"In February and March, we got various letters and questions from people. Some people were very angry, others expressed confusion about what was going on," Gabriel said about the monastery in Wayne, West Virginia.

On February 24, Russia launched a special military operation in Ukraine after the Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics appealed for help to defend them from intensifying attacks by Ukrainian troops. In response, the countries of the collective West imposed comprehensive sanctions against Russia and have supplied weapons to Ukraine in the amount of tens of billions of dollars.

Gabriel said the monks at the Holy Cross monastery, most of whom have no connections to Russia and came to Russian Orthodoxy from other Christian denominations, were trying to explain to people that the main role of the church is to pray for peace and for the restoration of brotherly love and relations among all people.

"We believe that these problems really can best be solved through prayer and our own repentance, and nothing will change our central mission that we have as monastics and as Orthodox Christians -to pray for the world, for the increase of love, for the repentance of our sins," he said.

Gabriel said most people, particularly those, with whom the monks interact frequently, have understood the church's position.

The monks were particularly trying to explain that being a part of a Russian heritage does not mean political engagement in the particular situation, he said.

"Our job is not to take sides, but simply to pray for everyone in this trouble and most people understand that," Gabriel added.

In addition, Gabriel said he noticed that Orthodox piety and faith in the United States has become more natural to the people.

"In the beginning, of course, Orthodox Christianity could have been something of a cultural shock to people coming to it from other denominations and there is a sense of, perhaps, unfamiliarity. But it seems, in recent years it is becoming something natural as people feel being 'at home,'" he said.

Gabriel also noted that Orthodox Christianity is beginning to be absorbed into the spiritual heart of the American people and this is happening not simply in an intellectual sense, but on the level of the "spiritual DNA."

The Holy Cross monastery is an English-speaking male convent in the United States under the jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia. The brotherhood numbers 25 monastics.

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RPT - FBI Mar-a-Lago Raid Likely to Boost Trump's Comeback Campaign - Experts

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) - Unless federal law enforcement authorities can convict former President Donald Trump on felony charges before the next presidential election, the FBI raid on his home in Florida last week has only strengthened his claim to the 2024 Republican nomination, analysts told Sputnik.

On August 8, the FBI executed a search warrant at Trump's Mar-a-Lago residence in Florida and examined the premises for nine hours during which they seized 11 sets of documents and other materials, some of which were labeled "Top Secret," according to the disclosed search warrant receipt.

Trump condemned the raid as a weaponization of the US justice system and claimed to have declassified all materials present at his residence.

"Unless Donald Trump is convicted of one or more felonies before November 2024, he is now, on paper, a much stronger contender than he was before the Mar-a-Lago raid," former hedge fund manager and political commentator Charles Ortel said.

The raid, Ortel added, and the fact US Attorney General Merrick Garland approved it personally, are shameful episodes in the assaults against the US Constitution.

"Whether you like Donald Trump or loathe him... you must understand that running the Federal Bureau of Investigation like a Stasi or Gestapo is so far beyond acceptable that it is worse than laughable," he said.

The raid will give Trump backers a rallying cry not unlike how Texans still chant "Remember the Alamo."

"As Americans vote in the looming pivotal elections, many will pull levers at the polls thinking 'Remember Mar-a-Lago,'" Ortel said.

Unless worse disasters strike before the looming mid-term election, Ortel added, Trump voters and disaffected Biden voters are still likely to swarm the polls.

"After the looming anti-Democrat deluge, there will be an accounting against all who have trampled the Constitution. This project will continue through and after November 2024," he predicted.

Political analyst Sam Hussein, founder of VotePact.org, said the conventional wisdom is that this raid hurts Trump, but the conventional wisdom is frequently wrong.

"This keeps the focus on Trump. It adds yet another dimension to the myriad of ways liberals have obsessed over 'getting him' or seeming to at apparently any cost. But he feeds off the notoriety," Hussein told Sputnik.

University of Pittsburgh Professor of International Affairs Michael Brenner said it will boost Trump among Republicans if he seeks the nomination, but could hurt him in the general election.

"There's a feeling that he's beginning to be seen as shop-worn - and past his sell-by date," Brenner said.

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Russian Exit Will 'Cripple' ISS Unless US Congress Acts - NASA Advisory Council Members

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) - The International Space Station (ISS) will be crippled if Russia eventually leaves unless US Congress authorizes and funds private-public partnerships to cover Roscosmos's duties, NASA Advisory Council members Kay Bailey Hutchison and Jane Harman said in an op-ed in The Wall Street Journal.

Roscosmos Executive Director for Piloted Spaceflights Sergey Krikalev said earlier this month that Russia is looking into potential projects to replace the International Space Station (ISS) after 2024.

"Roscosmos, is threatening to leave the ISS before the station retires in 2030. If nothing is done, this could cripple the ISS," Hutchison and Harman said in the op-ed published on Tuesday.

"There is a potential solution in the station's longstanding relationship with the commercial space industry... that successful private-public partnership has evolved as the industry has and could help cover Roscosmos's duties on the ISS if Russia leaves."

The NASA advisers said the ISS would be impaired if Moscow decides to leave because Russia supplies the propulsion-control elements of the station. However, they added,

Northrup-Grumman's Cygnus cargo vehicle could provide reboost in lieu of Roscosmos's cooperation while SpaceX is evaluating if it could use its Dragon Cargo modules to do the same.

"Both of these ventures will take time as well as authorizations and funding from Washington," the NASA advisers said. "Congress must not be hampered by the sort of partisan infighting that mars so much of our political discourse. The ISS is too important to lose."

Research conducted on board the ISS advanced treatment of cancer and other diseases, the duo noted, and is home to the Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer, a unique instrument searching for evidence of dark matter in deep space.

Hutchison and Harman also said, despite Moscow's threats, channels of communication remain open and Russia is still working with the ISS.

"It's essential to continue and expand these efforts with an emphasis on international cooperation," the authors wrote.

Hutchison served as US envoy to NATO from 2017-2021 and Harman served in the US House representing California for around 15 years.

Krikalev earlier this month said Russia's decision to leave the ISS will be based on a technical evaluation, but no changes will be made until 2024.

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Syrian Kurds Say Assured by US, Russia That There Will Not Be Turkish Military Operation

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) - Syrian Democratic Council (SDC) Representative in the United States, Bassam Saker, told Sputnik that they have been reassured by both Russia and the United States last week that there will be no Turkish military operation in the area.

"We had meetings at the State Department last week and with the Russians also. They denied that there is any green light from them to do that," Saker said. "But we know that [Turkish President Recep Tayyip] Erdogan can do it and he does not care sometimes about this issue."

We are ready to defend ourselves. There is also an agreement with the Syrian government for military defense."

Saker added that the SDC has continuous meetings with the State Department, Pentagon, Congress and all of them want the area to be stable and don not want the Turkish operation. "They increase drone attacks more and more but there is no attack on the land, only by air. Even there are no fighters yet, only drones. And these drones are very risky," he added. Turkey has played a considerable role in the Syrian conflict by supporting various opposition groups that are fighting the Syrian government, while at the same time attacking the Kurdish forces. Turkey is currently planning a new operation against the Syrian Kurds while Damascus is opposing foreign interference.

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Syrian Kurds Deny Reports Turkey Launched Military Operation - SDC

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) - Syrian Democratic Council Representative in the United States, Bassam Saker, told Sputnik that the latest social media reports of Ankara allegedly launching its military operation in northern Syria are false.

Unconfirmed reports circulated on social media about the start of a Turkish military operation against the Kurds in northern Syria on Tuesday. Reports said, according to Turkish media sources, that a Turkish military convoy entered Jarablus in northern Syria.

"This news it is not true," Saker stated. "There is not any attack and we believe there has been no green [light] from either Russia or the United States to do this attack . But we noticed that they have increased their drone attacks in the area. They are targeting civilians, the leader of self-administration, which is not good for the stability of the area."

At the end of June, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that his country would conduct a new military operation in northern Syria against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), designated terrorist by Ankara. Since 2016, Turkey has carried out four counterterrorism operations in Syria.

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US to Provide UN With \$68Mln to Buy, Store Ukrainian Wheat - USAID Chief

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) - The United States will provide the United Nations with more than \$68 million to purchase and store up to 150,000 metric tons of Ukrainian wheat, US Agency for International Development Administrator Samantha Power said.

"I am pleased to share that the United States, through the US Agency for International Development, is providing over \$68 million in additional funding to the UN World Food Program

(WFP) to purchase, move, and store up to 150,000 metric tons of Ukrainian wheat to help respond to the global food crisis," Power said in a statement on Tuesday.

Power said this will help feed people in countries facing severe malnutrition, but much more is needed to address the current global food crisis.

Earlier on Tuesday, United Nations spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres will visit the Joint Coordination Center (JCC) in Istanbul on Saturday. The JCC is in charge of overseeing the shipments of Ukrainian grain via the country's Black Sea ports. Guterres is expected to meet with Russian, Ukrainian and Turkish representatives at the JCC, Dujarric said.

On July 22, Russia, Ukraine, and Turkey signed an United Nations-brokered initiative to provide a humanitarian maritime corridor for ships with food and fertilizer exports from Black Sea ports. Three key Ukrainian ports - Odesa, Chornomorsk, and Yuzhne - resumed grain exports and the JCC was set up to monitor the implementation of the initiative, including ensuring that cargo ships do not carry unauthorized goods or personnel.

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Major Russian Monastery in US Organizes 1st Feast Day Since COVID-19 Pandemic Began

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) - The major English-speaking monastery of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR) in the United States was hit hard economically and physically during the COVID-19 pandemic, however, it not only survived but it began to grow and organized its first feast celebration in nearly three years, the convent's dean, Gabriel (Hooten), told Sputnik.

The Holy Cross monastery is a men's convent near the city of Wayne, West Virginia. The brotherhood numbers about 25 monastics, mostly Americans who converted to Orthodox Christianity from other denominations.

"Although there was some uncertainty for a period of time, we did not have it too bad," Gabriel said.

The monks were initially concerned about the economic state of the monastery, because the revenue from pilgrims decreased dramatically since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020. However, they found additional ways to fundraise and began to sell more goods online, including candles and incense, he said.

Gabriel noted that the monks also decided to broadcast most of the services on the internet to give people an opportunity to pray while their local parish churches were closed down due to the pandemic measures. That allowed attracting people and establishing connections with those who previously had never known about the monastery.

"The abbot made a decision, in consultation with some of the fathers, to temporarily broadcast the services and I think many people discovered our monastery through that ministry," he said. "They began to participate in some way with our daily services, and it was a source of comfort and consolation to them when the churches were physically closed. So, we were able to make many connections with people who perhaps did not know about us before, and they were able

to know us, to understand our life in some ways, and many people became interested in trying to help us.”

This August, the monastery held its traditional St. Panteleimon feast day for the first time in nearly three years. The great martyr and healer, Panteleimon, an Orthodox Christian saint who lived in the ancient city of Nicomedia in the 3rd-4th centuries, is a patron saint of the Holy Cross monastery.

In 2020, the monastery had to cancel traditional celebrations because of the global coronavirus pandemic. Last year, the monks set a goal of holding the feast but almost all got infected with the coronavirus just a week before the gathering, which forced canceling it a second time in a row.

“This year, thank God, everything came together. There were no temptations to stop this feast day. This was a really great joy,” Gabriel said. “We had some of the clergy from the local area, as well as from further away, friends and supporters of the monastery came and serve with us.” The Bishop of Manhattan, Nicholas, served the Divine Liturgy and gave a very inspiring sermon about the importance of turning to St. Panteleimon in prayers, and how the course of his life serves as a model for Orthodox Christians, Gabriel also said.

“We really rejoiced that St. Panteleimon brought us together, that we are able once again to pray together, to serve, to receive the Holy Mysteries and we thank him for arranging everything this year,” Gabriel added.

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Lockheed Martin Chooses BAE to Design Next-Generation Infrared Seekers for THAAD

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) - BAE Systems has won a contract from Lockheed Martin to design and manufacture next-generation infrared seeking technology for the US Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) interceptor missile, the United Kingdom-based company announced in a press release.

“BAE Systems has received a contract from Lockheed Martin to design and manufacture next-generation infrared seeker technology for the THAAD interceptor missile,” the release said on Tuesday.

The THAAD seeker provides critical sensing and guidance capabilities that help protect the US homeland and global allies from ballistic missile attacks, the release said.

“THAAD is a highly effective system for mitigating high-speed missile threats and we’re making it more capable,” BAE Systems Precision Guidance and Sensing Solutions Director Greg Procopio said in the release.

Equipped with BAE Systems’ infrared guidance technology, THAAD interceptors will engage ballistic missiles and destroy warheads with kinetic force both in or out of the atmosphere, the release added.

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Trump Says FBI Returned His Passports But Agents Took 'Everything in Sight' Like Criminals

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said in a statement that the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the FBI returned his passports after taking them during the raid of his Mar-a-Lago residence in Florida last week.

"The DOJ and FBI just returned my passports. Thank you! Unfortunately, when they Raided my home, Mar-a-Lago, 8 days ago, they just opened their arms and grabbed everything in sight, much as a common criminal would do. This shouldn't happen in America!" Trump said on Tuesday.

On August 8, the FBI executed a search warrant at Mar-a-Lago to recover materials linked to possible violations of the Espionage Act. Agents recovered materials labeled "top secret," according to a search warrant receipt.

Trump has condemned the raid as a weaponization of the US justice system against him and claimed to have declassified all materials present at his Mar-a-Lago residence.

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Wall Street Up Broadly as Big Tech Dips in Cautious Trade Ahead of Fed Minutes Release

NEW YORK, August 17 (Sputnik) - Wall Street registered another broadly higher close on Tuesday even as Big Tech stocks fell in cautious trade ahead of the release of the highly-anticipated minutes of the Federal Reserve's July meeting.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average, which comprises stocks of 30 large US corporations, climbed 0.7% on the day, extending Monday's gain of 1.5%.

The S&P 500 index, which represents the top 500 US stocks, rose 0.2%, adding to the previous session's advance of 0.4%.

The Nasdaq Composite Index, which comprises marquee names in technology such as Amazon, Apple, Netflix and Google, slid 0.2% after Monday's gain of 0.6%.

"The risks of the Fed sending the economy into a recession are easing as inflation is slowly coming down," Ed Moya, analyst at online trading platform OANDA, said. "The Fed's soft [economic] landing seems achievable and that has allowed this [Wall Street] rally to continue."

The Fed's meeting minutes for July have taken on additional importance after a blowout US jobs report for last month eased fears over the prospect of recession. The latest reading on inflation data pointed to the largest monthly slowdown in consumer price increases since 1973.

The Fed has raised rates four times since March in order to beat inflation previously raging at four-decade highs. Rates are currently at a peak of 2.5% versus just 0.25% in February. The central bank says it expects to continue with rate hikes until inflation returns to its target of 2% per year. Inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, grew by 8.7% during the year to July.

Traders are betting that the Fed will raise rates by just 50 basis points at its next meeting in September, versus bets previously for a 75 basis-point hike.

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Crude at 6.5 Month Low as EU Seeks to Revive Nuclear Deal to De-Sanction Iranian Oil

NEW YORK, August 17 (Sputnik) - Crude prices hit 6-½ month lows as the European Union worked on reviving a nuclear deal that could remove US sanctions on Iranian oil, potentially delivering an additional 1.3 million barrels into a market already softening from an anticipated global economic slowdown.

West Texas Intermediate, the benchmark for US crude, settled down \$2.88, or 3.2%, at \$86.53 per barrel on Tuesday. It plunged to as low as \$85.73 during the session, a bottom since the Jan. 26 low of \$85.01.

Brent, the London-traded global benchmark for crude, settled down \$2.76, or 2.9%, at \$92.34 per barrel. It earlier hit a session low of \$91.72.

"After 18 months of negotiations, progress has been made in reviving the Iran nuclear deal," said Ed Moya, analyst at online trading platform OANDA. "We've been here before and have seen talks fall apart. What is a little different this time is that it seems the Iranians are willing to discuss the terms. If the Iran nuclear deal is revived, that could send oil prices down to the low \$80s."

Since May, crude prices have fallen from March highs of around \$130 for US around and \$140 for Brent on concerns of a recession in the United States that could expand to Europe and elsewhere.

The oil market's slide has accelerated since the EU announced on Monday that it had sent Iran what it described as a "final" offer to revive the 2015 agreement. It also said it found "nothing alarming" in the response from Iran.

"For the moment, we are studying it and we are consulting with the other JCPOA participants and the US on the way forward," an EU spokesperson was quoted saying Tuesday about the potential for the deal.

The JCPOA refers to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action that binds Iran to the nuclear terms jointly set by China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, the United States, Germany and the European Union.

A de-sanctioning of Iranian oil could bring relief to the current tightness in the global energy market, analysts said.

"A revival of the deal and lifting of oil sanctions could potentially see Iran increasing oil supply in the region of 1.3 million barrels per day over time," analysts at ING said in a note.

Analysts have said the global crude market was short of an estimated two million barrels or more of daily supply as a result of sanctions imposed by the West on Russian oil since the start of the Ukraine conflict.

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US Judge Denies Plea Deals for Duo Charged With Trying to Sell Submarine Secrets - Reports

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) - A US federal judge for the Northern District of West Virginia denied the plea deals of a couple who in February pleaded guilty to trying to sell secret information about US submarines to a foreign government, the New York Times reported. Judge Gina Groh on Tuesday rejected the plea agreements of Jonathan and Diana Toebbe, who were charged with espionage for allegedly attempting to sell military submarine secrets obtained through Jonathan's job as a US Navy nuclear engineer to what the couple believed was a foreign government, the report said on Tuesday.

The FBI arrested and charged the couple in last October as part of a sting operation. Jonathan Toebbe's agreement stipulated a 12-year prison sentence, while Diana's agreement included a three-year sentence that could have seen her freed after just two years served, the report said.

Groh said she would consider a deal within the standard sentencing guidelines that would see the couple face more than 15 years in prison, the report said.

Such a long sentence could lead Dianna to seek acquittal by a jury at trial, the report said.

Groh noted that low-level drug dealers go to prison for longer than the three years stipulated in Dianna's plea agreement, the report said.

The couple's pleas were withdrawn as a result of the court's rejection of the agreements, prompting Groh to schedule a trial date for January 2023. Lawyers have until then to reach new plea deals acceptable to Groh, the report added.

The couple's actions have compromised the integrity of sensitive information and undercut the military advantage afforded by decades of research, Groh said during a statement on her decision.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) -

NEW START TREATY

* US sanctions against Russia are compatible with the New START treaty and do not prevent Russians from inspecting American facilities, State Department spokesman Ned Price said on Tuesday.

* The United States will continue to engage with Russia through diplomatic channels on the resumption of inspections under the New START, Price said.

SYRIA

* An Israeli tank crossed the line of demarcation in the Golan Heights, after which it defiantly pointed the gun toward the Syrian positions, Capt. 1st Rank Yevgeny Gerasimov, deputy head of the Russian Center for the Reconciliation of Warring Parties in Syria, said on Tuesday.

- * Three Syrian servicemen were killed and another six were injured as a result of a Turkish Air Force attack on military facilities on the outskirts of Aleppo, the Syrian Defense Ministry said.
- * The United States is creating threat of turning Syria into arena of conflict between Israel and Iran, Igor Kostyukov, the head of the Russian General Staff's Main Intelligence Directorate, said.

ZAPORIZHZHIA NUCLEAR PLANT

- * The Zaporizhzhya NPP reactor is protected, it will remain intact even if a plane crashes there, but Ukrainian troops are hitting other weak points of the plant, including the cooling system - if damaged, the reactor could become uncontrollable, Vladimir Rogov, a member of the main council of the regional administration, said on Tuesday.
- * The United Nations has logistics and security assurances from Kiev to ensure the safe travel of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) team to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

UKRAINE DEVELOPMENTS

- * Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan intends to discuss diplomatic steps to resolve the conflict in Ukraine at a meeting with Volodymyr Zelenskyy and UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, the Turkish leader's office said.
- * Guterres will meet with Zelenskyy and Erdogan in Lviv on August 18, spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.
- * The United States already provided Kiev with \$4 billion and plans to allocate \$4.5 billion more to help Ukraine confront Russia, Igor Kostyukov, the head of the Russian General Staff's Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU), said.

WESTERN RESTRICTIONS ON RUSSIA

- * The Latvian authorities "conceptually agreed" not to renew residence permits for citizens of the Russian Federation and to restrict their entry into the country on Schengen visas, Prime Minister Krisjanis Karins said on Tuesday.
- * Finland will accept only half of visa requests from Russians, up to 500 a day, starting from September, the Foreign Ministry said.

RUSSIA-TURKEY S-400 DEAL

- * The State Department is not aware of any new developments for Russia to provide Turkey with additional S-400 air defense systems, but the United States' position on the arms sale is well known, spokesperson Ned Price said on Tuesday.

8/16/2022 4:47:28 PM -04:00

Quebec Cardinal, Potential Pope Successor Named in Lawsuit for Sexual Assault - Reports WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - Cardinal of Quebec Marc Ouellet has been named in a class action filed against the Quebec Diocese for alleged sexual misconduct, the CBC reported on Tuesday.

The civil lawsuit representing more than 100 people accuses Ouellet and 87 other Catholic clergyman of having committed various abuses and taken part in sexual assaults, the report said citing the investigative program "Enquete."

The lawsuit documents indicate that most abuses have taken place between 1950-1960, the report said.

Ouellet's alleged victim has preferred to stay anonymous but is said to be a young woman going by the term "F" and has noted repeated and inappropriate touching by the then Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Quebec, between 2008-2010, with most of the abuse occurring during public events, the report said.

The person reportedly came forward to the committee in charge of reviewing the sexual misconduct allegations within the Quebec Diocese after falling victim to another instance of aggression by a different priest, ten years after Ouellet, the report added.

The news of the alleged sexual abuse comes after Pope Francis visited Canada and denounced the abuses perpetrated by the Catholic Church in the country. Ouellet has been considered by many to be a potential successor to the current Pope.

8/16/2022 4:34:58 PM -04:00

Former US Congressman Charged With Multiple Fraud Schemes – Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - Former US congressman for California Terrance John Cox has been charged with 28 counts of fraud schemes, including money laundering and campaign contribution fraud, the Department of Justice said on Tuesday.

"Terrance John 'TJ' Cox, 59, of Fresno, is charged with 15 counts of wire fraud, 11 counts of money laundering, one count of financial institution fraud, and one count of campaign contribution fraud," the department said in a statement.

Over the years, Cox's fraud schemes targeted a wide range of victims such as companies he was related to, their clients and vendors, the statement said, adding that the former Democratic lawmaker opened several unofficial bank accounts to which he diverted the money.

"Cox illicitly obtained over \$1.7 million in diverted client payments and company loans and investments he solicited and then stole," the statement said, noting that this only represents a part of his fraudulent activity.

Cox also received through fraudulent means a \$1.5 million construction loan to build Granite Park, a recreation area located in Fresno, California, the statement said.

During the 2018 election to the House of Representatives, Cox was allegedly involved in a fraudulent scheme to reimburse donations made by family members and associates.

If convicted, Cox faces up to 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine for wire fraud and money laundering, up to 30 years and a \$1 million fine for wire fraud affecting a financial institution and financial institution fraud, and up to five years and a \$250,000 fine for campaign contribution fraud.

8/16/2022 4:22:19 PM -04:00

US Expects Iran Comments on EU Proposal on JCPOA Revival to Be Final Stage - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration expects the talks on reviving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) may be in the final stage after Iran responded to the European Union's proposal on the accord, US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Tuesday.

"It will require some time to digest what has been provided to the EU and in turn what has been provided to us, but it is our hope that as we've now approached what should be the final stage of this, that the Iranians will show [and]demonstrate that seriousness of purpose that we have not consistently seen until now," Price said during a press briefing.

Price confirmed that the United States received Iran's comments on the European Union's proposal to revive the agreement and that the Biden administration is in the process of studying Tehran's response. He added that the United States also continues to consult with the European Union and other European allies on the matter.

Price declined to go into detail about what precisely the US government has seen in Iran's response so far.

Earlier on Tuesday, US media reported that Iran's response to the European Union draft agreement on the revival of the JCPOA is focused on issues related to sanctions and economic guarantees.

The report said there were no other demands regarding the International Atomic Energy Agency's probe into traces of nuclear material found by IAEA specialists in Iran. Tehran objected to the investigation and insisted that the nuclear deal could only be restored once the probe is closed, the report said.

The report also cited Iranian and Western officials as saying that Tehran still has reservations regarding the EU-proposed draft agreement, prompting a further delay in signing the deal.

8/16/2022 4:15:48 PM -04:00

UN Chief to Meet With Zelenskyy, Erdogan in Lviv on Thursday - Office

(Adds details in paras 3-4)

UNITED NATIONS, August 16 (Sputnik) - UN chief Antonio Guterres will meet with Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Lviv on August 18, spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Tuesday.

"At the invitation of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine, the Secretary General will be in Lviv on Thursday to attend a trilateral meeting with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey and the Ukrainian leader," Dujarric told a briefing.

After visiting Lviv, Guterres will head to Odesa, which is one of the three ports under the Black Sea Grain Initiative to export foodstuff out of Ukraine.

On Saturday, the UN chief will visit the Joint Coordination Center (JCC) in Istanbul. The JCC is in charge of overseeing the shipments of Ukrainian grain via the country's Black Sea ports.

Guterres is expected to meet with Russian, Ukrainian and Turkish representatives at the JCC, according to Dujarric.

8/16/2022 4:14:43 PM -04:00

Biden Signs Inflation Reduction Act, Authorizing Billions in Funds for US Economic Change

(Update: adds details in paras 4-9)

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden on Tuesday signed the Inflation Reduction Act into law, authorizing hundreds of billions of dollars in spending on areas including tax enforcement and healthcare in an effort to address the federal budget deficit over time.

"The Inflation Reduction Act does so many things that for so many years so many of us have fought to make happen," Biden said during remarks at the White House prior to signing the bill.

The legislation was passed by both the House and Senate along partisan lines.

The legislation provides approximately \$369 billion in funding for green technology and energy security, as well as tens of billion for healthcare. The bill also enables the US government to negotiate certain prescription drug prices in Medicare and Medicaid and commits \$80 billion towards Internal Revenue Service (IRS) tax enforcement.

Estimates by the Congressional Budget Office predict that the bill will reduce the deficit by approximately \$300 billion over the next decade, with the United States increasing savings and revenue by about \$790 billion while spending roughly \$485 billion. The \$80 billion IRS expenditure is expected to net \$124 billion of that revenue over 10 years.

Republican lawmakers opposed the bill, citing concerns about strengthening the IRS and the bill's potential economic impacts. The IRS's increased enforcement and operations budget, including hiring new agents, could be used to increase audits of ordinary American families and small businesses, the lawmakers contended.

The bill also adds a 15% corporate minimum tax and closes the carried interest loophole. The Biden administration has vowed that the legislation will not violate the president's campaign promise not to raise federal taxes on any person making less than \$400,000 a year.

However, the Joint Committee on Taxation found that the bill would slightly raise overall tax rates for some people making under \$400,000, although the White House has dismissed the panel's assessment as incomplete.

The bill could also potentially lead to higher energy prices amid already historic inflation, according to the American Exploration and Production Council. The legislation's energy security efforts include provisions to incentivize a transition towards green energy, as well as to impose a 16.4% Superfund tax on crude oil received at US facilities.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer during remarks prior to the bill's signing praised Biden's leadership as essential in getting the legislation through Congress.

8/16/2022 4:12:10 PM -04:00

Biden Signs Inflation Reduction Act Authorizing Billions in Funds for US Economic Change
WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden on Tuesday signed the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 into law, authorizing hundreds of billions of dollars in spending on areas that include tax enforcement and health care in an effort to address the federal budget deficit over time.

"The Inflation Reduction Act does so many things that for so many years so many of us have fought to make happen," Biden said during remarks at the White House prior to signing the bill. The legislation was passed by both, the US House and Senate along partisan lines.

The measure provides approximately \$369 billion in funding for green technology and energy security, as well as tens of billion for health care. The bill also enables the US government to negotiate certain prescription drug prices in Medicare and Medicaid and commits \$80 billion toward Internal Revenue Service (IRS) tax enforcement.

8/16/2022 4:08:35 PM -04:00

US Imposes New Water Restrictions as Severe Drought Impacts Country's Southwest - Reports

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The US federal government is instituting stricter restrictions to mitigate a severe drought that has gripped the southwest of the United States, Fox5 KVVU-TV reported on Tuesday.

The federal government announced the Colorado River will operate in a Tier 2 shortage condition for the first time starting in January as the drought has taken a severe toll on Lake Mead, the report said.

The drought has exacerbated the availability of water as the Colorado River dries up and water levels in Lake Powell and Lake Mead dip precipitously low, the report said.

Overuse of the river has led the federal government to put in place mandatory water cuts while asking states to develop plans that would save the river basin, the report said.

The US Interior Department estimates that Lake Mead's water level will fall below 1,050 feet above sea level in January, which is the threshold at which a Tier 2 shortage can be declared.

The shortage means the states of Arizona, Nevada and New Mexico will need to further reduce their use of water from the Colorado River beginning in January, the report said.

California will be exempted from having to reduce the amount of water it receives from the Colorado River, the report added.

8/16/2022 4:08:03 PM -04:00

US Justice Dept. to Monitor Alaska Election for Compliance With Voting Rights Laws

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The US Justice Department said it will monitor certain jurisdictions in Tuesday's Alaska primary election to ensure that the state complies with minority language accessibility laws.

The general election in Alaska is being conducted for the first time by using ranked-choice voting, a change some civil rights groups have said could pose a challenge in a state that has 20 distinct languages.

"The Justice Department announced today that it will monitor the Aug. 16, 2022, federal primary election in certain jurisdictions in the State of Alaska to ensure compliance with the minority language accessibility requirements of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the disability accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990," the release said.

The department said it will specifically monitor the Municipality of Anchorage, City and Borough of Juneau and Bethel, Dillingham, and Kusilvak Census Areas, all of which have large indigeouns populations per capita.

Alaska, in addition to the ranked-choice system for voting, will also take advantage of a new open primary system that was first used in a special House primary in June.

Several candidates are vying for the state's single House seat which is open since the death of Congressman Don Young. Alaska's new election system and process was approved by voters in a 2020 ballot initiative and changes the way the state operates primary and general elections. In primary contests, voters have the option to choose from all the candidates in a race, regardless of party affiliations. Each voter will select just one candidate, but the four who receive the most votes will appear on the general ballot in November.

Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski, a three-term incumbent, is being challenged by Kelly Tshibaka, a Republican attorney who is endorsed by former US President Donald Trump. It is expected that under the voting system, both candidates will advance to the midterm elections in November.

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US Housing Starts Hit 18-Month Lows as Surging Interest Rates Strangle Market

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - Construction of new US homes hit 18-month lows in July, according to Commerce Department data on Tuesday that suggested that interest rate hikes by the Federal Reserve were boosting mortgage rates that in turn were strangling the property market.

New residential construction, or housing starts as they are popularly known as, fell by 9.6% last month to 1.45 million, hitting February 2021 lows.

Economists polled by US media had expected July housing starts to drop to a 1.52 million rate from June's initial estimate of 1.56 million.

For the year to July, the slump was 8.1% compared with the previous year.

Economists were in consensus that the property market was tanking directly as a result of surging interest rates, although some said it was still resilient given the circumstances.

The Fed has raised interest rates four times since March, bringing them to a peak of 2.5% from a high of just 0.25% in February. The central bank says it expects to continue with rate hikes until inflation returns to its target of 2% per year. Inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, grew by 8.7% during the year to July.

US home prices have jumped almost 40% over the past two years. Mortgage rates, meanwhile, surged from 3.2% to about 6% in the past six months. The combination pushed up the cost of home ownership in the United States to the highest in a generation, putting purchases out of reach for a growing number of prospective buyers, particularly first-time purchasers.

Housing and real estate play important roles in the US economy, with roughly 65% of occupied housing units being owner-occupied. That makes homes a substantial source of household wealth and home construction a key provider of employment.

In the 2008/09 financial crisis, a crash of the housing market precipitated what later came to be known as the era of the Great Recession. Since then, the US property market has rapidly recovered on the back of economic recovery as well as demand from buyers.

Now, some economists say demand for homes might be unraveling from the triple whammy of Federal Reserve rate hikes, inflation in house prices and soaring mortgage rates.

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US Will Continue Talks With Russia on Resumption of New START Inspections - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The United States will continue to engage with Russia through diplomatic channels on the resumption of inspections under the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Tuesday.

"We'll continue to engage Russia on the resumption of inspections through diplomatic channels," Price said during a press briefing.

Earlier this month, Russia officially notified the United States that it was temporarily withdrawing from inspection activities under the New START but will resume inspections once the issues are resolved related to anti-Russia sanctions that made it difficult for Russian inspection teams to travel to the United States.

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State Dept Says Sanctions Compatible With New START Treaty, Allow Russian Inspectors in US

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) – US sanctions against Russia are compatible with the New START treaty and do not prevent Russians from inspecting American facilities, State Department spokesman Ned Price said on Tuesday.

"US sanctions and restrictive measures imposed as a result of Russia's war against Ukraine are fully compatible with the New START Treaty. They don't prevent Russian inspectors from conducting treaty inspections in the United States," Price said during a press briefing.

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US State Department Says Not Aware of New S-400 Deal Between Russia, Turkey

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The State Department is not aware of any new developments for Russia to provide Turkey with additional S-400 air defense systems, but the United States' position on the arms sale is well known, spokesperson Ned Price said on Tuesday.

Earlier in the day, Russian media reported that Moscow signed a new agreement to provide Ankara with additional S-400 systems.

"We're not aware of any new developments on this matter, our position on Turkey's purchase of the S-400 is well known," Price said during a press briefing.

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US Intelligence Briefers Used Charts, Graphics to Hold Trump's Attention - Reports

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - CIA officials charged with preparing intelligence briefings for former US President Donald Trump used charts and graphics to hold his attention in lieu of written material, NBC News reported on Tuesday.

Officials realized early on during Trump's presidency that he would not read short written summaries of the intelligence briefings, according to the report, which cited several officials familiar with the matter.

"To secure his attention, you had to use images and catchy headlines, even better if they had his name in them," former CIA intelligence briefing assembler Doug London reportedly said.

Trump spent little time understanding what made certain materials protected secrets, another former senior intelligence figure said in the report.

Trump's attitude toward classified materials resulted in him tweeting a picture of an Iranian missile launch site and giving US adversaries insights into the nation's spying capabilities, the report said. The image was indeed highly classified and taken by a secret spy satellite, a former intelligence official reportedly confirmed.

Former CIA Director Gina Haspel and Director of National Intelligence Joseph Maguire tried to dissuade Trump from releasing the image, citing concerns about revealing multi-billion dollar capabilities, the official also said. However, Trump was unmoved by the requests, according to the official.

The incident prompted senior intelligence officials not to bring highly classified images to the Oval Office again, the official added.

The report comes following an FBI raid of Trump's Mar-a-Lago residence in Florida, the search warrant receipt for which shows the seizure of materials labeled "top secret." Trump faces possible charges of violating the Espionage Act and classified material protocols.

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Russian Convent in US Got 'Angry' Letters Over Ukraine But Monks Praying for All - Dean

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The brotherhood of the major Russian English-speaking monastery in the United States, the Holy Cross, received angry letters about the situation in Ukraine at the beginning of Russia's special military operation there, but the monks were able to explain to the people that the church does not take political sides and prays for everyone, the monastery dean, Gabriel (Hooten), told Sputnik.

"In February and March, we got various letters and questions from people. Some people were very angry, others expressed confusion about what was going on," Gabriel said about the monastery in Wayne, West Virginia.

On February 24, Russia launched a special military operation in Ukraine after the Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics appealed for help to defend them from intensifying attacks by Ukrainian troops. In response, the countries of the collective West imposed comprehensive sanctions against Russia and have supplied weapons to Ukraine in the amount of tens of billions of dollars.

Gabriel said the monks at the Holy Cross monastery, most of whom have no connections to Russia and came to Russian Orthodoxy from other Christian denominations, were trying to explain to people that the main role of the church is to pray for peace and for the restoration of brotherly love and relations among all people.

"We believe that these problems really can best be solved through prayer and our own repentance, and nothing will change our central mission that we have as monastics and as Orthodox Christians -to pray for the world, for the increase of love, for the repentance of our sins," he said.

Gabriel said most people, particularly those, with whom the monks interact frequently, have understood the church's position.

The monks were particularly trying to explain that being a part of a Russian heritage does not mean political engagement in the particular situation, he said.

"Our job is not to take sides, but simply to pray for everyone in this trouble and most people understand that," Gabriel added.

In addition, Gabriel said he noticed that Orthodox piety and faith in the United States has become more natural to the people.

"In the beginning, of course, Orthodox Christianity could have been something of a cultural shock to people coming to it from other denominations and there is a sense of, perhaps, unfamiliarity. But it seems, in recent years it is becoming something natural as people feel being 'at home,'" he said.

Gabriel also noted that Orthodox Christianity is beginning to be absorbed into the spiritual heart of the American people and this is happening not simply in an intellectual sense, but on the level of the "spiritual DNA."

The Holy Cross monastery is an English-speaking male convent in the United States under the jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia. The brotherhood numbers 25 monastics.

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UPDATE - US Republican Lawmakers Cheney, Murkowski Face Primary Challenges From Trump-Backed Foes

(Updates with additional information in paras 7, 8)

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - US Congresswoman from Wyoming Liz Cheney and Senator from Alaska Lisa Murkowski on Tuesday face significant challenges in their Republican primaries from candidates backed by former President Donald Trump that are looking to take their seats in the midterm elections this November.

Cheney, an outspoken Trump critic and member of the US House Select Committee on the events of January 6, 2021, faces a primary challenge by Harriet Hageman, a natural resources attorney and former Republican National Committeewoman who is endorsed by Trump.

Polls indicate Hageman has a double-digit lead despite having raised only \$4 million for her campaign compared to Cheney's \$15 million. Cheney also received endorsements from Republican notables, including former US House Speaker Paul Ryan and former President George W. Bush.

Trump has frequently criticized Cheney and her work on the January 6 Committee, calling her a "warmongering and despicable human being" who is "hated by the great people of Wyoming."

Analysts have suggested that the only way for Cheney to overcome Hageman's lead is if significant number of Democrats and Independents join the Republican primary and vote for her, adding that the chances for such a development are scant.

Cheney is daughter to former US Vice President Richard "Dick" Cheney and served in the George W. Bush administration as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, which covers diplomatic operations in North Africa and the Middle East.

Murkowski faces primary challenges by 18 other candidates, out of whom the top four will move on the ballot for the general elections in November. She is expected to easily win one of the four slots.

The general election in Alaska is conducted for the first time by using ranked-choice voting. The system was adopted through a ballot measure in 2020. Murkowski would benefit from the new system of voting because she is not guaranteed to secure the most votes in Tuesday's primary. Trump is backing candidate Kelly Tshibaka, who has previously served in several government positions, including as special assistant to the Justice Department Inspector General and as Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Administration.

Murkowski voted to convict Trump in the impeachment trial that followed the January 6 events at the US Capitol and has frequently clashed with Republican colleagues over her more moderate policies. Trump was ultimately acquitted in the US Senate.

Alaska is also holding on Tuesday a special election to determine who will serve for the remainder of the late US Congresswoman Don Young's term. The three candidates running for office include former Alaska Governor Sarah Palin, fellow Alaska Republican Nichola Begich and former Alaska House Democrat Mary Peltola.

Analysts are watching the outcomes of the Republican primaries featuring pro-Trump challengers as potential early indicators of where the political party is moving ahead of both the midterm elections and the 2024 presidential race.

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UN Says Has Logistics, Security From Kiev to Help IAEA Team to Get to Zaporizhzhia NPP

UNITED NATIONS, August 16 (Sputnik) - The United Nations has logistics and security assurances from Kiev to ensure the safe travel of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) team to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Tuesday.

Earlier in the day, Russia's permanent representative to the international organizations in Vienna said Moscow hopes that Kiev and the UN will not risk the lives of IAEA personnel by sending them across the front line. There are other routes, the official noted.

"We are willing and able to help the IAEA anyway we can, and we have the logistics and security apparatus to do that from Kiev," Dujarric told a briefing.

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UN Chief to Discuss Zaporizhzhia NPP With Zelenskyy Thursday - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, August 16 (Sputnik) - UN chief Antonio Guterres and Volodymyr Zelenskyy will discuss the situation around the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Tuesday.

On Thursday, Guterres will meet with Zelenskyy and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Lviv.

"There are a number of issues that will be raised: the conflict in general, the need for a political solution to this conflict. Obviously, I have no doubt that the issue of the nuclear power plant, the fact-finding mission [to probe a strike on a prison in the Russian-controlled Donetsk region] and others will be raised," Dujarric told a briefing.

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US Puts Russia on COVID-19 Travel Warning List Citing 'High' Transmission - CDC

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a notice warning US citizens to be cautious if they are traveling to Russia because of an increase of novel coronavirus cases in the country.

The CDC raised its categorization of Russia on its travel warning list to Level 3, which means the agency believes there is a high transmission rate of the coronavirus in the country.

The CDC recommends Americans should be up to date with their COVID-19 vaccinations if they plan to travel to Russia, otherwise they should consider avoiding travel to the country.

On Monday, Russia's national coronavirus response center reported that the daily increase in new cases increased by 49.2% and hospitalizations by 29.8% compared to the previous week. Russia reported 25,273 new COVID-19 cases were detected in the country on Monday, 1,581 people were hospitalized and 53 died due to the disease. Recoveries totaled 15,410, 3.1% more compared to Sunday, according to the response center.

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Russia Denies US Allegations of Violating Religious Freedom in Ukraine - Embassy

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The Russian embassy in the United States said on Tuesday that the accusations by the congressional US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) about alleged violence against the so-called "Orthodox Church of Ukraine" are insinuations that have nothing to do with reality.

"We have paid attention to another Russophobic escapade of the Commission on International Religious Freedom at the US Congress. Would-be experts accuse us of organizing repressions against supporters of the so-called 'Orthodox Church of Ukraine' (OCU), killings, and torture of clergy. It is alleged that the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church justifies the

manifestations of cruelty," the Russian Embassy said in a statement. "Such insinuations have nothing to do with reality."

The statement noted that the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill, has repeatedly spoken out in defense of Ukrainians who profess Orthodox Christianity and are oppressed by Kiev nationalists.

In addition, more than 670 tons of humanitarian aid have been provided to affected civilians in the conflict zone with the assistance of the Russian Orthodox Church, including more than 380 tons sent to the Donetsk, Luhansk, Horlivka, Kharkiv, Kherson and the Zaporizhzhia dioceses. The Russian Embassy pointed out that the US authorities do not notice at all violations committed by the Ukrainian authorities, including the seizure of the churches and property of the Russian Orthodox Church and the canonization of Nazi criminal Stepan Bandera.

On Monday, USCIRF Vice Chair Abraham Cooper urged the US State Department to redesignate Russia as a Country of Particular Concern that has engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom in Ukraine and at home.

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UN Chief to Meet With Zelenskyy, Erdogan in Lviv on Thursday - Office

UNITED NATIONS, August 16 (Sputnik) - UN chief Antonio Guterres will meet with Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Lviv on August 18, spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Tuesday.

"At the invitation of President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine, the Secretary General will be in Lviv on Thursday to attend a trilateral meeting with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey and the Ukrainian leader," Dujarric told a briefing.

On Friday, Guterres will visit Odesa.

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US Republican Lawmakers Cheney, Murkowski Face Primary Challenges From Trump-Backed Foes

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - US Congresswoman from Wyoming Liz Cheney and Senator from Alaska Lisa Murkowski on Tuesday face significant challenges in their Republican primaries from candidates backed by former President Donald Trump and looking to take their seats in the midterm elections this November.

Cheney, an outspoken Trump critic and member of the US House Select Committee on the events of January 6, 2021, faces a primary challenge by Harriet Hageman, a natural resources attorney and former Republican National Committeewoman who is endorsed by Trump.

Polls indicate Hageman has a double-digit lead despite having raised only \$4 million for her campaign compared to Cheney's \$15 million. Cheney also received endorsements from Republican notables, including former US House Speaker Paul Ryan and former President George W. Bush.

Trump has frequently criticized Cheney and her work on the January 6 Committee, calling her a "warmongering and despicable human being" who is "hated by the great people of Wyoming." Analysts have suggested that the only way for Cheney to overcome Hageman's lead is if significant number of Democrats and Independents join the Republican primary and vote for her, adding that the chances for such a development are scant.

Cheney is daughter to former US Vice President Richard "Dick" Cheney and served in the George W. Bush administration as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, which covers diplomatic operations in North Africa and the Middle East.

Murkowski faces primary challenges by 18 other candidates, out of whom the top four will move on the ballot for the general elections in November. Trump backed candidate Kelly Tshibaka, a so-called moderate who has clashed with establishment Republicans like Murkowski.

Tshibaka has served in positions, including as special assistant to the Justice Department Inspector General and Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Administration.

Murkowski voted to convict Trump in the impeachment trial that followed the January 6 events at the US Capitol. Trump was ultimately acquitted.

Alaska is also holding on Tuesday a special election to determine who will serve for the remainder of the late US Congresswoman Don Young's term. The three candidates running for office include former Alaska Governor Sarah Palin, fellow Alaska Republican Nichola Begich and former Alaska House Democrat Mary Peltola.

Analysts are watching the outcomes of the Republican primaries featuring pro-Trump challengers as potential early indicators of where the political party is moving ahead of both the midterm elections and the 2024 presidential race.

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US Tried for Months to Convince Kiev, NATO of Risk of Russia Entering Ukraine – Reports

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) – The United States in the months leading up to Russia's special operation in Ukraine struggled to convince its NATO allies and Ukraine alike of the impending threat because of its own track record of dishonest war intelligence in Iraq and Ukraine's own denial and desire to protect its economy, The Washington Post reported on Tuesday.

In a lengthy investigative report, The Washington Post detailed the US administration's struggles since the fall last year to convince NATO, aside from the UK and Baltic members, of its growing intelligence about Russia's plans to enter Ukraine. European allies generally doubted the reliability of American intelligence due to the Bush administration's infamous pretext for invading Iraq in 2003. Ukrainian officials' skepticism was informed by the US refusal to provide specific details and their desire to avoid panicking the Ukrainian public, which

Volodymyr Zelenskyy feared would lead to the flight of both capital and citizens needed to successfully defend the country.

Zelenskyy ultimately stood by his decision not to warn his country to prepare for war, arguing that Ukraine would have lost \$7 billion each month since October and people would have fled rather than staying to defend their homes. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said the Ukrainian administration had to strike a balance between preparing for the possibility of war and keeping the economy running, noting that every US public warning about an inevitable invasion was reflected in the Ukrainian currency exchange rate.

Although Zelenskyy had been warned by both CIA Director William Burns and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in January that alleged Russian assassination teams might already be present in Kiev and that Russia purportedly intended to strike the capital and take down the central government, the Ukrainian leader resisted relocating himself and his government in order to avoid sowing public panic and weakening the country ahead of Russia's military operation.

Zelenskyy also feared that some Western officials wanted him to flee Ukraine because they did not have confidence that Ukraine could stand up to an attack and his departure would ease the way for Russia to install a puppet government that would negotiate a settlement with NATO. Blinken had first warned Zelenskyy in November, but the Ukrainians reportedly did not take the threat of a massive invasion seriously until the last minute. Kuleba said US officials refused to offer Ukraine specific intelligence to back up their dire warnings until "the last four or five days" prior to the commencement of Russia's special operation on February 24. At a Munich conference on February 18-20, European officials were still doubtful of an imminent attack. Kuleba himself was only convinced in the days after the conference when he received specific intelligence about five transport planes of paratroopers at a Russian airport on alert to fly toward a certain airport in Ukraine.

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Almost Half of US Voters 'Angry' About Upcoming Midterm Elections in November - Survey

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - Almost half of voters in the United States say they are "angry" about the upcoming 2022 midterm elections in November, a new Morning Consult survey revealed on Tuesday.

"[Forty-two percent] of Democratic voters are 'angry' about the midterms, compared with 41% of Republicans," a release about the survey said.

In addition, far fewer Democrats express hope about the midterm elections than Republicans did four years ago (56% to 74%), the release said.

With respect to the sense of apathy, 28% of Democrats and 27% of Republicans say they are indifferent about the midterm elections - up from the 22% in the summer before the 2018 midterms.

The Democrats' anger increased in April and reached a peak in May, when the US Supreme Court reversed its previous ruling on abortion in the Roe vs. Wade case, while the Republicans' apathy shows relatively steady level over this time, the release said.

"Democratic voters were generally less likely to say they felt angry about the midterm elections until May. Weekly tracking surveys suggest voters on the left were jolted by the leaked draft of opinion on May 2 that suggested the Supreme Court would overturn the landmark Roe v. Wade abortion opinion," the release added.

The survey took place on August 3-4 among 806 Democratic voters and 697 Republican voters, with unweighted margins of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

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Canadian Gov't Will Invest \$524,000 in Cyber Defenses – Public Safety

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) – The Canadian government will invest C\$675,000 (\$524,000) in the Quantum-Safe Canada initiative to bolster the country's cyber defenses, Minister of Public Safety Marco Mendicino said on Tuesday.

"I am very happy and very proud to announce that new federal support for Canada's cyber defenses will include an investment in Quantum-Safe Canada in the amount of \$675,000," Mendicino told a press conference.

The goal of the new investment is to better coordinate research, technology, tools, and training, Mendicino said, noting that the funding will ensure that competent individuals oversee the quantum computer sector.

"This project will help better protect Canadians against cyber threats, in particular the growing risk posed by quantum threats," Mendicino added.

The funding will come from the Cyber Security Cooperation Program (CSCP), Mendicino said. Canada launched the CSCP in 2019 as part of its cyber security strategy as it looked to supporting projects enhancing the country's capacities in that area. The CSCP has since allocated \$10.3 million in funding for various cyber security projects.

In June, the government introduced Bill C-26, An Act Respecting Cyber Security, which is tasked amongst other things, with addressing the issues hindering the federal authority's capacity to protect its vital digital services.

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American Airlines Says Reached Deal to Purchase Up to 20 Boom Supersonic Aircraft

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - American Airlines on Tuesday issued a press release that it has reached an agreement with the Denver-based aerospace company Boom Supersonic for the delivery of up to 20 supersonic aircraft with an option to acquire an additional 40 aircraft.

"American Airlines and Boom Supersonic today announced the airline's agreement to purchase up to 20 Overture aircraft, with an option for an additional 40. American has paid a non-refundable deposit on the initial 20 aircraft," the release said.

Overture aircraft will be capable of flying at 1.7 the speed of sound or more than 1,300 miles per hour. Doubling the speed will reduce the duration of a flight from Miami to London to five hours, and from Los Angeles to Honolulu to three hours, the release said.

The airplanes can carry between 65 and 80 passengers while their range will be more than 5,000 miles, the release added.

The Overture is expected to be the first commercial aircraft optimized to run on 100% Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) and is scheduled to roll out in 2025, start test flights in 2026 and carry passengers by 2029.

In 2021, United Airlines became the first US airline to reach an agreement with Boom Supersonic for the delivery of 15 supersonic aircraft with an option for an additional 35.

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CNBC Chief Mark Hoffman Stepping Down on September 12 - Reports

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - Mark Hoffman, president and chairman of business news outlet CNBC, will step down from his position at the organization on September 12 after having served in various roles there since 1997, CNBC reported on Tuesday.

Hoffman announced that he will be leaving of his own accord on September 12 after having served as president of CNBC since 2005 and chairman since 2015, the report said.

Hoffman will continue work as an advisor while current NBCUniversal advertising director KC Sullivan transitions into the role of CNBC president, the report added.

NBCUniversal in May 2020 also hired Cesar Conde to bring centralized leadership to NBC News, MSNBC and CNBC, the report said.

"Mark has overseen the steady continued growth of CNBC as the world's #1 business and money news brand," Conde said in a statement to employees. "No business news organization comes close to the reach and influence of CNBC, a true testament to Mark's leadership."

Hoffman increased the profitability of CNBC in 16 of his 17 years at the organization's helm, making the outlet one of NBCUniversal's most consistently profitable assets despite a steady decline in US cable television subscriptions over recent years, according to the statement.

CNBC ranked top among all business news platforms for 29 straight years in reaching viewers who make more than \$125,000 annually, the report said, citing Ipsos surveys.