

5/10/23 Wednesday

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Scientists Discover 'Secret Tether' That Keeps Planets From Colliding

Earlier models suggested the orbits of the inner solar system planets are random, and that based on their chaotic trajectory, they should have crashed into each other by now. Newly released findings have offered insight into a scientific phenomenon that is keeping the solar system from descending into sheer chaos, a possibility that had once been anticipated. Using a model for planetary motion, scientists discovered the solar system's inner planets are constrained by parameters that act as a kind of tether. While this exciting discovery helps explain how planets in our solar system keep from colliding, it also offers a deeper insight into how any exoplanet in deep space move around a star.

Based on the theories of the 19th-century mathematician Henri Poincaré, it is possible for two scenarios to be created which would predict that were the distances between the planets of Mercury, Venus, Mars and Earth to differ by the slightest amount, in one scenario the planets would collide with each other, and in another they would veer away from each-other.

But based on the astronomer (and co-author of the new study) Jacques Laskar's research in 1989, the instance in which the planets would diverge (referred to as the Lyapunov time of the chaotic system) is 5 million years.

"It means basically that you lose one digit every 10 million years," Laskar, told [US media](#), adding that after a length of time, the uncertainty of where a planet will end up grows.

With further calculation, Laskar discovered it would take at least 30 billion years for any of the planets to collide.

The findings were published in the journal [Physical Review X](#).

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McCarthy Says He Won't Seek Santos' Resignation Despite 13-Count Indictment

News outlets and media coverage have been reporting on the scandal-ridden politician for months. Santos first shocked his supporters when it was revealed he had lied about his education, work experience, and religion.

US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy has indicated that he will not be requesting embattled Rep. George Santos' resignation after the New York lawmaker pleaded not guilty to a indictment filed by prosecutors.

Acknowledging that Santos does not sit on any House committees, McCarthy told reporters on Wednesday that time will tell what exactly happens to the congressman.

"He will go through his time in trial, and let's find out how the outcome is," the House speaker said in response to his potential resignation. The GOP leader further admitted that charges were a "concern."

Earlier Wednesday, Santos entered a not guilty plea after he was arrested on a [13-count federal indictment](#). The congressman was charged with seven counts of wire fraud, three counts of money laundering, one count of theft of public funds and two counts of making materially false statements to the House of Representatives.

Santos later doubled down after news of the indictment broke, announcing outside a courthouse in Central Islip, New York, that he would not resign from Congress. The Republican underscored that he still intended on running for reelection.

Santos took the opportunity to describe the indictment as a "witch hunt," and attempted to compare his criminal charges to the Hunter Biden laptop controversy, a move that instantly prompted the crowd to boo the congressman.

Members of the GOP responded to Santos' indictment, and while an empty House seat left by Santos could be filled by a Democrat, some Republican members were quick to condemn the freshman lawmaker.

"He should have resigned a long time ago. He's an embarrassment to our party. He's an embarrassment to the United States Congress," said Senator Mitt Romney (R-UT).

When asked if it would be better for Santos to resign, Rep. Steve Womack (R-AR) said: "Oh absolutely."

"It's a distraction, and it's a punchline for a lot of commentary regarding the Republican party that we don't need," added Womack.

Santos was released on a \$500,000 bond, the New York attorney's office reported; however, he is [reportedly](#) being required to submit to pretrial services, random monitoring at his home, surrender his passport, and is restricted from traveling outside of the New York state nor Washington, DC, without first receiving approval from the court.

Santos is expected to next appear in court on June 30.

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'F***ing Disgrace': Netizens Trash Disastrous Trump Town Hall Appearance

The former president has long been an extreme critic of the CNN news channel, referring to the company as "fake news" throughout his presidency; however, despite all the past trash-talking, he opted to appear on the network for a town hall.

Delivering on expectations that the [Wednesday town hall](#) would be filled with nothing more than classic Trumpisms to rile his base, former US President Donald Trump gave viewers something to talk about across social media platforms.

Much to the dismay of some network insiders, Trump's appearance saw him speak for more than an hour, specifically pushing misinformation about the 2020 election, as well as investigations into his alleged criminal activity with an additional touch of his efforts to mock moderators - in this case Kaitlin Collins, who he referred to as a "nasty person."

A CNN insider said the decision by the network was “appalling” and criticized the company for handing Trump a “huge platform to spew his lies” on a silver platter.

Another network insider referred to the town hall as a “f***ing disgrace.”

Meanwhile Trump’s campaigners and advisers were overzealous with how “well” the night went for him. “We want to thank CNN for their generous donation to President Trump’s campaign!” one Trump adviser said late on Wednesday.

“[Trump] should literally do this every night,” one Trump 2024 adviser said about an hour into the event. “Nightly CNN hits!”

Those who were close to the rally-like show weren’t the only ones to criticize the network’s decision. Netizens took to Twitter to tear down CNN.

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Looming Kangaroo Boom in Australia Prompts Calls for Culling Iconic Animal

With Australian ecologists worried about El Nino bringing in another disastrous drought this summer, the massive kangaroo population could be left to the same cruel fate as in 2016 and 2017, when the population of kangaroos reached nearly 45 million, about double the population of Australians.

Ecologists are warning that Australia’s iconic kangaroo could soon come under a culling campaign after a number of the marsupial starved to death during Australia’s last drought. Authorities are presently growing more concerned that in light of the rising populations, many may starve once again.

“The last drought we estimated that 80 or 90% of the kangaroos in some areas died. They are starving to death – going into public toilets and eating toilet paper, or lying on the road starving while their joeys are trying to feed,” ecologist Katherine Moseby told French media.

“It keeps the numbers down so that when we do get drought, we don’t get these welfare issues,” she added. “If we saw them as a resource and managed them like that, we wouldn’t get the catastrophic deaths that we see.”

According to the Victorian government, the kangaroo also poses a risk to people’s farmlands, property, habitats and also poses a risk to human safety.

“Commercial harvesting is strictly regulated and monitored to ensure conservation, animal welfare and health and safety standards are upheld,” said the King’s Kangaroo Industry Association of Australia.

“State governments develop unique kangaroo management plans to conserve kangaroos, measure populations, set boundaries for the harvest, outline how it will be regulated and ensure it’s not detrimental to the animals or their ecosystems.”

But the animal rights organization People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), has argued that the excuse that kangaroos are damaging land is “simply laughable.”

“To say kangaroos are damaging the land they’ve lived on for 4 million years is simply laughable. Overgrazing by introduced sheep and cattle is the real culprit behind land degradation,” said PETA.

Dennis King, the executive officer for the Kangaroo Industry Association, agrees there could be another kangaroo boom due to recent climate conditions. And according to King, the next population growth could hit 60 million.

"After three years of La Nina right down the east coast, we've seen the perfect growth scenario for kangaroos over the next couple of years," he said. "The breeding cycle really speeds up." While fertility control and fencing have been used to control Kangaroo populations in the past, the result is often less effective, and less humane than culling and harvesting the kangaroo meat.

Moseby adds that an end to culling would be more cruel than its continuation. "Trying to stop the harvest of leather or meat, it's not going to have any welfare benefit," she said. "It's going to make it worse."

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Ecuador Votes to Impeach Western-Backed President on Corruption Charges

The legislature's attempt to remove the sitting president appears to have significantly more political support than a similar effort by the opposition last year.

The National Assembly of Ecuador voted on Tuesday to advance impeachment proceedings against President Guillermo Lasso following accusations of corruption, in the latest setback for the beleaguered head of state.

Of the 116 lawmakers who were present at the session, 88 voted in favor of the motion.

According to the bylaws of the opposition-controlled legislature, a new plenary session will be called next week. Exactly 92 votes are required to dismiss the head of state – a two-thirds majority of the assembly.

Lasso's presidency began on a strong note but within a year of his inauguration, his popularity suffered a steep decline. Approval ratings which had approached 80% at the beginning of his tenure rapidly dwindled, and less than a year and a half later, Lasso's support dwindled to below 30%.

According to one survey published earlier this month, the Ecuadorian leader's approval rating now [stands](#) at a meager 13.9%.

Observers have identified a number of causes for Lasso's hemorrhaging public support, with seemingly-constant corruption investigations and a major crime wave chief among them.

Following huge clashes with indigenous demonstrators that took place throughout the country, the president narrowly [survived](#) a similar impeachment attempt last year. Opposition lawmakers ultimately ended up with just 80 votes for impeachment, a full 12 votes shy of the total needed to oust him.

The current push to topple Lasso revolves around accusations of a network of corruption which allegedly spread across the president's family tree. At the center of the scandal is the president's brother-in-law, Danilo Carrera.

As Venezuelan media [summarized](#), “the revelations implicate Carrera as the head of a network responsible for selling positions and contracts in public companies and indicate that he is very close to political operator Rubén Chérrez, who is himself linked to drug trafficking.”

Reports also indicate that “the Albanian mafia financed the campaign of candidate Lasso in 2021 with one and a half million dollars,” the publication explained.

Should Lasso’s downfall begin to seem imminent, it’s a development the United States government is likely to track closely.

According to US media, “the center-right leader is one of the few friends Washington has in the region.” But the notoriously pro-establishment outlet [acknowledged](#) that “even that relationship may be fraying.”

In 2021 US Secretary of State Antony Blinken lauded Lasso’s promise to “uphold democratic principles,” but more recently a number of legislators in US President Joe Biden’s own party have begun pushing back.

On April 12, five Democratic representatives sent a [letter](#) to Blinken urging him to “review our bilateral relations with [Ecuador’s] government while the Department of Justice concludes its investigations of President Lasso and Mr. Carrera’s apparent holdings in the US.”

The letter cited “allegations of corruption at the highest levels of government,” an apparent “web of corruption that ties key associates of Ecuadorian President Guillermo Lasso to organized crime figures,” and evidence that both Carrera and “President Lasso himself have been using US jurisdictions to hide assets and avoid taxes.”

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Japan Seeking to Open ‘NATO Liaison Office’ as West Seeks Chinese Encirclement

The island nation’s push to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization comes even as all current maps and the latest geological surveys indicate Japan remains firmly tethered to the bottom of the Pacific Ocean.

Japan is seeking to open a so-called “NATO liaison office,” the country’s foreign minister confirmed Wednesday.

Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi reportedly [told](#) US media that Japan is “already in discussions” to open a formal outpost for the aggressive alliance but that “no details [have been] finalized yet.”

In his remarks, Hayashi directly linked the decision to ongoing hostilities in Ukraine.

“Something happening in East Europe is not only confined to the issue in East Europe, and that affects directly the situation here in the Pacific. That’s why cooperation between us in East Asia and NATO [is] becoming ... increasingly important.”

The comments came just one day after Japan’s Ambassador to the US, Koji Tomita, suggested to reporters at Washington’s National Press Club that a NATO office was in the works.

The opening of such an office is “one of the things that we are working on to strengthen our partnership,” Tomita [told](#) journalists, adding:

“I really haven’t heard any final confirmation of that, but we are working in that direction.”

The office would be NATO's first such installation in Asia, and is expected to be viewed with suspicion by Beijing, which has echoed Russia's warnings about the military grouping's hostile posture.

On Monday, China's Foreign Ministry [warned](#) the nation of 1.4 billion "will never forget the barbaric crimes of US-led NATO" in Yugoslavia, where the alliance bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade 24 years ago in an attack that left three people dead and 20 injured. The development comes ahead of this week's G7 meeting in Hiroshima, which Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is slated to attend virtually.

Hayashi reportedly described the meeting's planned location in Hiroshima as a nod to the need to discuss "nonproliferation and also disarmament," without noting that it was the de facto leader of the G7, the United States, which was responsible for the notorious deadly bombing there.

The US military's decision to strike Hiroshima and Nagasaki marked the only use of nuclear weapons in combat in human history and left hundreds of thousands of Japanese civilians dead, disfigured, and mutilated for generations.

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One Police Officer Killed, 2 Wounded in Shooting in Canada's Ontario - Police

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) – Three police officers were shot, one fatally, after being dispatched to check on reports of a shooting at a home in the village of Bourget in Canada's Eastern Ontario, the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) said on Thursday.

Shortly after 2:00 a.m. (6:00 GMT) on Thursday police officers were dispatched to a disturbance at a home on Laval Street in Bourget, where someone had reported hearing a gunshot.

"Three officers arrived on the scene and all three were shot by an individual at the home. All three officers were transported to hospital in Ottawa. One of the officers has since died as a result of their injuries. The others are recovering," OPP East Region said via Twitter.

One individual has been arrested in relation to the shooting, and there is now no risk to public safety, the police added.

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US Pacific Fleet Chief to Brief House China Committee on Taiwan - Reports

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - US Pacific Fleet commander Adm. Samuel Paparo will hold a closed-door briefing with the House China Committee on Thursday about China's possible "invasion" of Taiwan, Defense News reported, citing sources.

Paparo is expected to brief the 16-member committee about what is needed to defend Taiwan, capability shortfalls, modernization efforts, logistics and coordination with allies, the report said

on Wednesday.

The United States is yet to do what is necessary to start replenishing new stockpiles, given the amount of weapons being sent to Ukraine, to "surge and pre-position them" to the Pacific theater, Rep. Mike Gallagher, the chairman of the committee, told the news outlet.

The lawmaker noted that given the geography, "we can only fight with what we have there."

China has repeatedly called on the United States to put an end to its arms sales to, and military ties with Taiwan as well as stop creating tensions in the Taiwan Strait.

Beijing says it strives for a peaceful resolution to reunite with the breakaway province, but will not renounce the right to use force.

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RPT: PREVIEW - US Braces for Massive Surge of Migrants on Border With Mexico When Title 42 Ends

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The United States is bracing for the possibility that the ongoing surge of migrants arriving on the US border with Mexico will intensify after Title 42 expires late Thursday night at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time.

Title 42, the Trump-era public health emergency order imposed in March 2020, allowed the US government to turn away illegal immigrants at the border to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

"We are clear eyed about the challenges we are likely to face in the days and weeks ahead, which have the potential to be very difficult," Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said on Wednesday. "Even after nearly two years of preparation, we expect to see large numbers of encounters at our southern border in the days and weeks after May 11."

The high number of migrants arriving on the US southern border is placing a very significant strain on law enforcement personnel, facilities, and border communities dealing with the border crisis, Mayorkas added.

Last week, a Sputnik correspondent reported that more than 1,700 migrants were gathered for several days outside a church in downtown El Paso, Texas, that had easily reached the church's capacity. The Biden administration said it distributed \$250 million to border communities directly impacted by the border crisis.

President Joe Biden admitted earlier this week that the US southern border will be chaotic after Title 42 expires,, but it remains to be seen if the United States is prepared to deal with the potential worsening of the border crisis.

US immigration enforcement agencies and border communities are already overwhelmed by tens of thousands of migrants that have arrived along the US-Mexico border this week.

On Monday, US Border Patrol Chief Raul Ortiz said more than 26,000 migrants have been apprehended on the US southern border over the last three days. More than 10,300 migrants crossed illegally the border on Tuesday, media reported.

There are reportedly tens of thousands of migrants waiting in Mexico to cross into the United States after Thursday. CBS News reported, citing US government data, between 11,000 and 13,000 daily migrant arrivals are expected after Title 42 expires.

US Congressman Tony Gonzales's office confirmed to Sputnik earlier in the day that Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei said the White House was ignoring his warning calls about a group of 80,000 migrants, mostly Venezuelans, making their way to the United States.

US RESPONSE TO BORDER CRISIS

On Wednesday, Mayorkas said the United States finalized a rule that will impose harsher consequences for migrants that illegally enter the United States. The rule presumes that those who do not use lawful pathways to enter the United States are ineligible for asylum and authorizes deportations of migrants who do not establish a reasonable fear of persecution in their country.

Migrants who do not claim fear of persecution will be deported immediately, and migrants that do claim fear of persecution will encounter a higher threshold under the new asylum rule, unless they have accessed lawful pathways or sought relief in another country and been denied.

The US State Department plans to eventually open 100 regional processing centers throughout the Western Hemisphere, which will be used to screen migrants for eligibility for US refugee resettlement or other lawful pathways to the United States, Canada, and Spain.

The United States is also accepting up to 30,000 individuals per month from Venezuela, Nicaragua, Cuba, and Haiti as part of the expanded parole processes announced earlier this year.

After Title 42 ends, migrants will be subject to deportation under an authority known as Title 8, which may punish illegal migrants with a five year bar on re-entry into the United States or criminal prosecution if a migrant attempts another unlawful entry into the country.

US immigration enforcement agencies are ramping up deportation flights and efforts to counter misinformation from human smugglers profiting off migrants heading to the US southern border.

The US Defense Department is deploying more than 1,500 active-duty troops to the southern border to support US Customs and Border Protection personnel as they deal with the influx of migrants. The first 550 troops arrived in El Paso on Wednesday to help alleviate the surge that that sector is currently experiencing. However, US troops do not conduct law enforcement activity. The United States already had 2,500 National Guard troops deployed along the southern border.

Senior Biden administration officials told reporters the Mexican government is deploying law enforcement personnel to its border with Guatemala to try to deter the number of US-bound migrants.

According to Mayorkas, the administration's policies to deter migrants will deliver results, but it will take time to see the results.

An all-time record number of migrants has arrived at the US southern border under the Biden administration, hitting two consecutive records in 2021 and 2022, exceeding 2.3 million people. In fiscal year 2023, the US authorities said they have encountered more than 1.2 million migrants. Fox News and other media outlets have said the number of illegal immigrants that entered the United States since Biden assumed office has exceeded six million.

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IMF Warns of Subsidy Race Between Major Economies to Lure Green Investment

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) – The International Monetary Fund (IMF) warned on Thursday about the possibility of a "harmful subsidy race" unfolding between advanced economies in an effort to attract investment in the green economy.

"The risk now is a harmful subsidy race between the world's largest economies to lure green investment," Director of the IMF's European Department Alfred Kammer wrote in a blog post.

Such a race could undermine the level playing field in global trade, contribute to geo-economic fragmentation, and impose large fiscal costs, he cautioned.

"It would ultimately reduce efficiency and undermine the rules-based global trading system that has served the world economy well over several decades," Kammer said.

Subsidies, the official continued, should be carefully targeted to correct market failures. They should not discriminate between firms, be they foreign or domestic, old or new, large or small, and should comply with World Trade Organization rules.

He also emphasized that the European Union has to continue working with other countries to develop a common approach to stopping climate change, which would be acceptable to all parties. They could establish a special club of countries or sign an agreement on the appropriate use and design of subsidies.

"In the interim, green subsidies can be used cooperatively through open and nondiscriminatory plurilateral initiatives," Kammer said.

The IMF official also pointed out the need to preserve the integrity of the EU's single market. Coordinating fiscal support for clean-tech industries across Europe and creating a climate investment fund may help countries to coordinate and finance the additional public investment needed to achieve emission-reduction goals, according to Kammer.

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RPT - Garland Unlikely to Push Biden Probe But New Findings Could Open Impeachment Door - Expert

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - US Attorney General Merrick Garland is unlikely to effectively probe President Joe Biden and his family in light of new corruption allegations, but the latest discovery could enable the Republican-controlled House to pass impeachment articles which could have an immediate impact on the 2024 election, University of Illinois Professor of Law Francis Boyle told Sputnik.

Earlier on Wednesday, US House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer said bank records show the Biden family and their associates received over \$10 million from foreign nationals and companies, among them from those in China. Some of the money that came from a Chinese firm went to Hunter Biden's company, Comer told reporters.

"I would not count upon Garland doing the right thing at Biden's Department of Injustice. At best

Garland might appoint a Special Prosecutor and kick the can down the road," Boyle said. "If the Republicans have the goods on Biden himself, they should introduce a Bill of Impeachment against Biden for bribery... that might make an immediate difference."

The Republicans, Boyle noted, given they control the House and have enough votes, could quickly impeach Biden and send the bill of impeachment to the Senate for a trial.

In reacting to the allegations, White House spokesman Ian Sams in a tweet accused Republicans of "microwaving old debunked stuff."

Sams cited The Wall Street Journal's report from three years ago that reviewed that relevant corporate records and allegedly showed the president played no role in the scheme. Sams also referred to The Washington Post's conclusion from last year that there was no evidence Biden personally benefited from or knew details of the scheme.

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RPT - Border Agent Says Biden Plan to Deter Migrants Not Clearly Relayed to Agents on Ground

EL PASO, May 11 (Sputnik) - US National Border Patrol Council (NBPC) Vice President Chris Cabrera, who works as a Border Patrol agent in the Rio Grande Valley sector in Texas, told Sputnik the Biden administration's plan to deter a surge of migrants on the US-Mexico border has not clearly been relayed to Border Patrol agents on the frontline of the border crisis.

A massive surge of illegal immigrants is underway on the US-Mexico border ahead of the expiration of Title 42 on Thursday. The Trump-era public health emergency order allowed the US government to turn away illegal immigrants at the border to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

"We got a lot coming for us," Cabrera said. "I don't know what the plan is, but whatever it is, it hasn't been really relayed to us as far as what they're going to do to deter people from coming in in droves."

Earlier this week, US President Joe Biden said the US southern border will be chaotic when Title 42 expires, and it remains to be seen if the United States is prepared to deal with the massive surge of migrants anticipated when the policy expires.

US border agents are already seeing huge numbers of migrants arriving on the US-Mexico border ahead of the end of Title 42, Cabrera said.

There are reportedly tens of thousands of migrants waiting in Mexico to cross into the United States after Thursday. CBS News reported, citing US government data, between 11,000 and 13,000 daily migrant arrivals are expected after Title 42 expires.

"We're already at capacity in most of our stations, most of our sectors that are having huge numbers," Cabrera said. "So we're already at capacity, and we haven't even hit the high watermark."

Non-government organizations (NGOs) that aid migrants may also be at capacity, Cabrera added.

"Usually our relief valve is the NGO, so I would imagine if we're capacity, they're at capacity,"

Cabrera said.

Last week, a Sputnik correspondent reported that more than 1,700 migrants were gathered for several days outside a church in downtown El Paso, Texas, that had easily reached its capacity. According to Cabrera, more migrants will likely be released into US border communities due to capacity issues if migrant arrivals continue to intensify after Title 42 expires.

"When we have issues like we're having now - Title 42 is still in play and we're still having big numbers and you can't get buses to bus them out of the local area fast enough - so obviously they're gonna release them on the streets," Cabrera said. "Our numbers are gonna probably double, triple, quadruple ... if we can't put them anywhere now, where are we going to put them when we're doubled and tripled up."

Cabrera expects migrants who already made the trip to the US-Mexico border will continue to attempt to illegally cross into the United States regardless of any policy the Biden administration imposes to deter them, however, he emphasized that the current border crisis can only be fixed by Congress.

"I think there needs to be a legislative fix to it," Cabrera said. "We need to secure this border, mandatory detention, mandatory removal. That is the single biggest factor that will deter people from coming across."

On Wednesday, US Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said the United States finalized a rule that will impose harsher consequences for migrants that illegally enter the United States. The rule presumes that those who do not use lawful pathways to enter the United States are ineligible for asylum and authorizes deportations of migrants who do not establish a reasonable fear of persecution in their country.

Migrants who do not claim fear of persecution will be deported immediately, and migrants that do claim fear of persecution will encounter a higher threshold under the new asylum rule, unless they have accessed lawful pathways or sought relief in another country and been denied.

Moreover, after Title 42 is lifted, migrants will still face consequences for crossing into the United States illegally under an authority known as Title 8, which subjects migrants to at least a five year bar on re-entry into the United States, and can face criminal prosecution if they attempt to cross illegally again.

Former US Border Patrol sector chief Victor Manjarrez also told Sputnik he expects the number of migrants arriving on the US-Mexico border to increase.

"I do expect the numbers to go up. CBP [Customs and Border Protection], they're at the point of saturation, so I don't know if they could even arrest more if they wanted to," Manjarrez said.

"They're overwhelmed. It'll hit a point where they can't arrest anyone and people are gonna wait to be arrested - that's part of the process, you wait to get arrested to claim asylum."

The description of what is currently occurring on the US-Mexico border has transformed from a border crisis to a disaster, Manjarrez said.

It will take the Biden administration some time to turn the tide on the current surge of migrants at the US-Mexico border, Manjarrez said, adding that US-bound migrants should not be expected to turn back after already suffering hardships and giving up everything they have to make the journey to the United States.

"Some of the lowest points of illegal immigration had been when there's been a strong deterrent, some kind of consequence for crossing illegally," Manjarrez said. "You start with that. That's not the cure, but that's a start where you can start to slow the flow down enough so you

can manage it."

On Monday, US Border Patrol Chief Raul Ortiz said more than 26,000 migrants have been apprehended on the US southern border over the last three days. More than 10,300 migrants crossed illegally the US-Mexico border on Tuesday, US media reported citing CBP sources.

US Congressman Tony Gonzales has said that Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei informed him the White House is ignoring his warning calls about a group of 80,000 migrants making their way to the United States' border with Mexico in light of the end of Title 42.

An all-time record number of migrants has arrived at the US southern border under the Biden administration, hitting two consecutive records in 2021 and 2022, exceeding 2.3 million people. In fiscal year 2023, the US authorities said they have encountered more than 1.2 million migrants. Fox News and other media outlets have said the number of illegal immigrants to enter the United States since Biden assumed office has exceeded six million.

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UPDATE - FBI Refuses Republican Request for Docs Tied to Alleged Biden Criminal Scheme - Lawmaker

(Adds background with White House response in para 7)

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The FBI refused a House panel's request for a document that allegedly details President Joe Biden's involvement in an illegal scheme with a foreign national, House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer said in a statement.

"It's clear from the FBI's response that the unclassified record the Oversight Committee subpoenaed exists, but they are refusing to provide it to the Committee. We've asked the FBI to not only provide this record, but to also inform us what it did to investigate these allegations. The FBI has failed to do both," Comer said on Wednesday. "The FBI's position is 'trust, but you aren't allowed to verify.' That is unacceptable. We plan to follow up with the FBI and expect compliance with the subpoena."

According to the statement, based on whistleblower disclosures, the FBI and Justice Department possess an unclassified FD-1023 form that describes an alleged criminal scheme involving then-vice president Biden and a foreign national regarding an "exchange of money for policy decisions."

FBI congressional affairs office acting assistant director Christopher Dunham in a letter quoted by CNN said the FBI could not provide the document because it could "harm investigations, prejudice prosecutions or judicial proceedings, unfairly violate privacy or reputational interests, or create misimpressions in the public."

Comer has been pushing probes on multiple fronts into potential corrupt dealings involving Biden and his family. Earlier on Wednesday, Comer told reporters that bank records show the Biden family and their associates received over \$10 million from foreign nationals and companies, including some based in China.

Comer also said the oversight committee believes the Biden family and their associates' activities in Romania from 2015 to 2017 were also indicative of a scheme to peddle influence.

The lawmaker said Hunter Biden and his associates benefited from lucrative financial ties with a Romanian national who was later convicted of corruption. He claimed the Bidens received over \$1 million for the Romania deal, with 16 of the 17 payments made during Biden's vice presidency.

In reacting to Comer's allegations, White House spokesman Ian Sams in a tweet accused Republicans of "microwaving old debunked stuff." Sams cited The Wall Street Journal's report from three years ago that reviewed relevant corporate records and allegedly showed the president played no role in the scheme. Sams also referred to The Washington Post's conclusion from last year that there was no evidence Biden personally benefited from or knew details of the scheme.

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FBI Refuses Republican Request for Docs Tied to Alleged Biden Criminal Scheme - Lawmaker

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The FBI refused a House panel's request for a document that allegedly details President Joe Biden's involvement in an illegal scheme with a foreign national, House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer said in a statement.

"It's clear from the FBI's response that the unclassified record the Oversight Committee subpoenaed exists, but they are refusing to provide it to the Committee. We've asked the FBI to not only provide this record, but to also inform us what it did to investigate these allegations. The FBI has failed to do both," Comer said on Wednesday. "The FBI's position is 'trust, but you aren't allowed to verify.' That is unacceptable. We plan to follow up with the FBI and expect compliance with the subpoena."

According to the statement, based on whistleblower disclosures, the FBI and Justice Department possess an unclassified FD-1023 form that describes an alleged criminal scheme involving then-vice president Biden and a foreign national regarding an "exchange of money for policy decisions."

FBI congressional affairs office acting assistant director Christopher Dunham in a letter quoted by CNN said the FBI could not provide the document because it could "harm investigations, prejudice prosecutions or judicial proceedings, unfairly violate privacy or reputational interests, or create misimpressions in the public."

Comer has been pushing probes on multiple fronts into potential corrupt dealings involving Biden and his family. Earlier on Wednesday, Comer told reporters that bank records show the Biden family and their associates received over \$10 million from foreign nationals and companies, including some based in China.

Comer also said the oversight committee believes the Biden family and their associates' activities in Romania from 2015 to 2017 were also indicative of a scheme to peddle influence. The lawmaker said Hunter Biden and his associates benefited from lucrative financial ties with a Romanian national who was later convicted of corruption. He claimed the Bidens received over \$1 million for the Romania deal, with 16 of the 17 payments made during Biden's vice

presidency.

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Top US, Israeli Security Advisers Discuss Ongoing Conflict in Gaza - White House

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and his Israeli counterpart Tzachi Hanegbi discussed in a telephone call the ongoing conflict in Gaza and regional efforts to broker a ceasefire, the White House said in a press release.

"Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Jake Sullivan spoke with Israeli National Security Advisor Tzachi Hanegbi on May 10 to discuss the ongoing conflict in Gaza," the release said on Wednesday. "Sullivan reaffirmed the Administration's ironclad support for Israel's security, as well as its right to defend its people from indiscriminate rocket attacks."

Sullivan also discussed continued regional efforts to broker a ceasefire, and emphasized the need to deescalate tensions and prevent further deaths, the release added.

On Tuesday night, Israel launched airstrikes against militants in the Gaza Strip and their infrastructure, including rocket launchers and mortars. Fifteen people, including four women and six children, were killed in the airstrikes, including a Russian citizen. Earlier on Wednesday, four more Palestinians were killed in another series of airstrikes by Israel.

Militants of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group fired 469 rockets at Israel on Wednesday, while the Israeli airstrikes hit 133 targets in the Gaza Strip, according to the Israeli Defense Forces.

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Man Who Killed BLM Demonstrator in Texas Sentenced to 25 Years in Prison - Report

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - US Army sergeant Daniel Perry who shot and killed Black Lives Matter (BLM) demonstrator Garrett Foster in Texas in 2020 has been sentenced to 25 years in prison, CNN reported.

Perry shot Foster, a 28-year-old US Air Force veteran, at a racial justice rally in Austin, Texas, two months after the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

Perry's attorney said his client plans to appeal the verdict. The defense team sought a ten-year prison sentence, pointing to Perry's absence of criminal history, psychological issues, including complex post-traumatic stress disorder, and compliments from a number of military colleagues.

However, the prosecution asked for a sentence of at least 25 years in prison because of a profusion of inflammatory social media posts Perry wrote before the shooting.

On the night of July 25, 2020, Perry was working as a ride-share driver and had just dropped a person off close to the rally when he shot Foster. Perry's lawyers argued that the shooting was in self-defense because Foster came to his car with an assault-style rifle. But prosecutors said Perry triggered the fatal encounter by running a red light and driving toward the crowd of

demonstrators.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott announced that he would seek a pardon for Perry and asked the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles to begin an expedited review of the case.

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Garland Unlikely to Push Biden Probe But New Findings Could Open Impeachment Door - Expert

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - US Attorney General Merrick Garland is unlikely to effectively probe President Joe Biden and his family in light of new corruption allegations, but the latest discovery could enable the Republican-controlled House to pass impeachment articles which could have an immediate impact on the 2024 election, University of Illinois Professor of Law Francis Boyle told Sputnik.

Earlier on Wednesday, US House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer said bank records show the Biden family and their associates received over \$10 million from foreign nationals and companies, among them from those in China. Some of the money that came from a Chinese firm went to Hunter Biden's company, Comer told reporters.

"I would not count upon Garland doing the right thing at Biden's Department of Injustice. At best Garland might appoint a Special Prosecutor and kick the can down the road," Boyle said. "If the Republicans have the goods on Biden himself, they should introduce a Bill of Impeachment against Biden for bribery... that might make an immediate difference."

The Republicans, Boyle noted, given they control the House and have enough votes, could quickly impeach Biden and send the bill of impeachment to the Senate for a trial.

In reacting to the allegations, White House spokesman Ian Sams in a tweet accused Republicans of "microwaving old debunked stuff."

Sams cited The Wall Street Journal's report from three years ago that reviewed that relevant corporate records and allegedly showed the president played no role in the scheme. Sams also referred to The Washington Post's conclusion from last year that there was no evidence Biden personally benefited from or knew details of the scheme.

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UN Chief Urges Israel, Palestinians to Exercise Restraint, Stop Hostilities - Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, May 11 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is concerned about the hostilities between Israel and the Palestinians and calls on the parties to refrain from such actions, the UN Spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Wednesday.

"The Secretary-General also condemns the indiscriminate launching of rockets from Gaza into Israel, which violates international humanitarian law and puts at risk both Palestinian and Israeli

civilians," Dujarric said in a statement on Wednesday. "The Secretary-General urges all parties concerned to exercise maximum restraint and to work to stop hostilities immediately."

The Israelis and the Palestinians should solve the conflict based on existing agreements, the statement added.

On Tuesday night, Israel launched airstrikes against militants in the Gaza Strip and their infrastructure, including rocket launchers and mortars. Fifteen people, including four women and six children, were killed in the airstrikes, including a Russian citizen. Earlier on Wednesday, four more Palestinians were killed in another series of airstrikes by Israel.

In response to the shelling of the Gaza Strip, Palestinians allegedly belonging to Islamic Jihad fired dozens of projectiles at Israeli cities, including Tel Aviv and its suburbs.

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Blinken Says Has Concerns Over Treatment of US Companies in China Under New Law

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters that he has concerns over reports that some American companies are being mistreated in China following the adoption of a new law.

"[O]ne of our general concerns, and it's a concern shared by many allies and partners is the way some of our enterprises are treated in China, certainly treated in a way that's not reciprocal to the way that many Chinese enterprises are treated businesses are treated around the world," Blinken said on Wednesday.

Blinken noted that the actions China will take with regard to foreign business in the country will have a big impact on Beijing's ability to attract foreign investment and businesses.

The US top diplomat's comments were a reaction to a new anti-spy law in China that was introduced in April and which, according to US officials, had a negative impact on US businesses and nationals in the country.

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PREVIEW - US Braces for Massive Surge of Migrants on Border With Mexico When Title 42 Ends Thursday

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) - The United States is bracing for the possibility that the ongoing surge of migrants arriving on the US border with Mexico will intensify after Title 42 expires late Thursday night at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time.

Title 42, the Trump-era public health emergency order imposed in March 2020, allowed the US government to turn away illegal immigrants at the border to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

"We are clear eyed about the challenges we are likely to face in the days and weeks ahead, which have the potential to be very difficult," Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas

said on Wednesday. "Even after nearly two years of preparation, we expect to see large numbers of encounters at our southern border in the days and weeks after May 11."

The high number of migrants arriving on the US southern border is placing a very significant strain on law enforcement personnel, facilities, and border communities dealing with the border crisis, Mayorkas added.

Last week, a Sputnik correspondent reported that more than 1,700 migrants were gathered for several days outside a church in downtown El Paso, Texas, that had easily reached the church's capacity. The Biden administration said it distributed \$250 million to border communities directly impacted by the border crisis.

President Joe Biden admitted earlier this week that the US southern border will be chaotic after Title 42 expires,, but it remains to be seen if the United States is prepared to deal with the potential worsening of the border crisis.

US immigration enforcement agencies and border communities are already overwhelmed by tens of thousands of migrants that have arrived along the US-Mexico border this week.

On Monday, US Border Patrol Chief Raul Ortiz said more than 26,000 migrants have been apprehended on the US southern border over the last three days. More than 10,300 migrants crossed illegally the border on Tuesday, media reported.

There are reportedly tens of thousands of migrants waiting in Mexico to cross into the United States after Thursday. CBS News reported, citing US government data, between 11,000 and 13,000 daily migrant arrivals are expected after Title 42 expires.

US Congressman Tony Gonzales's office confirmed to Sputnik earlier in the day that Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei said the White House was ignoring his warning calls about a group of 80,000 migrants, mostly Venezuelans, making their way to the United States.

US RESPONSE TO BORDER CRISIS

On Wednesday, Mayorkas said the United States finalized a rule that will impose harsher consequences for migrants that illegally enter the United States. The rule presumes that those who do not use lawful pathways to enter the United States are ineligible for asylum and authorizes deportations of migrants who do not establish a reasonable fear of persecution in their country.

Migrants who do not claim fear of persecution will be deported immediately, and migrants that do claim fear of persecution will encounter a higher threshold under the new asylum rule, unless they have accessed lawful pathways or sought relief in another country and been denied.

The US State Department plans to eventually open 100 regional processing centers throughout the Western Hemisphere, which will be used to screen migrants for eligibility for US refugee resettlement or other lawful pathways to the United States, Canada, and Spain.

The United States is also accepting up to 30,000 individuals per month from Venezuela, Nicaragua, Cuba, and Haiti as part of the expanded parole processes announced earlier this year.

After Title 42 ends, migrants will be subject to deportation under an authority known as Title 8, which may punish illegal migrants with a five year bar on re-entry into the United States or criminal prosecution if a migrant attempts another unlawful entry into the country.

US immigration enforcement agencies are ramping up deportation flights and efforts to counter misinformation from human smugglers profiting off migrants heading to the US southern border.

The US Defense Department is deploying more than 1,500 active-duty troops to the southern border to support US Customs and Border Protection personnel as they deal with the influx of migrants. The first 550 troops arrived in El Paso on Wednesday to help alleviate the surge that that sector is currently experiencing. However, US troops do not conduct law enforcement activity. The United States already had 2,500 National Guard troops deployed along the southern border.

Senior Biden administration officials told reporters the Mexican government is deploying law enforcement personnel to its border with Guatemala to try to deter the number of US-bound migrants.

According to Mayorkas, the administration's policies to deter migrants will deliver results, but it will take time to see the results.

An all-time record number of migrants has arrived at the US southern border under the Biden administration, hitting two consecutive records in 2021 and 2022, exceeding 2.3 million people. In fiscal year 2023, the US authorities said they have encountered more than 1.2 million migrants. Fox News and other media outlets have said the number of illegal immigrants that entered the United States since Biden assumed office has exceeded six million.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, May 11 (Sputnik) -

NATO POLICY ON RUSSIA

* NATO is not working on military plans against China, but is doing so with respect to Russia and with respect to terrorist groups, Royal Netherlands Navy Adm. Rob Bauer, who chairs the NATO Military Committee, said on Wednesday.

* NATO has been preparing for a new era of security challenges in Europe and has to be ready to face the fact that conflict with Russia could "present itself at any time," Bauer said.

ISRAELI STRIKES IN GAZA STRIP

* The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) said on Wednesday that the military is currently striking at targets linked to the Islamic Jihad group in the Gaza Strip.

* Some 400 rockets have been fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip, and air defense has shot down most of them, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said.

SYRIA TALKS

* Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and his Syrian counterpart, Faisal Mekdad, on Wednesday discussed the conflict resolution in the Arab country based on the effective role of the Astana format, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

* A quadrilateral ministerial meeting between the top diplomats from Russia, Iran, Turkey and Syria in Moscow was constructive, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said.

* Cavusoglu said that he discussed the situation in Syria, the conflict in Ukraine and the Black Sea Grain Initiative during a meeting with Lavrov in Moscow.

TREATY OF CONVENTIONAL ARMED FORCES IN EUROPE

* Russia has denounced the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and President Vladimir Putin has appointed Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov as his representative during consideration by the State Duma, according to a decree published on the official legal information portal on Wednesday.

* The draft law on denouncing the treaty has been submitted to the State Duma, the lower house of the Russian parliament.

* The treaty has become a relic of the past due to actions of West, and military-political situation in Europe has worsened, Ryabkov said.

GRAIN EXPORTS DEAL

* The meeting on the Black Sea Grain Initiative started in Istanbul on Wednesday, Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said, adding that Ankara continues negotiations to extend the agreement.

* Turkey understands Russia's concerns about the grain deal and is trying to influence partners on the issue, Russian Ambassador to Turkey Aleksei Erkhov said.

RUSSIA-GEORGIA RELATIONS

* Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili called on the authorities on Wednesday to convene the country's Security Council and consider the issue of three-month visas for Russians in response to Moscow canceling the visa regime with Tbilisi.

* Zourabichvili said that he considers Moscow's decision to cancel the visa regime with Tbilisi to be unacceptable, calling it "another provocation."

* Georgia will allow airlines that are not under western sanctions to conduct direct flights to Russia, Deputy Economic Minister Mariam Kvrivishvili said, adding that Tbilisi has not yet received any notifications from Moscow about resumption of flights.

* Russian airlines will operate seven direct flights weekly from Moscow to Tbilisi and back on domestic aircraft, the Russian Transport Ministry told Sputnik.

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US Asked UAE to Pay for Military Assistance in Aftermath of Houthi Attack in 2022 –Reports

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) – Emirati officials were shocked to receive a bill from their US counterparts for military assistance the United Arab Emirates (UAE) received in the aftermath of a Houthi attack on Abu-Dhabi in early 2022, Axios reported on Wednesday, citing officials from the two countries.

On January 17, 2022, unmanned aircraft and missiles attacked several targets in the UAE capital of Abu Dhabi, including the construction site of a new airport and fuel tankers near

depots of oil company ADNOC. The Houthis claimed responsibility for the attack, threatening new strikes if the UAE continued its military operations in the country.

The UAE was disappointed by what they saw as a weak and slow US response to the attacks, for which US Secretary Antony Blinken apologized in April of 2022.

According to the report, the weak US response was perceived by then-Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed as proof that Washington had abandoned the UAE in its time of need.

Following the attack, the Emirati military leadership decided to have F-16s and Mirage 2000s aircraft airborne all the time to detect and intercept drones. Accomplishing that task required the assistance of US Air Force KC-135 strategic refueling tankers, deployed at that time to the Al Dhafra Air Base in Abu Dhabi. The United States agreed to help and ended up refueling Emirati fighter jets several times, according to the report.

Soon after the second attack on January 24, 2022, the military attache at the US Embassy arrived for a meeting with senior UAE military officials. The US officer handed his Emirati counterparts a bill for refueling their jets, the report said.

Later on, White House and Pentagon officials said that the request was a mistake and added that they regretted it, the report added.

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Biden Says Arrangements for Call With China's Xi 'In Progress,' Will Work Out

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Wednesday that arrangements for a conversation between him and Chinese President Xi Jinping are in the works, adding that he expects the talks to come to fruition.

"It's in progress. It'll work out," Biden told reporters, when asked about the potential conversation.

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US Congressman Santos Says Planning to Run for Re-Election, Will Not Resign Amid Probe

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) – US Congressman George Santos said on Wednesday that he is planning to run for re-election and will not resign after he was indicted on multiple federal charges.

"Yes, I am," Santos told reporters when asked whether he is planning to run for re-election. "I will not resign."

Earlier in the day, Santos pleaded not guilty to 13 federal criminal charges for which he was indicted in the US District Court for the Eastern District of New York.

Santos pleaded not guilty to charges including wire fraud, money laundering, theft of public funds, and lying to Congress and was released on a \$500,000 bond.

The congressman is set to appear in court on June 30 before US District Judge Joanna Seybert, according to media reports.

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US Congressman Santos Pleads Not Guilty to 13 Federal Criminal Charges - Reports

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - US Congressman George Santos pleaded not guilty to 13 federal criminal charges for which he was indicted in the US District Court for the Eastern District of New York, Axios reported on Wednesday.

Santos pleaded not guilty to charges including wire fraud, money laundering, theft of public funds and lying to Congress, the report said, citing court spokesperson Danielle Hass.

The court released Santos on a \$500,000 bond, the report added.

The indictment filed against Santos alleges that the lawmaker relied on repeated dishonesty and deception to enrich himself and win a seat in Congress. Santos has admitted to fabricating portions of his biography on the campaign trail.

The indictment alleges Santos defrauded donors by having them donate to a company under the false pretense the money would be used for his campaign; instead, the funds were used on personal expenses, according to the indictment.

US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy said on Tuesday that Santos will have to go through the standard legal process, which he noted presumes the innocence of the accused in the United States.

Santos is set to appear in court on June 30 before US District Judge Joanna Seybert, the report said.

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US House Introduces Resolution Calling for the Release of Journalist Evan Gershkovich

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul and three other members of the panel introduced a resolution calling for the release of Evan Gershkovich, the Wall Street Journal correspondent who was arrested in Russia this March on espionage charges.

"Russia has no grounds to hold Evan Gershkovich prisoner, he's an innocent American journalist," the lawmakers said in a statement on Wednesday. "We are proud to introduce this resolution calling on the Russian government to release Evan and other wrongfully detained Americans immediately and return them to their families."

The resolution calls on the Biden administration to address Gershkovich's case during talks with Russian officials and press for his immediate release. The resolution also calls for the

release of Paul Whelan, another American journalist currently being detained on espionage charges.

Additionally, the resolution urges the Russian government to "provide full, unfettered, and consistent consular access" to Gershkovich during the remainder of his detention.

Congressman Gregory Meeks, Thomas Kean, and William Keating joined McCaul in introducing the measure.

Gershkovich, 31, was detained on March 29 in the Russian city of Yekaterinburg on suspicion of trying to collect classified defense information for the United States. In April, a Moscow court ruled that the reporter be put in pre-trial detention until May 29. Requests by the US Embassy for consular access have been denied by Moscow.

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American Legion to Honor US, Soviet Veterans of World War II From New York - Activist

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - The American Legion will honor one Soviet and four US veterans of World War II who are living in upstate New York, Russian Youth of America member Anton Konev told Sputnik on Wednesday.

"On Thursday, there is going to be a celebration with American veterans. There are only four of them in our region who survived still and one of them, Harold Williams, will have his 100th birthday celebration at the event," Konev said.

The American Legion has invited the only Soviet veteran from the area, Daniel Kaplan, but unfortunately he will not be able to attend due to health issues, Konev said.

"But Mr. Kaplan will be recognized during the event," Konev said.

Konev said he visited Kaplan on May 9, when most of the former Soviet republics celebrated Victory Day in the Great Patriotic War, and together they watched the broadcast of the parade on Red Square in Moscow.

"I also congratulated two survivors of the blockade of Leningrad. One of them is 96 years old and another one is going to be 101 later this year. This holiday is very important for them because they survived when many of their classmates and friends did not," Konev added.

The United States and its European allies commemorated the 78th anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany on May 8. Since the document on Germany's unconditional surrender was signed in 1945 when the new day had already begun in Moscow, Russia and almost all of the former Soviet republics celebrate Victory Day on May 9.

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Democrats Urge Biden to End Trump-Era Venezuela Sanctions to Alleviate Border Crisis

EL PASO, May 10 (Sputnik) - A group of Democratic lawmakers are urging President Joe Biden to lift Trump-era sanctions imposed on Cuba and Venezuela to help alleviate the vast number of migrants arriving on the US border with Mexico, according to a letter obtained by Sputnik on Wednesday from Congresswoman Veronica Escobar's office.

"Experts widely agree that broad-based US sanctions - expanded to an unprecedented level by former President Donald Trump - are a critical contributing factor in the current increase in migration," the letter said. "In light of their grave humanitarian toll on the peoples of those countries [Cuba and Venezuela], and the significant logistical challenges that the resulting increase in migration is causing for federal, state, and local authorities, we urge you to act swiftly to lift the failed and indiscriminate economic sanctions that were imposed by the prior administration."

The lawmakers also suggest that Biden should conduct a broader review of preexisting sanctions policies that his administration inherited, which may also serve as push-factors for migration.

According to the letter, Venezuelan migration to the US border increased to more than 189,000 crossings last year, up from roughly 4,500 in 2020, while more than 220,000 Cubans fled Cuba in 2022.

Most of the Trump administration-imposed sanctions remain and continue to exacerbate US challenges at the southern border, the lawmakers said, adding that they hope Biden's dialogue with regional partners, such as with Colombian president Gustavo Petro, will communicate a willingness to consider a new approach.

"You have a historic opportunity to help mitigate economic push-factors driving migration and affecting our border and many of our cities, while reorienting US policy in the hemisphere towards a more holistic approach that eschews destructive sanctions policies to focus on peace, stability, and prosperity for all inhabitants of the Americas. We hope you will continue down this path," the letter said.

A massive surge of illegal immigrants is underway on the US-Mexico border ahead of the expiration of Title 42 on Thursday. The Trump-era public health emergency order allowed the US government to turn away illegal immigrants at the border to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

US Congressman Tony Gonzales's office confirmed to Sputnik earlier in the day that Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei informed him the White House is ignoring his warning calls about a group of 80,000 migrants, mostly Venezuelans, making their way to the United States' border with Mexico in light of the end of Title 42.

An all-time record number of migrants has arrived at the US southern border under the Biden administration, hitting two consecutive records in 2021 and 2022, exceeding 2.3 million people. In fiscal year 2023, the US authorities said they have encountered more than 1.2 million migrants. Fox News and other media outlets have said the number of illegal immigrants to enter the United States since Biden assumed office has exceeded six million.

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US Oil Stocks Build Again as Biden Admin. Releases Crude Reserves on Market

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - Stockpiles of US crude rose last week, defying forecasts for a draw, while those of fuel fell more than expected, data from the Energy Information Administration (EIA) showed Wednesday as traders bet on greater oil consumption ahead of the typical summer surge in road, air and seaborne travel.

The US crude inventory balance was up by 2.95 million barrels during the week ended May 5, the EIA said, versus a previous drawdown of 1.28 million for the week to April 28. Industry analysts tracked by Investing.com had forecast an inventory slide of 917,000 barrels in the latest week.

The crude build, however, comes with a caveat — the release of 2.9 million barrels from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve — without which the inventory balance might have been virtually unchanged from the previous week.

Crude releases from the US reserve have been a challenge to oil bulls as the Biden administration sought to continuously moderate market optimism to prevent both oil and pump prices of fuel from rising too much to add to already high inflation.

Also, demand for fuels last week surpassed expectations, indicating greater consumption ahead of the typical summer surge in road, air and seaborne travel.

The EIA reported a gasoline inventory draw of 3.17 million for the week ended May 5, versus forecasts for a drop of 1.23 million barrels. In the previous week to April 28, there was a build of 1.74 million barrels. Automotive fuel gasoline is the top US fuel product.

On distillate stockpiles, the EIA cited a decline of 4.17 million barrels versus expectations for a drop of just 808,000 barrels. In the prior week to April 28, distillates saw a deficit of 1.19 million. Distillates, which are refined into heating oil, diesel for trucks, buses, trains and ships and fuel for jets, have been the strongest component of the US petroleum complex in terms of demand.

Breaking down fuel demand further, the EIA reported total supply of finished motor gasoline to the marketplace — i.e. fuel pumps — at 9.303 million barrels daily, versus the year-ago level of 8.7 million a day.

Jet fuel, an important gauge at this time of the year when airlines are at their busiest in the run-up to summer travel, saw demand tick up to 1.92 million barrels daily, versus year-ago levels of 1.44 million per day.

Despite the relatively bright demand statistics, oil prices were depressed as traders focused on the net crude build almost 3 million barrels for all of last week.

Adding to the gloom of the market was the lack of any confirmation by the Biden administration that it was indeed ready to halt all future sales of oil from the SPR and refill the reserve, which stands at a four-decade low of just around 362 million barrels.

US media reports had suggested on Tuesday that a decision had been made to refill the SPR, after Biden authorized the withdrawal of more than 200 million barrels from the reserve since late 2021.

"Today's market reaction reflects disappointment on two fronts: The crude build reported by the EIA for last week as well as the lack of any government confirmation that the refill of the SPR is on," John Kilduff, partner at New York energy hedge fund again, said in a phone text to Sputnik. "Between the two, I think the disappointment over the SPR was bigger, given that it involves some 200 million barrels."

New York-traded West Texas Intermediate, or WTI, crude was down \$1.59, or 2.2%, to \$72.12 per barrel by 13:30 ET (17:30 GMT), after non-stop gains in three previous sessions. Wednesday's low itself was \$72 for WTI. Week-to-date though, the US crude benchmark was still up almost 2% after three prior weeks of losses totaling 13%.

London-traded Brent crude was down \$1.44, or 1.9%, to \$76. The session low for Brent was \$75.07. Still, the global oil benchmark was up around 1% on the week, after three prior days of gains. That compared with the total loss of 12% that Brent had seen over three previous weeks.

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US Senators Say Introducing Bill to Bolster Security Cooperation in Western Hemisphere

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - US Senator Marco Rubio said on Wednesday that he and Senator Bill Cassidy are reintroducing legislation to increase security cooperation between the United States and other countries in the Western Hemisphere amid alleged destabilizing influence campaigns by geopolitical competitors.

"Authoritarian regimes, transnational criminal organizations, and harmful influence campaigns led by Beijing, Moscow, and Tehran are destabilizing the Western Hemisphere and posing direct threats to regional national security interests," Rubio said in a statement on the legislation. "The bill would propose an increase in bilateral and multilateral security cooperation in the Western Hemisphere, as well as a push to disrupt and counter illicit narcotics trafficking."

The bill, dubbed the Western Hemisphere Security Strategy Act of 2023, requires the secretaries of state and defense to jointly submit a multi-year strategy to enhance diplomatic engagement and security assistance in the region, promote regional stability and advance US strategic interests.

The bill also expresses the sense of Congress that the "harmful and malign" influence of China, Russia and Iran in Latin America poses a risk to US national interests and the people of the Western Hemisphere.

In addition, the bill calls on the Secretary of State to submit a report on efforts by the Venezuelan government to detain US citizens and lawful permanent residents.

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Border Agent Says Biden Plan to Deter Migrants Not Clearly Relayed to Agents on Ground

EL PASO, May 10 (Sputnik) - US National Border Patrol Council (NBPC) Vice President Chris Cabrera, who works as a Border Patrol agent in the Rio Grande Valley sector in Texas, told Sputnik the Biden administration's plan to deter a surge of migrants on the US-Mexico border has not clearly been relayed to Border Patrol agents on the frontline of the border crisis.

A massive surge of illegal immigrants is underway on the US-Mexico border ahead of the

expiration of Title 42 on Thursday. The Trump-era public health emergency order allowed the US government to turn away illegal immigrants at the border to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

"We got a lot coming for us," Cabrera said. "I don't know what the plan is, but whatever it is, it hasn't been really relayed to us as far as what they're going to do to deter people from coming in in droves."

Earlier this week, US President Joe Biden said the US southern border will be chaotic when Title 42 expires, and it remains to be seen if the United States is prepared to deal with the massive surge of migrants anticipated when the policy expires.

US border agents are already seeing huge numbers of migrants arriving on the US-Mexico border ahead of the end of Title 42, Cabrera said.

There are reportedly tens of thousands of migrants waiting in Mexico to cross into the United States after Thursday. CBS News reported, citing US government data, between 11,000 and 13,000 daily migrant arrivals are expected after Title 42 expires.

"We're already at capacity in most of our stations, most of our sectors that are having huge numbers," Cabrera said. "So we're already at capacity, and we haven't even hit the high watermark."

Non-government organizations (NGOs) that aid migrants may also be at capacity, Cabrera added.

"Usually our relief valve is the NGO, so I would imagine if we're capacity, they're at capacity," Cabrera said.

Last week, a Sputnik correspondent reported that more than 1,700 migrants were gathered for several days outside a church in downtown El Paso, Texas, that had easily reached its capacity. According to Cabrera, more migrants will likely be released into US border communities due to capacity issues if migrant arrivals continue to intensify after Title 42 expires.

"When we have issues like we're having now - Title 42 is still in play and we're still having big numbers and you can't get buses to bus them out of the local area fast enough - so obviously they're gonna release them on the streets," Cabrera said. "Our numbers are gonna probably double, triple, quadruple ... if we can't put them anywhere now, where are we going to put them when we're doubled and tripled up."

Cabrera expects migrants who already made the trip to the US-Mexico border will continue to attempt to illegally cross into the United States regardless of any policy the Biden administration imposes to deter them, however, he emphasized that the current border crisis can only be fixed by Congress.

"I think there needs to be a legislative fix to it," Cabrera said. "We need to secure this border, mandatory detention, mandatory removal. That is the single biggest factor that will deter people from coming across."

On Wednesday, US Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said the United States finalized a rule that will impose harsher consequences for migrants that illegally enter the United States. The rule presumes that those who do not use lawful pathways to enter the United States are ineligible for asylum and authorizes deportations of migrants who do not establish a reasonable fear of persecution in their country.

Migrants who do not claim fear of persecution will be deported immediately, and migrants that do claim fear of persecution will encounter a higher threshold under the new asylum rule, unless

they have accessed lawful pathways or sought relief in another country and been denied.

Moreover, after Title 42 is lifted, migrants will still face consequences for crossing into the United States illegally under an authority known as Title 8, which subjects migrants to at least a five year bar on re-entry into the United States, and can face criminal prosecution if they attempt to cross illegally again.

Former US Border Patrol sector chief Victor Manjarrez also told Sputnik he expects the number of migrants arriving on the US-Mexico border to increase.

"I do expect the numbers to go up. CBP [Customs and Border Protection], they're at the point of saturation, so I don't know if they could even arrest more if they wanted to," Manjarrez said.

"They're overwhelmed. It'll hit a point where they can't arrest anyone and people are gonna wait to be arrested - that's part of the process, you wait to get arrested to claim asylum."

The description of what is currently occurring on the US-Mexico border has transformed from a border crisis to a disaster, Manjarrez said.

It will take the Biden administration some time to turn the tide on the current surge of migrants at the US-Mexico border, Manjarrez said, adding that US-bound migrants should not be expected to turn back after already suffering hardships and giving up everything they have to make the journey to the United States.

"Some of the lowest points of illegal immigration had been when there's been a strong deterrent, some kind of consequence for crossing illegally," Manjarrez said. "You start with that. That's not the cure, but that's a start where you can start to slow the flow down enough so you can manage it."

On Monday, US Border Patrol Chief Raul Ortiz said more than 26,000 migrants have been apprehended on the US southern border over the last three days. More than 10,300 migrants crossed illegally the US-Mexico border on Tuesday, US media reported citing CBP sources.

US Congressman Tony Gonzales has said that Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei informed him the White House is ignoring his warning calls about a group of 80,000 migrants making their way to the United States' border with Mexico in light of the end of Title 42.

An all-time record number of migrants has arrived at the US southern border under the Biden administration, hitting two consecutive records in 2021 and 2022, exceeding 2.3 million people. In fiscal year 2023, the US authorities said they have encountered more than 1.2 million migrants. Fox News and other media outlets have said the number of illegal immigrants to enter the United States since Biden assumed office has exceeded six million.

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Wildfires in Canada's British Columbia, Alberta Disrupt Oil and Gas Operations - Reports

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - Ongoing wildfires in the Canadian province of British Columbia have created disruptions in oil and gas operations, the CBC reported on Wednesday.

The ongoing wildfires in the northeastern part of British Columbia have affected some oil and gas operations, the report said citing the province's energy regulator, but has not caused direct damage to related infrastructure.

The decision to halt several operations was attributed to evacuation orders, and the authority's decision to enable preventive measures aimed at reducing risks for civilians, workers and the environment, the report continued.

Nonetheless, despite the risks some have been requested to continue their work, the report said, such is the case at the construction of a hydroelectric dam project a mere 14 kilometers (8.7 miles) away from raging wildfires.

Work at the Trans Mountain is also going ahead, as the company is said to be monitoring the wildfire situation both in British Columbia and the province of Alberta, the report added, noting that no impact has so far been reported.

The unusual heat wave recorded in Western Canada since the beginning of May has caused over 100 wildfires in Alberta, and 50 in British Columbia.

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OpenAI CEO Sam Altman to Testify Before Congress Amid Concerns Over AI - Senator

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - OpenAI CEO Sam Altman is scheduled to provide his first testimony before Congress next week amid US lawmakers' concerns over rapidly advancing artificial intelligence tools, US Senator Richard Blumenthal announced on Wednesday.

"US Senators Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and Josh Hawley (R-MO), Chair and Ranking Member of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Privacy, Technology, and the Law, will convene a hearing on Tuesday, May 16, 2023, at 10:00 AM titled "Oversight of AI: Rules for Artificial Intelligence," Blumenthal's office said in a press release.

OpenAI is mainly known for developing the generative AI chatbot ChatGPT, which has become immensely popular over the past months.

"Artificial intelligence will be transformative in ways we can't even imagine, with implications for Americans' elections, jobs, and security," the release cited Senator Hawley as saying.

Besides Altman, the hearing will also include testimonies from IBM Vice President and Chief Privacy and Trust Officer Christina Montgomery and New York University Professor Emeritus Gary Marcus, the release said.

ChatGPT gained popularity after its launch in November 2022, acquiring its first million users in less than a week. In late January, Microsoft said it would invest "billions of dollars" in OpenAI. Earlier in March, OpenAI introduced a new multimodal AI model, GPT-4, which is capable of recognizing both text and images, as well as solving complex problems with greater accuracy.

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Use of DNA Offers 'Significant Advances', Yet Scientists Need Guidelines - UN Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, May 10 (Sputnik) - Editing DNA can bring great advantages but scientists should have ethical guidelines, UN Spokesperson Farhan Haq said on Wednesday.

The UN commented on the recent birth of a baby in the UK with the combined DNA of three people.

"On the one hand, the use of DNA offers the promise of many significant advances. For example, in the fight against different diseases. So all scientific progress on this front is to be encouraged," Haq told a briefing. "At the same time, there always needs to be a clear sense of ethical guidelines for scientists as they go along this process."

Ethical guidelines would help them to avoid any 'pitfalls' in their mission, he added.

The majority of the baby's DNA comes from two parents, but a donor woman gave 0.1% of her genetic code. It was an attempt to avoid and prevent the child from being born with mitochondrial disease - which is fatal within days or hours after birth.

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Robert Kennedy Jr. Says Will 'Under No Circumstances' Join Trump on Electoral Ticket

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - US 2024 presidential candidate Robert Kennedy Jr. said on Wednesday that under no circumstances would he run alongside former US President Donald Trump, citing differences in opinion and leadership style.

"Just to quell any speculation, UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES will I join Donald Trump on an electoral ticket. Our positions on certain fundamental issues, our approaches to governance and our philosophies of leadership could not be further apart," Kennedy said in a statement via Twitter.

Kennedy launched his campaign as a Democratic Party candidate earlier this year, while Trump launched his bid for the Republican nomination late last year. Kennedy is likely to square off against sitting President Joe Biden, who officially announced his reelection bid, in the Democratic primary.

Trump's competitors include former US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and businessman Vivek Ramaswamy.

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White House Says Debt Ceiling Talks 'Most Important' Agenda Item Ahead of G7 Trip

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - Negotiations with Congress to raise the United States' debt ceiling remains the most important item on US President Joe Biden's agenda, even as he prepares to travel to the Indo-Pacific region for a Group of Seven (G7) summit, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Wednesday.

"The President said yesterday he is committed to going to the G7 on this trip... but preventing

default is the single most important thing on his agenda," Jean-Pierre said during a press briefing, when asked about Biden potentially delaying his trip to the G7 meeting.

On Tuesday, Biden met with House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and other congressional leaders to negotiate raising the US' debt ceiling. Following the meeting, Biden said he would not attend the summit if negotiations come "down to the wire," although he added that such a scenario is not likely.

Japan is hosting the G7 summit in Hiroshima from May 19-21, during which leaders will discuss issues including economic security, green investments and impacts of the conflict in Ukraine. Biden is set to attend the summit, followed by stops in Papua New Guinea and Australia, the White House announced earlier this month.

Biden is set to meet again with congressional leaders on Friday to follow up on debt ceiling negotiations. House Republicans passed legislation last month to raise the debt ceiling in exchange for cuts to government spending, although Biden and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer have rejected the proposal.

The US could default on its financial obligations as early as June if the debt ceiling is not raised, the Treasury Department said earlier this month.

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NATO Admiral Says Alliance Working on Military Plans Against Russia, Not China

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - NATO is not working on military plans against China, but is doing so with respect to Russia and terrorist groups, Royal Netherlands Navy Adm. Rob Bauer, who chairs NATO's Military Committee, said on Wednesday.

"NATO is not working on military plans against China. We are working on military plans against Russia and the terrorist groups," Bauer said during a press briefing. "That doesn't mean that there aren't allies in the alliance that also look at China and are planning on that as well."

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Canada Discusses Establishing Military Brigade in Latvia - Defense Minister

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - Canada is discussing with Latvia plans to establish a Canadian military brigade in the Baltic country, Defense Minister Anita Anand said on Wednesday after meeting with her Latvian counterpart Inara Murniece.

"The planning that we are undertaking on the subject of much of our discussion today was what are the stages we will be going through as we move to brigade level," Anand said during a press conference.

The Canadian defense minister explained that there are three stages, including one concerning the number of personnel in the brigade.

"The next stage is going to be establishing force development, making sure that we have the elements of a forward brigade command and control, and ensuring that we have the fourth generation capabilities. And the third stage will be the critical capabilities themselves," Anand said.

In addition, Anand noted that Canada has recently started its largest military exercise dubbed Maple Resolve.

"We are undertaking operation exercises right now, Maple Resolve, and what we are doing in Maple Resolve is to mimic some of the circumstances that would be on the ground in Europe, and Latvia in particular," she said.

Earlier this week, the Canadian government announced that the Maple Resolve exercise will take place in the province of Alberta and will last until May 22. About 2,500 Canadian and allied soldiers are participating in the exercise, according to the announcement.

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NATO Admiral Says Conflict With Russia Can 'Present Itself at Any Time'

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) – NATO has been preparing for a new era of security challenges in Europe and has to be ready to face the fact that conflict with Russia could "present itself at any time," Royal Netherlands Navy Adm. Rob Bauer, chair of NATO's Military Committee, said on Wednesday.

"We have to prepare for the fact that conflict [with Russia] can present itself at any time. NATO has been preparing for this new era. For years, the NATO military authorities have been monitoring Russia's pattern of increasingly aggressive behavior. Together we have implemented the biggest increase in collective defense, since the Cold War, but the work is not done yet," Bauer said during a press briefing.

The work to be done now is the integration of NATO and national military planning, which will enable the alliance to move in the same direction, Bauer added.

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Slim Majority of Americans Back Vaccine Requirements as Mandates Expire - Poll

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - Slightly more than half of Americans, or 52%, still support vaccination requirements for school employees and government workers as the Biden administration's vaccine mandates to combat the COVID-19 pandemic ended, a new Morning Consult poll revealed on Wednesday.

The poll was conducted as the Biden administration ended the COVID-19 public health emergency and ended vaccination mandates for federal workers and contractors.

"A slim majority of US adults (52%) are still "very" or "somewhat" concerned about the omicron

variant, including 59% of those who have been vaccinated," a release on the poll said.

The poll results show that 49% of respondents also back such requirements for businesses, the release added.

The poll results also reveal that very few Americans view COVID-19 as a "severe" health risk and roughly a quarter are still generally concerned about the virus, according to the release.

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Americans Trust Health News From Pharmaceutical Firms More Than White House – Poll

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) – Americans have more trust in health information and news from pharmaceutical and insurance companies than from the White House, a new Morning Consult poll showed on Wednesday.

"As the U.S. COVID-19 public health emergency expires Thursday, the public has more trust in health information and news from multiple federal agencies and providers than from the White House, insurance and pharmaceutical companies," the poll said.

Among 15 government groups, health entities and companies, the public has the greatest amount of trust in providers such as doctors and nurses (81%). They are followed by retail pharmacies (69%), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (68%), local governments and health agencies (66%) and state governments and health agencies (63%).

Sixty-one percent of Americans trust the World Health Organization (WHO), while 54% and 53% have trust in pharmaceutical and insurance companies, respectively.

The White House finishes out the rankings, with 51% of those trusting it for health information.

Democrats are more trusting than Republicans in relation to health information coming from government agencies. Seventy-four percent of them trust the White House on health issues, which is twice more than Republicans. At the same time, more than three-fourths of both parties' supporters have trust in hospitals and medical providers.

The poll was conducted from April 27-28 among 2,211 US adults, with an unweighted margin of error of +/- 2 percentage points.

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US House Majority Leader Says Began Considering Defense Spending Bill Despite Debt Debate

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - US House Majority Leader Steve Scalise said on Wednesday that lawmakers have already begun initial considerations for the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) despite an unresolved debate on the United States' debt ceiling and on spending policies.

"I'm hopeful that as the Speaker meets with the President and the other congressional leaders

on Friday, that they can get some real specifics that get us closer to an agreement. For now, we're going to wait and see how that process plays out before starting the NDAA, but we've already been doing work on what those policies would look like on the NDAA," Scalise said during a press conference.

Lawmakers have started work on the NDAA on the subcommittee and committee levels, House Republican Conference Chair Elise Stefanik said. Lawmakers will be prepared to pass a "robust" NDAA, Stefanik added.

On Tuesday, President Joe Biden met with congressional leaders, including with House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, to negotiate lifting the US debt ceiling. Last month, House Republicans passed legislation to raise the debt ceiling in exchange for cuts to government spending. However, Biden and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer have rejected the measure.

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House Panel Says CIA Conspired with Biden's Team to Blame Russia for Hunter Laptop Story

(Updates with details from the report in paras 5-7, background in para 8)

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - Senior Biden administration campaign officials conspired with the CIA to discredit allegations about Hunter Biden and portray them as "Russian disinformation" ahead of the 2020 presidential election, a new report from the US House Judiciary Committee stated on Wednesday.

"Evidence suggests that senior Biden campaign officials, including now Secretary of State Antony Blinken, now Deputy Press Secretary Andrew Bates, and now Counselor to the President Steve Ricchetti, took active measures to discredit the allegations about Hunter Biden by exploiting the national security credentials of former intelligence officials," the committee said in a press release coinciding with the release of the report.

The committee through its investigations found that Blinken, then a senior Biden campaign advisor, was the impetus of a public letter in which 51 former intelligence officials stated that a story in the New York Post about Hunter Biden's laptop had "all the classic earmarks of a Russian information operation."

Senior Biden administration officials then "coordinated efforts to disseminate" the public letter to members of the media in an effort to discredit the allegations about Hunter Biden, the committee stated.

The committee detailed through testimony, emails, and other evidence how former CIA Deputy Director Michael Morell helped write the public statement and get ex-intelligence officials to sign it.

The report alleges that the public letter was a "political operation to help elect Vice President Biden in the 2020 election" aimed at giving then candidate Joe Biden a "talking point" to use in response to any attacks by his rival then-President Donald Trump.

Three days after the letter was published, Joe Biden cited it during a debate with Trump, saying, "There are 50 former national intelligence folks who said that what this, he's accusing

me of is a Russian plan."

US officials have repeatedly accused Russia of meddling in US elections, a charge that Moscow has firmly and consistently denied.

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UN Under Secretary to Attend High-Level Meeting on Grain Deal in Istanbul - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, May 10 (Sputnik) - United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths will attend a high-level meeting in Istanbul for talks on the grain deal, UN spokesperson Farhan Haq said on Wednesday.

"I can say Martin Griffiths will represent us [United Nations] at the talks," Haq told a briefing.

The Black Sea Grain Initiative, concluded by Russia, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Nations on July 22, 2022, concerns the safe export of Ukrainian and Russian grain and fertilizer via Black Sea ports. The coordination of the vessel traffic is handled by the Joint Coordination Center in Istanbul.

Russian President Vladimir Putin pointed out in September that the collective West secures most of the Ukrainian grain for itself and not for the developing countries in other parts of the world. From March 18, 2023, Russia extended the deal for 60 days, to last until May 18. However, Ukraine insists that the deal was extended for 120 days.

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Scalise Says US House Will Vote on Border Security Bill Thursday When Title 42 Ends

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives will vote on Thursday to pass border security legislation as COVID-era Title 42 restrictions on entry into the United States expire, House Majority Leader Steve Scalise said on Wednesday.

"Tomorrow, the day that Title 42 expires, we're going to bring H.R. 2, the Secure the Border Act, a bill that actually focuses on solving the problems so that we can get back to the rule of law and have a secure border in America," Scalise said during a press conference.

The House is set to begin consideration of the legislation later on Wednesday.

The Secure the Border Act requires the US Homeland Security Secretary to resume construction of a wall along the US-Mexico border, prohibits the Department of Homeland Security from processing the entry of non-US nationals who arrive between ports of entry and limits asylum eligibility to individuals who arrive at a port of entry.

In addition, the bill authorizes the removal of non-US nationals to a country other than their country of nationality or last lawful habitual residence. The bill also imposes additional penalties for overstaying a US visa and expands types of crimes that disqualify people for asylum.

On Thursday, the Title 42 public health emergency, first utilized by the Trump administration,

will expire, preventing the US from turning away immigrants at the border on the basis of preventing the spread of disease.

The anticipated end of Title 42 restrictions has led to a surge of migrants to the US-Mexico border, where more than 26,000 migrants have been apprehended in recent days, US Border Patrol Chief Raul Ortiz said on Monday.

The surge of migrants is expected to continue for several weeks after the end of Title 42, a senior Biden administration official also said.

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White House Says House Republicans 'Microwaving Old Debunked Stuff' About Biden

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - White House spokesman for oversight and investigations Ian Sams accused us House Republicans of "microwaving old debunked stuff" about President Joe Biden's family's lucrative network of companies linked to China and other foreign entities.

"They're really just microwaving old debunked stuff," Sams said via Twitter on Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, US House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer said the Biden family and their associates received more than \$10 million from foreign nationals and companies, including in China. Comer explained that Chinese nationals created limited liability companies in the United States, transferred their "interests" to individuals in China and then transferred money to the Biden family.

Sams cited The Wall Street Journal's report from three years ago that reviewed that relevant corporate records and allegedly showed the president played no role in the scheme.

Sams also referred to the Washington Post's conclusion from last year that there was no evidence Biden personally benefitted from or knew details of the scheme.

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Blinken Urges IOM to Elect Amy Pope as Director General

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) – The United States has urged International Organization for Migration (IOM) member states to elect Amy Pope as its new Director General, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Wednesday.

"I encourage all IOM member states to embrace this important opportunity to reinvigorate the organization by electing Amy Pope as its next Director General," Blinken said.

The IOM will hold the election on May 15 in Geneva.

Blinken pointed out that the US nominated Pope, who is currently serving as the organization's deputy director general, because she has the dedication, experience and strategic vision to deliver on IOM's complex mission with a focus on the safety and dignity of migrants.

"Ms. Pope has visited more than 40 countries in every region of the world to hear directly from

governments, host communities, and migrants about their priorities and to explain her vision for how IOM can holistically manage migration challenges," Blinken said.

The secretary promised that Pope would represent all member states and consider diverse opinions in IOM's work.

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Canada, Latvia to Train Ukrainian Soldiers on Latvian Soil Beginning on May 15 - Anand

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - The Canadian and Latvian militaries will jointly train in Latvia Ukrainian troops as early as May 15, Minister of National Defense Anita Anand said on Wednesday.

"Today, I can announce that Canada and Latvia will jointly train Ukrainian soldiers on Latvian soil, beginning as early as May 15," Anand said in a joint press conference with her Latvian counterpart Inara Murniece in Ottawa.

The Canadian and Latvian militaries will train Ukrainian junior officers on battlefield responsibilities, planning, orders, maneuver coordination, intelligence and reconnaissance, among other elements of warfighting.

Anand said the training will complement Ottawa's ongoing efforts by the collective West to assist Ukraine under Operation UNIFIER in the United Kingdom and Poland.

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US Consumer Prices Grow 4.9% in Year to April, Smallest Increase in 2 Years - Labor Dept.
(Updates with more details, background in paras 4-13)

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) - Consumer prices in the United States rose 4.9% in the 12 months to April, expanding at the smallest pace in two years, the US Labor Department said on Tuesday in data that showed progress in the Federal Reserve's battle against inflation as debate grew on whether the central bank would be ready to pause its aggressive interest rate hikes.

The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI) was forecast to grow 5% in the year to April, unchanged from March. "The all items index increased 4.9 percent for the 12 months ending April; this was the smallest 12-month increase since the period ending April 2021," the Labor Department said in a news release.

On a monthly basis, annual CPI was flat, growing at 0.4% for April, with no change from March. The core reading on year-on-year and month-on-month CPI, which strips out volatile food and energy prices, was also unchanged from March, growing at 5.5% and 0.4%, respectively, in April.

Economists welcomed the slowing in the pace of the CPI as both employment and wage experienced runaway growth, complicating the Fed's task of pausing on interest rate hikes it has

carried out for more than a year in its bid to fight inflation.

"We have an overheated economy," Neil Dutta, head of economic research at Renaissance Macro Research group, said, referring to US non-farm payrolls growth for April that came in at 253,000, or 40% above expectations.

The labor market has been the engine of the US economic recovery from the pandemic measures, with hundreds of thousands of jobs being added without fail since June 2020 to make up for the initial loss of 20 million jobs to the pandemic. Average monthly wages have also grown without a stop since May 2021. The Fed has identified robust job and wages growth as two of the key drivers of inflation.

Annual growth in the CPI hit a 40-year high in June 2022, expanding at 9.1%. While inflation has slowed considerably since, it is still more than twice the Fed's target of 2% per year.

The central bank has raised rates by ten times since the end of the coronavirus pandemic in March 2022, adding a total of 5% to the previous 0.25%. Until the overwhelmingly strong jobs data for April, there had been speculation that the Fed could pause interest rate hikes from June onward.

The Fed has a mandate of ensuring maximum employment through a jobless rate of 4% or below, and keeping inflation "manageable." The last was a task easily achieved before the COVID-19 breakout, when prices expanded less than 2% a year. The pandemic and the trillions of dollars of relief spending by the government, however, triggered runaway inflation since mid-2021.

After its last rate hike, the Fed said it will closely monitor data in the coming months and assess their effectiveness in helping the United States return to its inflation target of 2%.

Despite April's jobs number and inflation being more than twice the Fed's annual target, it would not be surprising if the Fed stalls on rate hikes from June as data increasingly points to weakness in the US economy, analysts said.

Over the past week alone, gross domestic product data for the first quarter showed an anemic 1.1% growth on the year versus the 2.6% in the fourth quarter of 2022.

A US banking crisis that broke in March resurfaced in part this month with the takeover of San Francisco-based First Republic Bank. Adding to that were concerns about a potential US debt default, the first ever, and more weak readings on factory orders and durable goods.

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Trudeau to Visit South Korea, Attend G7 Summit in Japan from May 16-21 – Office

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) – Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will be visiting South Korea and Japan to attend bilateral meetings and the G7 Summit in Hiroshima from May 16-21, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said on Wednesday.

"The Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, today announced he will travel to the Republic of Korea (Korea) and Japan from May 16 to 21, 2023. Prime Minister Trudeau will participate in an official bilateral visit in Seoul, Korea from May 16 to 18 before traveling to Hiroshima, Japan, from May 19 to 21 to participate in the G7 Summit," the PMO's statement reads.

While in South Korea, Trudeau will meet with President Yoon Suk Yeol to speak about shared priorities in the economic, and energetic sectors, human rights, democracy, gender equality, and climate, the statement said, adding that Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy will also be addressed.

The Prime Minister will then leave for Hiroshima, Japan to attend the G7 Summit, the statement continued, where heads of state are to discuss ways to further cooperate in addressing current global challenges.

Notably, talks on "meeting the needs" of emerging economies, and the continued commitment to Ukraine's war effort, peace security, and human rights will be held.

The PMO said that Canada intends to cooperate with its international partners to address the challenges and impacts of the current global crisis.

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Bidens, Associates Receive Over \$10Mln From Foreign Nationals, Firms - Oversight Chair

(Adds details in paras 4-6)

WASHINGTON, May 10 (Sputnik) – The Biden family and their associates received over \$10 million from foreign nationals and companies, including in China, House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer said on Wednesday.

"The bank records show the Biden family, their associates and their companies received over \$10 million from foreign nationals and their companies. Some of that money came from a Chinese company and went to Hunter Biden's company," Comer said during a press conference.

Comer noted that Chinese nationals created limited liability companies in the US, transferred their "interests" to individuals in China and then transferred the money to the Biden family.

The Biden family and their associates' activities in Romania from 2015 to 2017 were also indicative of a scheme to peddle influence, the Oversight committee believes.

Hunter Biden and his associates benefited from lucrative financial ties with a Romanian national who was later convicted of corruption, the committee said.

The Bidens received over \$1 million for the Romania deal, with 16 of the 17 payments made during Biden's vice presidency, the committee stated.

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