

8/11/23 Friday

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

Biden's Big Ask - Cartoon
By - Ted Rall

In a letter to Congress the US president asked for an additional \$13 billion in military aid to Ukraine for next year. In addition, Biden also asked for \$7.3 billion for economic, humanitarian and security assistance to the Kiev regime. In total, the Biden White House is requesting some \$24 billion for Ukraine.

Adding to its ever growing iterations of aid packages, US President Joe Biden called on congressional lawmakers to submit to yet another [funding package](#) for Ukraine, regardless of growing opposition by lawmakers and the American public.

Although Congress proved supportive of aid to Ukraine in the past, that is no longer the case as hurdles have emerged since the start of the year, when House Republicans took control of the lower chamber.

House Speaker Kevin McCarthy said in early June that any further aid requests would not be taken up in the lower chamber, even if it received bipartisan support in the Senate. Other GOP members are also growing hesitant about continued support for Ukraine.

"Rather than spending a single penny more fighting a proxy war in Ukraine and killing more people, a more worthwhile effort would be if Biden would put America first by allocating resources in our country to secure the southern border," said US Rep. Paul Gosar (R-AZ).

A recent poll also found that some 55% of surveyed Americans were unsupportive of continued aid packages in light of growing domestic concerns. When asked about the polling, Biden administration officials chose to redirect by underscoring that the Ukraine conflict was a matter of national security concerns.

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

14,000 Evacuated in Lublin After WWII-Era Bomb Found Near Majdanek Concentration Camp

Thousands had to be moved to safety temporarily this week after construction crews in the Polish city of Lublin discovered a piece of unexploded ordnance from the Second World War. The order went out early on Friday morning for thousands to be evacuated from central Lublin, a day after a construction worker uncovered an unexploded 550-pound bomb during ground excavation.

Some 14,000 people were moved, many of them by buses to a local stadium, with special provisions made for local kindergartens and for disabled people requiring care.

Lublin Mayor Krzysztof Żuk told Polish media that a crisis team had been assembled after the bomb was discovered.

"All our units are ready and cooperating closely with the police and army as well as the Fire Brigade, all the services responsible for the whole process of making the ordnance safe and disposing of it," Żuk said, adding that the situation was "under full control."

According to local media, the bomb had fallen on the site of a pre-World War II aircraft factory which became part of the Majdanek concentration camp after Nazi Germany occupied the area in 1939.

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

Biden's Effort to Get Extra \$24 Billion for Ukraine Will Sway 'Only Hardcore Politicos'

Two experts told Sputnik that the White House is going to have a tough uphill fight getting more military aid to Ukraine, between American concerns about bread-and-butter issues and spreading awareness that Ukraine's vaunted counteroffensive, which was supposed to reverse Kiev's fortunes, has been a catastrophe.

US President Joe Biden has asked Congress to authorize more than \$24 billion more in aid for Ukraine, [\\$13 billion of which](#) is for weapons and military-related items. However, this is the first time he has done so since Republicans took control of the US House of Representatives in January, many of whom have pledged to oppose [blank checks for Kiev](#), including House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA).

McCarthy said in June he would not allow a vote in the lower chamber on additional Ukraine funding - a position in line with the majority of the US body politic, according to [a recent poll by CNN](#). The survey found that 55% of Americans oppose more funding for Ukraine while 45% support it, and 51% thought Washington had already done enough to help Kiev. When the conflict first began in February 2022, some 62% of Americans believed the US should be doing more for Kiev.

Financial and geopolitical analyst Tom Luongo told Sputnik on Friday that despite the GOP leader's vocal opposition, much of the rank-and-file lawmakers in both parties still support more Ukraine funding.

"No one should trust McCarthy on this because the majority of both Houses of Congress want more funding for Ukraine," he said. "The fiscal conservatives in the House will likely have to horse-trade with him if they want to go to the mat this fall with Biden over budget reforms McCarthy promised during the debt ceiling negotiations."

Regarding the recent CNN poll, Luongo observed that it reflected a difference of priorities between the US administration and the US population, who are less and less swayed by Biden's insistence that saving Ukraine should be at the top of every Americans' agenda.

"Americans care about inflation and their jobs," he said. "and if Biden keeps spending money overseas it will only drive more people into the arms of outsider candidates like Trump and RFK Jr."

"By next year, however? What are the real political consequences of this, nothing. By then the DNC will be dealing with a brutal recession that they will try to blame on the Federal Reserve raising interest rates."

"Only hardcore politicians will be swayed by this argument. They are setting themselves up for a massive backlash in 2024. Recession, war, unemployment, \$6/gallon gas. No sitting president will live through that. No war for Ukraine of all places will offset that," he predicted.

David T. Pyne, an EMP Task Force scholar and former US Department of Defense officer, told Sputnik that Biden's aid package would "likely encounter significant opposition" in the House.

"In addition, Russia has demonstrated an ability to jam GPS-guided munitions such as [HIMARS](#) to prevent them from reaching their intended targets, so it seems futile for the US to continue to provide additional precision guided munitions to Ukraine," he said.

"In my opinion, there is no amount of military assistance that the US and its NATO allies can provide Ukraine which will enable them to retake a significant part of their lost territories, let alone defeat Russia," Pyne said.

"Even the British press is now beginning to admit that [Ukraine's counteroffensive has been a total failure](#), unable to penetrate Russia's heavily fortified defensive lines in Zaporozhye and that [the Ukrainian army is now in total chaos](#), with [Ukrainian President Volodymyr] Zelensky's firing of top regional recruiting commanders over the latest corruption scandal. It is long past time for the Biden administration to publicly admit that the only way to end the war in Ukraine is to immediately suspend all assistance to Ukraine and negotiate a cease-fire and armistice agreement with Russia along the current lines of control [as I proposed last year](#)," Pyne said. When it came to the composition of the aid package, Pyne noted it was still "unclear" what was intended to include.

"I would anticipate that it would include more 105-millimeter and 155-millimeter artillery; Javelin ATGMs [anti-tank guided missiles]; rockets and missiles; artillery shells; and other munitions; given that Ukraine has expended a large amount of munitions and suffered heavy losses during its disastrous summer counteroffensive. The package could also include additional Bradley Infantry Combat Vehicles and HIMARS" rocket artillery, he noted.

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

China's Wang Yi Warns Singapore: US 'Biggest Destabilizing Factor in the World'

The United States has cast Beijing as a villain in Southeast Asia, presenting itself as the defender of international law and the rights of smaller nations. However, Washington's solution to the disputes is a military standoff, while China has voiced its desire for dialogue and mutually-beneficial relationships.

Speaking to Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong on Friday, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi warned that one of the city-state's biggest geopolitical partners, the United States, would be a never-ending source of chaos and instability.

"The United States, out of its motive to maintain unipolar hegemony, is unwilling to see the development and revitalization of China and other emerging countries," Wang told Lee.

“On the one hand, it condones and supports the Taiwan independence forces relying on the United States to seek independence, trying to cross China’s red lines,” he said. “On the other hand, it tears away the pretense of fair competition and coerces other countries into unilateral protectionism against China. These perverse practices will only damage its own credibility, laying bare the fact that the United States has become the biggest destabilizing factor in the world.”

Wang is on a tour of Southeast Asia to buttress Chinese relations with Singapore as well as Cambodia and Malaysia amid a heated [dispute with the Philippines](#) over a contested coral reef in the South China Sea and an increased effort by Washington to woo regional powers away from Beijing.

A day prior, Wang met with his Singaporean counterpart, Vivian Balakrishnan, reaffirming the two nations’ “mutual interest in furthering tourism and business flows, and air connectivity between China and Singapore,” as Balakrishnan’s office put it.

Singapore and China are both part of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a massive trade pact that [recently took effect](#). It includes roughly 30% of the world’s population and 30% of its gross domestic product, with more than a dozen nations included across East Asia and the Pacific, including all 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

“We will continue to explore ways to enhance our cooperation, including in areas such as connectivity, the digital economy and sustainable development,” Balakrishnan added.

Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, with whom Wang also met, expressed his support for China’s interest in joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). The 11-nation trading bloc was founded in 2018 and includes some of the same nations as RCEP, but also states like Canada, Mexico, and Peru, on the far side of the Pacific. The United Kingdom [joined the CPTPP](#) last month, becoming the first European Union member to do so.

However, Singapore, a former British colony, also has close ties with the United States, from which it has acquired a significant part of its military inventory. Due to its economic power and strategic location at the Straits of Malacca and southern end of the South China Sea, Washington has put extensive effort into courting the island nation’s friendship in recent years. In June, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin visited Singapore as well, [meeting with Wong](#) to reaffirm their “robust and long-standing bilateral defense partnership” and “their shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific region.”

It’s a phrase that [the US has invoked](#) in response to Chinese claims over islands and sea lanes in the South China Sea, much of which [overlap with the claims](#) of other nations, and against which the US has postured as enforcing the 1982 United Nations Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) against violations. Ironically, the US has never ratified UNCLOS.

Amid the US’ posturing, China and ASEAN have pushed closer to establishing a joint [code of conduct](#) for the South China Sea, which will govern their interactions and disputes in line with UNCLOS once it enters force. A working group meeting last month saw the partner states commit to producing a working document within three years.

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

Hawaii Officials Liken Wildfire Destruction to 'War Zone' as Death Toll Hits 55

The death toll has continued to climb on the Hawaiian island of Maui, where high winds drove uncontrollable wildfires through several towns earlier this week before residents and tourists could evacuate.

Richard Bissen Jr., the mayor of Maui island, told US media on Friday that he had viewed the devastated area on the island's west coast with other Hawaii politicians and found it virtually unrecognizable.

"The closest thing I can compare it to is perhaps a war zone or maybe a bomb went off. It was cars in the street, doors open, you know, melted to the ground. Most structures no longer exist," Bissen said. "For blocks and blocks of this."

"I'm familiar with what it looked like growing up here on Maui, especially with my mom working at one of the restaurants there ... for 17 years. And so it doesn't resemble anything that it looked like when I was growing up," he added.

The center of the destruction was the historic town of Lahaina, which was both a popular tourist destination due to its picturesque old town but also of great importance in Hawaiian history, having once served as the capital of the entire archipelago after it was united into a single kingdom in the late 18th century.

The flames swept through Lahaina [so quickly on Wednesday](#) that evacuation arteries were clogged, with added confusion created by the fire's smoke being blown sideways by winds of up to 60 miles per hour. Many fled to the ocean to escape the flames, including those in their cars on the highway as the fire advanced behind them.

Bissen said on Friday that the number of dead had risen to 55 [from 36 a day earlier](#) and is expected to continue to rise as a more complete picture of the damage is assembled.

Hundreds of structures are destroyed, including 80% of Lahaina Town, formerly a town of 15,000. Even boats moored at the town harbor burned or melted, the aggression of the flames was so intense.

Speaking on Hawaiian television, Hawaii Governor Josh Green warned residents returning to their homes that Lahaina was "a devastated zone."

"They will see destruction like they've not ever seen in their lives. Everyone please brace themselves as they go back," Green said.

Thousands of tourists at nearby resorts have already been evacuated from Maui or worked with airlines to book flights home, but thousands of residents now require aid.

Maui Food Bank Executive Director Richard Yust told US media that donations were urgently needed, especially since sea-based resupply was a two-week steam away.

"We're having a mass influx of people needing food assistance," he said.

Yust said the agency was "providing immediate relief just to kind of calm people's nerves and make sure they have what they need as far as food, water, essentials, cleaning products, hygiene products. We're providing all of that currently to those folks. But it will be a long time. It's so tragic, and these folks have generations (that) have been in line,"

"It's really sad so many people have lost everything. This is going to take a long time to, obviously either be rebuilt or - and that's going to be months, years, who knows how long. So we are gearing up for the long haul," he added.

Green spoke with US President Joe Biden on Friday as well, updating him on the situation in Maui and thanking him for support coming from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other agencies. On Thursday night, Biden issued a disaster declaration for the state after having erroneously told reporters earlier in the week that he had already done so.

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

Six Colombians Held in Ecuadorian Custody in Case of Assassinated Presidential Candidate

The office of Ecuador's national prosecutor announced on Friday that six Colombian men had been detained in connection with the recent shooting death of an anti-corruption politician following a political rally.

The men were arrested on Wednesday in the capital of Quito, the same night that Fernando Villavicencio, a presidential candidate for Movimiento Construye, was [shot to death in the city](#) immediately after attending a political rally.

According to the prosecutor's office, the men will be held for 30 days of investigation.

According to reports, when police raided the house where the men were located, they found and seized four shotguns, a 5.56-millimeter rifle, ammunition, grenades and 64 shell casings.

Officials also seized a motorcycle and another vehicle.

Villavicencio previously served in the National Assembly until it was dissolved in May by Ecuadorian President Guillermo Lasso, who did so in order to block an impeachment inquiry. Villavicencio had previously been associated with center-right politics, being a strong critic of former leftist President Rafael Correa, but ran in 2023 on a "big tent" platform. He was not considered the front-runner in the presidential election race.

The candidate was shot in the head while entering a car in Quito on Wednesday evening by an assassin who was killed in a shootout with Villavicencio's bodyguards. The assassin also threw a grenade that failed to detonate. Villavicencio was later rushed to the hospital, where he was declared dead.

Lasso [declared a 60-day state](#) of emergency following the shooting, mobilizing the armed forces to secure the country. The presidential election, scheduled for August 20, has not been postponed in response to the killing or the state of emergency.

Similarly, after Haitian President Jovenel Moise was assassinated in his home in 2021, Haitian authorities detained 18 Colombians and two Americans in connection with the killing. The [Pentagon later confirmed](#) that seven of the Colombians had been former soldiers, and had been trained at an elite US military facility known for schooling right-wing Latin American guerrillas.

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

US Envoy for Yemen Traveling to Gulf for Talks on Peace Process - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) - US Special Envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking is traveling to the Gulf on Monday as part of UN-led efforts to expand the truce and bring about a comprehensive peace process in the country, the State Department said.

"Special Envoy Lenderking will meet with Yemeni, Saudi, Emirati, Omani and international partners to discuss the necessary steps to secure a durable ceasefire and launch an inclusive, UN-mediated political process while ensuring continued efforts to ease the economic crisis and suffering of Yemenis," the statement said.

Lenderking also plans to congratulate Yemen, the UN, and other international partners on the successful transfer of oil from the damaged tanker FSO Safer off the coast of Yemen.

The US special envoy will continue to mobilize support from donors to fulfill the remaining \$22 million funding gap to scrap the tanker and address all residual environmental threats, the statement added.

A UN-backed truce between Yemen's government forces and Houthis initially went into effect in April 2022. The truce expired in October, but has since largely held.

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

Death Toll From Hawaii Wildfires Climbs to 96 - Maui County

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) - Police confirmed 96 deaths in the Hawaii wildfires as of Sunday night, according to a Maui County release.

"Maui Police Department around 9 p.m. said there are 96 confirmed fatalities," the release stated.

Fires in Lahaina and upcountry/Kula remain partially contained, at 85% and 60% respectively, the release added, while the fire in Pelu/Kihea is 100% contained, meaning firefighters have it fully surrounded by a perimeter. The fire in Pu'ukoli'i/Kaanapali remains extinguished.

The death toll makes the wildfires, which began as brushfires on the islands of Maui and Hawaii last week, the deadliest in the United States since 1918. It is expected to rise, with many people still unaccounted for.

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

Georgia Prosecutors to Begin Presenting Case Against Trump on Monday - Reports

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) - Fani T. Willis, the district attorney for Fulton County, Georgia, on Monday will begin presenting the case to a grand jury regarding former US President Donald Trump's alleged attempt to overturn the results of the 2020 election, ABC News reported.

Willis is expected to begin her presentation on Monday morning after a two-and-a-half-year investigation into the matter and it is unknown how long it will take, the report said.

CNN reported Sunday that state prosecutors have evidence to prove that Trump's legal team had a role in the 2021 voting system breach in Coffee County and Willis plans to seek charges against more than a dozen people when she presents the case. She reportedly has texts and emails implicating several of those people in the computer breach in the rural Georgian county.

The messages reportedly show how Trump's lawyers and operatives sought to access Coffee County voting systems in the days before the January 6, 2021 storming of the Capitol to prove their allegations of widespread electoral fraud.

Trump has repeatedly condemned the criminal proceedings against him as attempts to weaponize the American justice system to prevent him from running in the 2024 US presidential election and denied any wrongdoing.

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

Hawaii Death Toll Rise to 67, Lahaina Fires Not Contained Yet - Maui County

WASHINGTON, August 12 (Sputnik) - The number of deaths due to the wildfires in Hawaii increased to 67, Maui County said in a press release.

"As firefighting efforts continue, 12 additional fatalities have been confirmed as of 1 p.m. [Hawaii Standard Time] today amid the active Lahaina fire. This brings the death toll to 67 people," the release said on Friday. "The Lahaina fire is not yet contained."

Media reported that the new death toll number makes it the deadliest disaster in state history.

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

Hawaii Governor Confirms Wildfires Death Toll Reaches 59, Expected to Rise

WASHINGTON, August 12 (Sputnik) - The number of fatalities due to the ongoing wildfires in Hawaii increased to 59, Hawaii Governor Josh Green said in an interview.

"So 59 fatalities, that's up from 55 today, that we can confirm," Green told CNN on Friday. "Without a doubt there will be more fatalities. We don't know ultimately how many will have occurred."

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

UPDATE - US to Allow 24 Chinese Weekly Flights Starting Late October, Double Current Number - USDOT

(Update with more details in para 6)

WASHINGTON, August 12 (Sputnik) - The United States will allow Chinese air carriers to operate 24 weekly round-trip passenger flights starting October 29, which is twice as much as the current number, the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) said in a notice provided to Sputnik.

"The US Department of Transportation is further modifying the decision... to permit the above-captioned combination carriers of China to operate additional weekly round-trip scheduled passenger flights to and from the United States," the notice said on Friday.

Effective September 1, the specified Chinese carriers may operate, in the aggregate, a total of eighteen weekly round-trip scheduled passenger flights to and from the United States, the notice said.

Effective October 29, the specified Chinese carriers may operate, in the aggregate, a total of twenty four weekly round-trip scheduled passenger flights to and from the United States, the notice added.

The notice pertains to the following air carriers - Air China; Beijing Capital Airlines Co.; Ltd.; China Eastern Airlines Corporation Ltd.; China Southern Airlines Company Ltd.; Hainan Airlines Holding Co. Ltd.; Sichuan Airlines Co., Ltd.; and Xiamen Airlines.

USDOT said in a press release that China has agreed to double the number of passenger flights between the two countries. USDOT will continue to assess how and when to further modify its posture toward Chinese passenger flights in a manner that offers an equitable and competitive operating environment for the air carriers of both countries, the release said.

Chinese Embassy spokesperson Liu Pengyu told Sputnik that direct flights are essential to increase mutual visits between the Chinese and American peoples.

"We hope that the restoration of more flights will do good to the flow of people and trade between the two countries," Pengyu said.

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

Oil Up 7th Week in Row, Pace of Rally Slowing

NEW YORK, August 12 (Sputnik) - Crude prices rose for a seventh straight week after the Paris-based International Energy Agency (IEA), which looks out for consuming nations, said on Friday that it expects oil demand to hit record highs in August amid an output squeeze by key producer Saudi Arabia.

But nearly two months in, the rally in oil is also slowing as economic tensions, including fear of another worldwide spike in inflation from sky-high energy costs, set in, some analysts said.

New York-traded West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude settled at \$83.19 a barrel, up 0.5% on the day and week. It was the smallest weekly advance for WTI since the rally which began in the week to June 16. Notwithstanding the slowing pace of the run-up, the US crude benchmark hit a 9-month high of \$84.89 on Thursday and is up about 20% in under two months.

London-based Brent crude also rose modestly for the week. It settled at \$86.81 per barrel, up 41 cents, or 0.5%, on the day, and 0.7% higher on the week. Like WTI, the weekly gain for Brent was the smallest since the oil rally which began seven weeks ago. But in a similar trend to its U.S. counterpart, the global crude benchmark touched a new milestone on Thursday, reaching a seven-month high of \$88.10. In under two months, Brent is up 18%.

After a seven-week run-up, complacency was setting into the rally, enough "sometimes that ... you get a decent pullback", Ed Moya, analyst at online trading platform OANDA, said. But he also said upward momentum was still adequate for "energy traders [to] remain overly confident [that] the oil market will remain tight".

Friday's higher close in crude prices came after the Paris-based IEA estimated that global oil demand, which hit a record high of 103 million barrels per day in June, could scale another peak in August.

On a daily basis, oil demand for this year is forecast to average 102.2 million barrels, the IEA said, with China seen accounting for more than 70% of that growth, despite concerns about the economic health of the world's top oil importer.

The IEA forecast also came amid unilateral production cuts of one million per barrels announced by Saudi Arabia since July - a reduction the kingdom said will last at least through September, after which it could continue and even "deepen".

"There is no justification for Saudi Arabia to keep cutting production month after month when demand from consumers is said to be at such a peak," John Kilduff, partner at New York energy hedge fund Again Capital, told Sputnik, referring to the IEA's demand forecast for this month.

Even so, the IEA revised down its oil outlook for next year, citing a global slowdown and economic worries.

"The global economic outlook remains challenging in the face of soaring interest rates and tighter bank credit, squeezing businesses that are already having to cope with sluggish manufacturing and trade," the agency said.

For 2023, the IEA sees a 2.2-million-barrel-per-day growth. That is less than the 2.44-million-barrels daily growth forecast by OPEC.

For 2024, the IEA forecast world demand growth for oil to slow sharply to 1 million barrels per day, citing lackluster macroeconomic conditions, a post-pandemic recovery running out of steam and the burgeoning use of electric vehicles. It said the post-pandemic rebound in energy consumption would largely be over by next year, and multiple challenges are likely to crop up for the global economy.

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

US to Allow 24 Chinese Weekly Flights Starting Late October, Double Current Number - USDOT

(Updates with more information in paras 5-8; modifies headline, lede)

WASHINGTON, August 12 (Sputnik) - The United States will allow Chinese carriers to operate 24 weekly round-trip passenger flights starting October 29, which is twice as much as the current number, the US Department of Transportation said in a notice provided to Sputnik.

"The US Department of Transportation is further modifying the decision... to permit the above-captioned combination carriers of China to operate additional weekly round-trip scheduled passenger flights to and from the United States," the notice said on Friday.

Effective September 1, the specified Chinese carriers may operate, in the aggregate, a total of eighteen weekly round-trip scheduled passenger flights to and from the United States, the notice said.

Effective October 29, the specified Chinese carriers may operate, in the aggregate, a total of twenty four weekly round-trip scheduled passenger flights to and from the United States, the notice added.

The notice pertains to the following air carriers - Air China; Beijing Capital Airlines Co.; Ltd.; China Eastern Airlines Corporation Ltd.; China Southern Airlines Company Ltd.; Hainan Airlines Holding Co. Ltd.; Sichuan Airlines Co., Ltd.; and Xiamen Airlines.

Reuters reported earlier that China has also agreed to allow US air carriers the same number of passenger roundtrip flights.

Chinese Embassy spokesperson Liu Pengyu told Sputnik that direct flights are essential for increasing mutual visits between the Chinese and American peoples.

"We hope that the restoration of more flights will do good to the flow of people and trade between the two countries," Pengyu said.

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

Blinken Assures Ex-Nigerien President of Commitment to Finding Peaceful Solution in Niger

WASHINGTON, August 12 (Sputnik) –US Secretary of State Antony Blinken reassured former Nigerien president Mohamed Issoufou of Washington's commitment to finding a peaceful resolution to the crisis in Niger, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said.

"The Secretary assured the former president of the United States' continued dedication to finding a peaceful resolution that ensures Niger can remain a strong partner in security and development in the region," State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a statement.

Blinken shared his "grave concern" over the detention of current Nigerien President Mohamed Bazoum and the refusal of the coup leaders to release him.

On July 26, Niger's presidential guard removed Bazoum from power. The guard's commander, Gen. Abdourahmane Tchiani, proclaimed himself the country's new leader. The caretaker National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland closed the country's borders, brushing aside security agreements with France, the country's former colonizer. The borders were partially reopened on August 1. Bazoum and several ministers in his government were detained by the coup leaders.

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

US, China to Double Number of Permitted Passenger Flights - Transportation Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 12 (Sputnik) - The United States and China are doubling the number of weekly passenger flights currently permitted between the two countries, the US Department of Transportation said in a notice provided to Sputnik.

"The US Department of Transportation is further modifying the decision... to permit the above-captioned combination carriers of China to operate additional weekly round-trip scheduled passenger flights to and from the United States," the notice said on Friday.

Effective September 1, the specified Chinese carriers may operate, in the aggregate, a total of eighteen weekly round-trip scheduled passenger flights to and from the United States, the notice said.

Effective October 29, the specified Chinese carriers may operate, in the aggregate, a total of twenty four weekly round-trip scheduled passenger flights to and from the United States, the notice added.

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

Sam Bankman-Fried Sentenced to Jail After Judge Revokes Bail - Reports

WASHINGTON, August 12 (Sputnik) - FTX co-founder Sam Bankman-Fried had his bail revoked on Friday by a federal judge for witness tampering, CNN reported.

"There is probable cause to believe that the defendant has attempted to tamper with witnesses at least twice," US District Court Judge Lewis Kaplan is quoted as saying in the report.

Instead of revoking bail, Bankman-Fried's attorneys had argued for a gag order, which would prohibit the co-founder from making statements about the case, the report added. However, it was deemed insufficient by the judge.

Bankman-Fried is alleged to have repeatedly sought to tamper with witnesses--a violation of bail terms--and prosecutors believe that there are no conditions for release that can appropriately assure that such tampering doesn't happen, the report said.

Founded by Bankman-Fried in 2019, FTX became one of the world's largest cryptocurrency exchanges. It filed for bankruptcy on November 11, with an estimated one million customers facing billions of dollars in losses.

In December, the US government indicted Bankman-Fried in what prosecutors have described as one of the biggest financial fraud cases in US history. Prosecutors allege that FTX violated US campaign finance laws and schemed to misappropriate customer funds

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file

with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, August 12 (Sputnik) -

US-IRAN RELATIONS

* The United States is not engaged in active negotiations with Iran to revive the Iran nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said.

* Kirby confirmed that the United States will unfreeze \$6 billion in Iranian assets as part of a prisoner swap deal, but with restrictions as to how Tehran can spend the funds.

HUNTER BIDEN CASE

* US Attorney General Merrick Garland announced on Friday the appointment of Attorney David Weiss as a special counsel in Hunter Biden's case.

* Weiss will provide a public report at the end of his investigation into Hunter Biden and explaining his decision whether to file charges or not, Garland said.

* US House Committee on Oversight and Accountability Chairman James Comer said the Justice Department is trying to cover-up for the Biden family by designating Weiss as special counsel in Hunter Biden's case.

SYRIA TENSIONS

* The US-led international coalition continues to create dangerous situations in the skies over Syria, Russian Defense Ministry's Center for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in Syria deputy head David Kulit said on Friday

* The US-coalition has breached deconfliction protocols 11 times over the 24 hours, Kulit said.

* Two Russian Su-34 and two Su-35 fighter jets in Syria's Al-Tanf area recorded the impact of guidance systems and activated their defense systems, Kulit said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* The United States is open to the possibility of training Ukrainian pilots to fly F-16 jets if the capacity for training them in Europe is reached, White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said on Friday.

* Ukraine has lost more than 180 soldiers in the Donetsk area over the past 24 hours, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

* Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba urged the country's allies to deliver German-made Taurus long-range missiles and US Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS) to Kiev as soon as possible.

COURT HEARING IN TRUMP CASE

* US District Judge Tanya Chutkan said during a court hearing on Friday that former President Donald Trump has a right to freedom of speech but added it is not absolute and she is determined to issue a protective order as soon as possible, a Sputnik correspondent reported

from the court.

* Chutkan rejected a request by prosecutors for a broad order to prevent Trump from disclosing evidence in the January 6 case, saying she would instead issue a protective order covering sensitive information.

NIGER DEVELOPMENTS

* Russia supports the mediation efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) aimed at finding ways out of the crisis in Niger, but believes a possible military intervention may prolong the conflict and destabilize the region, the Russian Foreign Ministry said on Friday.

* The African Union supports the decisions by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) regarding the situation in Niger, according to the union's communique.

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

Biden Taps Labor Economist Jackson as Education Adviser

WASHINGTON, Aug 11 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden has tapped C. Kirabo Jackson, a labor economist who has called for strong public spending on schools, as an education adviser to occupy a remaining advisory slot in his administration, the White House said in a statement Friday.

A product of Ivy League colleges Yale and Harvard, Jackson's research interests included labor economics, public finance, and applied econometrics, with a focus on the economics of education, the statement said.

"Today, President Biden announced his intent to appoint C. Kirabo Jackson to be a Member of the Council of Economic Advisers," the statement said, adding that the candidate "has explored the role of teachers in the K-12 system, the causal impact of public-school spending on students, methods to measure impacts on students' socio-emotional skills, and other education-related subjects."

US media reports said Jackson's selection suggests public education will be a key thrust for Biden as he pushes for re-election next year, for a new four-year term beginning January 2025.

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

US in Talks With Bulgaria on Additional Gas Storage Capacity for Europe - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - The United States is in talks with Bulgaria regarding additional gas storage capacity in the country as Russia has ceased to be Europe's primary supplier of fossil fuels amid the conflict in Ukraine, Geoffrey Pyatt, assistant secretary for energy

resources at the US Department of State, said on Friday.

"[B]ecause Europe is largely off of Russian pipeline gas at this point, storage capacity becomes imperative in the winters. Historically, Russia was that storage reserve. So, there are opportunities. We're talking to Bulgaria next door, for instance, about some significant storage proposals that Bulgaria is working on," Pyatt said during a discussion hosted by the Atlantic Council.

The Biden administration is also very supportive of Ukraine working jointly with the energy community on the clarification of European regulations and Ukrainian rules to facilitate storage capacity, Pyatt said.

Pyatt added that two weeks ago he had a chance to discuss the issue of storage capacity with the CEO of Ukraine's Naftogaz, Oleksiy Chernyshov, who informed him about the contracts Kiev has secured with leading European oil and gas companies for storage at Ukraine's existing facilities.

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

New US Measure on Investment in China Not Downturn in Relations With Beijing - White House

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - The new US restrictions on American investment in China do not signal a downturn in the relationship between the two countries, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Friday.

Earlier this week, President Joe Biden signed an executive order that authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury to restrict certain US investments into Chinese entities engaged in activities involving national security sensitive technologies in three sectors: semiconductors and microelectronics, quantum information technologies, and certain artificial intelligence systems.

"I would like to push back a little bit on the premise of the question that we've sharpened our language or that we're executing some sort of turn in the relationship, and that is just not so," Kirby said during a press briefing. "We have been very consistent about pushing back on China, in the region and beyond, rhetorically and tangibly where and when we believe it's in our best interest, in the interest of our allies and partners to do so."

The United States will continue to seek to improve its lines of communication with China, according to Kirby.

The US-China relationship is difficult, complex, and the most consequential one in the world, Kirby added.

A senior US administration official told reporters on Wednesday that Biden imposed the new US measures after a thoughtful, deliberate assessment, which included extensive consultations with allies and partners in the US Congress, industry and other stakeholders.

Chinese Embassy spokesperson Liu Pengyu told Sputnik that Beijing is very disappointed Biden moved forward with plans to roll out new restrictions on US economic investment in China.

"The latest investment restrictions will seriously undermine the interests of Chinese and American companies and investors, hinder the normal business cooperation between the two

countries and lower the confidence of the international community in the US business environment," Liu said.

Liu said the US overuses national security concerns to politicize and weaponize trade, scientific and technological issues and to deliberately create obstacles to normalize economic and trade exchanges and technological cooperation.

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

US House Committee Chair Accuses Justice Dept. Of Covering Up Biden's Family

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) – US House Committee on Oversight and Accountability Chairman James Comer said on Friday that the Justice Department is trying to coverup the Joe Biden family by designating Attorney for Delaware David Weiss as special counsel for Biden's son's case.

US Attorney General Merrick Garland announced on Friday the appointment of Weiss as a special counsel in Hunter Biden's case. He added that Weiss would provide a public report at the end of his investigation explaining his decision to file charges or not.

"This move by Attorney General Garland is part of the Justice Department's efforts to attempt a Biden family coverup in light of the House Oversight Committee's mounting evidence of President Joe Biden's role in his family's schemes selling 'the brand' for millions of dollars to foreign nationals," Comer, a Republican from Kentucky, said in a statement.

The lawmaker expressed frustration over the Department's misconduct that allowed "the statute of limitations" to run on some of Hunter Biden's actions. He also noted that the Department's officials refused to follow evidence that could have led to the US president.

"The Biden Justice Department is trying to stonewall congressional oversight as we have presented evidence to the American people about the Biden family's corruption," Comer said. He ensured that his committee would continue its investigation in cooperation with other House committees.

On Wednesday, Comer revealed a third batch of financial documents that showed evidence that the Biden family received millions of dollars from foreign businessmen in Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan during Joe Biden's vice presidency in 2014.

Two previous packages of financial documents were released in March and May. They highlighted Biden's family use of the Robinson Walker, LLC account to receive money from a certain Chinese entity and dealings in Romania as well as the family's partnership with Chinese entities closely tied to the Chinese Communist Party.

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

Canada to Invest Some \$300,000 in Wildfire Fighting Training - Natural Resources Ministry

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - The Canadian government will invest C\$400,000 (\$297,500) in firefighting training amid the historically severe wildfire season in the country, Natural Resources Canada said on Friday.

"Today in North Vancouver, the Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, joined by the Honourable Harjit Sajjan, President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada, announced that \$400,000 through the first phase of the Fighting and Managing Wildfires in a Changing Climate - Training Fund will be provided to the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) to fund a pilot project to help build wildfire fighting capacity and enhance training best practices," the ministry said in a statement.

Under the project, the IAFF will train 25 instructors on how to deliver consistent and effective wildfire response training. The IAFF will also provide 15 courses across five different locations in western Canada, training up to 325 structural firefighting personnel on urban interface wildfire training.

The new project is in complement to Ottawa's efforts to increase its wildland firefighting resources by 1,000 over the next five years and will build upon a recent funding announcement directed at training 300 firefighters and 125 fire guardians from indigenous communities, the statement said.

Canada's 2023 wildfire season has already been declared as the worst in the country's history, with 13.5 million hectares of land burned as of Thursday, according to the Canadian Inter-Agency Forest Fire Center.

The latest data shows that 1,126 wildfires are raging across the country, 734 of which are out of control. Most of the fires are burning in the western part of Canada.

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

CORRECTION - US on Track to Meet Target of Delivering 50 BCM of LNG to Europe - State Dept

(corrects title in headline)

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - The United States is on schedule to meet or even surpass the targeted number of delivering 50 or more BCM of US LNG to Europe, Geoffrey R. Pyatt, Assistant Secretary for Energy Resources at the U.S. Department of State said on Friday.

"We are on track to meet or exceed the target that we set in the US-EU task force of delivering 50 BCM or more of US LNG to Europe," Pyatt said at the Atlantic Council event.

After Russia began its special military operation in Ukraine, the West actively searched for ways to limit Moscow's energy-related income, notably from oil and gas. Moreover, the Ukraine conflict also stopped the flow of Russian gas to Europe, which led to a spike in energy prices and shortages, forcing countries to look for alternatives, in particular, the United States and its liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports.

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

US on Track to Meet Target of Delivering 50 BCM of LNG to Europe - State Dept

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - The United States is on schedule to meet or even surpass the targeted number of delivering 50 or more BCM of US LNG to Europe, Geoffrey R. Pyatt, Assistant Secretary for Energy Resources at the U.S. Department of State said on Friday.

"We are on track to meet or exceed the target that we set in the US-EU task force of delivering 50 BCM or more of US LNG to Europe," Pyatt said at the Atlantic Council event.

After Russia began its special military operation in Ukraine, the West actively searched for ways to limit Moscow's energy-related income, notably from oil and gas. Moreover, the Ukraine conflict also stopped the flow of Russian gas to Europe, which led to a spike in energy prices and shortages, forcing countries to look for alternatives, in particular, the United States and its liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports.

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

FBI Confirms Sending Agents to Ecuador to Help Probe Murder of Presidential Candidate

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - The FBI confirmed to Sputnik on Friday that the agency is sending agents to Ecuador to assist authorities in investigating the murder of Ecuadorian presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio in Quito.

"The FBI, through our Legal Attache Office in Bogota, is assisting our counterparts in Ecuador with their investigation into the death of Fernando Villavicencio," the FBI said in a statement.

The FBI declined to comment further on the matter due to the ongoing nature of this investigation.

Villavicencio was shot dead and nine other people were injured during the attack at an election rally on Wednesday. Local media reported that Villavicencio had received several death threats before the incident.

A prime suspect in the assassination died from gunshot wounds received during his arrest, the Ecuadorian General Prosecutor's Office said, adding that six people had been detained in connection with the incident.

Diana Atamaint, the president of the National Electoral Council of Ecuador, said Thursday that the date of Ecuador's early presidential election scheduled for August 20 would remain unchanged despite the assassination of Villavicencio. She said the country's armed forces would guarantee the security of Ecuadorians throughout the planned electoral process, adding that the protection for the remaining presidential candidates would be doubled, and escort would also be assigned to election officials.

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

US Open to Training Ukrainian F-16 Pilots if Europe's Training Capacity Reached - Kirby

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - The United States is open to the possibility of training Ukrainian pilots to fly F-16s if the capacity for training them in Europe is reached, White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said on Friday.

"If the capacity for training in Europe is reached, we are certainly open to doing the training for Ukrainian pilots here in the United States," Kirby told reporters.

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

Orthodox Priest Says Plans to Fight Wildfires in Hawaii as First Responder

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - Alexander Leong, an Orthodox priest who serves in a Christian mission in the Hawaiian island of Maui once a month, told Sputnik on Friday that he intends to go there to help fight the severe wildfires.

The Hawaiian authorities said earlier on Friday that the death toll from the wildfires, fueled by Hurricane Dora, has increased to 55.

"I am not officially a first responder, but I am eager to help in the disaster relief efforts in any capacity I am able to," Alexander told Sputnik.

The small mission on Maui does not have a full time priest, so Leong, who presides over the Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church on the Hawaiian island of Oahu, usually visits Maui for services once a month.

Leong pointed out that the next service in the mission on Maui is scheduled for August 26 and he intends to conduct it despite the wildfires.

Leong said he continues to reach out to our faithful there but cautioned that the situation there is "devastating."

"Some people cannot be reached due to cell towers, fiber optics and phone lines being burned. But all of them seem to be okay," he said.

Leong explained that the mission serves 35 families in two places that are being rented and effectively serve as churches.

"I believe the fires have not impacted the churches that we use there," he said.

The local authorities have reported that as many as 1,000 people remain unaccounted for, with Maui Police noting that officials cannot confirm the exact number.

Strong winds from Hurricane Dora spread strong fires on Maui in what is described as the deadliest wildfire in the United States since 2018.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file

with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Kirby Says \$6Bln in Iranian Assets to Be Unfrozen in Prisoner Swap Deal With Restrictions

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - US National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby confirmed on Friday that the United States will unfreeze \$6 billion in Iranian assets as part of a prisoner swap deal, but with restrictions as to how Tehran can spend the funds.

"It is six [billion dollars]," Kirby said during a press briefing. "Think it's important to remember that there will be restrictions on what Iran would be able to do with any of those funds."

According to Kirby, Iran will be able to spend the money only to pay for food and medical equipment that would not have a dual military use.

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

US Not Engaged in Active Negotiations With Iran on Nuclear Deal - White House

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - The United States is not engaged in active negotiations with Iran to revive the Iran nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said.

"We are not in active negotiations with Iran akin to the Iran deal," Kirby said during a press briefing on Friday.

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

RECAST - US Congressman Files Impeachment Resolution on President Biden

(Recasts to reflect that the resolution has been filed today, not to be filed tomorrow; adds edits throughout)

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - US Congressman Greg Steube has filed an impeachment resolution on President Joe Biden for his alleged role in bribery, extortion, obstruction of justice, fraud and financial involvement in drugs and prostitution, according to the document published on Friday.

"Joseph Robinette Biden, Jr. has undermined the integrity of his office, has brought disrepute on the Presidency, has betrayed his trust as President, and has acted in a manner subversive of the rule of law and justice, to the manifest injury of the people of the United States," the resolution reads. "Wherefore, Joseph Robinette Biden, Jr., by such conduct, warrants impeachment and trial, and removal from office and disqualification to hold and enjoy any office of honor, trust, or profit under the United States."

The resolution lists four articles of impeachment, including abuse of power, bribery, extortion,

fraud, obstruction of justice, and financial involvement in drugs and prostitution.

On Thursday, Steube said in an interview that he hopes US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy will start the impeachment process when Congress returns from the summer recess.

Also on Thursday, Steube previewed his new legislation, the Hunter Act, which is expected to be published later on Friday.

Steube said he designed the Hunter Act to help get to the bottom of the cocaine story when a package with the drug was found at the White House, because he alleged the Secret Service is doing everything possible to cover up the Biden family's actions.

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

Illegal Crossings on US-Mexico Border Expected to Increase in Coming Months - CBP Union

EL PASO, August 11 (Sputnik) - The number of illegal crossings by migrants on the US-Mexico border is expected to increase in the coming months following a brief slowdown after the Title 42 border expulsion policy came to an end, US National Border Patrol Council Vice President Chris Cabrera told Sputnik on Friday.

"I'm not sure how high the numbers will climb, but realistically, with so many on the border waiting to cross, I imagine it will get busier in the coming months," Cabrera said.

According to Cabrera, illegal border crossings have recently increased along the Texas-Mexico border following the short wind down of the migrant surge.

The Title 42 public health policy expired in mid-May. 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.

The United States anticipated a massive surge of migrants would attempt to cross into the country illegally once it was lifted, but the number of illegal crossings instead slowed down.

The largest monthly number of illegal crossings on the southern border this year is so far in April at 211,999. The following month, in June, the number of illegal crossings dropped to 144,571, according to US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) data.

CBP has not released the number of illegal border crossings by migrants for July, however, media footage on social media from correspondents and Texas officials has revealed increased activity on the US-Mexico border.

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

UN Appreciates States' Support in Negotiating Release of 5 Staff in Yemen - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, August 11 (Sputnik) - The United Nations appreciates the role of several states, including Oman, in the negotiation process that resulted in the release of five UN personnel in Yemen, UN spokesperson Farhan Haq said on Friday.

"It took a lot of effort and we certainly appreciate the supporting roles that have been played by several member states in these discussions, including the support of Oman," Haq said during a press briefing.

Earlier on Friday, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomed the release of the five UN Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS) personnel, who were abducted in Yemen on February 11, 2022.

The five UN personnel include Akm Sufiul Anam, Mazen Bawazir, Bakeel Al-Mahdi, Mohammed Al-Mulaiki and Khaled Mokhtar Sheikh.

8/11/2023 12:56:52 PM -04:00

Hunter Biden Case at Impasse, No Plea Deal or Diversion Agreement Reached - Court Filing

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - The defense and the prosecution in the Hunter Biden criminal case are at an impasse since the last hearing on July 26 and have not reached a plea deal or a diversion agreement, a court document revealed on Friday.

"Following additional negotiations after the hearing held on July 26, 2023, the parties are at an impasse and are not in agreement on either a plea agreement or a diversion agreement. Therefore, the government believes the Court's briefing order should be vacated," the document said.

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

Newly Appointed US Special Counsel on Hunter Biden Case to Provide Public Report - Garland

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - Newly appointed US special counsel David Weiss will provide a public report at the end of his investigation into Hunter Biden explaining his decision to file charges or not, US Attorney General Merrick Garland said on Friday.

"As with each special counsel who has served since I've taken office, I am committed to making as much of his report public as is consistent with legal requirements and department policy," said Garland during public remarks.

Garland added that as special counsel, Weiss will continue to serve as US Attorney for the District of Delaware.

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

Cameroonian Journalist Ateba Sues White House Spokesperson Over Freedom of Press Violation

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - Cameroonian journalist Simon Ateba filed a lawsuit against White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre over an alleged violation of press freedom with respect to him and other correspondents covering the US president, according to a court filing published on Friday.

Ateba owns the news website Today News Africa and covers the White House as its correspondent.

In the complaint, Ateba states that the US Secret Service terminated on July 31 his pass to access the White House campus without any reason or explanation. However, the journalist says he believes this decision is due to the fact he repeatedly asked Jean-Pierre uncomfortable questions and also tried to shout out his questions when she refused his right to ask them.

Ateba also says in his complaint that the White House recently changed the guidelines for obtaining passes, which resulted in 442 reporters losing them, and asks the court to declare the new credentialing rules unconstitutional.

Ateba, who has been covering the White House since 2018 and has possessed a pass since February 2021, also points to the White House's refusal to communicate with him and answer questions, which negatively affects his ability to inform readers.

"The press' does not just include a small class of elite journalists, credentialed by one another. The First Amendment's guarantees protect the public's right to engage in constitutionally protected press activity," the lawsuit reads. "Indeed, the inclusion of the words 'the press' in the First Amendment does not confer upon [journalists] a title of nobility."

Ateba asks the court to declare illegal the new guidelines for issuing passes and asks for an injunction or declaring the decision of the US Secret Service to annul his pass to be unlawful.

The second defendant in the case is US Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle.

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

US Attorney General Says Appoints David Weiss as Special Counsel in Hunter Biden Case

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - US Attorney General Merrick Garland announced on Friday the appointment of Attorney David Weiss as a special counsel in Hunter Biden's case.

"I am here today to announce the appointment of David Weiss as a special counsel consistent with the Department of Justice regulations governing such matters," Garland said in a verbal statement.

Garland specified that in 2019 Weiss as a US attorney began investigating allegations of certain criminal conduct by Robert Hunter Biden, among others.

The investigation has been recently referenced in federal criminal proceedings in the district of Delaware and remains ongoing, Garland added.

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

UPDATE - US Judge Says Issuing Protective Order in Jan. 6 Case That Only Covers Sensitive Material

(Adds details in paras 6-13)

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - US District Judge Tanya Chutkan on Friday rejected a request by prosecutors for a broad order to prevent former President Donald Trump from disclosing evidence in the January 6 case, saying she would instead issue a protective order covering "sensitive" information.

Last week, Special Counsel Jack Smith requested a broad protective order that would have prevented Trump from disclosing any grand jury testimony, documents or other materials that his team provides to defense lawyers in the case.

But Chutkan at Friday's hearing said that she was not persuaded that prosecutors had shown good cause to block Trump from talking about non-sensitive materials in the case. The protective order will therefore only cover grand jury testimony and other materials that are deemed sensitive.

Before issuing the order, Chutkan stressed that she intends to keep politics out of the case and emphasized that Trump's ongoing political campaign would not influence her decision.

She also said that while Trump has a First Amendment right to free speech, this right is not absolute.

She added that she would not address his latest statements but cautioned to take special care with public statements going forward.

Chutkan compromised with the prosecution and defense over Trump's review of sensitive materials.

While Trump will not need to have a representative of the legal team to sit with him when he looks over sensitive grand jury materials, he will not be able to take any notes or have any device that can make copies of the materials.

Chutkan sided with the prosecution to designate all recordings, transcripts and evidence of witness interviews as sensitive.

The defense also asked the prosecution not to hide how much sensitive info they have and inquired when it would be available for review.

The prosecution said that there was at least 11.6 million pages of information that the defense would have by the end of the day when the judge issues the protective order.

In conclusion, the judge noted that she last night denied a prosecution motion to file something under seal as she intends for the case to be as public as possible.

The two sides agreed with the judge's proposal to hold the next hearing on classified information on August 28.

Trump faces criminal charges in the case including conspiracy against rights and conspiracy to defraud the United States for his alleged role in attempting to overturn the 2020 election results through the events at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, and related activities.

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

US Judge Says Issuing Protective Order in Jan. 6 Case That Only Covers Sensitive Material

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - US District Judge Tanya Chutkan on Friday rejected a request by prosecutors for a broad order to prevent former President Donald Trump from disclosing evidence in the January 6 case, saying she would instead issue a protective order covering "sensitive" information.

Last week, Special Counsel Jack Smith requested a broad protective order that would have prevented Trump from disclosing any grand jury testimony, materials, documents or other materials that his team provides to defense lawyers in the case.

But Chutkan at Wednesday's hearing said that she was not persuaded that prosecutors had shown good cause to block Trump from talking about non-sensitive materials in the case. The protective order will therefore only cover grand jury testimony and other materials that are deemed sensitive.

Before issuing the order, Chutkan stressed that she intends to keep politics out of the case and emphasized Trump's ongoing political campaign would not influence her decision.

She also said that while Trump has a First Amendment right to free speech, this right is not absolute.

Trump faces criminal charges in the case including conspiracy against rights and conspiracy to defraud the United States for his alleged role in attempting to overturn the 2020 election results through the events at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, and related activities.

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

UN Chief Welcomes Conclusion of Oil Transfer From Damaged Tanker Safer - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, August 11 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomes the conclusion of the transfer of oil from the damaged tanker FSO Safer off the coast of Yemen, UN spokesperson Farhan Haq said on Friday.

"The Secretary-General welcomes the news that the ship-to-ship transfer of oil from the FSO Safer to the Yemen replacement vessel has been safely concluded today, avoiding what could have been a monumental environmental and humanitarian catastrophe," Haq said in a statement.

Guterres also expressed gratitude to the Yemen authorities for their support in the transfer of oil from the damaged tanker, the statement added.

In addition, five United Nations staff members were released in Yemen earlier on Friday after being held in detention for 18 months.

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

US Sanctions 4 Russian Businessmen, Top Industry Group - Treasury

(Adds quotes, details in paras 3-7)

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - The US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control sanctioned four Russian businessmen and the country's top industry group on Friday, according to a notice on its website.

The sanctioned individuals include businessmen Petr Aven, Mikhail Fridman, German Khan, and Alexey Kuzmichev. The Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (RSPP) was also placed under sanctions.

"Today, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) issued a new round of sanctions targeting prominent members of Russia's financial elite, as well as a Russian business association," the statement said.

All four of the targeted individuals have served on the supervisory board of the Alfa Group Consortium, which OFAC described as one of the largest financial and investment conglomerates in Russia. They also were previously sanctioned by Australia, Canada, the European Union, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, the statement added.

The US Treasury pointed out that RSPP is sanctioned for its involvement in Russia's technology sector and activities related to Moscow's response to Western sanctions.

"The United States will continue to take all appropriate action to hold accountable those who enable and profit from Russia's war against Ukraine," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a separate statement.

The action blocks all property and interests in property of designated persons above that are in the United States or in the possession or control of US persons. American citizens are prohibited to conduct transactions with them, the Department of the Treasury said.

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

DeSantis Confirms Would Use Drone Strikes Against Mexican Cartels if Elected President

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - Florida Governor Ron DeSantis confirmed his stance that he would use drone strikes against Mexican drug cartels if he won the 2024 US presidential election, NBC News reported on Friday.

DeSantis told a crowd of supporters on Thursday that he absolutely reserves the right to use drones to strike Mexican cartels if they invade the United States and kill Americans.

"I said I would use whatever force we need to defend the country," DeSantis told NBC News when asked to clarify Thursday's remarks. "We'd be willing to lean in against them and we reserve the right to defend our country."

DeSantis also reiterated his stance on supporting the use of deadly force against migrants suspected of trafficking drugs.

The Florida governor emphasized in his presidential campaign and has been particularly vocal on the issue of illegal immigration into the United States. DeSantis, but also other contenders for the Republican presidential nomination, has criticized the Biden administration for its lax border

policy, which has allowed well over three million illegal immigrants to enter the country.

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

Attorney Warns Trump's Fundraised Money Could Be Frozen as Part of Ongoing Probe - Reports

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - Former President and 2024 presidential hopeful Donald Trump may see his fundraised money frozen as part of the ongoing criminal probe against him, Newsweek reported on Friday.

The funds collected by Trump after the 2020 elections could be frozen as part of Special Counsel Jack Smith probe targeting the former president and his fundraising efforts, the report said, citing former FBI general counsel Andrew Weissmann.

The report said Weissmann's comments were in relation to media reports on Smith's continued questioning of individuals connected to the funds raised by Trump as part of the Save America political action committee amid the federal probe into the origin of the funds and whether they were collected under false pretenses.

If Smith decides to proceed with the probe on Trump's fundraised money, the funds could be frozen in a pretrial seizure because the government would have to prove the fraud accusations levied against Trump, the report said.

Trump has repeatedly condemned the criminal proceedings against him as weaponization of the US justice system with an intent to prevent him from running in the 2024 US presidential election.

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

Judge Chutkan Says Trump's Free Speech Right Not Absolute, to Issue Protective Order ASAP

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - US District Judge Tanya Chutkan said during a court hearing on Friday that former President Donald Trump has a right to freedom of speech but stressed that it is not absolute and she is determined to issue a protective order as soon as possible, a Sputnik correspondent reported from the court.

The hearing on the Parties' Respective Protective Order Proposals called to keep evidence from the public in the criminal case of Trump's alleged role in efforts to overturn the 2020 US presidential election is taking place on the prosecutor Jack Smith's request.

Trump is not present at the room as Chutkan waived his appearance at the hearing, which kicked off at 10:00 a.m. (14:00 GMT) in Washington.

Prosecutors are requesting that the court restrict all of their produced documents without regard for their relative sensitivity. Trump's attorneys instead propose shielding only sensitive materials from public view.

The request was filed with the US District Court for the District of Columbia, where Trump faces criminal charges including conspiracy against rights and conspiracy to defraud the United States for his alleged role in attempting to overturn the 2020 election results through the events at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, and related activities.

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

Russia's Luna-25 Mission Demonstrates Global Interest in Understanding Moon - NASA

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - Russia's Luna-25 mission showcases the global interest in better understanding the Moon, a NASA spokesperson told Sputnik on Friday.

A Soyuz 2.1b rocket carrying Russia's first lunar mission in 47 years, Luna-25, launched from the Vostochny Cosmodrome in Russia's Far East earlier on Friday. The module has already separated from the Fregat upper stage and has been put on the flight trajectory to the Moon.

"The Luna-25 mission is the latest in a series of international missions to the Moon - notably following the successful launch of the Chandrayaan-3 mission by our Indian colleagues in July. These missions demonstrate the global interest in contributing to the scientific understanding of the Moon."

The Luna-25 module is scheduled to enter lunar orbit at an altitude of 100 kilometers (62 miles) on August 16 and make a soft landing at Moon's South Pole in the area north of the Boguslawsky crater on August 21.

Luna-25 is part of the Russian lunar program for the exploration and practical use of the Moon and its orbit to establish a fully automated lunar base.

Yuri Borisov, the head of Russian state corporation Roscosmos, said earlier on Friday that the Luna-26 automatic landing module will be launched to the Moon in 2027, the Luna-27 mission will fly to the Moon in 2028 and the Luna-28 module will take off after 2030.

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

US Sanctions 4 Russian Businessmen, Top Industry Group - Treasury

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - The US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control sanctioned four Russian businessmen and the country's top industry group on Friday, according to a notice on its website.

The individuals include businessmen Petr Aven, Mikhail Fridman, German Khan, and Alexey Kuzmichev. The Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs was also placed under sanctions.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file

with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Congressman Says Intends to File Impeachment Resolution on President Biden on Saturday

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - US Congressman Greg Steube announced on Friday that he is planning to submit an impeachment resolution on President Joe Biden for his alleged role in bribery, extortion, obstruction of justice, fraud and financial involvement in drugs and prostitution.

"Tomorrow, I intend on filing impeachment resolution on Joe Biden for bribery, for extortion, obstruction of justice, fraud, financial involvement in drugs, and prostitution," Steube said in an interview. "You have witness testimony, you have financial records, you have the laptop, you have text messages, you have phone conversations, you have all of this evidence now to corroborate and support impeachment articles against the President."

Steube said he hopes US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy will start the impeachment process when Congress returns after the summer recess.

The congressman also previewed his new legislation, the Hunter Act, which will also be published on Saturday.

Steube said he designed the Hunter Act to help get to the bottom of the cocaine story when a package with the drug was found at the White House.

The Secret Service is doing everything possible to cover up the Biden family's actions, Steube added.

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

US Cyber Safety Review Board to Focus on Cloud Computing - Homeland Security

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - The US Department of Homeland Security's Cyber Safety Review Board (CSRB) plans to conduct its next review on the malicious targeting of cloud computing environments, Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas announced Friday.

"Organizations of all kinds are increasingly reliant on cloud computing to deliver services to the American people, which makes it imperative that we understand the vulnerabilities of that technology," Mayorkas said in a release.

He added that cloud security was the backbone of some of the US's most critical systems, ranging from e-commerce platforms to communication tools.

The review will focus on how government, industry, and cloud service providers (CSPs) should strengthen identity management and authentication in the cloud. It will assess the recent Microsoft Exchange Online intrusion reported last month and conduct a broader review of issues relating to cloud-based identity and authentication infrastructure.

The board will develop recommendations to improve cybersecurity practices for both cloud computing customers and CSPs, with the report submitted to US President Joe Biden via

Mayorkas and Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency Director Jen Easterly.

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

RPT - Musk Says Cage Fight With Zuckerberg Set, Will Take Place in Rome

(Repeats to remove repetition in lede)

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - X owner Elon Musk said on Friday that his fight with Meta (banned in Russia as an extremist organization) CEO Mark Zuckerberg will take place at an "epic location" in Rome and will be live-streamed on both platforms.

"The fight will be managed by my and Zuck's foundations (not UFC). Livestream will be on this platform and Meta. Everything in camera frame will be ancient Rome, so nothing modern at all. I spoke to the PM [Prime Minister] of Italy and Minister of Culture. They have agreed on an epic location," Musk said in a post on X, formally known as Twitter.

Musk noted that the fight will pay respect to the past and present of Italy with all earnings going to veterans.

Musk also tweeted "Gladiator" earlier in the day, hinting that the epic location in Rome is the Colosseum.

Talk of a possible cage fight between the two tech moguls has been going on since June when they started exchanging biting messages on social media after Musk challenged Zuckerberg to a "cage match."

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

Musk Says Cage Fight With Zuckerberg Set, Will Take Place in Rome

WASHINGTON, August 11 (Sputnik) - X owner Elon Musk said on Friday that his fight with Meta (banned in Russia as an extremist organization) CEO Mark Zuckerberg will take place at an "epic location" in Rome and will be live-streamed on both platforms.

"The fight will be managed by my and Zuck's foundations (not UFC). Livestream will be on this platform and Meta. Everything in camera frame will be ancient Rome, so nothing modern at all. I spoke to the PM [Prime Minister] of Italy and Minister of Culture. They have agreed on an epic location," Musk said in a post on X, formally known as Twitter.

Musk noted that the fight will pay respect to the past and present of Italy with all earnings going to veterans.

Musk also tweeted "Gladiator" earlier in the day, hinting that the epic location in Rome is the Colosseum.

Talk of a possible cage fight between the two tech moguls has been going on since June when they started exchanging biting messages on social media after Musk challenged Zuckerberg to a "cage match."

