

Wires - 9/1/20 - Tuesday

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Most Latin Countries Back US Pick to Lead Inter-American Development Bank - Official

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - Most Latin American countries support President Donald Trump's nomination of Mauricio Claver-Carone to be the first American to lead the Inter-American Development Bank, Acting Assistant Secretary for the State Department's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, Michael Kozak, said in a conference call on Tuesday. "Most of the Latin countries... they're supporting Mauricio and some of them have co-nominated him," Kozak said.

Mauricio currently leads Latin America policy at the US National Security Council.

Kozak said Claver will help bring new energy and some of the best economic experts to the IDB to refocus efforts to spur economic growth in the region.

Colombia, Brazil and 15 other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean support Mauricio's nomination, according to media reports. Other nations, such as Argentina, Mexico, Chile and Costa Rica have criticized Mauricio's nomination, fearing the Trump administration will undermine the institution as countries seek to recover from the economic impact of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

The Inter-American Development Bank provides about \$13 billion for countries throughout the region every year.

Kozak denied reports that the EU has supported delaying the election due to COVID-19, adding that it has no role in the Latin American region. Kozak said there's a handful of Latin American countries that want to delay the election but have not presented an alternative option.

In July, the IDB's Board of Executive Directors announced that the election of president will take place on September 12 and 13.

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US Will Not Joint WHO Effort to Develop Global COVID-19 Vaccine - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - The Trump administration will not join a global program to develop a new COVID-19 vaccine in part because it is led by the World Health Organization (WHO), The Washington Post reported on Tuesday.

More than 170 countries are holding discussions to set up a COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (Covax) Facility to accelerate the development and testing of a new vaccine and manufacture and deliver it to the most at risk sectors in every nation, the report said.

The plan is spearheaded by the WHO, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and the Gavi vaccine alliance and it is supported by Japan and Germany and the

European Commission, the report added.

Washington pulled out of the WHO earlier this year after claiming the body helped China conceal information about the origins of COVID-19. The WHO said its January 30 emergency declaration gave the United States sufficient time to prepare while Beijing has said it has been transparent about the details of the virus's origins.

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Trump Says Massive Group of Federal Agents Could End Portland Protests in Under 1 Hour

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump on Tuesday said a massive group of federal law enforcement agents could end the violent protests in Portland, Oregon in less than sixty minutes.

"As they are watching Portland or Chicago or New York or any one of other cities that we are talking about, but Portland, probably, would be so easy - maybe that would be the first one because I see it every night, it's on the news, it's burning - they are always planning games," Trump said amid a trip to Kenosha, Wisconsin. "But we are ready, willing and able to send in, you know, massive group of people that are really highly trained... And we could solve that problem in less than an hour in Portland."

The president also expressed hope that the Portland authorities will call him for assistance, and warned that at some point the federal government may have to do something on its own. "So, I hope they call. Eventually they'll call," he added. "And at some point, Bill, we'll just have to do it ourselves. We are going to have to do something that, I think, the people will be extremely happy with. Maybe the mayor won't, maybe the Governor won't but I don't know if they know what they are doing."

Protesters set a building in the US city of Portland on fire overnight into Tuesday, prompting police to declare the situation a riot and force the crowd to leave the area. The police have warned that those who refuse to stop rioting and leave the area will be arrested. In addition, the police may use tear gas and batons against the protesters.

A New York Times correspondent tweeted that protesters set a fire outside the building where Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler supposedly lives.

Nationwide anti-racism protests, violence and social unrest erupted after police in Kenosha, Wisconsin shot Jacob Blake, a 29-year old Black man, in the back seven times. The incident, which occurred on August 23, left Blake paralyzed. According to the Kenosha Professional Police Association, Blake forcefully resisted arrest.

Protests against police brutality and racism started in numerous cities in the United States after the death of African American George Floyd in police custody in Minneapolis on May 25. However, many of the protests turned into riots complete with violence against police and civilians and acts of arson, looting and vandalism, especially after subsequent deaths of African Americans in encounters with police.

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Libya Conflict Frames Talks Between Pompeo, Moroccan Counterpart - US State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo sought continued support from Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita for UN-brokered efforts to end Libya's conflict while praising Morocco's efforts to fight regional terrorism, the State Department said in a readout of their conversation on Tuesday.

"Secretary Pompeo encouraged the Moroccan government to continue to support UN-facilitated efforts to resolve the conflict in Libya and end its destabilizing effects throughout the region. The Secretary highlighted Moroccan efforts in the shared fight against terrorism and the role Morocco plays in preventing violent extremism," the readout said.

The event also featured a ceremony in which US Ambassador to Morocco David Fischer and Morocco Ambassador Anas Khaled signed an agreement extending diplomatic immunity to officers and employees at the two nations' respective consular missions in Casablanca and New York.

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Trump Says Over \$42Mln Approved in Support for Law Enforcement in Wisconsin

WASHINGTON, Sept 1 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump on Tuesday announced over \$42 million in federal aid for law enforcement in the state of Wisconsin, praising their work in quelling riots that erupted in the city of Kenosha after police shot and severely wounded African-American Jacob Blake.

"We're going to be providing over \$42 million to support public safety statewide, including direct support for law enforcement, and funding for additional prosecutors to punish criminals and for resources to provide services to victims of crime," Trump said at a gathering of law enforcement representatives in Kenosha.

On August 23, police was called on the scene of a domestic disturbance call and shot Blake seven times in his back as he tried to enter his car. Blake survived, but is paralyzed from the shoulders down.

The riots that erupted in Kenosha came on the heels of nationwide protests caused by the death in police custody of another African American, George Floyd, in Minneapolis on May 25.

Trump has said he might meet the Blake family in Kenosha and that he would like to meet the family's pastor with whom he already spoke over the telephone.

Kenosha Mayor John Antaramian, a Democrat, had appealed to Trump not to visit the city at this time given the possibility for additional unrest.

However, Trump said while there may be renewed unrest during his visit to Kenosha, it will be very promptly put out by law enforcement.

The US president also said Kenosha law enforcement would get an additional \$1 million for having performed "incredibly" during a rough week for the city.

The administration has also approved \$4 million for business owners in Kenosha whose premises were burned down or looted, Trump added.

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No UNSC Resolution Proposed to Extend Iran Sanctions Relief as Deadline Passes - President

UNITED NATIONS, September 1 (Sputnik) - None of the UN Security Council member states have introduced a resolution to continue sanctions relief with respect to Iran after the expiration of the deadline to do so, UN Security Council president for the month of September Abdou Abarray told reporters on Tuesday.

"As of today, I have not received any proposal for resolution in relation to this process," Abarray said when asked whether such a draft resolution had been submitted. "If there had to be a notification, it should have been done yesterday at the very latest."

August 31 was the deadline to put forward a UN Security Council resolution to extend the sanctions relief with respect to Iran - ten days after the formal notification of Iran's significant non-performance with the 2015 nuclear agreement was sent by the United States.

On August 20, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo sent a letter to the UN Security Council then President Dian Triansyah Djani requesting the invoking of the nuclear agreement's snapback sanctions mechanism under UN Resolution 2231.

Pompeo said the United States, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, will use its veto power to prevent such document from being adopted to extend sanctions relief.

However, Djani said last week that he was not able to take further action regarding the United States' attempt to re-impose all United Nations sanctions against Iran.

When asked about his position, the current president said that nothing has changed since then, and the UN Security Council is "staying where we are right now."

The majority of the UN Security Council members, including Russia, China, France, Germany, South Africa and the United Kingdom, said they would not support the United States' move to snapback sanctions on Iran since the United States unilaterally withdrew from the nuclear agreement in 2018.

The JCPOA, signed in 2015 by Iran, China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union, stipulates the removal of international sanctions from Tehran in exchange for it scaling down its nuclear program. The deal was then enshrined in UN Security Council Resolution 2231 that includes the provision on the five-year arms embargo.

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US Gulf of Mexico Oil Output Down 28% in Hurricane Aftermath - Interior Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - More than 28 percent of oil production from the US Gulf of Mexico, accounting for 525,099 barrels per day, has been shut as a precaution due to last week's Hurricane Laura, the US Department of Interior said on Tuesday.

"Approximately 28.38 percent of the current oil production in the Gulf of Mexico remains shut-in," the department's Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement said in a statement. "After the storm has passed, facilities will be inspected. Once all standard checks have been completed, production from undamaged facilities will be brought back online immediately. Facilities sustaining damage may take longer to bring back online."

Crude production aside, the storm also idled approximately 24.96 percent of the natural gas output in the Gulf of Mexico, the statement said.

Laura, one of the strongest US hurricanes in more than a century, made landfall between east Texas and west Louisiana as a Category 4 hurricane at pre-dawn Thursday before turning into a tropical storm. The storm, which killed at least 16 people and damaged countless property, also scored a near-direct hit on one refinery in Louisiana processing 769,000 barrels per day of crude.

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Trump Met by Protesters, Supporters as He Tours Area Damaged by Kenosha Riots

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump was greeted by large numbers of both protesters and supporters as he toured areas damaged in recent riots in the Wisconsin city of Kenosha, White House pool reports said on Tuesday.

Trump arrived in Kenosha earlier on Monday to meet with law enforcement officers and business owners who suffered during last week's protests.

According to the pool report, Trump was joined by US Attorney General William Barr and Acting US Secretary of Homeland Security Chad Wolf. The White House pool reports said that a large group of protesters had their middle fingers pointed at motorcade.

The motorcade passed at least one person along the route wearing a "Make Kenosha Great Again" t-shirt. There was also a large sign that said "Trump Sucks," according to the pool report. Trump's supporters also gathered along the route, the pool report said, with one person holding a sign that said, "Thank you for saving our town."

Kenosha, a city of some 100,000 people, was ravaged by riots after police shot and severely wounded African American Jacob Blake.

The local authorities asked Trump earlier to delay visiting Kenosha to prevent new tensions.

Trump said his plans are "to say hello to law-enforcement and the National Guard," but added

that he does not know yet whether he will meeting with the Blake family.

However, Trump said he will speak with Blake family's pastor.

White House spokesperson Kayleigh McEnany said earlier that Trump denounces all sorts of violence and believes that police, contrary to protesters' demands, should be fully funded and grow in numbers.

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UK Citizen Pleads Guilty of Trying to Sell Iran Power Generating Equipment - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - A 45-year-old citizen of the United Kingdom admitted he tried to ship an electricity generating turbine engine to Iran by pleading guilty to charges of evading US sanctions, the Justice Department said in a press release on Tuesday.

"[Colin] Fisher, 45, admitted in United States District Court in Pensacola that from October 1, 2017, to August 7, 2020, he worked to violate the Iranian embargo by attempting to export a Solar Mars 90 S turbine core engine and parts from the United States for delivery to an end user in Iran," the release said. "This included participating in fraudulent invoicing and using coded language with conspirators to communicate about the illegal transactions."

Law enforcement authorities managed to seize the turbine and spare parts before the equipment was shipped, apparently with the intent of providing energy needed by oil fields of Iran, the release said.

Fisher was arrested by federal agents when he arrived in Pensacola in the state of Florida from the United Arab Emirates earlier this month to consummate the sale, the release added.

Turbine Resources International CEO James Meharg, who was convicted earlier of conspiring with Fisher, is currently serving a 40-month federal prison sentence, according to the release.

Fisher faces up to 20 years imprisonment for violating sanctions and up to 10 years for attempted smuggling at a sentencing hearing scheduled for November 10, the release said.

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Facebook, Twitter Remove 13 Russia-Linked Accounts

(Updates with details in paras 3-8)

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - Facebook has removed 13 allegedly Russia-linked accounts focused on affairs in the United States, the United Kingdom, Algeria and Egypt, the company said in a statement on Tuesday.

"We removed a small network of 13 Facebook accounts and two Pages linked to individuals associated with past activity by the Russian Internet Research Agency (IRA)," the statement said. "This activity focused primarily on the US, UK, Algeria and Egypt, in addition to other English-speaking countries and countries in the Middle East and North Africa."

Facebook investigated the matter after a tip from the FBI and found that the fake accounts were used to direct people to a fake news site called PeaceData, the statement said.

Some of the fake accounts posed as news editors from various countries, including the United States, that recruited freelance journalists to write on global news and current events that targeted left-leaning readers on issues like social and racial justice, President Donald Trump's policies, the Biden-Harris campaign, US military policies in Africa and more, the statement said. The network was able to garner an audience of about 14,000 accounts and spent about \$480 on advertisement on Facebook paid for mostly in US dollars, the statement said.

Twitter said in a separate statement that it has removed five accounts that it says are linked to "Russian state actors" for platform manipulation. These accounts are also associated with the news website PeaceData

Tweets from the Russian-linked accounts were low quality and received, if any, few likes or Retweets, the statement said. The company added that the accounts had little impact on Twitter and were identified and removed quickly.

Russia has repeatedly denied accusations of interfering in the US political system, saying such acts run contrary to the principles of Moscow's foreign policy.

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Trump Vows to Help Kenosha Businesses Rebuild After Riots

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump on Monday pledged assistance to the businesses affected by the recent riots in the city of Kenosha, Wisconsin.

"We're going to help them, we're going to help them a lot," Trump said.

He told the owners of a burned down store in Kenosha, as cited by the White House pool report, "We'll help you rebuild."

Trump made his remarks at a burned down store at the area damaged by the rioters last week.

Trump arrived in Kenosha earlier on Monday to meet with law enforcement officers and business owners who suffered during last week's protests. According to the pool report, Trump was joined by US Attorney General William Barr and Acting US Secretary of Homeland Security Chad Wolf.

The pool reporters noted that the air still smells of smoke.

Violent protests against racial injustice erupted this week in Wisconsin and elsewhere in the United States after police shot Blake in the back seven times. The incident, which occurred on August 23, left Blake paralyzed. However, the protest quickly turned into riots complete with violence against police and civilians as well as acts of arson and destruction.

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US Lifts Restrictions on Cyprus Non-Lethal Defense Exports, Imports - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - The US government is lifting restrictions related to the export and import of non-lethal defense articles to and from Cyprus, State Department spokesperson Morgan Ortagus said on Tuesday.

"Secretary [Mike] Pompeo informed President [Nicos] Anastasiades of his decision to waive restrictions temporarily for FY 2021 on the export, re-export, retransfer, and temporary import of non-lethal defense articles and defense services controlled under the International Traffic in Arms Regulation destined for or originating in Cyprus," Ortagus said in a statement.

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Over Quarter of US Workers Fear Layoffs, Reduced Wages Due to COVID-19 - Poll

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - Nearly 30 percent of US workers fear layoffs or pay cuts as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, nearly twice the level reported last year, a Gallup poll revealed on Tuesday.

"More than a quarter, 27% of US workers now say they are worried they will be laid off from their jobs, up from 15% a year ago. Twenty-seven percent of U.S. workers now fear their hours will be cut back, up from 15% in 2019, while 28% fear their wages will be reduced, up from 16% last year. Workers' worries their benefits will be reduced are also up, though less so than other worries, with 30% worried this will occur, up from 23% in 2019," the release said.

Given the disruption to the economy due to COVID-19, US workers' worries about negative events at their jobs are the highest since the 29 percent recorded in Gallup's annual survey of worker expectations in August 2013, the tail end of the Great Recession, the release added. Worry about the four potential setbacks – layoffs, wage reductions, working hour cutbacks and benefit reductions - is up among all subgroups. However, White workers remain less worried about these setbacks than non-White workers.

The largest gap, 23 percentage points, is on worry that wages will be reduced, 20 percent for White workers, vs. 43 percent for non-White workers, followed by a 21-point gap for layoff fears - 20% for Whites and 41 percent for non-Whites.

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China Developing Air-Land-Sea Nuclear Launch Triad Capability - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - China is developing land, sea and air-based nuclear weapons systems, the US Defense Department said in a report on Tuesday.

"China is pursuing a 'nuclear triad' with the development of a nuclear capable air-launched ballistic missile (ALBM) and improving its ground and sea-based nuclear capabilities," the report said.

The report, an annual assessment submitted to Congress, also said Beijing is moving its strategic nuclear arsenal to a more rapid launch footing.

"New developments in 2019 further suggest that China intends to increase the peacetime readiness of its nuclear forces by moving to a launch-on-warning (LOW) posture with an expanded silo-based force," the report said.

China is expanding its inventory of the multi-role DF-26, a mobile, ground-launched intermediate-range ballistic missile system capable of rapidly swapping conventional and nuclear warheads, the Defense Department added.

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Canada's Top Diplomat Discusses Belarus Unrest With Counterpart, Opposition - Statement

TORONTO, September 1 (Sputnik) - Canadian Foreign Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne discussed the ongoing social unrest in Belarus in separate phone calls with Belarusian Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei and opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya on Tuesday.

"I spoke with Vladimir Makei #Belarus FM. I reaffirmed [Canada's] concerns regarding the election and situation in Belarus and called for the release of people detained, [including] journalists and opposition members," Champagne said via Twitter.

Champagne added that the Canadian government is calling for dialogue and accountability for perpetrators of violence.

In a separate conversation with Tikhanovskaya, the two discussed the "options [Canada] is considering to stand with the people of Belarus" and said that Ottawa continues to monitor the situation in Belarus with the help of partners, including the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

Earlier in the day, Makei informed Champagne about "specific facts" of external interference in Belarus' sovereign affairs, according to the country's Foreign Ministry. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko has repeatedly accused Western nations of direct interference in the situation in the country.

Moscow has also voiced its concern over the signs of foreign interference in the internal affairs of Belarus. Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said last week that the Kremlin will not give any assessments to events in Belarus, considering it equivalent to interference in another country's sovereign affairs.

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China's Reluctance Does Not Deter US to Seek Arms Deal With Russia - Pentagon Official

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - The United States is willing to advance a nuclear arms control deal with Russia while continuing to urge China to join the negotiations, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Chad Sbragia said during a briefing.

"The United States is willing to make progress with Russia while waiting on China to recognize its interests in behaving like a great power and a responsible nuclear weapons state by pursuing negotiations in good faith," Sbragia told reporters.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov and US Special Envoy for Arms Control Marshall Billingslea met in Vienna last month to discuss the extension of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) that caps both countries' nuclear weapon stocks and is set to expire in February.

The United States initially insisted on a trilateral successor deal to the New START that would include China, but later dropped the demand.

Sbragia said China has not chosen to participate in the proposed trilateral arms control discussions, but its refusal to engage will not belabor US efforts to begin shaping a new era of arms control with Russia.

"China's interests will not be served by failing to come to the table," Sbragia said.

Nevertheless, the United States believes it is time for China to participate in nuclear arms control, Sbragia also said.

"China needs to halt the upward and destabilizing trajectory of its nuclear buildup and work closely to reduce nuclear risks," he added.

Earlier on Tuesday, a Defense Department released a report that estimated China's stockpile of nuclear warheads in the "low 200s," a fraction of US and Russian arsenals. However, the report said the US military believes China will double that figure over the next ten years.

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US Central Bank Needs More Aggressive Policy to Boost Economy - Fed Governor

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - The US economy remains under considerable threat from uncertainties related to the COVID-19 crisis and accommodative monetary policies are critical to avert risks tilted to the downside, Federal Reserve Governor Lael Brainard said on Tuesday.

"The economy continues to face considerable uncertainty associated with the vagaries of the COVID-19 pandemic, and risks are tilted to the downside," Brainard said in a live-streamed speech. "With the recovery likely to face COVID-19-related headwinds for some time, in coming months, it will be important for monetary policy to pivot from stabilization to accommodation..."

lower-for-longer interest rates could boost financial-sector risks."

The Fed kept interest rates in a range of zero to 0.25 percent after COVID-19 related business lockdowns triggered two consecutive quarters of sharp economic declines that left the United States with its worst recession in history. US GDP fell around 5 percent in the first three months of 2020 and nearly 33 percent in the April to June period. Unemployment rose to a record 14.7 percent in April before stabilizing at around 10 percent now.

Fed Chairman Jay Powell said last week the central bank intended to target higher inflation on the average over time to help economic and labor market recovery from crises such as the coronavirus pandemic. The Fed had for years pinged rate hikes on an outright 2 percent inflation rate target but realized this was not ideal in severe economic downturn situations such as the COVID-19, Powell said.

Brainard said had the Fed's new framework for inflation been in place years ago, "job gains would have been bigger".

While the revised policy for inflation broke new ground and put the Fed in a stronger position to support recovery, "the coronavirus is the most important economic factor" and "timing and size of fiscal support is also key" to a comeback, Brainard said.

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China Already Ahead of US as World's Largest Navy By Over 50 Ships - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - China is already ahead of the United States by having the world's largest navy, the US Department of Defense said in its annual report to Congress on Beijing's military capabilities on Tuesday.

"The PRC [People's Republic of China] has the largest navy in the world, with an overall battle force of approximately 350 ships and submarines, including over 130 major surface combatants," the report said.

The US Navy by comparison has 293 ships in 2020, the report said.

"The PLAN [Chinese Navy] remains engaged in a robust shipbuilding and modernization program that includes submarines, surface combatants, amphibious warfare ships, aircraft carriers, and auxiliary ships as well as developing and fielding advanced weapons, sensors, and command and control capabilities," the report said.

The Chinese Navy is currently largely composed of modern multi-role platforms featuring advanced anti-ship, anti-air and anti-submarine weapons and sensors, the report added.

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UN Chief Has Not Talked With Belarus Opposition Leader Tikhanovskaya - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, September 1 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has not had any direct contacts with Belarusian opposition leader and former presidential candidate Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, United Nations spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in a press briefing on Tuesday.

"The Secretary-General has not been in touch with her," Dujarric said when asked whether Guterres had spoken to Tikhanovskaya.

Dujarric also said that Guterres has been following with concern the reports of torture of protesters in Belarus and continues to urge the country's authorities to respect the right of people to peacefully assemble and allow journalists to conduct their work freely.

"No one should be harassed or detained for what they think and it's important that they don't face the threat of violence," Dujarric added.

On August 9, the Belarus opposition organized protests after disputing the results of the presidential election in which incumbent President Alexander Lukashenko was re-elected for a sixth term by winning 80 percent of the vote. The opposition insists that Tikhanovskaya won the election.

According to the Belarusian Interior Ministry, three people have died, and several hundred others have sustained injuries during the ongoing unrest.

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US Space Force Swells With Addition of 2,400 Active Duty Airmen - Statement

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - Some 2,400 active duty members of the US Air Force will transfer to the Space Force in a series of ceremonies this fall, the newly created fifth branch of the United States military said in a press release on Tuesday.

"Given limits on mass gatherings in the current COVID-19 environment, the Space Force will commemorate the transfers with a virtual swearing-in ceremony Sept. 15 following live remarks from Chief of Space Operations Gen. John 'Jay' Raymond during the Air Force Association's Virtual Air, Space and Cyber Conference," the release said.

On the official date of transfer, enlisted members will be administered the Oath of Enlistment and sign enlistment contracts into the Space Force, the release said.

Both officers and enlisted airmen will incur a minimum two-year active-duty service commitment in volunteering for the transfer.

Plans call for a Space Force with about 16,000 military and civilian space personnel, most transferred from the Air Force, according to an earlier press release.

Subject: US Space Force Swells With Addition of 2,400 Active Duty Airmen

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FBI Limits Campaign Surveillance After 'What Happened to Trump' - Attorney General

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - The US Justice Department introduced reforms to limit the FBI's surveillance of political candidates in light of what happened to the Trump campaign during and after the previous election, Attorney General William Barr said on Tuesday.

"What happened to the Trump presidential campaign and his subsequent Administration after the President was duly elected by the American people must never happen again," Barr said a press release. "The American people must have confidence that the United States Government will exercise its surveillance authorities in a manner that protects the civil liberties of Americans [and] avoids interference in the political process."

The release disclosed two orders from Barr, one establishing an FBI "Office of Internal Auditing" to oversee applications to the secret Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) court to spy on American citizens.

A second order establishes rules for federal agents seeking permission to surveil federal elected officials, candidates for federal elected office, or their staff to ensure that requests are justified and non-partisan.

Former FBI lawyer Kevin Clinesmith admitted last month to altering an email with false information to renew a warrant to spy on former Trump aide Carter Page.

Clinesmith's guilty plea prompted speculation of additional indictments in an investigation by US Attorney John Durham against other participants in Crossfire Hurricane – the FBI's counterintelligence probe of the Trump campaign and subsequent administration.

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China Set to Double Nuclear Warhead Stockpile to Around 400 by 2030 - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - China is on course to double its nuclear warheads to well over 400 by 2030 and expand its nuclear missile arsenal capable of hitting the United States by 200 within the next five years, the US Department of Defense said in its annual report to Congress on Tuesday.

"Over the next decade, China's nuclear warhead stockpile - currently estimated to be in the low-200s - is projected to at least double in size as China expands and modernizes its nuclear forces," the report said.

The number of warheads on China's land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of threatening the United States is expected to grow to roughly 200 in the next five years, the report said.

"The PRC has more than 1,250 ground-launched ballistic missiles (GLBMs) and ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs) with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometers (300 miles to 3,300 miles). The United States currently fields one type of conventional GLBM with a range of 70 to 300 kilometers (40 miles to 180 miles), the report said.

China has developed its conventional missile forces unrestrained by any international

agreements, the report added.

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Twitter Suspends 5 Accounts Linked to 'Russian State Actors' for Platform Manipulation

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - Twitter has removed five accounts that it says are linked to "Russian state actors" for platform manipulation, the company said in a statement on Tuesday.

"We suspended five Twitter accounts for platform manipulation that we can reliably attribute to Russian state actors," the statement said.

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WFP Sends 24 Trucks With Humanitarian Aid Into Northwest Syria From Turkey - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, September 1 (Sputnik) - The World Food Program (WFP) on Tuesday sent 24 trucks with humanitarian assistance from Turkey in northwest Syria by using the UN cross-border aid mechanism's only remaining checkpoint, United Nations spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in a press briefing.

"The cross-border operations from Turkey into Syria are continuing to provide life-saving assistance to people in the Northwest. Today, 24 trucks of the World Food Program supplies, which included supplies for 74,000 people in Idlib, crossed the only crossing point of Bab al-Hawa," Dujarric said.

In July, the UN Security Council decided to remove the Bab al-Salam crossing from Turkey and extended the authorization to bring aid through the Bab al-Hawa checkpoint for 12 months. Dujarric said that despite the removal, the United Nations continues to reach people with aid through the northwest region.

The WFP has taken steps to mitigate the impact of the Bab al-Salam checkpoint closure, including through the expansion of the trans-shipment hub and engaging in negotiations with the parties to the conflict on humanitarian access, Dujarric said.

When the mechanism was initially established via a UN Security Council resolution in 2014, aid organizations could deliver assistance to Syria through four border crossings, including one the boundary with Jordan and one with Iraq.

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Facebook Removes 13 Russia-Linked Accounts Focused on US, Others - Company Statement

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - Facebook has removed 13 allegedly Russia-linked accounts focused on affairs in the United States, the United Kingdom, Algeria and Egypt, the company said in a statement on Tuesday.

"We removed a small network of 13 Facebook accounts and two Pages linked to individuals associated with past activity by the Russian Internet Research Agency (IRA)," the statement said. "This activity focused primarily on the US, UK, Algeria and Egypt, in addition to other English-speaking countries and countries in the Middle East and North Africa."

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Seven in 10 US Adults Back 2nd COVID-19 Payment of at Least \$900 - Gallup Poll

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - Seventy percent of voting-age Americans want the US government to provide a second one-time COVID-19 relief check of at least \$900, a new Gallup poll revealed on Tuesday.

"Support for setting maximum payments at \$900 or more is high among both Democrats and Republicans. Two-thirds of Democrats who support an additional EIP (68 percent) think each qualified adult should receive \$900 or more. A majority of Republicans (60 percent) and independents (65 percent) who support this policy also believe that the payments should be \$900 or more," a press release explaining the poll said.

The poll shows widespread support for a second major relief package in addition to the \$2.2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act amid a continuing deadlock between Congress and the Trump administration as lawmakers return to Washington from an August recess, the release said.

The CARES Act provided \$1,400 for eligible adults and \$2,400 for couples.

The poll also attempted to gauge support for expanded unemployment benefits similar to the \$600 weekly subsidy that expired in July - a program that faced criticism for discouraging jobless workers from seeking employment because it was too generous.

The vast majority of respondents indicated a desire to return to work, and their willingness to do so varied little when they were presented with different hypothetical levels of additional federal unemployment benefits, the release said.

Those asked about receiving the highest weekly benefit now under consideration (\$450) were just as likely to say they are very likely to return to their previous job (52 percent) as those asked about receiving a smaller additional weekly benefit of \$150 (54 percent), the release added.

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Trump Promises More Aid to US Airlines Hit by Pandemic

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump promised on Tuesday more government aid to the airlines industry badly hurt by the pandemic-induced decline in demand.

"We'll be helping the airlines," Trump told reporters. "Airlines are tough business in good times and we are about ready to get back to good times."

White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows said last week that Trump is looking at executive actions to help US airlines as stalled negotiations in Congress hold out assistance for affected businesses.

Meadows' remarks came after American Airlines reported that it expected to lay off by October another 19,000 employees, or about 14 percent of its workforce, when federal aid that protected those jobs expires.

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US Considering Sanctions on 7 Belarusians Over Alleged Election Fraud - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - The Trump administration is considering sanctions against seven Belarusians for allegedly engaging in election fraud and violence against protesters, Reuters reported on Tuesday citing a senior State Department official.

The report added that the United States may consider imposing sanctions on Russia if it becomes more involved in Belarus' internal affairs.

The US administration shared the names of the seven individuals with the European union several weeks ago, the report said. Information regarding these sanctions is expected to be made public in the coming days, the report said.

The Belarusian Foreign Ministry said earlier in the day that Belarusian Deputy Foreign Minister Oleg Kravchenko and Charge d'Affaires at the US Embassy in Minsk Jeffrey Giauque discussed the post-election situation in the country and other bilateral matters.

On August 9, the Belarus opposition organized protests after disputing the results of the presidential election in which incumbent President Alexander Lukashenko was reelected for a sixth term by winning 80 percent of the vote. The opposition insists that its candidate, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, won the election.

According to the Belarusian Interior Ministry, three people have died and several hundred others have sustained injuries during the ongoing unrest.

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Trump Says Unrest in Kenosha May Resume During His Visit But Will Be Put Out 'Powerfully'

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump said unrest in Kenosha, Wisconsin, may erupt again as he visits the city on Tuesday, but law enforcement will put it out very powerfully as it had done earlier.

"Today, I am really for law enforcement and for the National Guard because they have done a great job in Kenosha. They put out the flame immediately... Now, maybe it will start up again, in which case they will put it out very powerfully," Trump told reporters before boarding a plane for Kenosha.

Kenosha, a city of some 100,000 people, was ravaged by riots after police shot and severely wounded African American Jacob Blake.

The local authorities asked Trump earlier to delay visiting Kenosha to prevent new tensions.

Trump said his plans are "to say hello to law-enforcement and the National Guard," but added that he does not know yet whether he will meeting with the Blake family.

"I don't know yet. We'll see, we'll be making that determination. I don't know yet," Trump said. However, Trump said he will speak with Blake family's pastor.

"Very well involved and respected man. I spoke to him yesterday, I had a great conversation. I think is going to be there," Trump said. Yesterday local media quoted Blake's relatives as denying having a family pastor.

When asked about his attitude to militias and their involvement in the disturbances, Trump said: "I think a lot of people are looking to what's happening to these Democratic-run cities and are disgusted. They see what's going on, they can't believe this is taking place in our country. I can't believe it either."

White House spokesperson Kayleigh McEnany said earlier that Trump denounces all sorts of violence and believes that police, contrary to protesters' demands, should be fully funded and grow in numbers.

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US, Morocco Sign Enhanced Immunities Agreement - Pompeo

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - The United States and Morocco have signed an Enhanced Immunities Agreement to extend the immunity the embassy staff enjoys to the consular officers and employees at the US Consulate General in Casablanca and the Moroccan Consulate General in New York, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said.

The agreement became the first such accord between the United States and an African nation. "Today, our countries write another great entry into our diplomatic history books," Pompeo said at a signing ceremony. "Our nations' consular staffs deserve the same privileges and

protections that our embassy staffs enjoy. This agreement provides those good things."

Pompeo said the agreement, along with the new consulate the United States will begin to construct in Casablanca later this year, is a statement of how much the two nations value the safety and morale of their teams and their families.

"It's another achievement in our long history of friendship, which, God willing, will continue long into the future," Pompeo said.

Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita said during the ceremony that the agreement is a proof of the growing US-Morocco alliance.

"This agreement will allow us to better support the important work carried out by our respective consular officers in service to our citizens abroad, and it will also accompany our expanding cooperation in this area. The building of the new US general consulate in Casablanca will further the regional outreach of America's historic presence in Morocco," Bourita added.

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Global Airline Group Urges Nations to Reopen Borders as July Air Travel Plunges 92%

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - Nations need to aid the global airline industry by easing novel coronavirus-related border closings amid a 91.1 percent drop in international air travel in July, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) said in a press release on Tuesday.

"IATA's call reflects deep industry frustration as government policies such as closed borders, travel restrictions and quarantines continue to annihilate travel demand. This was evident in a disappointing 'peak (Northern Hemisphere) summer travel season' that saw minimal improvements compared to the May-June period, as four in five potential travelers stayed home," the release said.

International air passenger traffic in July fell 91.9 percent from July 2019 levels while total passenger traffic, which includes domestic flights, was down 79.8 percent, the release said.

"Too many governments are fighting a global pandemic in isolation with a view that closing borders is the only solution. It's time for governments to work together to implement measures

that will enable economic and social life to resume, while controlling the spread of the virus," IATA Director-General Alexandre de Juniac said in the release.

Mitigation measures such as physical distancing and facemask use are adequate to enable a safe re-start of aviation without resorting to measures adopted by many nations - especially requirements that arriving passengers quarantine for 14 days, the release said.

The release also recommended additional government aid for the industry as earlier relief programs begin to expire.

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US Alerts Global Industries to North Korea Missile Procurement Activities - Treasury

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - The United States has issued an alert to industrial concerns around the world about North Korea's continuing efforts to acquire more technology to develop its ballistic missile program, the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) said on Tuesday.

"The United States is issuing an advisory to alert industry worldwide to North Korea's ballistic missile procurement activities," OFAC said. "This advisory identifies key North Korean procurement entities and deceptive techniques employed by North Korean proliferators and procurement networks."

OFAC explained the advisory provides an overview of US sanctions authorities related to Pyongyang's proliferation activities and lists North Korea-related sanctions enforcement resources.

A report submitted last month by an independent, 15-member panel of experts on the UN Security Council Sanctions Committee on North Korea claimed that Pyongyang was violating sanctions and was likely developing miniature nuclear devices that attach to ballistic missile warheads.

The report also said several countries believed North Korea had probably developed miniaturized nuclear devices to fit into the warheads of its ballistic missiles.

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White House To Resume Public Tours on September 12 - Statement

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - The White House resumes on September 12 public tours after a six-month hiatus with COVID-19-related restrictions in place, the Office of the First Lady announced on Tuesday.

"The Office of the First Lady is pleased to announce that the White House Visitors Office will resume public tours on Saturday, September 12, 2020," the statement said.

In order to mitigate coronavirus risks tours will be hosted two days a week instead of five, on

Friday and Saturday, and the number of guests is limited to 18% of normal capacity. Public tour to the main US Presidential residence in Washington, DC, were suspended in mid-March when the disease was spreading rapidly across the country.

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Six Week US Roundup of Violent Criminal Aliens Yields 2,000 Arrests - Immigration Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - An operation targeting illegal aliens with violent criminal convictions or facing charges of crimes involving victims in the United States netted 2,000 fugitives in a six-week period ending August 20, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) said in a press release on Tuesday.

"The aliens targeted during this operation preyed on men, women and children in our communities, committing serious crimes and, at times, repeatedly hurting their victims," ICE Director Tony Pham said in the release. "By focusing our efforts on perpetrators of crimes against people, we're able to remove these threats from our communities and prevent future victimization from occurring."

About 85 percent of those arrested had criminal convictions or pending criminal charges, the release said.

Among those arrested, 388 had past convictions for criminal assault, with an additional 386 facing assault charges. Victims included both family and non-family members, including attacks on police officers, the release also said.

Fourteen had previous convictions for either homicide, including negligent manslaughter, plus another 12 with pending homicide charges, the release added.

In fiscal 2019, ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) arrested individuals with more than 1,900 convictions and charges for homicide, 1,800 for kidnapping, 12,000 sex offenses, 5,000 sexual assaults, 45,000 assaults, 67,000 crimes involving drugs, 10,000 weapons offenses, and 74,000 for DUIs [drunk driving], according to the release.

Immigrant rights groups claim illegal aliens are no more likely to commit crimes than US citizens or legal residents.

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UN Experts Receive Reports of 450 Cases of Torture in Belarus - OHCHR

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - UN human rights experts are aware of 450 documented cases of torture and ill-treatment of people detained in Belarus for participating in anti-government protests, The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) said in a statement on Tuesday.

"The experts received reports of 450 documented cases of torture and ill-treatment of people

deprived of their liberty after the disputed presidential election on 9 August that led to mass protests and arrests," OHCHR said. "We are extremely alarmed at the hundreds of allegations of torture and other ill-treatment in police custody."

The UN experts said some 6,700 people were detained in recent weeks, including journalists and passers-by, amid protests following the disputed election. The whereabouts and the state of health of at least six individuals are reportedly unknown to their relatives, they said.

On August 9, the Belarus opposition organized protests after disputing the results of the presidential election in which incumbent President Alexander Lukashenko was reelected for a sixth term by winning 80 percent of the vote. The opposition insists that its candidate, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, won the election.

According to the Belarusian Interior Ministry, three people have died and several hundred others have sustained injuries during the ongoing unrest.

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White House Hopes for New \$500B In Coronavirus Relief Bill By Next Week - Chief of Staff

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - The Trump administration hopes to strike by next week an agreement with Congress for a new coronavirus relief bill worth \$500 billion after weeks of rejecting Democrats' demands for a relief package worth more than four times as much, White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows said on Tuesday.

"We're making some real progress with some of the Democrats on Capitol Hill, and I hope [for] them to pass a bill sometime next week," Meadows told CNBC. "I don't see a 2.2 trillion benchmark happening mainly because it's not based on facts and it's not based on reality. The Senate proposal is looking at a more targeted bill, maybe at \$500 billion."

Congress has so far passed four phases of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act that have approved roughly \$3 trillion to be disbursed as loans and grants to businesses, paycheck protection for workers and personal aid to qualifying US citizens.

Both Republicans and Democrats have blamed each other for the drag over the fifth installment of the act.

The US economy shrank at its fastest pace in history in the second quarter of 2020, contracting by 32.9 percent amid widespread lockdowns due to the novel coronavirus pandemic. Economic and labor market data in recent months have, however, pointed to an encouraging recovery.

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US Extends Condolences to India on Death of Former President Pranab Mukherjee - Pompeo

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - The United States has expressed condolences to India on the death of former President Pranab Mukherjee, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said

in a statement on Monday.

"The United States is deeply saddened to learn of the passing of former Indian President Pranab Mukherjee," Pompeo said. "On behalf of the American people, we extend our deepest condolences to the people of India and to President Mukherjee's family during this time of mourning."

Mukherjee, who served as president from 2012 to 2017, died at the age of 84 on Monday following a brain surgery earlier this month.

Pompeo said in the statement that Mukherjee's distinguished career spanned more than half a century, during which he worked as a parliamentarian, cabinet minister and as president.

"His visionary leadership helped drive India's rise as a global power and paved the way for a stronger US-India partnership," he said.

Pompeo noted that Mukherjee championed the landmark US-India Civil Nuclear Agreement, a foundation of the US-India strategic partnership, and signed the Defense Framework Agreement to enable the US-India security relationship that is today.

"Few Indian statesman played a more vital role in preparing India for the mantle of global leadership in the 21st century," Pompeo said.

The Indian government has announced a seven-day state mourning.

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US Limits Coal-Fired Power for Seasonal Demand Peaks as Old Plants Close – Energy Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) – US utilities reduced four big US coal-fired power plants to part time service thus far in 2020, reflecting a likely trend as utilities evaluate plans to reserve coal for seasonal demand surges such as during summer heat waves, the Energy Information Administration (EIA) said in a report on Tuesday.

"In an effort to improve the economics of coal plants, owners are evaluating plans to run plants on a seasonal basis, when electricity demand allows for steadier operation. Under these plans, coal plants would only operate during periods of higher electricity demand, from December to February (winter) and from June to August (summer). The expectation is that completely shutting down plants when electricity demand is low will limit financial losses," the report said. So far in 2020, four large coal-fired plants announced plans to operate on a seasonal basis, two in the state of Minnesota that only run in the summer and winter, as well as plants in the warmer states of Arizona and Louisiana that will only operate during summer, the report said.

The availability of cheaper and cleaner burning natural gas has already prompted utilities to begin closing older, less efficient coal-fired plants to meet both tighter air emission standards and adapt to a decreased cost-competitiveness relative of coal relative to other power sources such as cheaper and cleaner-burning natural gas and renewable electricity from sources such as windmills and solar panels, the report added.

From 2011 to mid-2020, 95 gigawatts (GW) of coal capacity was either closed or converted to another fuel, with another 25 GW slated for closure in the next five years.

As a result, overall generating capacity of coal plants in the US is expected to drop by more

than one third from peak capacity of 314 GW in 2011.

Nevertheless, it remains unclear whether using coal on a seasonal basis will allow coal to remain an important resource for the US power grid, according to the report.

Plans to reserve coal plants in the states of Texas and Wisconsin to seasonal demand peaks in 2018 only lasted a year before utilities decided to shut down the facilities altogether, the report said.