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7/1/22 Friday

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With Biden's Approval Rating Tanking, Most Americans Don't Want POTUS to Run in 2024, Polls Show

It's common for the president's party to lose seats in Congress in the midterms, but with US President Joe Biden's dismal approval numbers and lack of victories to chalk up for his agenda, Democrats are bracing for a beating come November.

According to The Hill, which was given exclusive access to the results of a Harvard CAPS–Harris Poll survey, 71% of Americans don't want Biden to seek a second term in office in the 2024 presidential election.

Respondents expressed various reasons for objecting to a second Biden administration, with 45% saying it's because he's a bad president, while 33% said the 79-year-old leader is too old, and about 25% saying they simply want to see a change. The poll surveyed 1,308 registered voters on June 28 and 29.

However, the same poll also found that 61% of Americans don't want to see former US President Donald Trump, Biden's 76-year-old predecessor, seek a return to the White House in 2024, either. Among those who objected, 36% said Trump was too erratic, while 33% said he would divide the country and 30% specifically said it was because they held him responsible for the January 6, 2021, insurrection by Trump's supporters at the US Capitol, which aimed to overturn Biden's election victory on unfounded accusations of fraud.

An agglomeration of recent polls compiled by FiveThirtyEight has Biden's approval rating at 39.2% and his disapproval rating at 55.9% on July 1. While his approval rating has only slightly declined in the last month, those who disapprove of his administration have increased from 53.6% in the first week of June.

The same service shows Trump's dis/approval ratings holding roughly the same, with 54.9% holding an unfavorable view of the real estate mogul and 41.9% holding a favorable view of him. Interestingly, those numbers are almost identical to where he stood on July 1, 2018, a year-and-a-half into his presidential term and six months before the midterm elections.

In those elections, the GOP suffered a major defeat, losing 40 seats and the majority in the House of Representatives to the Democrats.

Still, Biden has largely treated Trump as his presumptive rival in 2024, casting Republicans as "Ultra MAGA" and warning of the direction the country could go under his influence. A slew of victories in GOP primary races by candidates backed by Trump hints at both his lasting control over the party, but also dissidence within the party as other figures, such as Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, back competing candidates.

It remains to be seen how many of the most salient political issues, including rising inflation, mass shootings, and the Supreme Court's recent overturning of federal abortion rights, will affect the midterms. Democrats have heavily banked on the crises turning out voters in their

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favor in November, arguing that they can only overcome Republican intransigence by reaching a critical mass of Democratic lawmakers.

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Akron Prepares for Protests After Police Shoot Black Delivery Driver Jayland Walker Over 60 Times

The northeastern Ohio city of Akron is canceling public events for the coming holiday weekend amid protests over the police killing of a young Black man.

Dump trucks were being positioned across downtown streets on Friday to block traffic and a public festival was canceled ahead of anticipated mass protests in response to the killing of Jayland Walker, a Black delivery driver, by Akron police earlier this week.

Late Monday night, the 25-year-old Walker was shot and killed during a traffic stop for a claimed traffic violation that turned into a car and foot chase and ended in a hail of police bullets.

"While the vehicle was still moving, the suspect fled from the vehicle on foot," says an Akron Police Department (APD) statement about the events from Tuesday morning. "Officers engaged the suspect in a foot pursuit in order to apprehend him. The suspect ran northbound into a nearby parking lot. Actions by the suspect caused the officers to perceive he posed a deadly threat to them. In response to this threat, officers discharged their firearms, striking the suspect."

What their statement neglected to mention was that eight officers managed to fire more than 90 rounds at Walker, at least 60 of which struck his body. According to WKYC, which viewed photos of the autopsy on Wednesday, the bullet wounds covered the front of his body, from his face to his legs.

A gun was found inside Walker's car, but he was unarmed when police shot him.

According to APD, the officers involved have been placed on leave, pending the results of an internal investigation.

"Use of force cases are always ugly," an unnamed police officer familiar with the shooting told WKYC on Wednesday. "This case is ugly times 10."

Akron Police Chief Steve Mylett and Mayor Dan Horrigan are expected to "provide further details" at a news conference scheduled for Sunday afternoon, which will likely include footage of the incident from officers' body-worn cameras. Walker's family is expected to be shown the footage first.

On Thursday, Walker's family held a presser at which they gave details about the victim.

"Jayland was a sweet, young man. He never caused any trouble. We don't know what happened and we'd like to know," said his aunt, Lajuana Walker Dawkins. She noted he worked for DoorDash and had no criminal record apart from a traffic ticket.

A small group of protesters gathered on Thursday and Friday outside APD headquarters and blocked traffic, carrying signs that read "Justice for Jayland" and "Jayland's life matters."

"This is absolutely ridiculous," city resident Russel Fennell told the Akron Beacon Journal at the protest. "They did it because they knew they could get away with it. To me, this is worse than George Floyd."

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“Racism is racism. I guess in Akron it's never going away,” he added.
The city of 190,000 is located in northeastern Ohio and earned the moniker “Rubber Capital of the World” in the 20th century due it being the headquarters of four major tire manufacturers. However, the area has also been a hotbed of racism and resistance, once possessing the largest chapter of the Ku Klux Klan white supremacist group of any county in the US, and seeing major riots in 1900 and 1968, provoked by whites trying to lynch a Black man in police custody, and by Black residents rejecting militant police patrols in their neighborhoods, respectively.

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Xi Hails Hong Kong as ‘Risen From the Ashes’ in First Visit to City in Five Years

Seized by the UK in 1842, Hong Kong was returned to Chinese rule in 1997 under the condition that its capitalist system be preserved for a time under a “one country, two systems” scheme. However, Western powers have used the city’s autonomy as a wedge to provoke unrest and inveigh against Chinese socialist “authoritarianism.”
Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) on Thursday in his first visit to the city in five years and his first trip outside the Chinese mainland since the COVID-19 pandemic began in early 2020.
Arriving by high-speed train from Shenzhen with his wife Peng Liyuan and a long retinue of Chinese government and Communist Party officials, Xi met with outgoing HKSAR Chief Executive Carrie Lam and her successor, John Lee Ka-chiu, who was sworn in on Friday.
“In the past few years, Hong Kong has gone through various severe tests one after another, and has overcome risks and challenges one after another,” Xi said at the West Kowloontrain terminal. The city has seen large protests backed by foreign actors from the United States and Ukraine, as well as COVID-19 outbreak magnitudes worse than that seen on the mainland. Both crises have brought criticism upon Lam’s administration.
“After the wind and rain, Hong Kong has risen from the ashes, and showed strong vibrancy. These facts prove that one country, two systems has strong vitality, which has ensured the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong, and safeguarded the well-being of compatriots in Hong Kong,” the Chinese leader said. “One country, two systems is a good system.”
“As long as we unswervingly uphold one country, two systems, Hong Kong’s future will surely be brighter. Hong Kong, for sure, will make new and greater contributions to the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation,” Xi added, quoting the Confucian philosopher Xunzi: “Through perseverance, the future is promising.”
Once a sleepy fishing village at the mouth of the Pearl River, Hong Kong was seized by British forces as a war prize in 1842 at the conclusion of the First Opium War - an event regarded in Chinese history as the start of the “Century of Humiliation” when China was at the mercy of European colonial powers and Japan. Under the highly undemocratic British rule, Hong Kong turned into a colonial outpost in East Asia, and by the time its return to Chinese rule was secured in 1997, it had developed into a modern metropolis and major financial hub.

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Under the terms of that return, the socialist government in Beijing agreed to give the capitalist city a wide degree of autonomy for at least 50 years. A similar deal was made with Portugal for the return of neighboring Macau in 1999. In March of this year, Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office director Xia Baolong said that the agreement could easily be extended for another 50 years in 2047.

However, in the wake of the 2019 demonstrations ostensibly provoked by the consideration of an extradition treaty with the mainland, Lam's government came under heavy pressure to improve security. After the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress in Beijing passed a new national security law that took effect on June 30, 2020, Western nations cried foul, claiming Beijing had destroyed the "One Country, Two Systems" principle.

The new law established as crimes the promotion of secession, subversion, terrorism, and collusion with foreign organizations, and established a national security office in Hong Kong outside the SAR's jurisdiction.

While in Hong Kong, Xi also visited the People's Liberation Army garrison on Friday and praised its role in the city's "transition from chaos to stability."

Speaking at Lee's swearing-in ceremony on Friday, Xi said the incoming government "should deliver concrete outcomes and live up to people's expectations, give top priority to meeting the aspirations of the whole community, especially ordinary people, and act with greater resolve and take more effective steps to address existing problems so that more fruits of development will reach all people in Hong Kong in a more equitable way."

"In particular, we should care about the young people," he added. "When the young people thrive, Hong Kong thrives. When the young people grow, Hong Kong grows. When there is a future for the young people, there is a future for Hong Kong."

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US Interest in Vasectomies Rising Sharply in Wake of High Court Ending Federal Abortion Rights

Mass demonstrations have followed the end of federal abortion rights in the United States, and although some states have moved to protect abortion access, in large swaths of the country early termination of a pregnancy will become increasingly hard to do legally.

As a consequence, many men are rushing to get the procedure done in order to keep their partners from becoming pregnant. However, there are problems with vasectomies being held up as an alternative to aborting a pregnancy.

According to the Washington Post, urologists have seen a sharp increase in the number of vasectomy requests since the Dobbs vs Jackson decision was announced last month. One Florida-based doctor said he went from getting four or five vasectomy requests per day to between 12 and 18 per day.

"It was very, very noticeable Friday, and then the number that came in over the weekend was huge and the number that is still coming in far exceeds what we have experienced in the past,"

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Doug Stein, a urologist in the Tampa suburbs known as the "Vasectomy King" for his advocacy of the procedure, told the Post for a Wednesday story.

"Many of the guys are saying that they have been thinking about a vasectomy for a while, and the Roe v. Wade decision was just that final factor that tipped them over the edge and made them submit the online registration," he said, referring to the 1973 ruling that had legalized abortion nationwide, but which the high court overturned in the Dobbs decision last month.

Google search data shows a spike in searches for "vasectomy" in early May, following the publication of the Supreme Court's draft of the Dobbs decision, followed by a massive increase of at least four times the normal search volume after Dobbs was announced on June 24.

Those searches increased in every state in the union, but saw the sharpest increase in those states with so-called "trigger laws," which had sat passive for years but immediately took effect when Roe was overturned, banning abortions in those states. Utah, Idaho, Texas and Oklahoma were among the highest, alongside other conservative-dominated states like Montana and North Dakota.

About half a million men get vasectomies each year in the US, according to the New York Times. The procedure is a form of birth control and involves severing the vas deferens, a pair of tubes that connect the testes, which produce sperm, to the seminal vesicles, which produce semen. It renders men unable to impregnate a woman during sexual intercourse, although they will continue to ejaculate like before. The entire procedure takes just 10 minutes.

A Viable Alternative to Abortion?

While in pop culture it's commonly referred to as being "fully reversible," Planned Parenthood notes: "Vasectomies are meant to be permanent - so they usually can't be reversed. You should only get a vasectomy if you're 100% positive you don't want to be able to get someone pregnant for the rest of your life."

A popular internet meme since the abortion crisis began suggests that men should be required to get vasectomies, which would only be reversed if they are found to be acceptable father figures. However, historians have cautioned that at not-so-distant times in US history, the government did just that to control the reproduction of Black, indigenous and disabled people, so it might not be the most progressive of ideas.

"The US has done mandatory vasectomies for men it saw as unfit to be parents already. In fact, it was policy in some parts of the US for most of the twentieth century. It disproportionately affected Black, Latinx, and disabled people," Georgia Grainger, a Phd. researcher from the Center for the Social History of Health and Healthcare in Glasgow, Scotland, wrote in a popular Twitter thread last week.

She further noted a number of problems with relying on vasectomies to prevent pregnancy, ranging from the fact that vas deferens can heal to the inability to distinguish between someone who has and has not had the procedure done, leaving women at the mercy of men's honesty. In the case of medical situations such as ectopic pregnancies, when the fertilized egg embeds itself in a part of the reproductive tract other than the uterus, an abortion will still be required.

"Vasectomies do not help in cases of wanted pregnancies that need to be ended for medical reasons, unwanted pregnancies where a future pregnancy might be wanted, young people, non-monogamous people, pregnancies by rape, or pregnancies by BC [birth control] failure (since vasectomy can also fail)," she added.

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On the other side of things, women are stocking up on birth control and abortion pills in the wake of the ruling as well. Pharmacies and online retailers such as Amazon and Walmart have seen a 3,000% increase in demand and have been forced to place order caps on emergency contraceptive pills.
“Due to increased demand, at this time we are limiting purchases of Plan B contraceptive pills to three per customer,” a RiteAid spokesperson told Fortune on Tuesday. Also known as the “morning after” pill, Plan B prevents conception or prevents the fertilized egg from attaching to the uterine wall - a necessary step to beginning pregnancy.

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Video: Two Dead, Multiple Injured After Car Crashes Into DC Fireworks Stand

Although an official cause of the incident remains unclear, initial reporting from the scene has suggested that the driver of the crashed vehicle suffered a medical emergency.
Two pedestrians were killed and "multiple" others were left with injuries late Saturday after a vehicle crashed into a fireworks stand in Washington, DC, local police have detailed.
Of the injured, two were said to have been taken to a local area hospital.
Citing police, Perris Jones, an on-scene reporter with Fox 5, noted in a Twitter post that the driver had run a red light, struck a cyclist and then crashed into the fireworks stand. He further noted that the deceased are the cyclist and the individual who was manning the fireworks stand at the time. It was earlier reported the driver suffered a medical emergency.
Preliminary findings issued by the DC Police Department detailed the crash took place at about 6 p.m. local time near the intersection of Minnesota Avenue and Hunt Place Northeast.
A photo released by the department on social media showed multiple boxes strewn across the sidewalk with what appears to be fireworks on the ground.
Local WUSA9 reporter Rafael Sanchez-Cruz detailed on Twitter that a detonated firework was heard at the scene following the crash.
Video from the scene shows officers surveying the incident area. A gray truck with significant damage to its hood is also seen.
UPDATE| FIREWORK STAND EXPLODES AFTER A VEHICLE CRASHES INTO IT LEAVING 4 PEOPLE INJURED AND ONE PERSON DECAPITATED WITH HIS HEAD GONE.
https://t.co/AGrkLd21sk pic.twitter.com/x5zmEdtd47
— killmoenetwork™ (@Killmoenews1) July 2, 2022
An investigation into the incident remains ongoing.
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Cristiano Ronaldo Reportedly Asks Man U to Let Him Leave Club - If They Can Get a Good Offer

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Ronaldo signed a two-year contract with Manchester United in August 2021, with the added option of extending his stay for an additional year. While the highly-anticipated signing marked a welcome return to Old Trafford for fans, Ronaldo's future is growing ever uncertain as reports suggest the player is wanting out.

Football star Cristiano Ronaldo has asked Manchester United to let him leave the club if team officials find a suitable enough offer for him, an exclusive Saturday report by the Times has revealed.

The UK-based outlet reported Ronaldo is willing to part ways with the Old Trafford team this summer in favor for landing on another club that will allow him to return to the UEFA Champions League and win some trophies.

However, Man United has yet to show interest in truly wanting to let go of Ronaldo, who is still contracted for another 12 months of play. Citing sources, ESPN earlier reported that team officials relayed to Ronaldo that he would not be available for a summer transfer.

The player's first season back with the Red Devils proved mostly positive as Ronaldo became the team's stop scorer, but ultimately fell short as Man U failed to qualify for the Champions League. Sources have indicated that Ronaldo's doubts of the team's current abilities is what is fueling his desire to leave.

As Ronaldo seeks to ensure that his career ends on a high note, reports have indicated that Chelsea owner Todd Boehly earlier met with Jorge Mendes, who represents the Portuguese forward. Additionally, clubs Napoli and Bayern Munich are said to be aware of a potential Ronaldo snag ahead of the upcoming football season.

Although Man U has not signed any new players to strengthen the team since the appointment of Erik ten Hang, the club is reported to be working to attain Dutch player Tyrell Malacia and Ajax's Lisandro Martinez amid ongoing talks for midfielder Frenkie de Jong.

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Former DEA Agent: Biden's 'Lack of Law and Order' to Blame for 53 Deaths in Texas Lorry Incident

By - Evan Craighead

A total of 53 migrants hoping to enter the US were found dead in San Antonio, Texas, earlier this week after the air conditioning unit of the tractor-trailer stopped working, a federal criminal complaint filed on Wednesday states. The driver and suspected conspirator of the human smuggling incident are facing charges that carry the death penalty.

Members of the Border Network for Human Rights and other immigration advocates held a candlelight vigil in Texas on Thursday in honor of the hundreds of individuals whose lives were lost while attempting to enter the US.

Memorials in honor of the 53 lives lost earlier this week were placed near the border wall as speakers at the event decried the horrific incident and continued border policies of US President Joe Biden's administration.

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“Migrants, refugees and entire families are using more distant and dangerous routes to come to the United States due to border policies that pretend to deter migration,” said Border Network for Human Rights member Irma Cruz, as reported by Border Report. “We demand immediate action to prevent more unnecessary deaths and we demand border policy solutions that save lives, not lead people to their deaths.”

Derek Maltz, a national security and public safety executive and former Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agent, tells Sputnik that border policies implemented by the Biden administration have exacerbated the US border situation and a “lack of law and order” is overwhelming US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents.

“The poor migrants that were cooked to death in a tractor-trailer is a result of failed immigration and border security policies that have been implemented under this current administration,” Maltz said, referring to the Texas lorry incident.

“And we have 155-160 countries taking advantage of the weak policies that have been implemented by the current administration in America,” Maltz said. “They want to come to America. Many of these people are living in horrible conditions in their own countries, and they want to come to America because it's a great country and we want them to come to America.”

In acknowledging the rise in the number of legitimate asylum seekers, Maltz emphasized that US leadership is sending “mixed messages” to migrants.

He noted that Tom Homan, retired acting director of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), recently told Fox News that, in the eyes of the Biden administration, “[b]eing here illegally is no longer illegal.”

“Illegal immigration is no longer a priority of this administration,” said the retired acting director. “I think they are going to continue that.”

Last year, US Vice President Kamala Harris, the nation’s point-person for immigration issues at the nation's southern border, took her first international trip and plainly urged would-be Guatemalan migrants to not make the “dangerous trek” to the US.

“Do not come,” Harris said. “The United States will continue to enforce our laws and secure our borders."

Harris’ June 2021 speech included an announcement of 500,000 COVID-19 vaccines to Guatemala, as well as $26 million in aid to fight the pandemic.

Many have argued that if US officials were truly concerned for the safety of asylum-seeking migrants, the administration would have promptly lifted Title 42, the Trump-era policy that employed COVID-19 and public health as the basis for the expulsion of asylum seekers.

While Texas Governor Greg Abbott and other Republicans have attributed the rise in asylum seekers at the border to Biden’s “open border policies,”Title 42 has remained in place since March 2020. Under the order, US border agents have been able to swiftly expel most asylum seekers.

Many migrants are sent back into Mexico without detention or any criminal penalties, which notably has contributed to a rise in repeated encounters with US border agents. CBP data shows 25% of encounters at the border in May were with migrants who attempted to cross into the US within the past year.

Furthermore, the rise in activity at the border has been accompanied by an increase in the trafficking of fentanyl.

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“We have more deaths in America now than ever in the history of the country because of poisonous fentanyl that's coming in from Mexico on a daily basis,” Maltz said, noting that the DEA recovered enough fentanyl in 2021 to kill every American.
This estimate was based on the determination that it would take approximately two milligrams of fentanyl to kill a human.
“We're losing about 300 Americans a day to drugs, and the majority of the deaths are from the poisonous fentanyl that are coming from labs in Mexico,” he added.

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Voluntary Jacka**ery - Cartoon
By - Ted Rall/Evan Craighead

Outrage has mounted after a group of Texas educators banded together to suggest to the Texas State Board of Education that chattel enslavement in America should be taught as “involuntary relocation” during second grade social studies course work.
A working group of nine educators has been directed by the Texas Board of Education to reexamine the language and phrasing used in its submission for curriculum changes. The decision came following a unanimous vote.
“For K-2, carefully examine the language used to describe events, specifically the term ‘involuntary relocation,’” advised the board.
“I can’t say what their intention was, but that’s not going to be acceptable,” said Aicha Davis, a Democrat representing Dallas-Fort Worth who argued that the wording did not convey a “fair representation”of the Atlantic slave trade and continued enslavement of African descendants.
Uvalde Schools Police Chief Resigns From City Council Amid Criticism Over Botched

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Shooting Response
By - Evan Craighead

From civilians to the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), many have asserted Uvalde school district police chief Pedro "Pete" Arredondo is primarily responsible for authorities’ delay in neutralizing the shooter who killed 19 children and two adults on May 24. Officials claim the teen gunman roamed classrooms for 77 minutes before engagement.
Pete Arredondo, chief of the Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District Police Department, has signaled that he will be stepping down from a separate, elected position as the district continues to grapple with the tragic loss of more than a dozen elementary school children and two educators.

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“After much consideration, I regret to inform those who voted for me that I have decided to step down as a member of the city council for District 3,” Arredondo said in a statement provided to the Uvalde Leader-News. “The mayor, the city council, and the city staff must continue to move forward without distractions.”

Arredondo was appointed to the Uvalde City Council on May 7 and was sworn in on May 31, a week after the shooting at Robb Elementary School. His resignation comes shortly after the city council denied his request for an extended leave of absence amid public scrutiny.

“I feel this is the best decision for Uvalde,” he added.

The embattled police chief has been on administrative leave since June 22 due to a pending investigation and a “lack of clarity” surrounding his role on May 24, Uvalde CISD superintendent Hal Harrell wrote in a memo last month.

Arredondo, the highest-paid law enforcement official in Uvalde, has remained tight-lipped about his exact actions during the mass shooting. However, the police chief did assert he did not view himself as the on-scene commander for the incident.

Just last week, Texas DPS Director Steve McCraw informed a state Senate committee that Arredondo, the state-identified incident commander, “decided to place the lives of officers before the lives of children,” despite possessing enough officers “to isolate, distract, and neutralize the subject.”

“There's compelling evidence that the law enforcement response to the attack on Robb Elementary was an abject failure and antithetical to everything we've learned over the last two decades since the Columbine massacre,” McCraw told the Texas Senate Special Committee to Protect All Texans, referencing the mass murder of 12 students and one teacher in Columbine, Colorado, back on April 20, 1999.

Uvalde Mayor Don McLaughlin has pushed back against McCraw’s comments, telling city council members that McCraw was placing the brunt of the blame on Arredondo to deflect and shirk his department’s responsibility in the matter.

“Col. McCraw has continued to - whether you want to call it - lie, leak, mislead or misstate information in order to distance his own troopers and Rangers from the response,” McLaughlin said last month. “Every briefing he leaves out the number of his own officers and Rangers that were on-scene that day.”

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Economist: G7 Cap on Russian Crude Would Deepen Global Energy Crisis, Force US & EU Into Recession

By - Evan Craighead

The Group of Seven (G7) convened this week to reiterate the nations’ support of Ukraine and discuss future steps in the group’s coordinated campaign to squeeze Russia’s income and cap revenue from oil sales directly financing Moscow’s forces. Deputy PM Alexander Novak has warned that such actions could lead to a “market imbalance.”

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Analysts at JP Morgan Chase & Co. warned clients this week that global oil prices could reach a "stratospheric" $380 per barrel if Russia decides to slash its crude output in response to the multiple layers of penalties imposed by the US and the EU.

Natasha Kaneva and other JP Morgan analysts highlighted that Russia's economy could withstand Moscow cutting crude oil production by some 5 million barrels without disrupting its economy.

"The most obvious and likely risk with a price cap is that Russia might choose not to participate and instead retaliate by reducing exports," the market analysts wrote, as reported by Bloomberg.

Due to much of the world depending on Russia for oil, even cutting production by 3 million barrels could force benchmark London crude prices to swell to $190 per barrel.

"It is likely that the government could retaliate by cutting output as a way to inflict pain on the West," the memo floated. "The tightness of the global oil market is on Russia's side."

As G7 leaders moved to ban imports of Russian gold in support of Ukraine this week, many experts have begun to weigh in on the practicality, likelihood, and effectiveness of establishing fossil fuel price caps.

Dr. Mamdouh G Salameh, an international oil economist and visiting professor of energy economics at ESCP Europe Business School, has argued that Biden and other Western leaders have "lost all sense of direction" and are on a path to economic despair by continuing to exacerbate the global oil crisis.

"They are letting their enmity cloud their judgment," Salameh told Sputnik.

"Every time Western nations talk about banning Russian oil or capping it, oil prices surge further forcing Western customers to pay steeper energy bills while [Russian] President [Vladimir] Putin laughs all [the] way to the bank," he added.

Rather than playing by other nations' so-called rules, Russia could simply nix its exports of crude oil and petroleum products to Western nations and maintain oil sales to China and India, "both of which account for more than 50% of Russia's crude exports," according to the economist.

"This will certainly push Brent crude oil prices beyond $140 a barrel, deepen the global energy crisis facing the world and plunge Western economies into damaging recession," Salameh emphasized.

"Western nations don't seem to realize how quintessential Russia's oil exports are to the global oil market. That is why they have avoided so far banning Russian oil exports and are looking for alternative ways of cutting Russia's oil revenues."

"Even without any new Western sanctions and more follies, the single most important problem that is adversely impacting global supplies and prices is the ever-shrinking global spare oil production capacity which is running very low," Salameh said. "This will keep the market on edge and also send crude oil prices in a steep upward trajectory soon."

The economist pointed out: "The United States currently imports more than 9.1 mbd of crude oil and this could rise to 9.24 mbd before the end of the year. This means that it is more vulnerable to an oil price shock than other major economies."

For his part, Dr Gal Luft, co-director of the US-based Institute for the Analysis of Global Security and a senior adviser to the United States Energy Security Council, believes that JP Morgan's

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forecast is a "hypothetical scenario", and oil will never come to such price level simply because the "world economy will collapse way earlier."
"Even at $159 a barrel we will see massive demand destruction and global depression. The G-7 leaders are behaving like a bunch of drunken sailors on the deck of a ship in the midst of a storm. They are so consumed with rage and vindictiveness that they cannot see the situation clearly and act according to their nations' self interest. The summer months will face G7 leaders with their voters and they will get an earful. There will be protests and perhaps even violent ones. No democratically elected leader can outsmart the rules of economics," Dr Luft pointed out.

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Bezos' $500M Megayacht Stranded After Dutch Firm Abandons Bid to Dismantle Rotterdam Bridge
By - Evan Craighead

The Koningshaven Bridge, known locally as 'De Hef,' is a landmark bridge that was heavily battered during Germany's 1940 bombing of Rotterdam. Restored in 2017, the structure is a rijksmonument, or national heritage site, and would not be dismantled after the unveiling, according to city officials.
It appears Jeff Bezos' $500 million sailing superyacht won't be going very far after Dutch shipbuilding company Oceano abandoned plans to request the city of Rotterdam dismantle the landmark Koningshaven Bridge to allow passage of the 127-meter schooner and its three masts.
While it remains unclear how Bezos plans to get to the North Sea, city officials did not rule out the possibility of the shipbuilder being granted a permit in the future.
According to documents obtained by Dutch newspaper Trouw, Oceano was taken aback by the public outrage that accompanied its initial bid back in February.
Indeed, many appeared perturbed by the possible tear-down, as events were swiftly organized in protest of the "megalomaniac billionaire," according to one Facebook event encouraging locals to throw rotten eggs at the superyacht as it passes by the bridge.

The report concluded that the shipbuilder feared vandalism and employees of the shipbuilder felt threatened by locals.
Rotterdam politician Stephan Leewis voiced a moral objection to the request made on behalf of Bezos, tweeting earlier this year that Bezos' request was a "bridge too far."
"This man has earned his money by structurally cutting staff, evading taxes, avoiding regulations and now we have to tear down our beautiful national monument?" Lewis said.
Bezos' 127-meter sailing superyacht is designed after Oceano's 108-meter Black Pearl, an ecological sailing yacht capable of traversing the Atlantic without burning a liter of fuel. The Black Pearl is owned by the family of late billionaire Oleg Burlakov.

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The ship, dubbed 'Y721' since its early stages, is one of the largest vessels ever built in the Netherlands and cost the Amazon founder an estimated $500 million to commission. The sailing yacht's masts are so tall that Bezos also commissioned a support yacht to carry a helipad in its wake, according to Bloomberg.

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Graphic Video: Akron Police Release First Body Cam Footage in 90-Round Slaughter of Jayland Walker
By - Evan Craighead

Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost informed the public on Sunday that the state's Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) will conduct a thorough and fair probe into the June 27 killing of Jayland Walker, a 25-year-old Black man who was unarmed and running away when eight Akron officers unloaded a staggering 90 rounds at him.

Akron Police Chief Steve Mylett held a news conference on July 3 to reflect on the concurrent release of "disturbing" body camera footage that showed eight Akron cops firing nearly 100 rounds at a man who allegedly led police on an early morning chase after refusing to pull over for an unidentified traffic violation.

Cops fired around a total of 90 rounds, and some 60 bullets fired by Akron cops struck Jayland Walker, according to Bobby DiCello, one of the Walker family's attorneys.

Be advised, the footage below contains graphic scenes, including loss of life.

Per Akron authorities' account, cops first attempted to pull Walker over near Thayer and E. Tallmadge Avenues. The pursuit shifted gears after at least one officer reported gunfire coming from Walker's vehicle.

"Actions by the suspect caused the officers to perceive he posed a deadly threat to them," authorities said. "In response to this threat, officers discharged their firearms, striking the suspect."

Cops highlighted Walker's alleged gunfire once again on Sunday, with Mylett detailing that a firearm, magazine and a gold wedding band were recovered from the 25-year-old's vehicle, and a shell casing was retrieved along the chase path.

The car chase became a foot race after Walker reportedly ditched his car near the intersection of E. Wilbeth Road and Clairmont Street.

Mylett, on Sunday, was notably unable to cite the moving or equipment violation that prompted the fatal series of events.

Officers said they first used stun guns in an attempt to prevent Walker from fleeing. However, upon failure, gunfire was then used, according to the department.

Walker was proposed dead at the scene, with the Summit County Medical Examiner citing 'multiple gunshot wounds' as the obvious cause of death. The Akron Police Chief has refrained from speculating on the number of gunshot wounds, as the examiner is expected to release an official memo on the matter.

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Walker's mutilated corpse was ultimately handcuffed, prompting further questions on the responding officers' real-time judgment.
"People want and deserve answers, and they shall have them. BCI will conduct a complete, fair and expert investigation," Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost announced on Sunday. "Body-worn camera footage is just one view of the whole picture – before drawing conclusions, the full review must take place."
All eight officers are on administrative paid leave as the incident remains under review.
Many in the community have taken to the streets to demand accountability in the fatal incident as more is revealed about Akron police's use of force against an unarmed 25-year-old.
Organizers, including Walker's family, have demanded peaceful demonstrations.
"Please, please be peaceful today," DiCello said on Sunday, ahead of a scheduled peace rally.

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Biden Admin Officials Go on Defensive After Bezos Blasts Prez's Plea to Gas Companies
By - Evan Craighead

On Saturday, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos tweeted that US President Joe Biden was either leading the nation down a problematic path, or demonstrating a "deep misunderstanding of basic market dynamics," after issuing a social media demand for "companies running gas stations" to lower their prices amid "a time of war and global peril."
As the White House continues to shroud crippling fuel prices, inflation, and other worrying economic trends within a feel-good narrative with abstract explanations, it appears a growing number of Americans are growing tired of being told to make daily sacrifices.
Nevertheless, White House and National Security Council (NSC) officials defended the president's Saturday post, asserting that Bezos' binary approach is not that of the Biden administration.
"Anybody that knows President Biden knows he's plain-spoken and he tells exactly what he's thinking in terms that everybody can understand," NSC coordinator for strategic communications John Kirby told "Fox News Sunday" guest host Mike Emanuel.
"So, I think, we obviously take great exception of the idea that this is somehow misdirection," Kirby added.

While Kirby tackled the cable television front, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre directly addressed Bezos and quipped that it was unsurprising that a man of Bezos' wealth and workplace reputation would speak out in favor of gas companies being able to "reap record profit."
"Oil prices have dropped by about $15 over the past month, but prices at the pump have barely come down," the press secretary tweeted. "That's not "basic market dynamics." It's a market that is failing the American consumer."
Diplomatic actions taken over the past several months have had a lasting impact on several economies across the world.

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"It's time for the United States to continue to support Ukraine, and that's what we are doing," Kirby said on Sunday, dismissing the idea that the US may play a role in urging Kiev to draft a settlement agreement with Moscow.
The NSC official emphasized that the US intends to continue arming Ukraine to ensure its forces "can succeed on the battlefield so that [Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky] can succeed at the table."

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Graham Throws Backing Behind Biden's Pursuit of $6 Billion Deal to Modernize Turkey's F-16 Fleet
By - Evan Craighead

The future of an estimated $6 billion modernization deal between the US and Turkey is now at the mercy of US lawmakers, including members of the Hellenic Caucus who recently penned a bipartisan statement condemning the proposed sale of 40 Lockheed Martin-made F-16 fighters and nearly double that amount in modernization kits.
Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) took to Twitter Sunday evening to express his newfound support for strengthening US relations with Turkey, a NATO ally that has been seeking to procure at least 40 F-16 aircraft and dozens of modernization kits since October 2021.
"While we have had a problematic relationship at times, it is imperative Turkey and the US take steps to strengthen the ties between our two nations," Graham tweeted upon his return to the states.
"These fighter jets, in the hands of our NATO allies, will create a sense of stability and provide capability to the Turkish military that is most definitely in America's national security interests," said the longtime US lawmaker for South Carolina.
Graham's proclamation of support comes three days after US PresidentJoe Biden expressed optimism about securing congressional authorization for Turkey's request.
Speaking to reporters in Madrid, Spain, last month, Biden disclosed that his meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan included a reassurance that he continues to support the sale and modernization effort, as it remains within the national interest of the US.
"I indicated to them that I've not changed my position at all since December," Biden said.
Reps. Carolyn B. Maloney (D-NY) and Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), co-chairs of the Hellenic Caucus, and caucus member Rep. Chris Pappas (D-NH) expressed staunch opposition to the modernization of Turkey's F-16 fleet.
"I am deeply disappointed with the apparent plan to move forward with modernizing Turkey's F-16s," Maloney said in a quoted statement.
The US lawmaker for New York went on to assert that Turkey's continued possession of Russian S-400 surface-to-air missile system, "which led to their ejection from the F-35 program and the imposition of ['Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act' (CAATSA)] sanctions."

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Members of the caucus have also called for additional sanctions to be imposed against Turkey, informing US Secretary of State Antony Blinken that Jeff Flake, his nominee for ambassador to Turkey, warned the US about circumventing the penalties by "trying to sell the jets to an entity other than Turkey's SSB (Presidency of Defense Industries), which has been sanctioned."

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Hacker Claims to have Personal Information of 1 billion Chinese Citizens
By - Ian DeMartino

According to a study by IBM, data breaches cost companies an average of $4.24 million in 2021. The most common initial attack vector was compromised credentials, responsible for 20% of breaches.
A hacker is selling a data trove of over 23 terabytes of data allegedly containing the personal information and records of over 1 billion Chinese citizens.
The pseudonymous hacker going by the name "ChinaDan" posted on the hacker-frequented Breach Forums, offering to sell the data he says came from the Shanghai police department for 10 bitcoins, currently worth $202,660.
The leak has not yet been confirmed as legitimate, and some of the phone numbers listed in the sample have since been disconnected, according to The Guardian. However, that does not mean the data is illegitimate, just that some of the information it contains may be out of date.
ChinaDan's post went viral on the Chinese social media site Weibo and chat application WeChat, causing the hashtag "Shanghai Data breach" to be banned on Weibo, though that has not stopped Chinese netizens from discussing the leak.
"Databases contain information on 1 billion Chinese national residents and several billion case records, including: name, address, birthplace, national ID number, mobile number, all crime/case details," the hacker posted on Breach Forums.
This is the latest in a string of data breaches to hit China, including a leak in 2016 that resulted in the personal information of several high-profile Chinese citizens being leaked online, including Alibaba founder Jack Ma.
If the data is legitimate, this latest hack would be one of the largest in history.

On Sunday, Zhao Changpeng, CEO of the Chinese-based cryptocurrency exchange Binance posted on Twitter that the company's threat intelligence spotted the sale of the personal information of 1 billion residents of an Asian country on the dark web. While he did not mention the Shanghai hack specifically, it seems likely that it was the hack he was referring to. Zhao says that the exchange is stepping up its user verification process for those affected by the hack.
On Monday, Zhao mentioned a theory on how the leak could have happened, pointing to a blog post by a government developer that may have included the database credentials.
China passed legislation last year mandating how companies handle personal information and data.

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Study: United States - Mexico Border Now the Most Dangerous Land Crossing in the World
By - Ian DeMartino

Fifty-three people died and another 16 were hospitalized after a tractor-trailer full of migrants was abandoned in San Antonio, Texas last week. The tragedy highlighted a growing trend of migrant deaths in the Americas.

The United States - Mexico land border is now the most dangerous land crossing in the world, according to a study by the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Missing Migrants Project (MMP).

At least 728 migrants have died making the trek from Mexico to the United States, an increase of 52% from 2020. That number makes up the majority of the 1,238 migrant deaths that were reported in all of the Americas in 2021, the highest number since the MPP started tracking migrant deaths and disappearances in 2014.

But even that ghastly number is likely underreported, the study's authors say. That is because an unknown number of dead migrants are never found or reported as missing.

"Our data shows the growing crisis of deaths during migration in the region, and the need to strengthen the forensic capacity of the authorities to identify deaths on these routes," explained Edwin Viales, the lead author of the IOM study. "We cannot forget that every single number is a human being with a family who may never know what happened to them."

The study was released less than a week after the discovery of a tractor-trailer in San Antonio, Texas, that was filled with over a hundred migrants, 53 of whom died after temperatures in the area soared to 103 F. That incident increased the number of migrant deaths along the United States - Mexico border to 493 in 2022 so far, putting this year on track to surpass even 2021.

While the land route is dangerous, traveling by sea is not much better. The study notes that at least 67 migrants have died traveling maritime routes between the Caribbean and the United States. That number is also likely underreported due to the number of vessels lost at sea that are never found.

Authorities attempt to identify the country of origin of dead migrants, but more often than not they are unable to. Over 500 of the deaths reported since the start of 2021 have an unknown country of origin.

While the economic crisis in Venezuela is cited as one cause of the increase in migrant activity, it is the border policies of the destination countries that the MPP points to as the primary culprit in the rise in migrant deaths.

"These deaths and disappearances are related to the lack of options for safe and regular mobility, which increases the likelihood of migrants opting for irregular migration pathways that put their lives at risk," the executive summary of the studies states.

The Biden administration has been attempting to end Title 42, a Trump-era COVID-19 prevention policy that prevented asylum seekers from entering the country while they wait for

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their cases to be heard. However, multiple states have sued the federal government, delaying the policy's cessation.
That and other strict border policies have forced migrants to seek alternative, more dangerous routes.
The study's executive summary ends with a plea to governments to do something to prevent the deaths of migrants.
"States must honor their commitments … to save migrant lives and prevent further deaths and disappearances."

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New Zealand Proposes Stricter Laws On Public Defecation
By - Ian DeMartino

An activity called "freedom camping" is being blamed for an increase in used toilet paper and human excrement littering popular tourist destinations in New Zealand.
New Zealand is perfectly fine with you pooping and peeing in public, as long as you make sure you aren't being watched. But more restrictions on doing your business outdoors may be coming to the island nation soon.
Freedom Camping is camping on public land without paying a fee and is an activity quickly growing in popularity in New Zealand. In 2019, the year before the country shut down tourism due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 245,000 freedom campers enjoyed New Zealand's famous landscapes while "freedom camping." Of those, only 91,000 were Kiwis, indicating freedom camping is becoming a major tourist attraction for the small country.
However, it is also causing problems, something the Responsible Campers Association (RCA) wants to fix by adding more regulations on where freedom campers do their personal business and what they do with it after they are done.
The association wants new rules mandating that excrement must be buried at least 15cm (5.9 inches) and must be done at least 15 meters (49.2 feet) away from the nearest waterway.
The plea comes after multiple localities banned freedom campers from popular destinations because of a perceived increase in human waste and toilet paper being left at sites around the country. The issue became so heated that New Zealand's tourism minister Stuart Nash told Radio New Zealand that freedom campers "pull over to the side of the road and … s*** in our waterways."
The spokesperson for the RCA, Bob Osborne, says that blaming freedom campers is unfair. "There is no evidence linking any specific group to this undesirable practice which affects travelers all over New Zealand," he said.
While the RCA advocates for a more permanent solution of more public restrooms, Osborne says that in the meantime, mitigation of the worst side effects of public defecation can be a solution, namely burying excrement and toilet paper and keeping it out of water sources. The association also stresses that campers should not be punished for the actions of a few bad apples, and that bad behavior should be punished, not camping itself.

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Technically, public defecation is an offense in New Zealand that can result in a $200 fine, but that fine will be waived if the offender can show they had reason to believe no one could see them doing their business. Nash will be introducing new regulations to parliament later this year, including harsher fines for bad behavior and restrictions on where freedom campers can park. With COVID-19 restrictions on tourism being lifted in the country, 2022 is expected to be a big year for freedom camping in New Zealand. With unburied defecation still allowed under law, campers are advised to watch where they step.

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Yum! Negotiating to Sell KFC Restaurants in Russia to Local Operator, Fully Exit Country

WASHINGTON, July 5 (Sputnik) - Yum! Brands Inc. is negotiating to sell Russian KFC restaurants to a local operator and fully exit Russia, the company said in a statement on Monday.
"Yum! Brands, Inc. (NYSE: YUM) announced an update on its ongoing process to exit the Russian market," the statement said.
In June, Yum! completed the transfer of ownership of all Pizza Hut assets to a local operator.
"The Company is also in advanced stages of transferring ownership of its KFC restaurants, operating system and master franchise rights, including the network of franchised restaurants, to a local operator," the statement said.
The strategy is a part of the Yam!'s actions to suspend operations of all company-owned restaurants in Russia, the statement also said.
"[The company is planning to] halt all investment and restaurant development efforts, and redirect any profits from Russia operations to humanitarian efforts. Following completion of the KFC transaction, Yum! Brands intends to fully exit from Russia," it added.

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Griner Terrified of Staying in Russian Jail Forever, Asks Biden to Remember US Detainees

WASHINGTON, July 5 (Sputnik) – Detained WNBA star Brittney Griner has pleaded for President Joe Biden not to forget about her as the US celebrated Independence Day, according to excerpts of a handwritten letter shared by her family and circulated by media.
"As I sit here in a Russian prison, alone with my thoughts and without the protection of my wife, family, friends, Olympic jersey or any accomplishments, I'm terrified I might be here forever," Griner wrote.
Noting that she voted for him in 2020, she asked Biden to "do all you can" to bring her and other US detainees home.

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"I realize you are dealing with so much, but please don't forget about me and the other American Detainees," she said.
Griner, who was in Russia playing for the UMMC Yekaterinburg basketball team during the WNBA off-season, was detained on February 17 at a Moscow airport for carrying cannabis oil in her luggage.
National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson said in a statement published by multiple news outlets that Biden has been "clear about the need to see all U.S. nationals who are held hostage or wrongfully detained abroad released," including Griner. She added that Biden's team was in "regular contact" with her family.
Griner's trial began last Friday. The Phoenix Mercury center and two-time Olympian gold medalist with the US women's basketball team faces up to 10 years in a penal colony if convicted.

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Blinken, Chinese Counterpart to Meet on G20 Sidelines This Week - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, July 5 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken will meet with his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Bali this week, the State Department said on Tuesday.
Blinken will travel to Bali, Indonesia, and Bangkok, Thailand, from July 6-11. Bali hosts the G20 summit on July 7-8.
"In addition to attending G20-related engagements, the Secretary will hold a bilateral meeting with Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi. Among other bilateral engagements, Secretary Blinken will also meet with the People's Republic of China (PRC) State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the margins of the G20," the press release said.
According to The Washington Post, Blinken and Wang will discuss Ukraine.

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RPT: ANALYSIS - US Unlikely to Avoid Severe Recession if Fed Acts Took Swiftly to Cool Inflation

WASHINGTON, July 2 (Sputnik) - A severe US recession might be unavoidable if the Federal Reserve hikes interest rates too quickly in its bid to cool demand and tame record high inflation, economic analysts told Sputnik.
A key Federal Reserve model this week signaled that the US economic recession is already here, after projecting the second consecutive quarter of negative growth. The unofficial forecast generated by the Atlanta Federal Reserve's GDPNow model on Thursday put 2Q GDP growth at -1%, which comes after a first quarter that saw -1.6% growth.

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The central bank has said it will continue with rate hikes until inflation, running at 40-year highs of more than 8% per year, returns to its target of 2% per year. On Friday, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco President Mary Daly said US interest rates need to double by year-end for the central bank to have a fair shot at neutralizing inflation.

Fed Chairman Jerome Powell earlier this week said, although possible, it would be challenging for the US economy to achieve a "soft landing" - that is, avoiding a recession in the wake of the central bank's rate adjustments.

"We won't be able to avoid a 'hard landing' with a serious recession… [and] the quicker we try to cool down inflation to the 2% target, the more likely the recession will be severe," retired Brown University Assistant Professor of Economics Barry Friedman told Sputnik.

Friedman said there was a risk in aggressively attempting to get beyond stagflation (a combination of weak growth and high inflation).

"They may hate stagflation, but a sudden sharp recession is an awful risk of a snowballing movement that takes difficult political compromises to turn around, and who is going to compromise these days?" Friedman said.

ALL SIGNS FLASHING

Some experts believe the situation is even worse than the stagflation of the 1970s and early 1980s, when inflation peaked at 13.5% and then-Fed chair Paul Volcker raised interest rates to over 20%, which triggered a 16-month recession.

"Contrary to the major media talking about stagflation it will be dragflation," Trends Journal Publisher Gerald Celente told Sputnik. "Economies won't stagnate as inflation rises: It will be declining gross domestic products and rising inflation."

Levy Economics Institute of Bard College Research Associate Marshall Auerback said all signs clearly indicated that an economic decline was inevitable.

"I would argue that we're already in recession, and it will get worse," Auerback told Sputnik. "Consumer confidence is hitting record lows even below what we had in the early 1980s during the era of Volcker's interest rate hikes."

He also noted that a Bloomberg Agricultural Spot Index fell 12% in June while almost all other major industrial commodity prices such as steel and fertilizers have fallen.

"What is striking is how across the board these price declines are. Almost no commodity prices have risen since interim peaks in May or June," he said.

Auerback also pointed to the decline in the US Conference Board Consumer Confidence Index, which fell again in June, the second month in a row. Expectations, he added, have fallen into a zone associated with recessions in the past.

Retail sales too were now already plunging across the United States and Europe, Auerback observed.

"This rapid inventory build coupled with widespread business concerns about excessive inventories for several months now suggests this build in inventories has been involuntary," Auerback said. "In other words, firms have experienced an unexpected shortfall in consumer purchases."

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RPT - ROCOR Has No Plans to Stop Commemorating Patriarch of Moscow Due to Events in Ukraine

WASHINGTON, July 2 (Sputnik) - The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) does not plan to stop commemorating the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill because of the events in Ukraine, Archbishop of Canada and Montreal Gabriel told Sputnik.
"Yes, of course, there are absolutely no plans to withdraw or to stop commemorating the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia," Gabriel said.
During the session of the ROCOR Synod on Thursday situation in Ukraine was discussed, and all the bishops agreed that whatever opinion one may hold, the Church first and foremost, has to be united and faithful to the Gospel, he added.
"There is no doubts that Neo-Nazis in Ukraine want to separate the two Orthodox people, the Russians and Ukrainians, historically close to each other, and that is something that should not be allowed to happen. For this reason, we have to understand the Patriarch's position," Gabriel said.
Some people want ROCOR to stop commemorating the Patriarch because of his position on Ukraine while others oppose such an approach, he said.
"The Patriarch is the head of the Church, and he is in a difficult situation. However it is understandable that he supports the military operation and Russian soldiers, that are defending Donetsk and Luhansk regions from the Neo-Nazis, which have been shelling those territories for the past eight years. In my opinion, we have to understand the Patriarch's position and be supportive of that," he said.
Gabriel emphasized that the Synod also discussed an order on the election of a new First Hierarch during the upcoming Bishops' Council on September 13.
The previous ROCOR Primate Metropolitan Hilarion (Kapral) passed away in May.
"Each bishop, of course, has a right to vote. Those who cannot make it for some reason, can send in their votes," Gabriel said.
In order to be elected, a candidate has to get the support of two thirds of the members of the Synod. In case no candidate receives two thirds support, the two bishops who received the most votes go onto a second round of election on the same day, Gabriel said.
The lot is the final method of election if a candidate does not get two-thirds of the votes in the second round, he added.

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ANALYSIS - US Unlikely to Avoid Severe Recession if Fed Acts Took Swiftly to Cool Inflation

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Levy Economics Institute of Bard College Research Associate Marshall Auerback said all signs clearly indicated that an economic decline was inevitable.

"I would argue that we're already in recession, and it will get worse," Auerback told Sputnik. "Consumer confidence is hitting record lows even below what we had in the early 1980s during the era of Volcker's interest rate hikes."

He also noted that a Bloomberg Agricultural Spot Index fell 12% in June while almost all other major industrial commodity prices such as steel and fertilizers have fallen.

"What is striking is how across the board these price declines are. Almost no commodity prices have risen since interim peaks in May or June," he said.

Auerback also pointed to the decline in the US Conference Board Consumer Confidence Index, which fell again in June, the second month in a row. Expectations, he added, have fallen into a zone associated with recessions in the past.

Retail sales too were now already plunging across the United States and Europe, Auerback observed.

"This rapid inventory build coupled with widespread business concerns about excessive inventories for several months now suggests this build in inventories has been involuntary," Auerback said. "In other words, firms have experienced an unexpected shortfall in consumer purchases."

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US in Meeting With Taliban Raise Concerns About Restricting Delivery of Aid - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, July 2 (Sputnik) - A US delegation led by Special Envoy Thomas West during a meeting in Doha relayed Washington's concerns to senior Taliban representatives about interfering in the delivery of humanitarian aid, the State Department said in a press release.
West led a senior interagency delegation to continue discussions with senior Taliban representatives and technocratic professionals in Doha on June 29 and 30.
"The United States registered concerns regarding increased interference by the Taliban in the delivery of humanitarian assistance," the release said on Friday.
The US also underscored concerns with the ongoing and expanding restrictions on the rights of Afghan women and girls, the release said.
"West made clear the critical linkage between progress on protection of Afghans' rights and steps toward normalizing America's ties with the Taliban," the State Department said.
In addition, the United States discussed US support for steps to enhance the availability of afghani currency and other economic stabilization measures.
"The two sides discussed in detail US actions to preserve $3.5 billion in Afghan central bank reserves for the benefit of the Afghan people as well as steps to build international confidence in the central bank, Da Afghanistan Bank," the release said.
The United States in addition expressed condolences for the loss of life and suffering in Afghanistan caused by recent earthquakes, the release said.
The two sides noted an interest in additional exchanges regarding counternarcotics and disaster response preparedness, according to the release.

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Biden Administration Proposes Offshore Drilling Plan in Gulf of Mexico - Interior Dept.

WASHINGTON, July 2 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is proposing a five-year plan to expand offshore drilling for oil and gas in the Gulf of Mexico, the US Interior Department said.
"The proposed program includes no more than ten potential sales in the Gulf of Mexico (GOM) and one potential lease sale in the northern portion of the Cook Inlet Planning Area offshore Alaska," the Interior Department said in the release on Friday.
The proposed plan will go through a public comment period to determine whether or how many offshore oil and gas lease sales to hold over the next five years, the release said.
It is possible the final proposal for offshore drilling could include less potential lease sales or no lease sales, the report added.

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US Used Secret Authority to Conduct Proxy War Operations in Mideast, Asia-Pacific -Reports

WASHINGTON, July 2 (Sputnik) - The United States has used a secret authority known as 127e to conduct at least 14 proxy war operations in the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific region as early as 2020, the Intercept reported citing documents in obtained and also senior Defense Department officials.

The United States uses the 127e authority to allow US commandos to conduct so-called counterterrorism operations through foreign and irregular partner forces around the world, the report said on Friday.

The United States, through the authority, is then able to provide foreign forces with arms, training and intelligence, who are then sent on US-directed missions targeting US enemies, the report said.

According to retired four-star Army Gen. Joseph Votel, the United States conducted 127e counterterrorism efforts in Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen, the report said.

Another former senior defense official confirmed to the Intercept that a 127e operation took place in Iraq and obtained documents showed another 127e operation took place in Tunisia.

These secret operations have cost the United States $310 million between 2017 and 2020, the report said.

The Defense Department and Special Operations Command refuse to comment on the 127e authority because it is classified and the White House has failed to address the matter, the report said.

In addition, it is unknown how many civilians and foreign forces have been killed during 127e operations, but there have been US casualties, the report said.

The report said, citing a US government official familiar with the program, that only a small number of lawmakers on Congress' armed services and intelligence committees read reports on 127e operations while others do not know they exist.

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Poll Shows 71% of Americans Do Not Want Biden to Run for Second Term in Office - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 2 (Sputnik) - More than seven out of ten Americans do not want President Joe Biden to seek re-election for a second four-year term of office according to a new poll, The Hill reported.

Some 71%, or well over two-thirds, do not want Biden to run for re-election according to a Harvard CAPS-Harris Poll reported by the newspaper on Friday. Only 20% said they believed he should run.

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Within that 71% who want the president to stand down after only four years, nearly half of them - 45% - said they felt that way because they believed he was a bad president, the report said. Only 30% of registered Democrats told the pollsters they would even support Biden in any purely internal Democratic party primary state elections to choose the presidential candidate, the report added.

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Trump Media Company Subpoenaed in Federal Criminal Probe Tied to Merger Deal - Filing
(Updates with details in paras 4, 5)
WASHINGTON, July 1 (Sputnik) - A federal court subpoenaed former US President Donald Trump's media group in connection to a criminal investigation linked to its merger deal with Digital World Acquisition Corp., according to a filing in the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).
"Digital World has been informed that on June 27, 2022 TMTG [Trump Media and Technology Group] received a subpoena from the SEC seeking documents relating to, among other things, Digital World and other potential counterparties for a business transaction involving TMTG," Digital World said in a filing on Friday.
In addition, Digital World said it has also been informed that "on June 30, 2022, TMTG was served with a subpoena, issued by a federal grand jury sitting in the Southern District of New York, seeking a subset of the same or similar documents demanded in subpoenas to Digital World and its directors. Certain current and former TMTG personnel have also recently received individual grand jury subpoenas."
Digital World said in the filing that the SEC is seeking various documents and information related to the company's merger with the Trump's media group, information about potential targets other than TMTG, and information about relations Digital World has with other entities. The investigations by the SEC and the Justice Department could delay or prevent the merger, the filing said.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY
WASHINGTON, July 2 (Sputnik) -

UKRAINE DEVELOPMENTS
* The United States announced another package of security assistance for Ukraine worth $820 million that includes two advanced surface-to-air missile systems and four additional counter-artillery radars amid Russia's special military operation, the Pentagon said on Friday.

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* Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskky's message handed to Russian President Vladimir Putin by his Indonesian counterpart, Joko Widodo, is not a written document, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.
* Ukraine became the second-largest importer of German armaments, after Berlin approved the exports of 562 million euros ($584 million) worth of weaponry to Kiev in the first six months of 2022, the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK) said.

KALININGRAD
* Russia is currently in talks with the European Union on the issue of goods transit to its exclave of Kaliningrad through Lithuania, while also working on a package of retaliatory measures to be introduced if the problem is not solved, Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko said on Friday.
* The German government is dismayed by Lithuania blocking the transit of goods from mainland Russia to its exclave of Kaliningrad and urges Vilnius to lift the ban, German newspaper Spiegel reported, citing insights.

UNREST IN UZBEKISTAN
* The public order has been restored in Nukus, the capital of the autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan in Uzbekistan, after an "illegal protest" over constitutional amendments, the Uzbek Interior Ministry said on Friday.

RUSSIA-BULGARIA DIPLOMATIC DISPUTE
* Acting Bulgarian Prime Minister Kiril Petkov said on Friday that he will not change his decision to order 70 Russian diplomats out of the country.
* Russian Ambassador to Bulgaria Eleonora Mitrofanova said he would raise the issue of closing the Russian embassy in Sofia with the Russian leadership, given that the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry had ignored Moscow's appeal regarding the issue.

PUTIN-MODI TALKS
* Russian President Vladimir Putin held a phone conversation with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.
* Putin told Modi during a phone conversation that Russia remains a reliable producer and supplier of grain, fertilizers and energy, the Kremlin said.

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Russians Leaving Snake Island Result of Ukrainian Pressure, Harpoons Deployment - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, July 1 (Sputnik) - The Russian military decided to leave Snake Island in the Black Sea due to significant pressure applied by the Ukrainian forces as well as the deployment

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by them of Harpoon missiles that were recently supplied to the country, a senior US Defense Department official said on Friday.
"The way we view this development [Russians leaving the Snake Island] is that the Ukrainians were very successful at applying significant pressure on the Russians, including by using those Harpoon missiles that they recently acquired to attack a [Russian] resupply ship," the official said during a press briefing.
The Ukrainians made it very hard for the Russian military to sustain operations on the island because they became "very vulnerable" to Ukrainian strikes, the official claimed.
At the same time, the official admitted that Russian troops leaving Snake Island is not a "panacea" for Ukraine, but it has made it easier to defend Odessa from potential attacks and has enabled opening up sea corridors.
On Thursday, the Russian Ministry of Defense said its forces left Snake Island located in the Black Sea near Odessa. The ministry called the retreat a "gesture of goodwill" to show the world community that Russia does not interfere with the efforts of the United Nations to organize a humanitarian corridor for exporting grain from Ukraine.

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In addition, Digital World said it has also been informed that "on June 30, 2022, TMTG was served with a subpoena, issued by a federal grand jury sitting in the Southern District of New York, seeking a subset of the same or similar documents demanded in subpoenas to Digital World and its directors. Certain current and former TMTG personnel have also recently received individual grand jury subpoenas."
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Oil Markets Start 3rd Quarter Trading on High Octane Amid Supply Disruptions

NEW YORK, July 1 (Sputnik) - Oil markets began July and third-quarter trading on a high octane as supply disruptions from Libya to Norway propped up crude prices that finished June trading lower for the first time in seven months.

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Libya's National Oil Corporation (NOC) declared force majeure on Thursday at the Es Sider and Ras Lanuf ports, as well as the El Feel oilfield, adding to similar declarations made earlier on the ports of Brega and Zueitina, reports said.
Force majeure is declared when unforeseen circumstances prevent a party from fulfilling a contract. It is most commonly used in the delivery of oil and other commodities.
Production at the NOC has seen a sharp decline as a result of the force majeures, with daily exports ranging between 365,000 and 409,000 barrels per day - a drop of some 865,000.
In Norway, nearly 75 offshore oil workers at Equinor's Gudrun, Oseberg South and Oseberg East platforms will go on strike from July 5, likely halting about 4% of the country's oil production, trade union officials said.
Offsetting some of the bullish impact from the events in Libya and Norway was news that Ecuador's government and indigenous groups' leaders have reached agreement to end more than two weeks of protests that had led to the shut-in of more than half of the country's pre-crisis 500,000 barrels-per-day oil output.
Reacting to all, New York-traded West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude settled up the first trading day of July and the third quarter up $2.67, or 2.5%, at $108.43 per barrel. The US crude benchmark had finished June down more than 7%.
London-traded Brent crude, the global benchmark for oil, settled up $2.60, or 2.4%, at $111.63 on its most-active September contract. It fell nearly 6% for all of last month.
"Crude is rebounding on the back of the quarter-end selling being done and more issues in Libya," Scott Shelton, energy futures broker at ICAP in Durham, North Carolina, said. "At some point, crude oil prices are going to make a parabolic move in my view that will be led by the physical market as there simply isn't enough oil production to offset refiner demand with the losses from Libya, Russia and OPEC constantly failing to make [its] quota."
Analysts said oil market participants will have two major challenges coming their way over the next two months that could pull prices in both directions: the Atlantic hurricane season and an increasingly-likely U.S. recession.
While hurricanes come and go each year, any storm in 2022 could have a rippling impact on energy infrastructure, supply and prices due to the squeeze already on barrels from sanctions piled on Russia; the apparent inability of OPEC+ to produce what consuming countries want; and US shale being slower than ever in returning to its pre-pandemic drilling glory.
Equally crippling to oil could be the evolving recession in the United States. US gross domestic product likely contracted by an estimated 1% in the second quarter of 2022, the Federal Reserve bank of Atlanta said on Thursday. It was the first official forecast of recession by a division of the US central bank, after the 1.6% economic decline in the first quarter.
Economists say the recession narrative could get uglier over the next 30 to 60 days as the Federal Reserve continues to increase US interest rates.

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Pentagon Announces $820Mln in Security Aid for Ukraine, Including Air Defense Systems
(Adds details in paras 4-6, provides background in para 7)

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WASHINGTON, July 1 (Sputnik) - The United States is announcing another package of security assistance for Ukraine worth $820 million that includes two advanced surface-to-air missile systems and four additional counter-artillery radars amid Russia's special military operation, the Pentagon said on Friday.

"This afternoon, the Department of Defense (DoD) announced $820 million in additional security assistance for Ukraine," the Pentagon said in a press release. "Included in this package are: Two National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems (NASAMS); Up to 150,000 rounds of 155mm artillery ammunition; and Four additional counter-artillery radars."

The new package also includes additional ammunition for High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) that were previously committed to Ukraine, the release said.

Nearly 95% of the new aid package, or $770 million come from Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI) funds, while the rest $55 million is a presidential drawdown authority, according to the release.

Under USAI authority, Ukraine will be getting military equipment on a contractual base directly from industry rather than from the Department of Defense warehouses, the release noted.

With the $820 million package, the US total military assistance to Ukraine since the beginning of the Biden administration has amounted to $7.6 billion dollars.

On February 24, Russia launched a special military operation in Ukraine after the breakaway republics of Donetsk and Luhansk requested help in defending themselves from intensifying attacks by Ukrainian troops. The Russian Ministry of Defense said the operation is solely targeting Ukrainian military infrastructure.

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CORRECTION - White Americans See Rise in Discrimination Against Their Group - Poll

(Corrects headline, story to reflect responses among racial groups rather than a nationally representative sample)

WASHINGTON, July 1 (Sputnik) - Over 30% of white Americans believe discrimination has increased more against white people than other racial groups over the past five years, the University of Maryland's Critical Issues Poll showed on Friday.

A total of 30.1% of white respondents said white Americans face "a lot more" discrimination, University of Maryland researchers said in an article for The Conversation. The figure was only close to the number of those white respondents (28.9%) who said Asian Americans experience "a lot more" discrimination.

In comparison, only 21.7% of white Americans note a rise in discrimination against Jewish Americans, 20.4% against black Americans, 19.7% against Muslim Americans and 14.7% against Latino Americans, the researchers said.

In contrast, 53.2% of black respondents believe that their group has faced "a lot more" discrimination in the past five years, compared with 38.9% of black Americans who said the same about Asian Americans, 33.3% about Latino Americans, 29.3% about Muslim Americans, 23.7% about Jewish Americans and 13% about white Americans.

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Brazil Plans Organizing Meeting at UN Security Council on Ukraine, Food Security - Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, July 1 (Sputnik) - Brazil is planning to organize a meeting at the UN Security Council this month on Ukraine and food security, the country's Ambassador to the United Nations Ronaldo Costa Filho said on Friday.

"Our plan is to have a meeting on Ukraine focused on the aspect of food security, which we feel is something that is impacting not only directly the populations of the region but is impacting the whole world. And we feel this is an issue that could give a welcome first step in the resolution of the conflict," Filho said during a press briefing.

However, Filho said the exact date of the meeting will be determined based on the developments in the ongoing United Nations-led negotiations on enabling grain exports from Ukraine and Russia.

"Now, this is a very delicate and sensitive issue. You're all aware that negotiations are ongoing on this issue. And the precise date of when this meeting would occur would depend on the evolution of those consultations and negotiations being held in Europe," Filho said.

Brazil has said it believes the UN Security Council has underperformed on the issue of Ukraine and would like to bring the United Nations body to specific talks instead of assigning blame. Brazil presides with the UN Security Council during the month of July.

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Pentagon Announces $820Mln in Security Aid for Ukraine, Including Air Defense Systems

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UN Continues Negotiations on Grain Exports With Key States - Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, July 1 (Sputnik) - The United Nations continues negotiating with the leaders and representatives to the world body of key countries on enabling grain exports out of Ukraine and Russia, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Friday.
"The Secretary-General [Antonio Guterres]]spoke the last few days to the Foreign Minister [Sergey] Lavrov. He spoke to the Turkish permanent representative. He spoke to the Russian permanent representative. Mr. [Martin] Griffiths and his team have spoken to Ukrainians and Russians. The same thing for Miss Greenspan; she has also been in touch with authorities in Europe and the United States and Russia over the last days and week, so as they say the telegraph lines are humming," Dujarric said during a press briefing.
The United Nations wants to be able to announce something, but we will only do it when we're ready, Dujarric said.
The United Nations is trying to broker a deal between Ukraine and Russia to ship grain out of Ukraine and grain and fertilizers out of Russia onto the world markets.
Guterres is leading the consultations and has said he seeks to find common ground between Ukraine and Russia.

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UN Says Inscribing Ukrainian Borscht as Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Protection

UNITED NATIONS, July 1 (Sputnik) - The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) said in a press release on Friday inscribed Ukrainian borscht as a piece of cultural heritage in need of urgent protection.
“Culture of Ukrainian borscht cooking was today inscribed on UNESCO’s List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding by the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage,” the release said.
The tradition was nominated to the List of Urgent Safeguarding due to the ongoing Russian special operation in Ukraine, the release said.
The displacement of people and impediments to agriculture threaten the ability of communities to engage in cooking borscht, the release added.
Inclusion on the List of Urgent Safeguarding mobilizes attention toward protecting and helps stakeholders undertake international efforts to develop and implement a safeguarding action plan, the release added.
Cooking borscht - a soup centered on beetroot - is practiced in communities in the broader Eastern European region.

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US Interest Rates Need to Be Above 3% by Year End - Federal Reserve Official

WASHINGTON, July 1 (Sputnik) - US interest rates need to double from the current nominal level of 1.5% to above 3% by year-end for the central bank to have a fair shot at neutralizing inflation, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco President Mary Daly said on Friday.

"We need to get to something like the neutral rate of interest by the end of the year," Daly said in an interview. "I see it around the 3.1% range of a nominal Fed funds rate."

The federal funds rate, which refers to the Federal Reserve-set interest rate that banks charge other institutions for lending excess cash from their reserves, is currently at a 1.50%-1.75% range.

Many economists say the Federal Reserve kept interest rates "too low for too long" and its catch-up now could unravel the recovery made since last year from the coronavirus pandemic. The Federal Reserve left interest rates at between zero and 0.25% for two years during the pandemic and only raised them this year in March. The central bank has said it will continue with rate hikes until inflation, running at 40-year highs of more than 8% per year, returns to its target of 2% per year.

The Federal Reserve began with a hike of 25 basis points, or quarter-percentage point, then raised it by 50 basis points, or a half percentage point, in May. In June, it imposed an increase of 75 basis points, or three quarters of a percentage point - its highest in 28 years.

The central bank's policy-making Federal Open Market Committee will meet another four times before the year-end - in July, September, November and December - to decide on how much higher rates should go.

"I would say 75 [basis points] in July, and then you figure out what else needs to be done so that we can get to 3.1% by the end of the year," Daly said. "So that is likely to be some natural slowing of the pace of interest rate hikes in terms of the magnitude."

Economists, however, fear that under its quantitative tightening approach, the Federal Reserve will push the economy into a recession with aggressive rate hikes and the simultaneous sale of hundreds of billions of dollars of assets and bonds in its holdings.

US gross domestic product likely contracted by an estimated 1% in the second quarter of 2022, the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta said on Thursday. It was the first official forecast of recession by a division of the central bank, after the 1.6% economic decline in the first quarter. US GDP contracted by 3.5% in 2020, in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic. The following year, it posted a growth of 5.7%, its strongest in four decades, as the economy rebounded forcefully from business lockdowns and other restrictions imposed during the height of the pandemic. Since the start of 2022, inflation has negatively impacted GDP growth.

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Ottawa Authorities Say Issued 275 Tickets, Towed 72 Vehicles Amid Canada Day Protests

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TORONTO, July 1 (Sputnik) - Canadian authorities have issued 275 tickets and towed 72 vehicles amid a resumption of protests against the Trudeau government for Canada Day, Ottawa By-law and Regulatory Services (BLRS) said on Friday.

"Since 8 am on June 29, Officers have issued 275 parking tickets and towed 72 vehicles located in the Vehicle Control Zone in place for Canada Day events and demonstrations this weekend," BLRS said via Twitter.

City authorities implemented full enforcement of all by-laws and additional security measures in response to demonstrations planned for the Canada Day weekend. BLRS on Thursday issued a statement expressing intent to enforce restrictions against motor-vehicle idling, unnecessary noise such as shouting, encumbering a sidewalk or roadway and littering.

Tickets for certain violations of city by-laws were recently raised to $1,000, the statement added.

Protesters involved in the so-called Freedom Convoy returned to Ottawa for Canada Day demonstrations, including a concert in front of Parliament Hill.

BLRS disabled public comments on its Twitter account on Friday in response to apparent criticism of the city and Trudeau government's policies.

"We wanted to let you know that we have had to temporarily disable comments on our page. While we aim to provide important information to the residents of Ottawa in a safe and informative space, that has become challenging given the nature of the comments we have been seeing," BLRS said on Friday. "We will resume comments when we are confident that we can ensure a safe and respectful space for everyone."

Canada Day celebrates the 1867 joining of separate colonies into a single Dominion within the British Empire, following which Canada gained increased political autonomy.

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US Orders 2.5Mln Doses of Smallpox, Monkeypox Vaccines - Health Human Services

WASHINGTON, July 1 (Sputnik) - The US government has ordered 2.5 million doses of a European-produced vaccine to inoculate against any outbreak of smallpox or monkeypox, the Department of Health and Human Services announced in a press release on Friday.

"The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) today ordered an additional 2.5 million doses of Bavarian Nordic's JYNNEOS, an FDA-licensed vaccine indicated for prevention of smallpox and monkeypox, for use in responding to current or future monkeypox outbreaks and as part of US smallpox preparedness," the release said.

Deliveries of the new vaccine are scheduled to start arriving at the US Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) later this year and will continue through early 2023, the release said.

"We are working around-the-clock with public health officials in states and large metro areas to provide them with vaccines and treatments to respond to the current monkeypox outbreak. This order of additional JYNNEOS vaccine will help us push out more vaccine quickly," Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra said in the release.

The US government had already ordered 500,000 doses of vaccine from Bavarian Nordic and by the end of 2023, more than 4 million doses are now on order. The vaccines will also be used as part of national preparedness efforts against smallpox, the release added.

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UN on P5 Summit Says Welcomes Any Dialogue to Lessen Tensions

UNITED NATIONS, July 1 (Sputnik) - The United Nations would welcome any summit, including the United Nations P5 Summit originally proposed by the Russian President Vladimir Putin, to lower the tensions between its members, the UN Spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Friday. "Obviously, I think for us any dialogue that would help lessen the tensions that are really for all to see within the P5, is always welcomed in whichever format they would choose," the UN Spokesman said.

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US List of Russian Import Items With 35% Duty Excludes Titanium, Palladium - White House

WASHINGTON, July 1 (Sputnik) - The US list of 570 Russian articles with 35% import duty does not contain titanium, palladium and certain kinds of aluminum, a White House document said on Friday.

On Monday, US President Joe Biden signed a proclamation to increase duties on certain import items from Russia after the Group of Seven (G7) countries agreed to explore options for using revenues collected by new tariffs on Russian goods to help Ukraine. The tariff hike comes after the Biden administration's decision in April to remove Russia and Belarus from the list of countries with which the United States maintains normal trade relations.

"[A]rticles that are the product of the Russian Federation, as provided for in this note, shall be subject to a 35 percent ad valorem rate of duty in lieu of the rates of duty provided for such articles in column 2 of the HTSUS [The Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States]," the document said.

The Biden administration increased duties on most Russian goods from 10% to 35%. The list of items includes a wide range of products made of wood, rubber, various metals, as well as yachts and boats, electrical, transport and cinematographic equipment, among others.

At the same time, the Biden administration decided to leave the same duties on the majority of cast iron and nickel articles made in Russia, according to the document.

According to the White House, over a past few few months, US exports to Russia have decreased by approximately 97%, while Russia's imports of goods from across the world could fall by 40%.he 570 items accounted for approximately $2.3 billion imports from Russiing to the White House.

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US Under Secretary for Economy, Energy on Visit to Bilbao for US-Spain Forum – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, July 1 (Sputnik) – The US under secretary for economic growth, energy, and the environment is visiting Spain form June 29-July 5 to take part in the US-Spain Forum in Bilbao, the State Department said on Friday.

"Under Secretary for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment, Jose W. Fernandez, is visiting Spain June 29 through July 5, 2022, to participate in the U.S.-Spain Forum in Bilbao, and engage with government officials, business leaders, and civil society members to support our shared objectives regarding commerce, investment, and clean energy initiatives," the press release said.

Fernandez will concentrate on better practices for building partnerships and bolstering green investment in ways that further job growth, economic inclusion, and opportunities for citizens in Spain, the United States, and across the region, it added.

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Biden Names 17 Presidential Medal of Freedom Recipients - White House

WASHINGTON, July 1 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden named 17 new recipients of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the United States' highest civilian recognition, including the late lawmaker John McCain, the White House said on Friday.

The medal is awarded to individuals who have made "exemplary contributions to the prosperity, values or security of the United States, world peace or other significant societal, public or private endeavors," the White House said in a statement.

McCain was posthumously awarded the medal following a decades-long career in both chambers of the US Congress, as well as a 2008 presidential run as the Republican Party nominee, the statement said.

Other recipients include late Apple co-founder Steve Jobs, Olympic gymnast Simone Biles, prominent Greek Orthodox leader Alexander Karloutsos and actor Denzel Washington, the statement said.

"President Biden has long said that America can be defined by one word: possibilities. These seventeen Americans demonstrate the power of possibilities and embody the soul of the nation - hard work, perseverance, and faith," the statement added.

The awards will be presented at the White House on July 7, according to the statement.

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US Allows Ship to Unload Oil Cargo After Finding No Breach of Russia Sanctions - Reports

(Edits headline, adds details in paras 5-6, edits throughout)

WASHINGTON, July 1 (Sputnik) - The United States on Friday allowed a halted oil tanker transporting fuel products from a Russian port to unload its cargo in Louisiana after finding no evidence of sanctions violations, The Wall Street Journal reported on Friday.

The Daytona tanker, owned by a Greek company, was allowed to unload in a New Orleans port after US authorities concluded that no breach of sanctions on Russia occurred, the report said, citing people familiar with the matter and a Coast Guard official.

The ship was detained for inspection by US Customs and Border Protection last week after arriving in the US following a trip to the Taman peninsula on the Black Sea, where there is a terminal for both Russian and Kazakh oil products.

The company was able to establish that the cargo aboard the ship originated in Kazakhstan and was not subject to any US sanctions on Russian energy, a spokesperson for the company reportedly said.

The US oil embargo on Russia, imposed in March in response to the special military operation in Ukraine, does not apply to energy products that transited through Russia, the report said.

Russia and Kazakhstan share oil pipelines and produce a popular crude oil blend containing 90% Kazakh oil and 10% Russian oil, according to the report.

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Six Out of 10 Women in US More Ready to Vote After Court Overturned Roe vs Wade - Poll

WASHINGTON, July 1 (Sputnik) - Some 60% of all women in the United States are more ready to vote in November's midterm elections since the US Supreme Court overturned the 1973 ruling in the Roe vs Wade case concerning abortion, a new All In Together poll revealed on Friday.

The 60% figure marks an increase of 6% in women interested in casting their ballots in elections compared with the previous survey nine months earlier in September 2021, the pollsters said.

Interest Among American men is now at 51%, a drop of 6 % over the same period of time, a release on the poll said.

The survey explored the change in interest in voting in the upcoming midterm national elections in November after the conservative-dominated Supreme Court effectively scrapped the 1973 Roe vs Wade decision in the case of Dobbs vs. Jackson Women's Health, the release said.

Young women have shown the biggest interest in voting with 83% now interested in voting, a rise of 26% over the 57% who expressed the same sentiment in the September 2021 poll, the release added.

The poll was undertaken from June 28 to June 29 in association with Emersion College Polling and it used a national cross-section of 1,271 registered US voters, according to the release.

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Americans See Increased Discrimination Against White People - Poll

WASHINGTON, July 1 (Sputnik) - Thirty-five percent of American adults believe discrimination has increased against their white compatriots over the past five years, according to the University of Maryland's Critical Issues Poll.

A nationally representative sample of 2,091 Americans were surveyed in May by Nielson Scarborough, which examined their perceptions of whether racial, ethnic, or religious discrimination toward White, Black, Latino, Asian, Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Americans had increased or decreased. The respondents were also asked whether these groups strengthened or weakened American society.

Twenty-five percent of respondents felt white Americans – the dominant racial group in the US – were discriminated against "a lot more." The figure was only significantly surpassed by the 33% who said discrimination against Asian Americans had increased "a lot more."

The questions were part of a broader poll on domestic and foreign issues. The survey accounted for the variables of age, gender, race, ethnicity, household income, level of education, census regional division, and political party affiliation.

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Almost Third of Americans Say They May Have to Take Up Arms Against Gov't - Poll

WASHINGTON, July 1 (Sputnik) - About 30% of Americans believe they may at some point have to take up arms against their government, according to a poll by the Policy Institute at the University of Chicago.

"And 28 percent of voters, including 37 percent who have guns in their homes, agree that 'it may be necessary at some point soon for citizens to take up arms against the government'," the poll said.

This viewpoint is shared by one in three Republicans and one in five Democrats.

In addition, the survey found that 49% feel more and more like strangers in their own country.

"A majority of Americans agree that the government is 'corrupt and rigged against everyday people like me,' including 73 percent of voters who describe themselves as a 'strong Republican,' 71 percent who called themselves 'very conservative' and 68 percent of rural voters. A bare majority (51 percent) of voters who call themselves 'very liberal' also agreed," it said.

The survey was conducted from May 19-23 among 1,000 Americans. The margin of error is 3.53%.

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ROCOR Has No Plans to Stop Commemorating Patriarch of Moscow Due to Events in Ukraine

WASHINGTON, July 1 (Sputnik) - The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) does not plan to stop commemorating the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill because of the events in Ukraine, Archbishop of Canada and Montreal Gabriel told Sputnik.

"Yes, of course, there are absolutely no plans to withdraw or to stop commemorating the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia," Gabriel said.

During the session of the ROCOR Synod on Thursday situation in Ukraine was discussed, and all the bishops agreed that whatever opinion one may hold, the Church first and foremost, has to be united and faithful to the Gospel, he added.

"There is no doubts that Neo-Nazis in Ukraine want to separate the two Orthodox people, the Russians and Ukrainians, historically close to each other, and that is something that should not be allowed to happen. For this reason, we have to understand the Patriarch's position," Gabriel said.

Some people want ROCOR to stop commemorating the Patriarch because of his position on Ukraine while others oppose such an approach, he said.

"The Patriarch is the head of the Church, and he is in a difficult situation. However it is understandable that he supports the military operation and Russian soldiers, that are defending Donetsk and Luhansk regions from the Neo-Nazis, which have been shelling those territories for the past eight years. In my opinion, we have to understand the Patriarch's position and be supportive of that," he said.

Gabriel emphasized that the Synod also discussed an order on the election of a new First Hierarch during the upcoming Bishops' Council on September 13.

The previous ROCOR Primate Metropolitan Hilarion (Kapral) passed away in May.

"Each bishop, of course, has a right to vote. Those who cannot make it for some reason, can send in their votes," Gabriel said.

In order to be elected, a candidate has to get the support of two thirds of the members of the Synod. In case no candidate receives two thirds support, the two bishops who received the most votes go onto a second round of election on the same day, Gabriel said.

The lot is the final method of election if a candidate does not get two-thirds of the votes in the second round, he added.

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US Allows Ship to Unload Russian Oil Cargo After Finding No Breach of Sanctions - Reports

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US Reaffirms Nuclear Non-Proliferation Commitment on NPT Treaty 54th Anniversary - Blinken

WASHINGTON, July 1 (Sputnik) - The United States remains committed to the tenets of the Treaty of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) 54 years since the signing of the accord, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Friday.
"On this day 54 years ago, the Treaty of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) opened for signature in London, Moscow, and Washington, D.C. Today, the United States reaffirms its commitment to this critical treaty and celebrates the immeasurable contribution it has made to the security and prosperity of the nations and peoples of the world," Blinken said in a statement.
The NPT is an international treaty concluded to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and promote cooperation for peaceful use of nuclear energy by furthering the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament.
Blnken said the NPT has provided the foundation for international efforts to curb the risk of nuclear-weapon proliferation and limited the potential for nuclear war.
The United States looks forward to working with all parties to preserve the treaty when the 10th Review Conference of the NPT begins next month, blinken also said.
Washington is expected to highlight during the conference NPT's enduring role as an international framework, Blinken added.

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US Holds Meeting With 30 Nations to Discuss Countering Hezbollah's 'Terrorist' Activities'

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WASHINGTON, July 1 (Sputnik) - The United States has held the ninth annual meeting of law enforcement representatives from more than 30 countries to discuss countering what it terms are "terrorist and illicit" activities by the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, the US State Department said on Friday.

"The Law Enforcement Coordination Group (LECG) focused on countering Hezbollah's terrorist and illicit activities convened in Europe on June 29-30 for its ninth meeting," the State Department said in a statement.

The countries represented in the meeting included from the Middle East, South and Central America, Europe, Africa, North America and the Indo-Pacific. The representatives from Europol also participated in the meeting.

"Participants discussed Hezbollah's ongoing global terrorist plotting, weapons procurement, and financial schemes, and outlined how Hezbollah may adapt in the future to evade law enforcement detection. LECG members discussed how law enforcement or financial tools can be used to disrupt Hezbollah terrorist and criminal activities, and associated networks," the statement said.

The State Department noted that numerous countries in Europe, South and Central America and the Indo- Pacific have taken measures in recent years "to designate, ban or restrict" Hezbollah, the statement said.

"LECG participants noted that these actions demonstrate the growing recognition among our partners about the need to cooperate on our efforts to counter Hizballah's global terrorist networks," the statement added.

Hezbollah formed in 1982 to promote and build a state in Lebanon based on Shiite Islamic principles of governance, according to reports.

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Ex-UFC Champ Nurmagomedov in Hall of Fame Speech Recalls Paving Way for Russian Fighters

MOSCOW, July 1 (Sputnik) - Former Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) Lightweight Champion and Dagestani native Khabib Nurmagomedov, during an acceptance speech to the UFC's Hall of Fame, recalled paving the way for other fighters from Russia as one of the first athletes from the country to compete in the mixed martial arts promotion.

"I become 16-0 and UFC signed me. I was first fighter from Russia, and a lot of people in my country was watching [sic]," Nurmagomedov said on Thursday evening. "January 2012, I make my debut in the UFC and I finish my opponent, and after that, UFC understand, they have to watch to this area and bring some good fighters from there. I'm very happy I was first guy for a lot of fighters who come after me."

Nurmagomedov achieved an undefeated 29-0 professional MMA record, earning accolades including world combat sambo championships, a UFC championship, ESPN's best MMA fighter of 2021, and now a place in the UFC Hall of Fame.

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The UFC ranked Nurmagomedov as the №1 pound-for-pound men's fighter at the time of his official retirement from the sport in 2021. Nurmagomedov is best known for his victory over Conor McGregor in the most-watched UFC event of all time.
Nurmagomedov is the first Russian to hold a modern divisional UFC championship, although Russian Oleg Taktarov also won a UFC tournament in 1995 before the implementation of weight classes.
Nurmagomedov in his acceptance speech also discussed the importance of parents setting a positive example for their children, a value which he attributes learning from his late father, Abdulmanap Nurmagomedov, who himself was awarded the title Merited Coach of Russia for his work training Khabib and other professional Russian fighters.
Nurmagomedov, who himself started actively coaching other Russian fighters upon retirement from competition, predicted three more UFC championships will come from his gym in the next several years.
The athlete has met with Russian President and judo practitioner Vladimir Putin several times throughout his career and maintains the most-followed Russian accounts on social media.

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Assange Appeals UK's Decision to Extradite Him to US – Reports

WASHINGTON, July 1 (Sputnik) – WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has appealed the United Kingdom's decision to extradite him to the United States where he is facing espionage charges, The Wall Street Journal reported on Friday, citing his lawyer.
Assange filed two appeals to the UK high court on Thursday in an effort to prevent his extradition, according to the lawyer.
The new legal dispute can last for months and delay Assange's extradition to the US, the report said.

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