



Washington Insider

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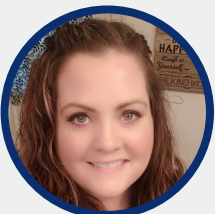
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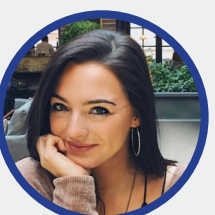
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ABOUT US



We believe in providing our audience with independent journalism throughout expert writers, analysts and journalists. Our culture is distinguished by unwavering grit, honesty, and a focus on innovation.

Transatlantic Today delighted to present the Washington Insider Magazine, a product that we present to our readers in Washington DC and beyond. Our magazine publishes unique and independent coverage on transatlantic relations with a Washington perspective. Transatlantic Today covers policymaking, politics and business related to the transatlantic relationship.

Our magazine strives to be become a key news analysis source for news on politics and policymakers in the US with particular focus on DC. Our coverage is designed with nonpartisan journalism and real-time tools create, inform and engage a those seeking timely and concise news.

Our work is designed by relentless grit, integrity and a prioritization of urgent and newsworthy topics.

In both of our website and and this magazine we cover topics about Diplomacy, Security, Defence, Counter Terrorism, foreign policy and international affairs. Indeed our reporting, OPeds, interviews with various stakeholders provide unique insights and analysis as well as the tools to arm you with the intel you need to make informed decisions.

Here I wish to commend.

Hannah Ochocki
Editorial Team

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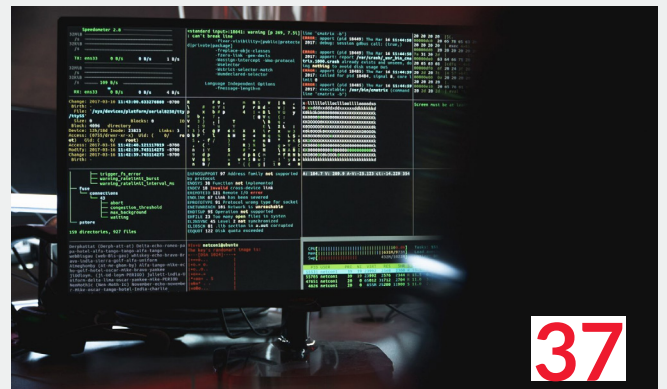
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Biden Promises Consequence To Putin If Ukrain Attacks Occur

by Christina Levandowski

With tensions rising to a boiling point between Russia and Ukraine, Vladimir Putin received a straightforward phone call from President Biden last Tuesday. This occurred in the wake of Putin's threats to invade and attack Russia that has been circulating over the past few weeks.

President Biden's scope of restriction on Putin would come in the form of severe economic sanctions and restrictions. While this may have been effective in other situations, President Putin has shown resistance to Biden, rebuffing his authority as President of the United States since he's assumed office in January of 2021. Political commentators from a variety of sources have expressed disbelief that this will keep Putin from executing political strategy over Ukraine and its citizens.

This is especially a risk, as President Biden has confirmed that at the moment, using US troops to help reinforce the threat will not be considered. Although reasons for the passive strategy are unclear, many doubt the efficacy of the strategy given President Putin's past history of inaction until there is military reactivity involved.

Currently, Biden has stated that troops will not be involved, as the US is not beholden to Ukraine in the same way that it is to other allies under NATO – which, while accurate, is not considering any of the potential human rights abuses or concerns for Ukraini-



an wellbeing if the country were to suffer an attack under President Putin.

Instead, President Biden is considering making allowances for the Russian frustration surrounding the expansion of NATO. While this act of diplomacy may elevate the United States under different circumstances, many fear that this lapse in foreign policy will signal concurrent weakness or passive leadership under the current presidency.

This was already noted and evident by the resumption of the oil pipeline construction the day after Biden swore into the US presidency.

The goal of these allowances and talks is to reduce the tension in the East, especially surrounding Ukraine. If these talks go well, one may consider that this is a long-form strategy that will continue to shape US policy in the future.

Putin has been very vocal about his refusal to attack and subse-

quently encroach on Ukraine, stating that his concern comes with the expansion of NATO and Russia's inability to maintain monitoring and intelligence in other relative areas.

To completely ignore and enable the expansion without quantification of Russian concern would show evidence of indifference to the political and security interests of Russia, according to President Putin.

While tensions are still on the rise, Putin has affirmed that Russia is proceeding with a peaceful foreign security policy unless otherwise provoked by Ukraine. Both presidents have affirmed that the phone call was open, honest, and otherwise constructive when it comes to the future of US foreign policy and Russian procedure.=

Despite US Intelligence sources seeing and vocalizing a heavier military presence along the Ukrainian border, Russia has dismissed all claims of possible invasion at this time.

Two Former Aides To Sen. Sinema Lobbied To Sway Biden's Agenda

by Liam Flynn



WASHINGTON – Two former aides to Senator Kyrsten Sinema have lately lobbied for corporate behemoths seeking to sway President Joe Biden's agenda.

Kate Gonzales and Alyssa Marois, two former Sinema staffers, appear to be uncommon examples of former Sinema staffers who have registered to lobby the federal government. Because their former employer, an Arizona Democrat, is a critical vote in a Congress split 50-50 by party, their position is extremely valuable to their clients.

Sinema and conservative Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.

Va., have been key members of the Democratic-controlled Senate in recent months as their party attempts to pass initiatives such as Biden's Build Back Better Act with a simple majority. Major legislation can be derailed by a single Democratic defection.

According to Senate regulations, Gonzales, a former Sinema staffer who became a lobbyist, will have to wait a year before lobbying Sinema's office. Gonzales departed Sinema's office in April after working for five months as a policy advisor, according to her LinkedIn page.

Her past work experience includes a year as a legislative staffer for Arizona Senator Kyrsten Sinema. Gonzales might continue to lobby other members of Congress and their staff.



Last year, Marois, who worked for Sinema's office in the House of Representatives, was promoted to senior vice president of public affairs at HSBC. Her employment was announced in late September by the company. CNBC reports that she previously worked as a lobbyist for J.P. Morgan Chase, a Wall Street giant.

According to a third-quarter lobbying disclosure report covering July through September, Marois assisted HSBC in lobbying on proposals in which Sinema played a prominent role. The Build Back Better Act, which was passed by the House, the American Rescue Plan, which was signed last year, and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), which was passed in 2020, are all mentioned in the study.

Sinema voted in support of the latter two bills but has not stated if she will support the Senate version of Build Back Better.

Many former MPs' advisors go on to work as lobbyists. Ex-aides to Manchin have recently attracted powerful clients, including Hess, the media behemoth Comcast, and a foundation headed by a former campaign manager for Mike Bloomberg.

Doug Jones To Guide Supreme Court Nominee

by Randy Whitehead

WASHINGTON (Transatlantic Today) – Two sources involved in the process told CNN that the White House is set to pick former Alabama Senator Doug Jones to coach Supreme Court candidate Brett Kavanaugh through the confirmation procedure on Capitol Hill, filling the role known as “sherpa” in Washington.

Jones, a former federal prosecutor best known for prosecuting members of the Ku Klux Klan, has been a close ally of President Joe Biden for many years. He was present in Atlanta for the President’s speech on voting rights late last month, and he keeps in touch with the White House on a regular basis. Jones and the White House both declined to respond.

Jones will be a member of a large team that the White House is putting together to work effectively with the nominee. Veterans of the Obama administration’s judicial confirmation battles will also be on the team.

Jones was also a strong candidate for Attorney General in Biden’s cabinet. He eventually joined a law firm in Washington, DC, and has been a CNN contributor for the past year. He was a member of the United States Senate from 2018 to 2021, winning an extraordinary election when Sen. Jeff Sessions resigned to serve as the Trump administration’s attorney general. Jones, who ran as a moderate Democrat, was defeated by Tommy Tuberville, the state’s junior Republican

senator, in the very conservative state in 2020.

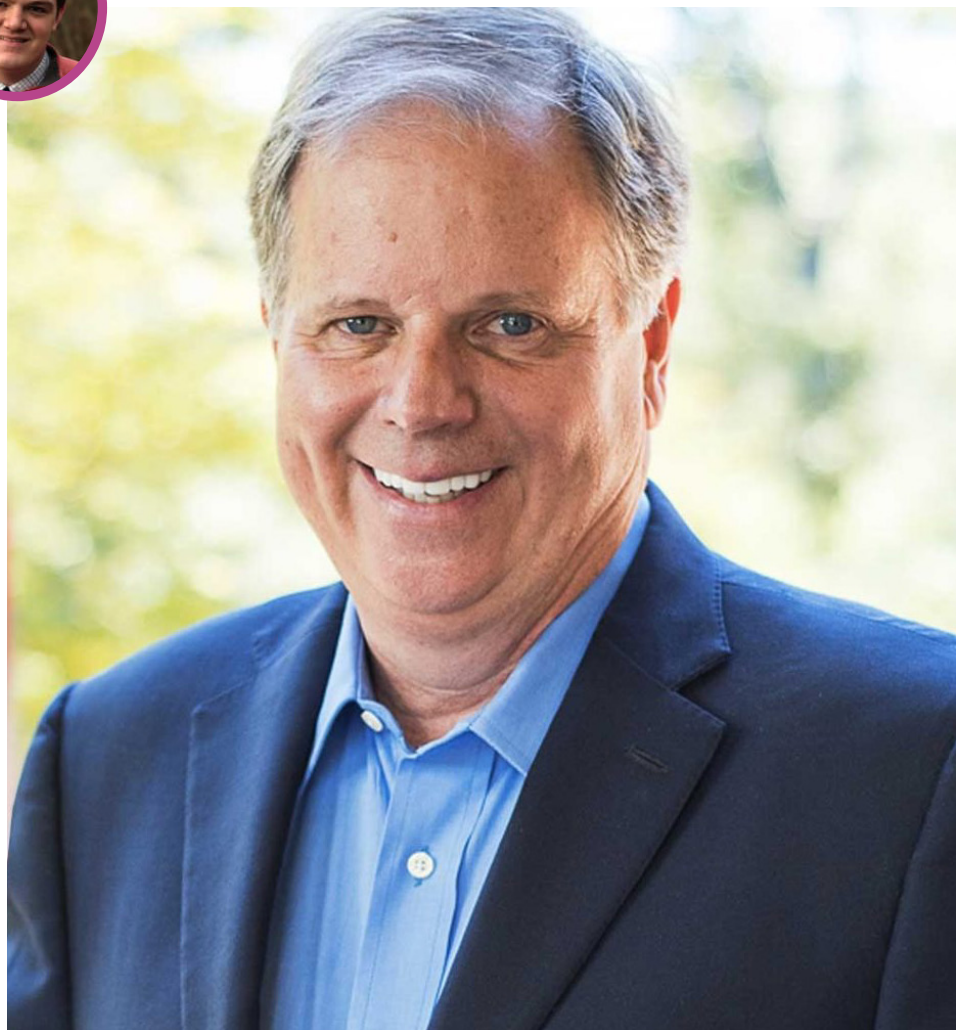
Jones was appointed as the U. S. Attorney for the Northern District of Alabama by former President Bill Clinton in 1997. Jones served as the state’s senior federal prosecutor when 4 African American girls were slain in the 1963 bombing of Birmingham’s 16th Street Baptist Church, a watershed incident in the civil rights movement.

Jones’ nomination comes only hours after Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris met with the Senate Judiciary committee’s senior Republi-

can, Sen. Chuck Grassley and the Committee Chair Dick Durbin, at the White House to discuss the future Supreme Court vacancy.

The discussion reflects the President’s promise to bring senators from both sides to the White House to provide feedback on who he should pick to the nation’s highest court to succeed Justice Stephen Breyer.

The President has stated that he will appoint the first Black woman to the Supreme Court, and the White House has stated that it is now casting a wide net in its search for candidates.

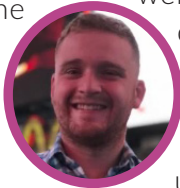


Trump Issued Second Executive Order To Sabotage Election Results

by Liam Flynn

WASHINGTON (Transatlantic Today) - Multiple sources tell CNN that former President Donald Trump's aides drafted 2 different versions of an executive order to freeze voting machines, one instructing the Department of Homeland Security to do so and the other instructing the Department of Defense to do so, as part of a larger effort to sway the 2020 election results.

According to the sources, retired Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn and retired Col. Phil Waldron came up with the notion of utilizing the federal government to gain access to voting equipment in states where Trump lost. Both Army veterans circulated false information about



Trump's election being rigged.

While advisers openly discussed the concept at the time, the fact that two draught executive orders were actually written for various agencies to carry out the job highlights the degree to which the former President's associates planned to use his lame-duck administration's authority to reverse the election.

It would have been unusual in US political history for the army or federal authorities to seize voting machines for political motives.

According to CNN, a draft order authorizing the Pentagon to seize voting machines has been issued.

The National Archives has given over that document to a House select committee examining the invasion of the US Capitol on January 6, 2021.

The executive orders were not issued, and it is unclear who authored them.

During a now-infamous White House meeting in mid-December 2020, though, Trump's former attorney Sidney Powell and Flynn pushed for the plan. According to CNN at the time, the conference descended into heated discussions as several of the President's advisors resisted different recommendations, including establishing martial law and appointing Powell as special counsel to examine election fraud charges.

The House select committee is now investigating the effort to draught an executive order and how it got started, including the roles of, Powell, Waldron and Flynn, as well as another Trump lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, and Bernie Kerik, who worked with Giuliani just after the election to seek any proof of voter fraud.

According to witness statements presented to the Senate Judiciary Committee by former senior Justice Department officers who were present, Trump floated Cucinelli as a potential candidate again during a White House meeting nearly 2 weeks after White House advisers pushed back on the concept of naming Powell to such a role.



Biden Charges Federal Reserve With Responsibility To Mitigate Tax Hikes

by Danielle Campbell

President Biden has made it clear it is the Federal Reserve's responsibility to the U.S. Economy to recalibrate policy in the face of skyrocketing prices and recovery strength.

The president is currently emphasizing the importance of the Federal Reserve within the U.S. fiscal management system, and has put the burden of the avoidance of elevated price permanency on their shoulders. The Biden Administration has repeatedly pointed out that the Reserve has been given a dual presidential mandate of complete employment and price stabilization.

Biden also believes the White House and Congress could play a major role in helping inflation by turning their attention to mitigating supply chain issues, encouraging competition in the economic free market, and making sure the Build Back Better budget plan gets passed into law, which could help families mitigate various costs. This law would mainly apply to families in lower tax brackets, and help them elevate to a higher quality of life. At this moment, lawmakers are in contention over the Build Back Better plan, with many citing the potential for tax increase on the middle class as a problematic point.

Policymakers have shared that interest rates will rise several times through the year, most likely beginning in March, to help combat rapid inflation, which is at its



highest rate in almost 40 years. The Fed's balance sheet of \$8 trillion would likely face cuts following the rising inflation.

Fed Chairman Jerome Powell promised at his renomination hearing that he wouldn't allow this issue to spiral and would work diligently to curb it. He also mentioned a tighter policy stance would be required to keep the economy-boosting.

Biden has warned the U.S. Senate against dragging its feet on confirming his recent nominations to the Federal Reserve Board in an effort to stabilize the body and get the ball rolling in tackling the turmoil American consumers are facing every day.

Earlier this month, Biden nominated Former Governor, Sarah Raskin, and two black economists, Lisa Cook and Philip Jefferson, to join the Federal Reserves Seven Member Board. These nomina-

tions will make the Federal Board the most diverse it's ever been in its 108-year history.

These measures come on the heels of the recent COVID-19 Omicron spike that almost led to another nationwide shutdown, which would have left many businesses with no choice but to shut their doors again for an indefinite amount of time.

In hopes of avoiding another shutdown, the public is looking to Capitol Hill for policy and provisions to help them through the inclines in the prices of fuel and other common goods. The supply chain issues, as well as labor and wage disputes, are amongst the primary concerns for many Americans. The Biden administration is hoping to absolve these issues and capitalize on the steady decline of unemployment in 2021.

"The inflation has everything to do with the supply chain," said

Biden while also highlighting this administration's plan to help promote competition.

According to a recent poll by CBS News, two-thirds of Ameri-

cans believe President Biden isn't being attentive to the effects of inflation on the economy. As a result, Biden's approval ratings have begun to plummet despite Biden's economic team predicting the ris-

ing prices eventually subsiding later this year.

The Biden Administration is hopeful things will turn around for the American citizens.

U.S. Prepares For High-Stakes Discussions With Moscow

by Eric Gahagan



A current administration official and two former US national security officials familiar with the planning told NBC News that the Biden administration is going into the next week's dialogue with Russia unclear whether Moscow is truly serious about discussions, but if it is, US officials are ready to propose talks on scaling back US and Russian troop movements and military drills in Eastern Europe.

According to the sources, the discussions could cover the scope of both powers' military exercises, the number of US troops deployed in the Baltic states and Poland, advance notice of force movements, and Russia's nuclear-capable Iskander missiles in the Russian territory of Kaliningrad, which lies between Poland and Lithuania.

The Biden administration is promising unprecedented penalties and other strong measures if Russia initiates military strikes against Ukraine, with thousands and thousands of Russian forces mobilised on Ukraine's border. However, as US officials prepare for a lot of high talks with Moscow beginning Monday, the administration is looking into measures to reduce tensions with Russia.

According to current and former officials, any shift in the US

military position in Europe would require Russia to take reciprocal, similar steps to draw up its forces, and taking Russian troops out of Ukraine would not be adequate.

Following the release of this article by NBC News, White House National Security Spokeswoman Emily Horne denied that the US would consider lowering the number of troops stationed permanently in Poland and the Baltic nations.

Following Russia's 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimean peninsula, the US and other NATO members sent a small contingent of troops to Eastern Europe, including armoured vehicles, and increased air and naval patrols as well as high-profile military drills from the Baltics to the Black Sea.

Russia has expressed its unhappiness with NATO's increased "forward presence" and exercises, claiming that the alliance's activities represent a threat to Russia.

If effective, such negotiations may resurrect the spirit of the now-defunct 1990 treaty on conventional forces between the West and the Soviet bloc, which mandated Washington and Moscow to exchange intelligence on force and weapon movements. According to experts, the pact played a role in preventing conflict at the conclusion of the Cold War.

Former US officials say the White House has a delicate balancing act as it prepares for talks with Russia, trying to decrease the temperature without surrendering to Russian threats or saber-rattling.



Why Civil Rights Groups Boycotted Biden's Georgia Speech



BY HENRY NICHOLAS

Washington, (Transatlantic Today) – PRESIDENT BIDEN and VP Harris landed in Georgia on Tuesday to debate crushing a Senate filibuster for voting rights as the whole state was hungover following the University of Georgia's College Football Playoff Championship win over college football Goliath Alabama. What comes next sounds like humor but is entirely accurate; the Georgia General Assembly called off their Tuesday session, presumably since leaders understood they couldn't hold a quorum regardless of what transpired in the championship, good or bad.

That said, it was more than merely the Georgia football fans blowing off the POTUS visit, during which the President placed a wreath at the grave of Martin Luther King Jr. and gave a speech at Morehouse College in Atlanta. On Monday, a team of civil rights leaders and voting rights activists declared they wouldn't attend the President's speech, voicing disapproval at Biden's half-efforts to pass a voting rights bill.



Guided by Black Voters Matter, the meeting with directors from GALEO Impact Fund, the Asian American Advocacy Fund, New Georgia Project Action Fund, and more requested actions, not words.

"Take voting rights seriously," stated James Woodall, previous Georgia NAACP President. "We're requesting for [Biden] to take this earnestly and to draft a solid strategy. [POTUS] should be in Washington accepting a vote on this right now," he said. "Also, go, Dawgs."

A hypothetical Democratic candidate for GA governor and voting rights leader, Stacey Abrams, did not observe Biden's arrival in Georgia, noting a scheduling conflict; Abrams did not discuss further. Biden utilized powerful tongue to bombard partisan

stubbornness in the U.S. Senate, comparing senators who vote to support a filibuster to contend voting rights legislation to segregationists and secessionists.

For the first time, President Biden summoned Congress to put down the filibuster to approve voting rights legislation within the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and the Freedom to Vote Act. Biden had earlier bypassed verbiage about the filibuster, reluctant to discuss the matter publicly. "I'm tired of remaining quiet," Biden stated.

Civil rights directors have indicated unprecedented measures brought or endangered by legislators in the path of Biden's electoral win in 2020, and the U.S. Senate victories by Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff in January 2021.

Jan. 6 Committee Dismissed Ray Epps' Conspiracy Theory

by Athena Nagel

WASHINGTON – The Congressional select committee examining last year's deadly Capitol riot shot down a right-wing conspiracy theory that the FBI played a role in inciting the invasion on Tuesday.

The plot revolves around Ray Epps, an Arizona guy who claimed to have traveled to Washington for former President Donald Trump's rally outside the White House on Jan. 6, 2021, which began just before a mob of his followers stormed the Capitol. Epps is seen in a widely circulated video inciting a mob to get into the Capitol.

Epps was allegedly on the FBI's wanted list before being removed without being charged. According to CNBC, the decision sparked widespread conjecture about its significance among

right-wing media sites.

Mr. Epps was interrogated by the select committee. In a statement, a spokesperson for the House panel investigating the riot said that Epps has informed them that neither he was working with nor employed by any law enforcement agency on January 5th or 6th or at any other time. He also mentioned that he has never been an informant for the FBI or any other agency that enforces law in the country.

Several Republican legislators have also publicly questioned Epps' role in the violence, allegedly to raise the notion of a government-led plot to incite or carry out the attack rather than Trump and his followers.

During a House Judiciary Committee hearing on domestic ter-

ror threats on Tuesday, Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, expressed his suspicions about Epps. He said that according to public record, Epps has been charged with nothing and no one's explained why an individual videoed urging masses to go to the Capitol. An individual whose conduct was so suspect the crowd believed he was a 'fed,' would just disappear from the list of people the FBI was looking at. Cruz remarked, pointing to a placard with a screenshot of an FBI website underneath the red text reading "FBI DROPS EPPS FROM LIST," said Cruz before questioning two Justice Department officials on if federal agents "actively encouraged violent and criminal conduct on January 6."

"Not to my knowledge, sir," FBI national security official Jill Sarnoff said.



Rep. Jim Jordan Rejects Jan. 6 Panel Interview Request

by Casey Fenn

Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, indicated on Sunday that he will not participate with a House select committee probing the Capitol attack on Jan. 6.

Jordan said in a lengthy letter to the panel's chairman, Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., that he has nothing worth discussing with the committee.

"I have no relevant information that would assist the select committee in advancing any legitimate legislative purpose," Jordan penned.

Jordan, a strong ally of former President Donald Trump, was among the 147 members who raised challenges to the Electoral College results in January in a last-ditch effort to torpedo Joe Biden's

lawful triumph.

Jordan stated in his letter that the committee's invitation to talk with him came as a surprise to him "amounts to an unprecedented and inappropriate demand to examine the basis for a colleague's decision on a particular matter pending before the House of Representatives. This request is far outside the bounds of any legitimate inquiry, violates core Constitutional principles, and would serve to further erode legislative norms."

According to NBC news the committee members had urged Jordan to speak with them on Monday. While he did not indicate he is not complying, his words opposing Democrats' inquiry make it plain that he

does not intend to participate.

"Even if I had information to share with the select committee, the actions and statements of Democrats in the House of Representatives show that you are not conducting a fair-minded and objective inquiry," he added.

Jordan was informed last month that the committee wanted to talk to him about his conversations with former president Donald Trump on the day of the riot.

Jordan's letter prompted the committee to request a meeting with him since "he worked directly with President Trump and the Trump legal team to attempt to overturn the lawful results of the 2020 presidential election," according to a committee representative.

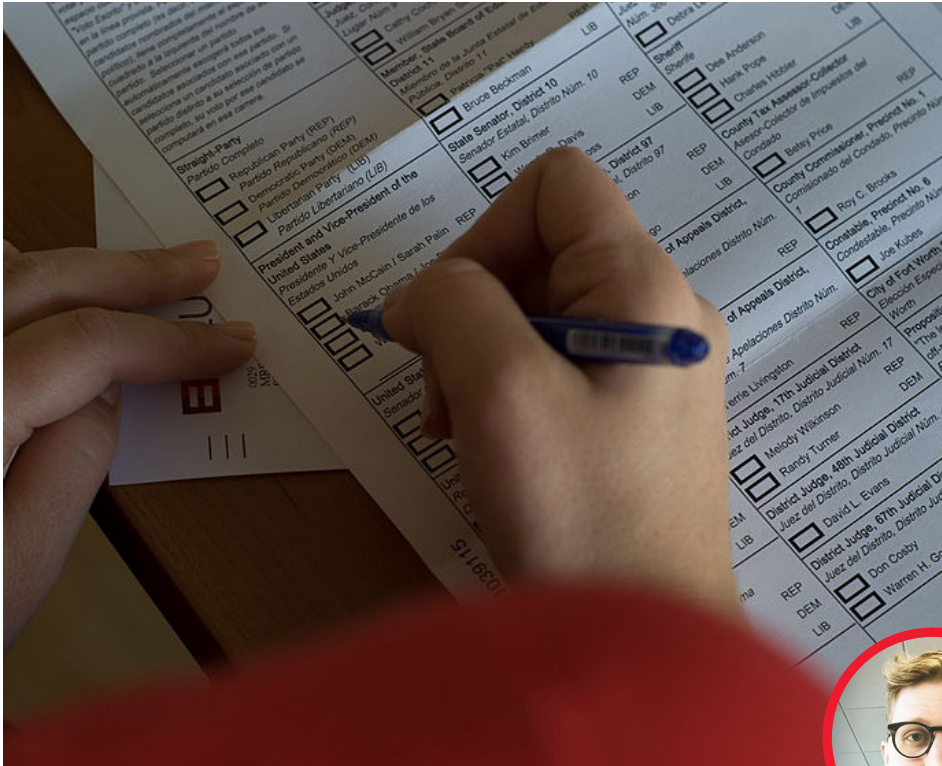
"Mr. Jordan has admitted that he spoke directly to President Trump on January 6th and is thus a material witness," the statement reads "According to the spokesman. "Mr. Jordan's letter to the committee fails to address these facts. Mr. Jordan has previously said that he would cooperate with the committee's investigation, but it now appears that the Trump team has persuaded him to try to hide the facts and circumstances of January 6th."

Jordan was also one of the senators whose text conversations to then-White House chief of staff Mark Meadows were published last month by the committee.



Congress Resumes Full Session With The Goal Of Passing Voting Laws

by Henry Nicholas



What effect would the bills have?

The Freedom to Vote Act would provide a set of assurances throughout all states, such as automatic voter registration, universal access to mail-in voting, and declaring Election Day a holiday, all while shielding election officials from party interference.

The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act would compel states with a history of discrimination to pre-clear changes to their voting rules with the Justice Department on a rolling 25-year basis.

Republicans on the issue

The Freedom to Vote Act is opposed by all 50 Republicans in the Senate. Mitch McConnell, R-Kentucky, has termed it a federal election takeover and suggested that Congress should leave the decision to the states.

Lisa Murkowski from Alaska seems to be the sole Republican who favors the John Lewis bill.

Is a bipartisan bill possible?

The parties are very far apart on voting rights.

Last week, however, there was a glimpse of hope that perhaps the Senate may agree on a restricted bill to protect election results processing and certification. Several Republicans, including McConnell, have stated that they are interested in changing the 1887 Electoral Count Act, or are at least open to doing so.

The solemn Jan. 6 anniversary has revived President Joe Biden and other Democrats' to pass voting rights legislation, which they claim will defend future elections and democratic institutions in the United States.

Biden is set to make a speech on voting rights in Georgia on Tuesday, a typically Republican state where he won by a razor-thin margin in 2020. According to the White House, he plans on making a "passionate case" for voting rights and also to "restore" the Senate's functionality.

According to White House press secretary Jen Psaki, Biden will also emphasise the "urgent need to pass legislation to protect the constitutional right to vote and the integrity of our elections." "He'll get

into the details."

In an interview with ABC News last month, Biden stated his support for modifying Senate filibuster rules. He said he'll "support making the exception of voting rights for the filibuster" — or "do whatever it takes" — to get important legislation to a vote in the Senate.

What are the Democrats doing in Congress?

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., has pledged a vote on two important election bills, the Freedom to Vote Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, both aimed at strengthening voting rights and ensuring the count. The bills have enough votes to pass, but not enough to overcome a filibuster.



Democrats Welcomes The Cheneys

by Eric Gahagan

On Thursday, former Vice President Dick Cheney made a surprise visit to the Capitol as Democrats in Congress commemorated the one-year commemoration of the Capitol attack on Jan. 6, 2021.

According to CNBC, the former vice president was in attendance to support his daughter, Wyoming Republican Liz Cheney, who serves as vice chairperson of the House Select Committee probing the January 6 terrorist attack. But he also decided to visit Washington to mark the anniversary of the tragic day.

There, it was clear how many Republicans agreed with the former vice president's assessment of the day's significance: almost every seat on the Republican side of the enormous chamber was vacant except for the two Cheneys and an adviser.

Liz Cheney has become an outcast within her own party as a result of her readiness to accuse former President Trump for his participation in fueling the violent insurgency and her unwillingness to dismiss its significance over the past year.

Republicans were conspicuously absent on Thursday as Democrats hosted gatherings all over the Capitol.

There were no Republican senators present for a separate remembrance event in the House, and Liz Cheney was really the only elected Republican in the House who attended the session in the morning.



A few House republicans issued statements acknowledging the tragedy of the day when hundreds of Trump supporters stormed the Capitol in an unsuccessful effort to stop President Joe Biden's election victory over Trump from being properly certified by the Senate.

Murkowski and Romney were two of the seven Republican members who voted to convict Trump for encouraging the attack on the capitol when he was impeached last year, and they were the only ones to make public remarks on Thursday.

Susan Collins of Maine, Richard Burr of North Carolina, Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania, and Ben Sasse of Nebraska were the other five sen-

ators who voted to convict.

In appearances with local media this week, Collins and Cassidy commented on the anniversary of the incident briefly. Sasse issued a message to the Omaha World-Herald underlining that the violent plot to reverse the 2020 election had failed. Neither Burr nor Toomey made a public commemoration of the anniversary.

Republican leaders have slammed Democrats for the activities, accusing them of exploiting the anniversary as a "political weapon" to bash Republicans.

"I'm deeply disappointed we don't have better leadership in the Republican Party to restore the Constitution," Dick Cheney stated at the Capitol on Thursday.



New York City Grants Voting Rights To Noncitizens

by Henry Nicholas



After Mayor Eric Adams permitted legislation to officially become law on Sunday, more than 800,000 noncitizens and “Dreamers” in New York City will have access to the voting booth – and might vote in municipal elections as soon as next year.

Opponents have promised to sue over the new law, which was approved by the City Council a month ago. New York Metropolis will become the first major U.S. city to provide sweeping municipal voting rights to noncitizens unless a judge intervenes.

The Board of Elections now has until July to draft an implementation plan, which must include voter registration procedures and

measures that would establish separate ballots for local elections to prevent non-citizens from voting in federal and state elections.

It’s a landmark moment for the nation’s most populated metropolis, according to NBC News, where legally registered, voting-age non-citizens account for about one-fifth of the city’s 7 million voting-age residents. After repeated setbacks, the noncitizen voting rights movement triumphed.

Non-citizens who have lived in the city for at least 30 days, as well as those authorized to work in the United States, such as “Dreamers,” would be able to vote for the mayor, council members, borough

presidents, comptroller, and public advocate.

Non-citizens will be permitted to vote in the first elections in 2023.

Former City Council member Ydanis Rodriguez, who spearheaded the bill’s passage, remarked, “We build a stronger democracy when we include the voices of immigrants.”

Rodriguez, who was appointed by Adams as his transportation commissioner, praised the mayor for his support and said he anticipates a strong legal defense if he is prosecuted.

While it was unclear whether Adams would be able to prevent the bill from becoming law, the mayor’s 30-day deadline for action passed at midnight.

Adams predicted that the law will draw millions more people into the democratic system.

Former Mayor Bill de Blasio had strong concerns but did not seek to veto the bill before leaving office at the end of the year.

Opponents argue that the committee lacks the jurisdiction to grant noncitizens voting rights on its own and that the state legislature should have been consulted first.

Some states, such as Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, and Florida, have passed measures that would prevent laws such as the one in New York City from being passed.

South Dakota Governor Signs Anti-Trans Sports Law

by Athena Nagel

SOUTH DAKOTA (Transatlantic Today) – Governor Kristi Noem of South Dakota passed an anti-transgender sports legislation into law on Thursday, prohibiting transgender girls and women from participating in school sports leagues that correspond to their gender identity in post-secondary institution and schools.

Senate Bill 46 was presented just 2 months before Noem took office. According to the law, if a kid is harmed directly or indirectly as a result of a transgender student participating in a sport that corresponds to their gender identity, they can sue the organization, school, or educational institution that inflicted the harm.

According to ABC NEWS, lawsuits filed against schools, organizations, and agencies that follow the new legislation will be addressed by the state's attorney general.

According to The Trevor Project, a suicide awareness and crisis response group for LGBTQ youth, it is the first anti-transgender legislation of the year.

According to the Human Rights Campaign, 2021 was a record breaking year for anti-LGBTQ policy, with more than 250 laws proposed and at least Seventeen becoming law.

LGBTQ rights groups around the country slammed the decision.

The Trevor Project raised worries about trans youth's physical and mental health in the face of exclusionary policies.

In a study conducted by the Suicide Prevention Resource Center, nearly half of trans youth said they had seriously considered suicide.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, trans youth frequently report feeling alienated and excluded in academic

that they do have a competitive advantage in their sport.

In March 2021, Dr. Eric Vilain, a geneticist who researches sex distinctions in athletes, told NPR that testosterone influences performance in only a tiny number of sports and provides no benefit.



situations, and that discrimination puts them at a heightened risk for poor mental health, suicide, substance misuse, violence, and other health hazards.

Noem's comments on the measure echo arguments made by opponents of trans women participating in sports, who claim that transgender women have a "biological" edge over women born female.

Experts say there's no indication that transgender athletes are preferentially dominating sports associated with their gender identity or

There is no proof of this in the Texas measure that was under discussion.

Currently, the National Collegiate Athletic Association, the Olympics, and the governing bodies of national sports leagues in the United States allow transgender athletes to compete in sports that correspond to their gender identity.

The ACLU of South Dakota and the Trevor Project, among other opponents of the new law, have pledged to continue to fight these laws.

CNN President Jeff Zucker Resigns

by Casey Fenn

NEW YORK (Transatlantic Today) – On Wednesday, CNN President Jeff Zucker submitted his resignation, informing staff that he was supposed to reveal a relationship with a valued colleague but had neglected to do so.

Zucker announced his retirement after 9 years in a company-wide email. As part of an inquiry into former CNN presenter Chris Cuomo, he was probed regarding a consensual relationship with a close colleague.

WarnerMedia chief executive Jason Kilar approved Zucker's resignation, according to an email ac-

quired by NBC News.

According to CNN media correspondent Brian Stelter Stelter, executive vice presidents Ken Jautz, Michael Bass and Amy Entelis would head CNN as co-heads of the network beginning Wednesday.

According to Stelter, Zucker's email did not identify the person with whom he was having an affair, but it was Allison Gollust, CNN's chief marketing officer and executive vice president.

According to Stelter, Gollust confessed to her role in a second memo to staff.

A request for comment from CNN was not immediately returned on Wednesday.



Zucker's departure comes almost precisely a year after CNN revealed that he was on the verge of leaving the network but elected to stay until at least for the rest of 2021. Zucker, a former NBC executive, joined CNN in 2013 to assist with the global operation.

Last year, sources informed NBC News that Gollust had risen as a leading contender to succeed Zucker as president, adding that she was virtually constantly by his side in the workplace and on the road.

Zucker and Gollust worked previously together at NBCUniversal when he was president and chief executive and she was executive vice president of corporate communications.

The email didn't say why Zucker was being interrogated as part of the probe into Cuomo, who was terminated in December.

The network looked into Cuomo for assisting his brother, former New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, in his fight against sexual misconduct claims.

Before joining CNN, Gollust served as a communications director for the governor's office.

While the news of Zucker's resignation was shocking, former CNN stars remarked on social media that Gollust and Zucker's affair was well-known.



North Carolina Fertilizer Plant Fire; Thousands Evacuated

By Randy Whitehead



NORTH CAROLINA (Transatlantic Today) – After a fire started out at a fertilizer plant in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, around 6,000 residents were forced to flee their houses for the risk of an explosion.

At a news conference early Tuesday morning, Winston-Salem Fire Department Battalion Chief Patrick Grubbs stated that the fire at the Winston Weaver Co. fertilizer factory was still active as of roughly 4:30 a.m. ET.

According to a statement from the North Carolina prison system, about 220 minimum-security inmates have also been evacuated from Forsyth Correctional Center in Winston-Salem. The offenders were sent 60 miles away to a vacant minimum-custody facility.

According to NBC NEWS, the fire started on Monday evening. The cause of the fire remains unknown.

As of Tuesday morning, no injuries had been recorded, according to Winston-Salem Fire Chief Trey Mayo, who said the fire had been “relatively static” throughout.

However, because the location contains 600 tons of flammable ammonium nitrate, the potential of an explosion will continue until Wednesday, he warned.

According to Grubbs, the team battled the fire for 2 hours before it spread to a rail car.

“It became an explosive hazard” once the railway car was engaged, he claimed, with the possibility of an ammonium nitrate explosion.

Ammonium nitrate is a nitrogen-containing chemical compound used in fertilizers. However, it is also used to make explosives for mining.

According to Grubbs, this development led firemen to pull back, de-

spite the fact that at least 90 firemen were involved in the endeavor.

He claimed that first responders had gone door-to-door telling homeowners to evacuate. Fire authorities were inspecting the scene every 15 to 20 minutes, he said.

Fire Chief Trey Mayo of the Winston-Salem Police Department issued another statement on Twitter, warning citizens not to expect something to happen.

Grubbs said he didn’t have a figure for refusals, so it was unknown if any local residents had chosen not to vacate their homes.

The cause of the fire has yet to be determined by authorities. On Tuesday, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives said that its investigators would be supporting local firemen.

RBG's Personal Library Auctioned For \$2.35 Million

by **Conor La Rouche**

WASHINGTON (Transatlantic Today) – Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's book collection fetched more than \$2.35 million at an auction on Thursday, with one valued book fetching more than \$100,000.

Ginsburg, a women's rights leader, and a social figure known to many as "RBG," died of pancreatic cancer in 2020. Her death left a vacancy on the Supreme Court, which was filled by Trump appointee Amy Coney Barrett just before the 2020 election.

Last week, Ginsburg's personal library was put up for auction, with bidding closing Thursday noon, the very same day current Justice Stephen Breyer announced his retirement.

According to auction house Bonhams, the sale included numerous books, photographs, and memorabilia from Ginsburg's personal library, including textbooks from her time as a law student and books that she and her spouse, Marty Ginsburg, had loved during their marriage.

Ginsburg's edition of the 1957-58 Harvard Law Review, which went for \$100,312.50, was one of the objects up for auction, according to Bonhams.

Ginsburg's annotations can be found throughout the Harvard Law Review tome, which she worked on herself. Her name, "Ruth B. Ginsburg," is likewise etched in gilt on the book's spine.

In a description of the book, Bonhams noted, "The year Ginsburg

spent on the Harvard Law Review was also the year her husband Martin was diagnosed with cancer and underwent two surgeries and radiation therapy, making the excellence of her work that much more impressive."

According to Bonhams, Ginsburg's private copy about her own accumulated speeches and writings, which was specifically made for her by Simon & Schuster, sold for over \$81,000.

Catherine Williamson,

an expert of rare manuscripts and books at Bonhams, said Ginsburg's huge collection drew bids "beyond our wildest dreams" in an interview with CNBC on Thursday.

Williamson estimated the auction to be worth between \$300,000 and \$500,000. She was astounded to learn that the winning bids totaled more than \$2.3 million.

According to the expert, every single one of the 166 available lots sold at the bidding, making it a "white glove" sale.



Former First Lady Auction Items Fail To Get The Expected Value

By Randy Whitehead

WASHINGTON (Transatlantic Today) – Former first lady Melania Trump’s auction of three belongings, which she placed upon the market earlier this month, failed to achieve the \$250,000 beginning offer.

When the auction for the three things – a tailored, wide-brimmed white hat sported by Trump all through an official White House state visit, a watercolor of Trump donning the hat, and a non-fungible token (NFT) of the graphic illustration with animation – closed Wednesday night, there actually appeared to be only five overall bids on the auction goods, each between the basic threshold of 1,800

Solana tokens, the cryptocurrency picked by Trump as the sole way for prospective buyers to pay.

While the baseline stipulation of Solana tickets was fulfilled, the \$250,000 threshold was not met because the crypto market has taken a massive dive over the last two weeks, almost the entire duration of the auction, with the value of various currencies falling 20, 30, or even 40%, as was the situation with Solana (SOL.)

The “Head of State Collection,” as Trump named her lot, looks to have sold for roughly \$170,000, \$80,000 less than the anticipated opening price, due to a lack of curiosity in Trump’s things, an overstated initial bid amount, and a sinking market. Trump’s spokeswoman was contacted by CNN for comments on the sale.

The reduced price and a small

number of bids are typical of the volatile realm of cryptocurrency, some of which can be incredibly profitable but is ultimately subject to the whims of an unregulated system. During this month’s crypto meltdown, Bitcoin, possibly the most well-known cryptocurrency, went down more than 20%, demonstrating that even established kinds of currency are prone to volatility.

The former first lady’s debut into NFT commerce began in December when she said she would be selling a digital work of art featuring her eyes for \$150 each. Trump’s website indicates that a portion of the revenues from the purchases will go to a charity that helps foster children, as it did with the most recent auction.



Supreme Court Justice To Step Down

by Danielle Moore



WASHINGTON (Transatlantic Today) – As President Joe Biden aims to find his ground with his vision blocked and Democrats deeply divided in Congress, Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer steps down, setting up a dramatic confirmation war at the outset of a midterm election cycle.

According to a well-placed official familiar with the situation, Breyer,

83, is anticipated to continue on until the conclusion of the judicial term and until a successor is confirmed.

Two sources have told CNN that he notified Biden of his intentions last week and that he will publicly confirm his departure at a White House ceremony with the President as early as Thursday.

Although Biden's selection will

not alter the court's balance, assuming that Breyer will probably be replaced by another liberal, the new appointee is believed to be much considerably younger and might serve on the bench for decades. Six conservative justices have been chosen by Republican presidents, while three liberal justices have been appointed by Democrats.

On the campaign road, Biden promised that if he were elected, he would appoint an African American woman to the Supreme Court, which would be a historic event. Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson, 51, was confirmed to the influential DC-based appellate court last year and is a possible candidate. She worked as a law clerk for Breyer, as well as serving on the US Sentencing Commission and also as an assistant federal public defender.

Breyer's decision to resign comes at a time when he has been under strong pressure from the left, which has urged him to step down while Biden has a straight road to replace him.

On Wednesday afternoon, Biden declined to comment on the news of his retirement.



In the State Dining Room, Biden told journalists that every justice has the right to decide what he or she will do and disclose it on their own.

Breyer has spent nearly 30 years on the Supreme Court as a steady liberal vote with an unwavering trust in the US form of governance and a realistic view of the law.

The Bronx Fire Exposes Housing Injustice

by Athena Nagel

The recent apartment fire in the Bronx was the deadliest housing fire in decades. How could things have been different? What can be done in the future? What policies will make a difference and reduce housing injustice?

The Bronx fire tragically took the lives of 17 people — 8 of which were children. Dozens of others were hospitalized with significant injuries. A quickly defined cause was blaming a space heater. Yes, a faulty space heater caused the fire. But can the deaths all be blamed on a defective space heater?

The fire remained confined to one apartment. The smoke, however, was able to travel. Doors were not up to code — they lacked automatic closures allowing dense black, deadly smoke to travel through the 19 story building.

A list of concerns includes:

- The open doors.
- Lack of outdoor fire escapes.
- Heat and ventilation complaints.
- Complaints about alarms going off so frequently they grew to ignore them because they were always false alarms.

Not only was the Bronx fire tragic. This tragedy struck predominantly poor African Americans in Section 8 housing receiving governmental rental assistance. The pandemic has taken the governmental focus away from housing and more on the pandemic. Yet, housing injustice is at an all-time high, tenants orga-



nizing and even refusing to pay rent. Particularly in New York, the eviction moratorium comes to an end, and tenants will begin to lose housing resulting in the neediest populations becoming homeless. New York could struggle with mass homelessness.

Ground zero for evictions: This is the status of the Bronx at the moment, and it will only get worse. Additionally, specific rental vouchers will not be transferable to other rental housing. Investors and landlords control the most at-risk populations in New York, and the result

will be continued criminalization of the poor.

It is not uncommon for housing to change hands so often that the tenants no longer know who owns the building they live in. This not knowing makes it almost impossible to get assistance for their housing needs. The housing crisis is not just in New York, and nationwide funds have shifted from housing assistance to pandemic assistance.

The nation needs a significant governmental response to the ever-increasing housing crisis.

Ukraine Responds To Biden's 'Minor Incursion' Remarks



BY CASEY FENN

WASHINGTON (Transatlantic Today) – On Thursday night, President Joe Biden declared that the US would not tolerate even a “minor incursion” into Ukraine by Russian forces. Within minutes, Ukrainian officials responded with frustration, issuing back-to-back statements condemning Biden’s comments.

During Biden’s news conference, he said that he expected Russia to take begin taking steps toward Ukraine with the goal of invading. While clarifying his position on US engagement, he said, “It’s one thing if it’s a minor incursion and then we end up having a fight about what to do and not do, et cetera. But if they actually do what they’re capable of doing with the force they’ve massed on the border, it is going to be a disaster for Russia if they further invade Ukraine.”

While Biden did recommit American support for Ukraine, many critics saw his comments as giving the green light for Russia to move into Ukraine territory as long as there was no full-scale invasion.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy tweeted out, “We want to remind the great powers that there are no minor incursions and



small nations. Just as there are no minor casualties and little grief from the loss of loved ones.”

Meanwhile, Dmytro Kuleba, the Ukrainian Foreign Minister, told the Wall Street Journal, “Speaking of minor and full incursions or full invasion, you cannot be half-aggressive. You’re either aggressive or you’re not aggressive.”

Within hours, the White House released a statement that attempted to clarify Biden’s remarks, offering assurances that any incursion into Ukrainian territory by Russian forces would be met with “a swift, severe, and united response from the United States and our allies.”

Unfortunately, many within the Ukrainian government seem to feel like Biden’s clarifications were too little, too late. In their eyes, his statement about “minor incursions” possibly not requiring a military response opened the door for Vladimir Putin to move into Ukraine.

Ukraine has been at the center of conflict between the US and Russia for years, though tensions have flared more in recent months. It was even the source of talks between the two world powers coming to an impasse earlier this month.

For now, the world will watch to see what move Russia makes next.

Blockade Of Ambassador Selection Continues Despite Biden's Best Efforts

BY CHRISTINA LEVANDOWSKI

Current US selection processes to various authorities and entities around the world are currently in process of being slowed or halted by key Republican representatives. The currently-sitting President has been working to nominate additional appointees for ambassador selection without much success as we prepare to close out the end of 2021.

Due to the severity of the backlog for ambassador nominees, Majority Leader Chuck Schumer is working to encourage lawmakers in a way that will speak to them most effectively: their vacation time. Currently, Mr. Schumer has advised that if no progress has been made to alleviate the backlog, White House lawmakers will need to work throughout the holiday season to get the appointment process started.

This decision and pressure are made in the wake of the realization that President Biden's presidency will end its first year with some of the most vacancies seen out of any presidential Administration in American history. With his current approval rating significantly lower than his predecessors, Democrats and other White House officials are working to make significant changes before the end of the year.

These appointments are especially important, as they set the tone for the Nation's presentation and execution of foreign policy. The absence felt in these key roles could leave the US open to significant vulnerabilities.

The current conversations on the Hill are surrounding the impact that these vacancies have had on US interests, such as international trade.



Karine Jean-Pierre, White House Deputy Secretary, has openly voiced her concern and frustration that the Senate has still not had the opportunity to confirm any of these appointees to their appropriate positions and vacancies.

These holds from the Republican side are not unfounded, as (most notably) Senator Cruz has pointed out the slew of procedural errors and footholds that the Biden Administration continues to run up against. Pointing back to the legislation, the senators have reached a stalemate when it comes to appointing the current nominees to positions.

Senator Lindsay Graham, among others, are growing increasingly frustrated and concerned due to the significant vulnerability that the US is welcoming by delaying the position appointments. While many news sources are pointing to the obvious procedural delays that keep coming into play from the Republican sena-

tors, it is important to note that President Biden has made no efforts to keep appointments impartial.

The President has notably been inflexible or attempted to compromise on his appointments, causing Republicans to be even more adamantly opposed to progressing or compromising on any procedural avenue.

While consternation grows in Washington, the world wages on and is making significant development and changes that the US may be missing.

Throughout the process, Republicans work to create compromises that would further open discussion on international issues and topics, such as the Nord 2 project overseas. If these topics were discussed, additional appointments may be confirmed and executed to fill the roles in a timely way.

The Senate will likely continue to confirm these roles as we welcome 2022.



Tentative Talks May Deescalate Missile Tensions Between U.S. And Russia

By Randy Whitehead

WASHINGTON (Transatlantic Today) – As long as Russia reciprocates, the U.S. officials are entertaining the possibility of pulling back eastern European missile deployments, as well as other military efforts in the region. U.S. Deputy Secretary of State met with the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister in the first of three scheduled meetings between the two. Then, NATO and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe will both meet with Russia to discuss the possibility of reining in missile deployment and some other military practices.

Sherman made it clear that these talks are still in their early stages,

and nothing is settled yet – emphasizing the Biden administration’s promise to speak with both NATO and Ukraine before any final decisions are made. On a State Department-hosted conference call, Sherman said that “We put some ideas on the table” regarding “missile deployments and exercises.”

Further, an anonymous official said that “There are some areas...where we think it might be possible to make progress.” This same official said that Russia feels “threatened” by the possibility of U.S. missiles being deployed in Ukraine; however, the official said that the U.S. has no intention of doing that.

Clearly, with diplomatic talks this massive, both sides will be forced to make concessions. The U.S. has already agreed to tamp down its missile deployment as long as Russia “reciprocates,” and Russia wants a guarantee that the U.S. will not deploy missiles with a large enough range to strike Russia. Again, if the U.S. does this, Russia is willing to reciprocate.

However, as is to be expected, the U.S. is not willing to meet all of Russia’s demands. Some officials believe that Russia is asking too much of the U.S. Despite Russia’s persistence, American officials have stated that the government has no intention of lessening its military presence or weapon arsenal in eastern Europe.

Sherman recently confirmed that U.S. government officials are united in their refusal of Russia’s insistence to stop NATO’s eastern expansion, explaining also that the Biden administration will not remove U.S. troops or weapons from eastern Europe. She said “We did not have discussions about American troop levels...That’s not a topic of conversation.”

So, while it may be possible for Russia and the U.S. to come to some sort of agreement about missile deployment, it doesn’t look like progress in other areas – such as troop organization or military maneuvers – will be made anytime soon.



Analysis Of NATO Relations With Russia

BY CASEY FENN

Analysis of NATO Relations with Russia has been in the spotlight recently as NATO prepares to expand into Ukraine. The conflict has also prompted many analysts to ask whether NATO has the right to expand, and the Russians have raised concerns about this. Nevertheless, it is crucial to consider the ramifications of enlarging NATO's sphere of influence. While Russia's growing military capabilities make that possible, many observers doubt that the alliance can do so successfully.

The Russian challenge poses multiple uncertainties. The intentions of Moscow's leadership are often un-



clear to NATO members. Some argue that Moscow's aggressive behavior in Ukraine is an indication that it is willing to use force against former Soviet republics. Others fear that Moscow could use military force against the alliance. There are many reasons for this uncertainty, and there are many questions that must be answered. However, the question remains whether NATO will continue to develop its defense capabilities in the face of such threats.

First, NATO states need to assess the real threat posed by Russia. They need to assess the threat to ensure

that it is limited. As the Russians continue to develop their nonkinetic arsenal, NATO may be tempted to escalate its actions. Depending on the nature of the threat, several member states could be pressed to send even more weapons and trainers to the region. The result of this would be a dangerous situation for the allies.

Second, NATO Allies must pay attention to the original purposes of NATO-Russia relations. This means striking the right balance between the two. With Russia in a treaty default, it is crucial to be aware that the situation is dynamic and requires balancing between military and non-military means. Additionally, it is imperative to be vigilant about the fact that Russia may be using Western propaganda to promote its national interests and protect its borders.

Third, the U.S. needs to reassess the NATO-Russia alliance and its future role in the region. The U.S. is the most powerful nation in Europe. Its strategic importance in the region should not be underestimated. Moreover, it is vital for the Baltic States to maintain close cooperation with the United States. In a case of war, NATO is the main ally of the United States.

In addition, NATO's Maritime Posture is being reinforced, aiming to improve maritime situational awareness and sea lines of communication. In particular, this is important for the North Atlantic, which could play an important role in the movement of troops from North America to Europe. In addition, NATO's Maritime Posturing is important for displaying its naval presence in the Baltic and demonstrating that it is not prepared to accept Russian control of the re-

gion.

The latest development in NATO-Russia relations highlights the relationship's capacity to protect itself in the event of a conflict. Its role has always been to protect the alliance's allies from possible threats. In addition to these, Moscow and NATO's military capabilities are closely linked, which makes it vital to maintain their respective strategic alignments. While both sides are keen to maintain relations, there are several factors that should be considered in a country's relationship with the other.

The most important aspect of NATO-Russia relations is the level of cooperation. The two organizations have expanded their military footprint in the Black Sea and have bolstered their military presence in the region. Moreover, both sides have embraced a mutually beneficial partnership in their foreign policy. The alliance also helps each other in countering the other's aggression. While this relationship is still developing, it will help in keeping the alliance's forces together.

As of 2016, NATO's relations with Russia have improved. The new enlargement of NATO to the east has been a major source of regional instability and a central source of disagreement between the two countries. At the 2016 Warsaw Summit, both sides emphasized the need to maintain trust with their eastern allies and increase the resilience of their allies. They also recognized the need for dialogue with Russia. The alliance is resolute in this area, and the alliance's allies are working to improve relations with Moscow.



White House To Rejoin The Foreign Policy Discussions Surrounding Iranian Nuclear Deal In Vienna

BY CHRISTINA LEVANDOWSKI

After an already-tumultuous year involving Iran and its nuclear assets, the 2015 Iranian Nuclear Deal has been resurrected and reintroduced to the global stage. According to sources, the global authorities are to meet in Vienna the week after Christmas to determine Iran's nuclear future.

This is a significant development, considering the halting of discussion that occurred late last week based on new demands from Tehran. After these demands were made the Iran nuclear negotiator had requested to return home for additional discussion and consultation, leaving the discussion at an impasse. Currently, Britain, French, Germany, China, and Russia are consulting with Iran – and the United States may not be far behind.

After withdrawing from discussion under the Trump Administration in 2018, the United States largely indirectly influenced discussions. After a quiet few years, the Biden Administration would like to make significant changes to foreign policy, rejoining the deal.

If the United States were to continue to follow through on this change, this could mean lessened economic restrictions and sanctions for Iranian trade and commerce, in exchange for a responsible nuclear policy.

Rejoining would also mean a more immediate return to safe nuclear practices, as Iran has acted on a reactionary basis. The US withdrew from the deal in early 2018, causing an almost-immediate risen threshold of Uranium production and enhance-



ment out of Tehran – signalling to the rest of the world that Iran had resumed nuclear capacity and production at an enhanced rate.

While Tehran left the discussion table after making demands, the European authorities have also been considering making concessions and loosening the current regulations to comply with components of the new Tehran developments. This is done, presumably, to reduce the amount of nuclear research and enhancement that Iran has been doing, blocked from the UN in an effort to maintain the proprietary nature of the advancements.

This secrecy is pointing to a potentially larger problem down the line if Tehran is not satiated.

Additional developments are expected to come throughout the week prior to and of New Year's, although legislators and authorities are not fond of working through the holiday season. The fact that discussions are

still being held despite the season points to the importance that this deal holds for nationals, as well as humanity.

In 2018, President Donald Trump decided that the United States would no longer support the current structure and framework of the 2015 Iranian Nuclear Deal. Calling the layout rotten and ineffective, the president utilized his abilities to remove the nation from the agreement.

Political agencies and commentators alike were shaken from this monumental decision, defining a new era of foreign policy that allowed the US to reinforce its authority and inability to tolerate opaque political stances that otherwise pandered to the possibility of terrorism.

For the Biden Administration to reverse this decision so definitively, shows a renewed tenure of tolerance for Iran's nuclear behaviour and for national entities as a whole.



Could We Be Looking At A Stock Market Burst? Experts Think So



BY DANIELLE CAMPBELL

The stock market has disregarded the harsh realities many Americans have faced, despite the ongoing pandemic. Thanks to the many safety net policies put into place by the government during the Covid-19 crisis, the stock market was able to not only stay afloat but thrive during a time when most people were losing loved ones, their health, and employment. However, that stroke of good fortune may soon come to a halt in 2022.

With new government contingencies and stimulus funding ending, the Federal Reserve is expected to raise interest rates to help combat inflation causing investment behavior to become more erratic in the coming year.

While investment portfolios are projected to be shoddy in 2022, there is some good news for the average consumer. Analysts at J.P. Morgan are expecting the 6.8% inflation rate to regress to the mean as well as minimal effect on economic growth due to Omicron.

The S&P 500 had 2021 for the ages, rising 25% on top of the 16% gains during 2020. The S&P hit 70 new closing highs, the most in nearly 27 years (there were 77 in



1995).

The S&P also set a new record on January 7, the day after the Capitol was famously attacked by a mob of Trump supporters. Millions of amateur investors were driven to the market as well during the lockdown because many were stuck at home with nothing better to do than snag up shares of various companies, even those not expected to bring returns.

However, with recent tension between the U.S. and China, the markets remained optimistic about future business prospects between the two powers. Despite multiple variants of COVID and death tolls in the millions around the globe, the market's growth was not stunted. Coincidentally each new panic was met with subsequently quicker recoveries.

The past year did seem to be the year for new stock offerings, but investors were quick to sell these new holdings. There were 400 pri-

vate companies that raised a total of \$142.5 billion in 2021, but the Renaissance IPO exchange-traded fund, which tracks initial public offerings, is down 9% for the year. As a prime example of this trend, Oatly's shares in May, when it went public, soared 30%, but are now sold at 60% lower than the opening-day closing price.

In fact, the second half of 2021 was when the writing seemed to be on the wall for the stock market's rare hot streak. This is when household goods and gasoline prices soared supply chain issues caused by the pandemic marred the availability of products, and businesses trying to get back to normal operations had to raise wages to recruit and retain workers. Consumer prices escalated 5.7% making this the fastest pace in 30 years!

Overall, 2022 is expected to be a bit of a bumpy ride because the investments are not going to return at the same rate it did in the past 2 years.

US Economy Shows Promise At The Dawn Of 2022

BY DANIELLE CAMPBELL

There is no question the U.S. economy is flourishing with new record lows for unemployment and growing demand for imports amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, but the latest spike could reverse the strong resilience.

In fact, the United States Labor Department reported the unemployment rate had fallen to 3.9% in December, despite creating less than the expected amount of new jobs. This news immediately followed the Department of Commerce's announcement that the U.S. imports in November had increased by 4.6% in the past month to \$304.4 billion.

Rising import levels are the main contributor to the \$80.2 billion trade deficit of December, close to the record high of \$81.4 billion set in September. A substantial trade deficit is seen as a negative to many observers, Donald Trump a chief among them during his presidency, going to

extremes to close the import/export gap. Economists will agree that this actually points to a U.S. economy that is leading the global ascension from the pandemic-induced economic slump.

There's a common misconception that a heavy import economy is a bad sign for the economic health of the U.S. However, it's usually an indication that the U.S. is on an incline relative to other countries.

According to Gary Hufbauer, a senior associate with Peterson Institute for International Economics, the dollar is significantly stronger than we have seen in previous years. This is a good thing, but it can also further exacerbate the trade deficit. Overall, as we are no longer backed by the gold standard, the strength found in our dollar today puts forth a cautiously optimistic view for the economic future of the U.S. Many stakeholders benefit from the strength of our

economy, especially parties overseas. The effects are felt worldwide in consumer markets as well, as the consumers there are clamoring to purchase international goods.

Employment continues rising in America. The Department of Labor released its monthly jobs report on Friday, and it reinforced the fact that the economy has shown a strong resilience from the recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The 199,000 number was not as high as predicted, but it did contribute to an overall growth of 537,000 jobs per month for all of 2021, falling from 6.4% unemployment in January 2021 to 3.9% in December. The decline in unemployment didn't necessarily attribute to job growth due to millions of Americans dropping out of the labor force. Additionally, Black Americans still face a challenge finding employment in the economy, seeing an increase from November to December from 6.1% to 6.5% respectively.

Omicron looms as a possible wild card on recent upturns in the economy. The most recent economic data can't yet interpret the degree to which the surging COVID variant has had on U.S. employment because the reference week used by The Labor Department was before the spike was at its peak. The January 2022 data will be presented on February 4 and should show the impact the recent increase in infections has had. All in all, the Omicron has the potential to not only affect the job market but also reverse the recent success of the past year.



Netflix Stocks Drops 20%

By Randy Whitehead

NEW YORK (Transatlantic Today) – Due to a bleak view for future growth, Netflix's shares dropped as much as 20% in after-hours trade.

Netflix (NFLX) currently boasts a global subscriber base of 221.8 million people. The business stated on Thursday that it added 8.2 million members in the fourth quarter of 2021.

The amount fell short of the streaming service's own projections, which predicted an increase of 8.5 million customers. The big surprise, though, was that the business also predicted 224.3 million subscribers in the first quarter of 2022. That's only a 2.5 million in-

crease, which is lower than analysts had predicted.

Netflix had a profit of \$607 million in the fourth quarter, up from \$542 million the year before. Revenue increased by 16% to \$7.7 billion.

In a letter to investors, the business stated that intense competition from streaming companies may be harming its marginal growth.

Netflix's CEO, Reed Hastings, noted on the company's post-earnings call that the company's low estimate was due to a variety of factors. He cited greater competition as a factor but pointed

out that competitors such as Amazon and Hulu have been there for a long time.

He also expressed optimism about the prospects of streaming, as well as Netflix's significant market share and consistent execution.

"For now, we're staying calm," Hastings remarked.



The company announced Friday that it would hike pricing in the United States and Canada, 2 of its most important regions, as a result of its slowing growth. Netflix's standard plan subscription fee in the United States increased by \$1.50 to \$15.49. The basic plan has increased by \$1 to \$9.99, while the premium plan has risen by \$2 to \$19.99.

Netflix is attempting to offset its slow growth with increasing membership costs in response to competition from Disney+ and HBO Max, which is a division of CNN parent company WarnerMedia.

One glimmer of hope for the streamer was in the United States and Canada, where subscriptions climbed by 1.2 million in the fourth quarter, a significant increase from the roughly 70,000 added the previous quarter.

Other streaming companies were also affected by Netflix's dramatic fall this Thursday.

Disney shares were down approximately 4.5 percent in the after-hours trade, while Roku was down around 6%.



Pfizer Has Requested FDA Approval For A Vaccination For Children Under 5

BY CASEY FENN



WASHINGTON (Transatlantic Today) – Pfizer requested emergency use clearance for its vaccination for children under the age of five from the Food and Drug Administration on Tuesday.

The FDA will now analyze the data, present it to its independent advisers, and perhaps approve the vaccine in the following weeks as a result of this action. On February 15, the FDA's independent advisers will hold a public hearing.

According to ABC NEWS, the data would next be presented to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's independent experts for yet another review, followed by a possible recommendation from CDC Director Rochelle Walensky,

all of which could happen within the month.

Pfizer's 2 dose vaccine is currently available to everyone over the age of five. Anyone above the age of 12 can get a booster shot after 5 months. Adults can purchase Johnson & Johnson and Moderna.

In December, Pfizer revealed that their vaccination for children under the age of five had been shown to be safe and effective, but that the 2 dose schedule wasn't as successful for children aged 2, 3, and 4 as it was for adults. The dose for children under the age of five is one-tenth that for adults.

Pfizer filed data for 2 doses of the vaccine again on Tuesday, but with the assumption that data for

a three-dose vaccination will be available soon, making it more efficient at preventing sickness.

In March or April, Pfizer is expected to have more evidence on the effectiveness of a three-dose regimen, but allowing the first 2 doses in February would allow the immunization process to begin sooner.

After the second treatment, the third dose will be given at least 8 weeks later.

According to a recent weekly report from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Children's Hospital Association, roughly 808,000 children tested positive for COVID-19 last week, down from a peak of 1,150,000 reported the week ending Jan. 20. (CHA).

Since the beginning of the epidemic, 11.4 million youngsters have tested positive for the virus. In the omicron variant outbreak, child COVID-19 cases "spiked substantially," with far more than 3.5 million reported cases in January.

Unvaccinated 12 to 17-year-olds had an 11-fold higher risk of hospitalization than fully vaccinated youngsters, according to the CDC.

While it is less likely for young children to end up in the hospital, it is nevertheless conceivable. They can also act as spread vectors, infecting other adults in their group who are at higher risk.



Moderna Begins Omicron-Specific Covid-19 Vaccine Booster Trials

BY CHRISTINA LEVANDOWSKI

WASHINGTON (Transatlantic Today) – Moderna reported Wednesday that it has started treating patients in a clinical trial assessing its omicron-specific Covid-19 vaccination booster.

According to NBC News, the Phase 2 trial will analyze the vaccine's safety, acceptability, and immune response in adults. This will be Moderna's very first trial of the omicron-specific vaccination in humans.

Moderna's current booster shot still provides immunity from the new variant, particularly against severe sickness, according to lab data and research published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

However, fresh evidence presented Wednesday in The New England

Journal of Medicine shows that six months following the booster, the antibodies' ability to neutralize the omicron variation has dropped by around sixfold compared to the initial strain.

The news comes only a day after BioNTech and Pfizer announced the initiation of a clinical study for their own customized vaccination that targets the omicron type.

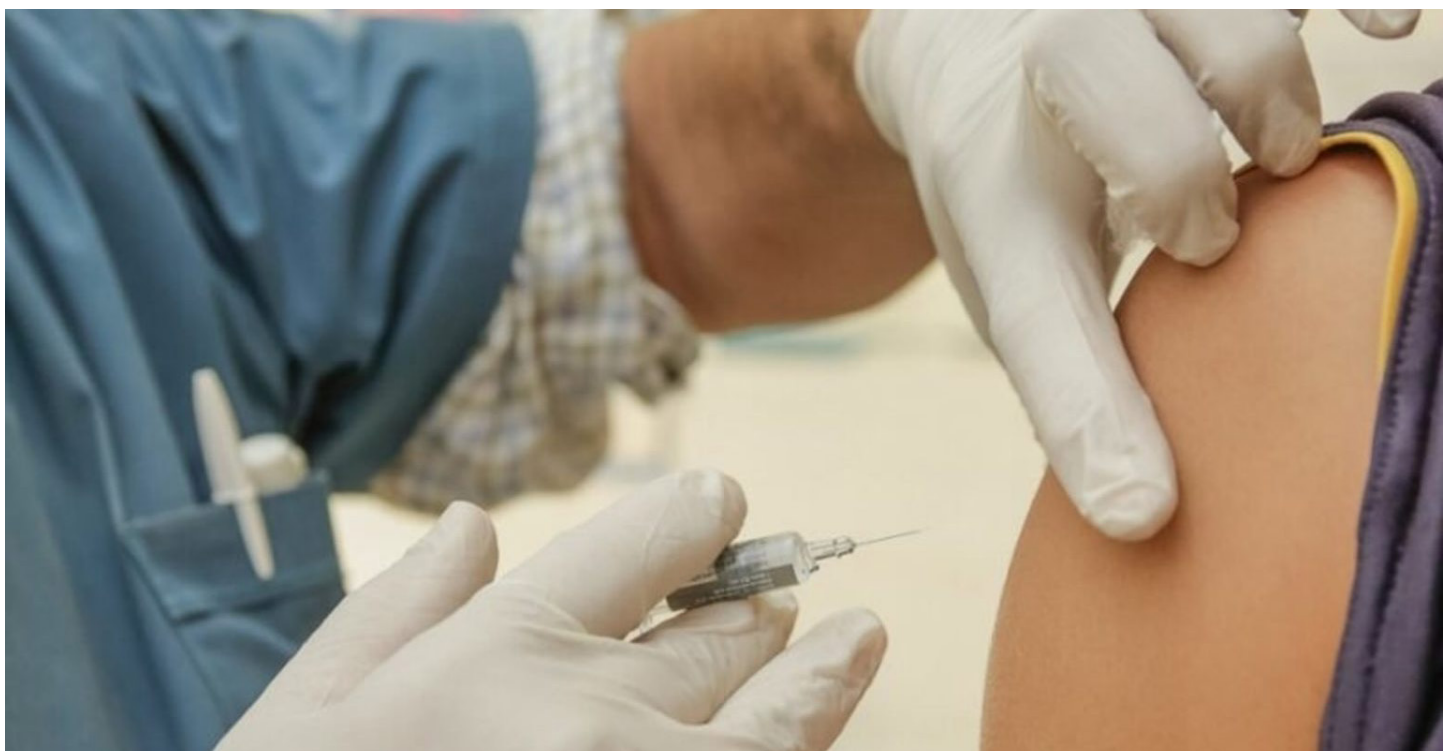
According to the CDC, the highly contagious variety now accounts for nearly all new infections of Covid in the United States.

People who received 2 doses of Moderna's vaccine at least 6 months ago, and people who had two doses and as well as a booster shot at least 3 months ago, are both eligible to participate in the clinical trial.

The company intends to enroll about 300 people in each phase of the study, which will take place at up to 24 locations across the United States.

Moderna's trial, according to Bill Hanage, an epidemiologist at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, will allow researchers to determine how beneficial it is to teach the immune system to target the new variety. According to Hanage, the drop in omicron neutralizing antibodies that they report six months after booster is enough to enable the virus to establish an infection, but the antibody reaction is still robust enough in the vast majority of people to handle it rather effectively.

Moderna has previously stated that it is in talks with public health officials regarding the possibility of releasing an omicron-based booster in the fall.



North Carolina To House A Plant To Produce Supersonic Passenger Jets

By Randy Whitehead

RALEIGH, N.C. (Transatlantic Today) – A Colorado-based aviation business said on Wednesday that it will manufacture next-generation supersonic passenger jets at a North Carolina airport. If the investment is successful, it might result in the creation of more than 2,000 job positions in the entire region throughout the next decade, as well as significant reductions in flight times for a post-Concorde population of airline passengers.

Boom Supersonic has stated that their intended Overture supersonic aircraft will be built at Piedmont Triad International Airport in Greensboro, with the final assembly line, testing, and delivery center located there. Boom expects to produce more than 1,750 employment by 2030, with an aim of more than

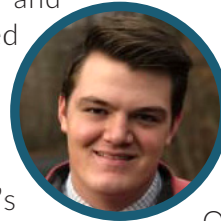
2,400 by 2032.

State and municipal governments have contributed \$230 million in economic benefits to make the idea a reality, according to ABC News, even including money for airport enhancements passed by the legislature in November and other sweeteners granted Wednesday.

Some of the incentives flowing to Boom Technology Inc., the company's parent, will be rescinded if it doesn't fulfill job-creation and investment goals, as with other similar ventures. A \$500 million capital investment is expected.

The Overture plane is meant to accommodate 65 to 88 passengers, use sustainable aviation fuel,

and fly at 1,300 mph (2,090 kph) – faster than the speed of today's passenger planes – at 60,000 feet (18,290 meters). However, several technological and production challenges need to be addressed before the aircraft can be considered a viable choice for airlines.



The company announced in a news release on Wednesday that production at the new facility will commence in 2024, with the initial

Overture planes rolling out in 2025, flying in 2026, and carrying passengers by 2029.

Boom is one of several businesses attempting to resurrect supersonic passenger transport, which died over two decades ago when the Concorde was grounded. Boom has created a one-third-scale demonstrator plane known as the XB1, but it now confronts the formidable task of bulking it up.

Boom claims to have received “pre-orders” from a number of potential buyers. Last year, United Airlines struck a deal to acquire Fifteen versions of the Overture as well as accept options on another 35. United, on the other hand, stated that any orders are contingent on Boom fulfilling specific financial and operational criteria, which it did not elaborate on.

Skeptics argue that if supersonic passenger flight were truly possible, Boeing and Airbus would build the planes rather than just allowing startups like Boom to dominate the market.



IRS Worker Shortage; A Painful Filing Season For Taxpayers

BY CASEY FENN



WASHINGTON (Transatlantic Today) – This filing season, an IRS personnel shortfall, an increased workload from managing pandemic-related programs, and delayed bills that would have granted the agency billions of cash to process returns more quickly will all cause taxpayers anguish.

Reviewing delays are to be anticipated, especially since the IRS claims it is still processing 2020 tax returns.

According to the most recent IRS data, the IRS processed over 240 million tax applications and issued nearly \$736 billion in reimburse-

ments for the 2020 financial year, comprising \$268 billion in incentive payments. 59.5 million individuals called or actually visited the IRS office within the same time period.

Due to the epidemic, filing deadlines have been extended twice in the last two years. It's uncertain whether the EPA will give taxpayers comparable leeway this year. According to NBC News, there will be enough new difficulties to deal with this year.

Individuals who are entitled to the child tax credit and have received advance payments year-

round, for example, may receive a smaller refund than they would typically receive.



People who did not receive stimulus checks as a result of the pandemic assistance package may still be eligible for a “recovery rebate credit” on their taxes.

The IRS issued a list of “Top 5 Things to Remember” on Thursday, with tips for taxpayers about what documents to gather and what to do if their 2020 filings have not yet been processed.

Unless there are any complications with filing their return, the IRS expects most taxpayers to get their rebate anywhere within 21 days of filing electronically.

However, a number of stumbling blocks exist, in particular, due to IRS staffing issues.

The IRS, according to Tony Reardon, president of the National Treasury Employees Union, has a difficult time hiring because they're up against Burger King or McDonald's, which pay similarly and don't require employees to handle complicated laws and regulations.

The agency's recruitment website featured at least 180 unfilled positions as of Thursday, comprising clerks and tax auditors earning as little as \$11 per hour. Exclusively 42 of the roles were open to the general public; the majority were only open to internal applicants.

US To Block Egypt's Military Aid



BY DANIELLE CAMPBELL

WASHINGTON (Transatlantic Today) – According to a high-ranking State Department executive, congressional sources, and advocates, the Biden government has chosen to withhold \$130 million in military aid to Egypt due to the nation's failure to abide by the State Department's human rights criteria.

The unusual step against a strong ally arrives shortly before a January 30 time limit for the State Department to reveal plans for the finances, which are the final portion of a tumultuous \$300 million aid package that was divided in September, with just around half going to Egypt at the time and the rest held back until just now due to human rights issues.

Egypt is the last country in the necessity of \$130 million, according to a senior State Department official, who also stated that Congress has already been notified and that there is total agreement inside the department on the proposal that Secretary of State Antony Blinken denies Egypt access to the funds that will now be distributed to other countries.

Two congressional sources verified that they were informed regarding the State Department's intentions on Wednesday, and CNN spoke with human rights groups



who were also notified.

On Thursday, State Department spokesperson Ned Price told journalists that the money's status had not altered and that Blinken had yet to make a decision. On Thursday, Blinken talked to his Egyptian colleague, Sameh Shoukry, discussing a variety of concerns, notably human rights, but the department's report of the call left out the aid money.

President Joe Biden campaigned on ending "blank checks for Trump's 'favorite dictator,'" Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, and the withholding of cash for Egypt would be a first for the Biden administration.

While the measure is both severe and significant, human rights activists claim that the millions blocked

pale in comparison to the \$2.5 billion in weaponry and equipment sold to Egypt by the Biden administration only last week.

According to the State Department official, the transaction, which comprises a dozen big transport airplanes and three radar systems, is in the US security interest and is being compensated in part using American military aid funds recently received by Egypt.

The sum that Egypt would no longer receive is 10 percent of the \$1.3 billion in annual military aid that the US provides to Egypt. As it has before, the State Department can utilize an oft-criticized national security waiver to get around the aid's human rights conditions.

US Army's Tactical Network Must Overcome A Number Of Obstacles

BY CHRISTINA LEVANDOWSKI



VIRGINIA (Transatlantic Today) – The Pentagon's weapon tester gave the Army's upgraded tactical network approach a failing grade in its yearly report, claiming that the service must overcome multiple hurdles to ensure operational effectiveness, appropriateness, and survivability.

The Army's integrated tactical network was evaluated before being fielded to units in FY21, according to the Office of the Director, Operational Test, and Evaluation's fiscal 2021 annual report.

Using a variety of program-of-record technologies and commercial off-the-shelf solutions, the Army's battlefield network is being modernized through the integrated tactical network. The Army has created capability sets, which are evolutionary builds and distribution of capability to divisions on 2-year cycles to establish a foundation of technology and integrate advancement as it arrives, under this idea. Infantry brigades were the focus of Capability Set '21, Stryker vehicle formations in Capability Set '23, and armored units in Capability Set '25.

The Army originally planned a series of operational demonstration test events to facilitate quick mobilization of assets to troops for Capability Set '21, according to DOT&E. However, real-world oc-



currences, such as test unit deployments, prohibited the service from holding the event in January 2020, according to the article. Instead, the Army organized a capstone event in March 2021, although it lacked a DOT&E-approved test plan.

As a result, there was insufficient information to assess the usage of the integrated tactical network, or ITN, at the unit or brigade level.

The Army is designing a test and evaluation plan to address the lack of an adversarial evaluation of the ITN in a disputed electromagnetic spectrum environment, according to the DOT&E. Furthermore, the leader radio is sensitive in a cyber-contested setting, whereas the Manpack can withstand some cyber threats, according to the paper.

However, both are sensitive in

a crowded electromagnetic spectrum, according to the report.

Mehney has said that the Army is partnering with Army Test and Evaluation Command and DOT&E to develop a test strategy for Capability Set '23. To inform fielding decisions, the set's new ITN components will be evaluated using a blend of instrumented lab activities, soldier touchpoints, technical tests and cyber and electromagnetic activities.

Officials earlier claimed that the program office has matured its threat-based assessment and assessment in a cyber and electromagnetic spectrum setting as a result of DOT&E comments. This will be part of the implementation strategy for Capability Set '23, which will continue to evolve via future capability sets.

DHS Warns Of A Russian Cyberattack On The US Amid Escalating Tensions

BY CHRISTINA LEVANDOWSKI

WASHINGTON (Transatlantic Today) – As tensions over Ukraine increase, the Department of Homeland Security has explicitly warned that the United States’ response to a hypothetical Russian invasion might potentially result in a cyber-attack by the Russian government or its allies against the United States.

According to a DHS Intelligence and Analysis report sent out to federal law enforcement departments across the country and obtained by ABC News, if Russia believed the US or NATO response to a potential Russian military invasion of Ukraine threatened its national

security, it might seriously consider launching a cyber attack against the Homeland.

According to the US, hackers based in Russia were responsible for two of the most devastating cyberattacks in recent times, last year. In May 2021, a ransomware strike broke down Colonial Pipeline’s services and caused severe disruptions across the country, while meat producer JBS had its activities knocked down due to Russian-based cyber-criminals.

The US has also blamed Russia for

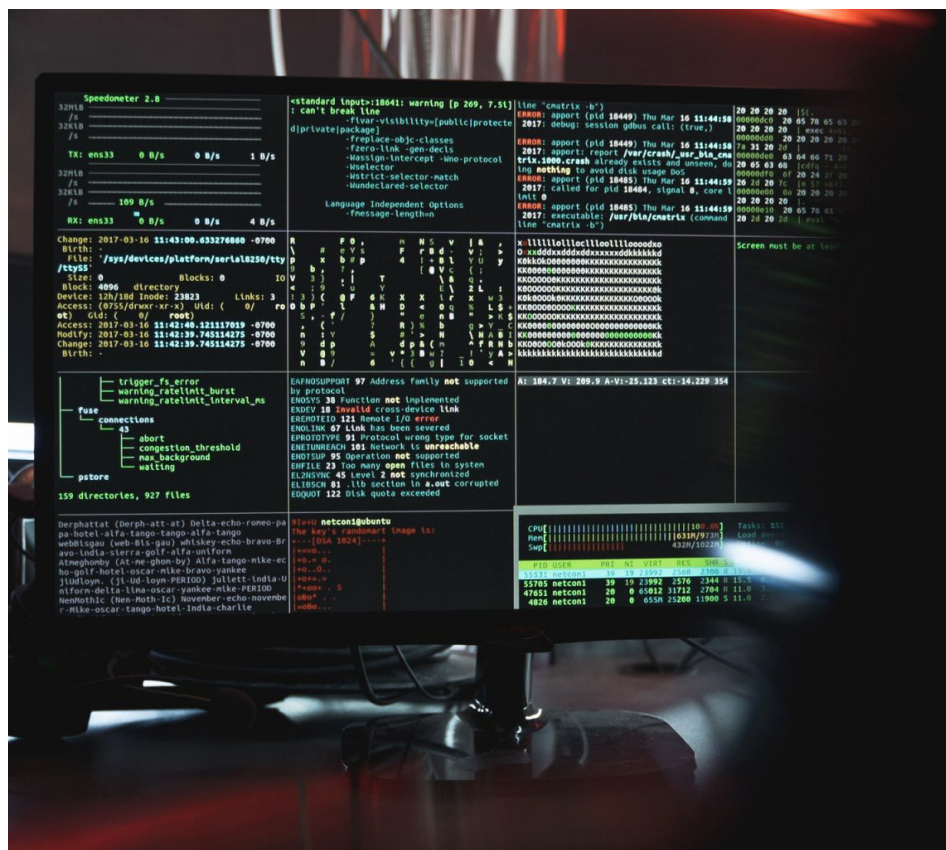
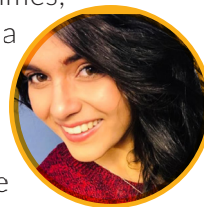
the SolarWinds hack in late 2020, in which Russian-backed hackers allegedly obtained access to 10 US government agencies, along with the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Commerce.

Russia continues to attack and obtain access to key facilities in the U. S., according to the Department of Homeland Security, but Russia’s cyber operations are not limited to the United States.

According to the report, Russian military intelligence operatives attempted a cyberattack targeting Ukraine’s power grid in 2015 and 2016. Despite the fact that it is not mentioned in the report, Ukrainian officials recently blamed Russia for yet another cyber incident that resulted in the shutdown of government websites.

Given the geopolitical landscape, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas warned reporters the previous week that the US is on high alert for cyberattacks.

He told reporters at the United States Conference of Mayors on Thursday that predicting the chances of something happening is tricky, the fundamental point is that when the threat of harm occurs, we call for alertness, and in the cybersecurity arena, we ask for ever-present attention.



U.S. Orders Embassy Families To Evacuate Ukraine

BY CHRISTINA LEVANDOWSKI



UKRAINE (Transatlantic Today) – According to a defense official and a senior government official, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin informed President Joe Biden this Saturday regarding U.S. strategies for striking if Russia infiltrates Ukraine, as well as possibilities for U.S. troops movements in advance of an attack.

The State Department recently ordered families of embassy staff in Kyiv to depart Sunday and authorized non-emergency embassy personnel in Ukraine to leave while Biden assessed his options.

It also advised Americans to not travel to Russia or Ukraine, stressing the risk of Russian military action as well as the potential for harassment of foreigners throughout Russia, according to a department official.

Bomber aircraft over the region, ship excursions into the Black Sea, and the movement of troops and weapons from various regions of Europe into Poland, Romania, and other countries bordering Ukraine were among the alternatives proposed to the US forces in advance of an invasion.

According to the officials, Austin proposed ideas to reassure NATO partners and strengthen their defenses, particularly those of nations bordering Ukraine. The purpose, according to the officials, is to demonstrate NATO's unity and power while also deterring Russian action against friends in the region.

According to the defense official and the senior administration official, Air Force Gen. Tod Wolters, the commander of US European Command and supreme allied commander Europe, has been planning

alternatives for weeks. Wolters has the power to shift certain forces throughout his theater, but given the gravity of the issue, authorities say he is keeping Austin and top generals updated.

The latest intelligence suggesting the Russian forces have not ceased building up forces surrounding Ukraine was included in the briefing for Biden, according to officials.

According to another defense official, Russian President Vladimir Putin continues to deploy more military units and flow forces to Ukraine's border territories. The defense official stated He's getting stronger by the day.

Officials did not say if Biden had given his approval to any of the moves. Some soldiers and assets may be shifted in the coming days, according to the senior administration official.

The US military and NATO will kick out Exercise Neptune Strike '22 on Monday, which will entail training alongside NATO allies for military capabilities that may be deployed against Russia. The USS Harry S. Truman carrier battle group will undertake long-range attack and anti-submarine combat training from the Mediterranean as part of the exercise, according to NBC News.

Will The Transition To 5G Interfere With Military Planes?

BY ATHENA NAGEL

5G cell phone technology is finally here. But does it present unique concerns for pilots and, even more specifically, the military?

The concern arises because 5G phone technology is the same technology that planes use for their altimeters, gauging their altitude. This technology feeds data to the autopilot system, collision avoidance programs, and other critical plane operation systems in a commercial aircraft.

Military planes also use radar altimeters. Many airports in the United States also serve as bases for military flying units such as the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve. The FAA instructs pilots not to use radar altimeters at this time when there are low visibility conditions or bad weather. Instead, they are instructed to rely on “other equipment” for flight guidance.

The FAA provides guidance on civilian air transportation. No military guidance has been issued yet. The military 5G testing program won't begin until next week and is expected to continue into April 2022. Military guidance is even more crucial because so much of their flying (planes and helicopters) occurs in low visibility, low flying, and poor weather conditions. Avoiding the use of radar altimeters is not a viable solution.

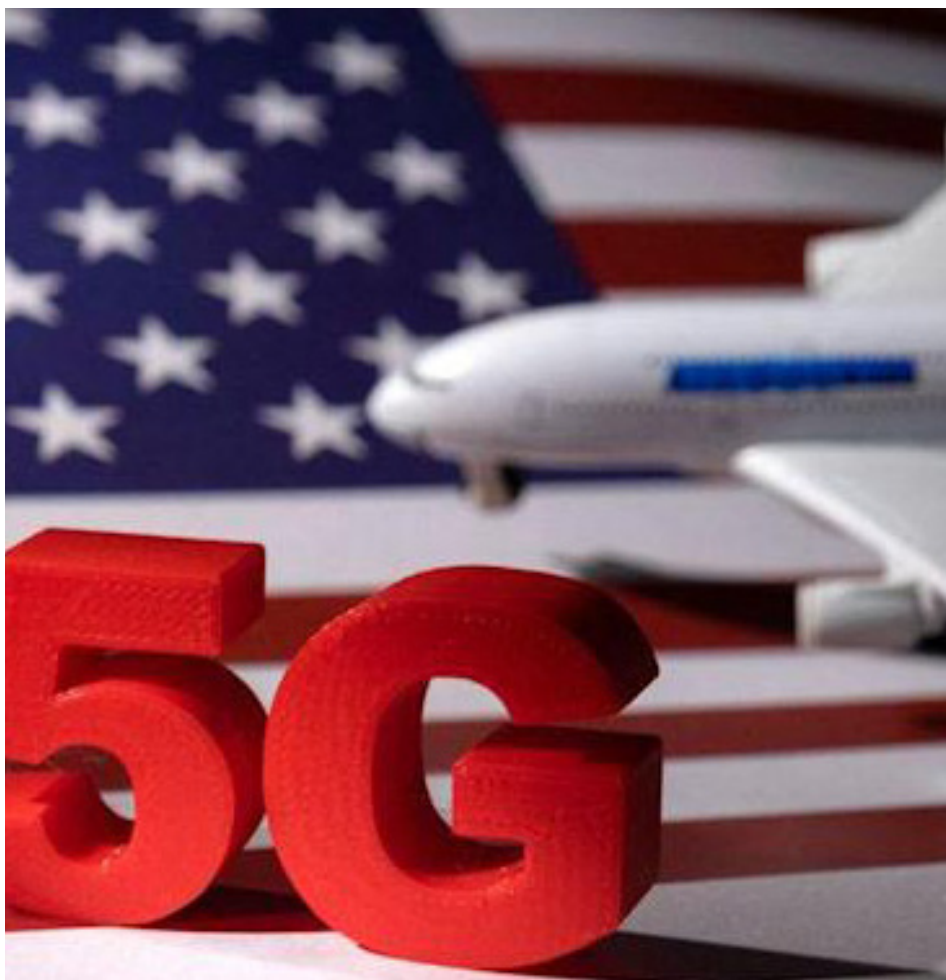
Military helicopters often find themselves in conditions where

they need to hover above the ground in low visibility or not ideal conditions. They need the radar altimeters to hover safely. Interference could lead to injuries both on the ground and in the helicopter, as well as crashes.

The radar altimeter was created in 1924 but has gone through several iterations. The point is that the frequency used works, and it works well for commercial planes and works well for military air-

planes and helicopters. Creating an alternative for the commercial airline industry will take time and imagination, and the result will likely be similar for the military.

For the moment, Verizon and AT&T have delayed activating the 5G service near airports, and they have not provided a new date for 5G implementation near airports. The military will conduct their tests, and time will tell what their tests declare.



South Korea Secures Huge Arms Export Deal With UAE

BY RANDY WHITEHEAD



country appears to be proactively cooperating with South Korea. Hence, defense exports to the UAE are expected to continue.”

Late last year, UAE publicly announced its plans to purchase these missiles, and the impending deal will make UAE the first international recipient of the defense system. The Cheongung II was designed as a replacement for South Korea’s MIM-23 HAWK defense system; as such, the new system possesses what’s called a “hit-to-kill technology,” can intercept ballistic missiles, and includes four launchers for a total of 8 missiles.

According to the Yonhap news agency, this preliminary deal was preceded by discussions between South Korean President Moon Jae-Kim and UAE Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum in Dubai. Reportedly, they discussed defense cooperation. On an official week-long trip to the Middle East, President Moon is expected to spend three days in UAE.

While the deal is still in its preliminary phase, it seems that working cooperation between South Korea and UAE is in the future. And if South Korea continues to export other defense systems – and they likely will – they may initiate tentative cooperation with other states as well.

SEOUL (Transatlantic Today) – South Korea has recently secured its largest arms export deal ever with UAE, agreeing to sell the Middle Eastern hub mid-range surface-to-air missiles in a deal that’s worth \$3.5 billion. This mid-range surface-to-air missile system – known as Cheongung II – is set to bolster the UAE’s air defense capabilities and will likely lead to increased cooperation between the two countries.

In fact, in a recent press release, South Korea’s Defense Acquisition Program Administration said, “The UAE is the first foreign nation to operate the Cheongung II.” The Administration went even further, saying that the deal would bring

“mutual trust” between the countries and could serve as a “watershed moment,” hinting at more defense cooperation in the future. Officials seem to think that this arms deal will improve the relationship between the two countries.

Indeed, it’s largely possible that South Korea is taking advantage of this opportunity to both export arms. Just last month, the country agreed to export their Huntsman AS9 self-propelled artillery system to Australia. However, it also seems that the country is trying to have a cooperative relationship with UAE.

Professor Kim Jong-dae of Yonsei University told UPI News Korea, “The UAE is trying to modernize its military. Toward that end, the

Air Force Looking For Smarter Ways To Deploy

BY RANDY WHITEHEAD

Air Force deployments could before long start to appear to be somewhat unique as the help advances to another schedule for preparing and dispatching forces all across the world.

On August 2021, Airforce Chief of Staff Gen. Charles “CQ” Brown Jr. stated that after nonstop combat rotations to U.S. Central Command spanning over 20 years, a modern approach will help squadrons prepare to go when required and steer clear of short staffing.

In a report published by Defense News Under the newly made arrangement, airmen would go through a year on neighborhood and enormous scope preparing prior to opening up to head abroad. Arrangements as a component

of defense secretary-coordinated activities, customary pivots through Air Force military center points in different nations, or other ready-response forces would last an additional a half year — like typical deployments now.

Airmen would then get back for a final 6 months of reconnecting with families, top to bottom airplane fixes and upgrades, and catching up on basic abilities and skills.

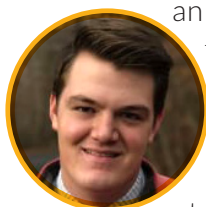
The refreshed power age model could be prepared for primetime as soon as October 2022. How every squadron’s stages will be lurched throughout the year to stay away from airplane deficiencies — especially among more modest armadas like the 20 B-2 Spirit bombers or the 16 E-8C Joint STARS ground

target-tracking planes.

It dovetails with different ideas underway, including the “lead wing” work to assemble squadrons groups to prepare and design a plan and get trained throughout an year, and an upgrade of maintenance of fighter jet.

The assistance is breaking its enormous aircraft maintenance units into small fighter generation squadrons, aiding fighter bases pivot all the more easily through training, activities and reconstitution after organization. One of those phases can be focused upon by the Squadron commanders at a time rather than supervising people at all of the three stages as well.

By summer 2022, all fighter wings are scheduled to get aboard.



USS Nevada Makes A Rare Visit In Guam

BY CHRISTINA LEVANDOWSKI

HONG KONG (Transatlantic Today) – Analysts say one of the US Navy’s most heavy weaponry made an unusual port visit in Guam, this weekend, delivering a message to major allies and rivals amid rising Indo-Pacific tensions.

On Saturday, the USS Nevada, a nuclear-powered submarine of the Ohio class containing twenty trident ballistic missiles with tens of nuclear warheads, were received at the Navy base in US Pacific territory. It is the first time a ballistic missile submarine, sometimes known as a “boomer,” has been to Guam since 2016, and only the second time since the 1980s.

The operations of the US Navy’s 14 boomers are normally closely guarded secrets. The warships’ nuclear power helps to stay underwater for months at a time, with only the supplies required to keep their personnel of over 150 sailors.

According to the Navy, Ohio-class submarines spend an average of 77 days at sea before returning to port for repairs and resupply.

Outside of their native ports of Bangor, Washington, and Kings Bay, Georgia, it’s not usual for it to be pictured. The “most important

survivable leg of the nuclear triad,” which also comprises silo-based ballistic missiles on the US mainland and nuclear-capable bombers like the B-2 and B-52, is the confidentiality around nuclear submarines.



But, as CNN reports, with tensions between the US and China over the position of Taiwan’s self-ruled island and North Korea speeding up missile testing, US can send a statement with its nuclear submarines which neither Beijing nor Pyongyang can.

North Korea’s ballistic nuclear submarine program is still in its initial phase, while China’s projected six nuclear submarine fleet pales in comparison to the US Navy’s. According to an analysis in 2021 by analysts at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, China’s nuclear submarines lack the capability of the US boomers. CSIS analysts stated in August that China’s Type 094 nuclear submarines make twice as much noise than US submarines, making them easier to detect and carry less missiles and warheads.

Guam was last visited by a US Navy boomer in 2016 when the USS Pennsylvania made a stop there.

Analysts say tensions in the Indo-Pacific have risen dramatically since then, and further military shows from Washington are expected in the current scenario.



Jailed Saudi Princess Freed After Being Held Without Charges For Nearly Three Years

BY KATHY MALOUF

Princess Basmah bint Saud Al Saud, 57, and her daughter Souhoud Al Sharif, 30 were released on January 6, 2022, after being arrested in March 2019. As the pair was attempting to depart Saudi Arabia for Switzerland for medical appointments, they were arrested and placed in a high security prison: Al-Ha'ir, outside the capital city of Riyadh. It is believed that several high-profile dissidents are also being kept there. No charges were ever brought against the mother or her daughter, according to her attorney Henri Estramant.

She was not allowed contact with any other family members for an extended period of time after the arrest. Princess Basmah appealed via Twitter to her cousin, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, for release in May 2020.

Her pleas were ignored, and she was barred from contacting her family after May 2021. During her imprisonment she claims she was denied medical attention as well as legal representation according to ALQST, a Saudi human rights organization, which Princess Basmah supported.

Princess Basmah is the daughter of King Saud, former monarch of Saudi Arabia, born in the last month of his reign, the youngest of 115 children. Basmah only saw her father twice when she was five years old, before he died the same

year. Her mother took her to live in Beirut, Lebanon, until the Lebanese civil war broke out.

At that time, they moved among several European capitals and the United States, where she received her education at various universities. She received a Sociology from the National American University, and two years later earned a MSc Degree in Social Economics and Political Science.

She was married to a prominent Saudi citizen from the Al Sharif family. They had five children together, but were divorced in 2007. The princess excelled in business and, as a single mother went on to found several restaurants and catering businesses in Saudi Arabia, as well as a media firm, Media Ecco. She has also been a critic of public policy and human rights issues in her country, which could have made her a target of the reigning monarch.

The princess has also advocated for loosening up harsh restrictions and regulations regarding women's rights under Sharia law. She had called for changes to the constitution, education system, social services, divorce laws, and the practice of prohibiting women from going out in public without a male chaperone.

In 2014, through a London research center (GURA), the Fourth Way Law was registered and recorded by the European Union.



Princess Basmah was recognized for her efforts in the international monitoring of human rights and developments, and establishing training centers to promote Fourth Way values on a global stage.

Several countries, such as America and England, have been considering recommendations from the organization when making important international decisions. After delivering an important lecture at Cambridge in 2012, several sections of the Fourth Way Law were implemented by the British government.

While she is grateful to be home again, Princess Basmah is taking time to reconnect with her family, to rest and recuperate. She is unsure, however, if she will be allowed to travel abroad to receive the medical treatment she was seeking when first arrested.



The United Arab Emirates On A Global Watchdog's List

BY AMBER ERWIN

Even after a recent government attempt to wipe out illicit transactions, the United Arab Emirates is at risk of being added to a global watchdog's list of countries subject to heightened scrutiny for deficiencies in counter-money laundering and terrorist funding.

According to people familiar with the matter who requested anonymity because the discussions are private, the Financial Action Task Force is leaning toward adding the UAE to its "gray list" early this year, one of two major categories used by the intergovernmental body for nations determined to have "strategic deficiencies."

Given the UAE's position as the Middle East's main financial hub, the FATF's approval of the designation would be one of the most momentous in the group's three-decade existence.

The FATF is presently scrutinizing 23 nations, including Albania, Syria, and South Sudan, with only North Korea and Iran on its "black list" of the highest-risk countries.

'Fully Committed'

As per Ibtissem Lassoued, a UAE-based head of advising in financial crime at law firm Al Tamimi & Co, the UAE government has taken various initiatives to better conform with global norms on anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing since the FATF's warning in 2020.

Authorities established financial crime courts and now demand businesses to reveal their real

owners to the authorities. Officials in the UAE also created the Executive Office, directed by Al Zaabi, to guarantee that the central bank, the Finance Ministry, and other government agencies work more closely together.

Multiple banks have been fined by the central bank in recent months for violating anti-money laundering regulations, and additional limitations have been placed on hawalas, charities that are frequently accused of facilitating terrorism-related money flows, claimed a report by Bloomberg.

A setback?

A gray-listing will be a disap-

pointment at a time when the oil-rich country is facing more competition from Saudi Arabia, which is expanding its capital sector and taking moves to attract more investment. Dubai and Abu Dhabi are also attempting to generate billions by listing state-owned companies, and the UAE has altered its work week from Monday to Friday since the beginning of the year in an effort to attract international business.

According to Bauer, the scale of any repercussions for the Emirates would be difficult to assess, primarily because foreign financial institutions and investors may already view it as a high-risk location.



Second Anniversary Of Qassem Soleimani's Death Brings Renewed Threats Against Former President Trump And Others

BY KATHY MALOUF

As the second anniversary of General Qassem Soleimani's death was remembered in Iran on January 3, 2022, President Ebrahim Raisi has called for former President Donald Trump to stand trial for Soleimani's killing, or face revenge from Tehran. Raisi demanded that President Trump and former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo should be tried in a "fair court" for the assassination or Muslims would take their "martyr's revenge."

As one of the Generals responsible for Iran's Quds forces, Soleimani was notorious for his oversight of countless assassinations and assassination attempts across the world in such places as the U.S., Germany, Argentina and India.

He was also believed to be responsible for the deaths of over 600 U.S. military in Iraq, as a result of enhanced IEDs, which also wounded thousands of U.S. service men and women. As a leader of the Quds forces, which was designated to be a terrorist organization, Soleimani would have been a legitimate military target.

At the time, according to former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, the targeted drone strike which killed Soleimani was not retribution for his past actions, but to prevent an imminent attack against U.S. Troops and diplomats in Iraq and other parts of the region. Because of the immediacy of the reported planned attack, President Trump was not required to notify Con-



gress in advance (covered by the President's powers under Article Two in the U.S. Constitution.)

The attack on Soleimani was carried out on January 3, 2020, outside of the Baghdad International Airport, as 2 drones fired several missiles at 2 cars containing Iranian and Iraqi officials who were with him.

At the Baghdad airport on January 2, 2022, where supporters of Iran-backed militia were gathered to remember Soleimani, chanting anti-American slogans, officials were intent on calling for revenge and threatening that revenge to take place from within America from "within their homes,without our presence," according to Iranian Revolutionary Guard Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani. He also stated, "We will get revenge that you will not forget for the rest of your life."

Meanwhile, on Monday, January 3, 2022, two armed drones were shot down upon their approach to Baghdad International Airport. The Iraqi military base attached to the airport hosts U.S. military and coalition forces. Photos of parts of the downed drones appeared on social media showing the phrase "operations of the leaders' revenge" painted on a wing from the wreckage. This seemed to be a reference to the assassination of General Qassem Soleimani two years prior.

Will they be successful in orchestrating a revenge attack from inside America? Only time will tell. But as long as our borders remain open and porous, their chances increase. These threats have been made several times to the United States to reiterate the need for retribution for the deaths of key leaders of the Jihad, so we must remain prepared.



First Test For Emirati President Of Interpol Ahmed Naser Al-Raisi

BY CASEY FENN AND CHELSEA MEECE

Madrid, (Transatlantic Today) – The new Interpol President Ahmad Al Raisi who is overwhelmed with lawsuits and legal proceedings seems to be under landmark test to show his integrity. Al Raisi who is accused of war crimes and tortured is now under investigations by French court. Spain has now called Emirates to hand over a dangerous criminal and arms dealer? What will happen next?

Via Al Pais- Interpol has requested Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates) to immediately arrest the Spanish-Lebanese arms merchant Abdul Rahman El Assir, a regular companion of Juan Carlos I in that country, who has been held since 2019 by two international search and arrest warrants, police sources told EL PAÍS.

Interpol's order with a red note (detention for extradition) takes place days after an investigation by this newspaper revealed that Abdul Rahman El Assir, 71, disappeared for almost three years and persecuted by the Spanish and French courts, is hiding in Abu Dhabi, where he has frequented the king emeritus for months in his private residence, according to eye The friendship between El Assir and Juan Carlos I is known and dates back decades.

Interpol's request has been processed by the organization's office in Madrid after the Fugitive Brigade of the National Police activated the channels of international cooperation after learning from EL PAÍS that the arms merchant lives in Abu

Dhabi, a country of 1.45 million inhabitants, where he moves freely. The Interpol office in the capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has transferred it, in turn, to the operational groups of the United Arab Emirates police.

Abdul Rahman El Assir, in an image from decades ago.

Abdul Rahman El Assir, in an image from decades ago.

The Spanish police, in addition, have contacted the attaché of the Ministry of the Interior at the Embassy of Spain in Abu Dhabi to convey to the police services of the United Arab Emirates the interest of the authorities in the arrest of the escapee, according to police sources.

Assir vanished on October 4, 2018, when he had been summoned by a Madrid court to be tried for a tax crime for a millionaire tax fraud. The arrest and imprisonment order was issued by the court of the Provincial Court, on March 6, 2019, where he was going to be tried and to which he gave a sit-in on up to four occasions. The request was sent to the SIRENE Bureau in which the alerts of people wanted by the European judicial authorities for their detention for extradition purposes are activated and validated.

What affects most is what happens closest. In order not to miss anything, subscribe.

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The SIRENE bureaux, created in all the signatory states of the Schengen Agreement, constitute an operational mechanism to support the Schengen Information System (SIS). In its archives the names of hundreds of people claimed for detention by the Spanish courts accumulate.

In the SIRENE system, there is also the search and arrest warrant for extradition against El Assir issued by the French justice system where he was convicted in absentia by Karachigate, a corruption and arms sales scandal in Pakistan. It has been in force since mid-2020 and is persecuted for a financial crime and against property. Part of the commissions for the sale of submarines financed the campaign, in 1995, to the presidency of the French republic of Prime Minister Édouard Balladur.

In Switzerland, where he established his residence in recent years, he has also left a trace. It owes 2.2 million in taxes, according to the Swiss media Bergen Zeitung.

"The arrest warrant for rebellion against El Assir was issued by the court and is still in force. When he is located, he will be made available to the judges," says a spokesman for the High Court of Justice of Madrid. "It was agreed and announced. Nothing has changed in this case," responds an official source of the Prosecutor's Office who requests against the Spanish Lebanese a sentence of eight years in prison, the payment of almost 90 million and compensation to



the Treasury of 14,784,602.

For the public prosecution, this arms merchant and international commissioner “consciously omitted” profits of more than 31 million euros and did not file the Personal Income Tax (IRPF) return. The fraud made it easier for him not to pay 12.03 million in 2002 and 2.7 million in 2003.

The Assir has been frequenting the king emeritus for months at his private residence in Abu Dhabi. Eyewitnesses to these meetings interpret that the merchant of arms is using Juan Carlos I as a “shield” to overcome his judicial problems. The Royal House and Juan Carlos I’s lawyer declined to comment.

Paradise of international criminals

The United Arab Emirates belongs to Interpol, like most Arab countries, but its collaboration is not as active as that of its other 194 partners. The response that

the authorities of that country will give to the express request of the Spanish police, the police sources consulted recognize is unknown. Spain chairs the European Network of Active Fugitive Search Teams, but lacks influence in Arab countries.

Dubai, one of the main cities of the UAE, is an example of lack of collaboration in the search for fugitives from this federation of seven emirates. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration considers this city a paradise for criminals and international traffickers due to the limited collaboration of its authorities in the fight against international crime. “For the DEA Dubai is currently the refuge of the three main drug traffickers in the world. Collaboration is very difficult,” says a police source.

The Hispanic Lebanese El Assir married Samira, sister of Adnan Kashogui, the influential Saudi arms dealer based in Marbella who

died in 2017 and then considered the richest man on the planet. Samira was divorced from the Egyptian businessman and founder of the Harrods warehouses in London, Mohammed Al-Fayed, and with him she had Dodi, who was Diana of Wales’s partner. After his divorce, El Assir married María Fernández-Longoria, daughter of the Spanish ambassador to Egypt, with whom he has had three children and from whom he is separated.

Thanks to his friendship with Juan Carlos I, El Assir attended as a guest in 2004 the wedding of then Prince Philip of Bourbon to Letizia Ortiz. In 2016, he celebrated the wedding of one of his daughters at the Swiss ski resort of Gstaad and chartered a plane for the guests, including the daughter of José María Aznar and her husband, Alejandro Agag, whose liaison he attended in El Escorial, according to the media of the heart.



Visit To Moscow As A “Turning Point”; Ebrahim Raisi

BY CASEY FENN

TEHRAN (Transatlantic Today) – Prior to a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Iran’s President Ebrahim Raisi suggested his travel to Moscow might represent a “turning point” in bilateral ties between the two countries. Before flying to Moscow for a two-day visit on Wednesday, the Iranian President hailed Iran and Russia as powerful, autonomous, and influential countries in the area that could improve their trade and security by keeping close ties, according to Al Jazeera.

Raisi went on to say that neither Iran nor Russia are satisfied with their existing level of ties, and that they both want to utilize this visit to improve things.

According to the president, political, economic, energy, trade, and space concerns would be discussed in Moscow.

Their prior 20-year agreement came to an end last year, and while it was due to be automatically extended for another 5 years, all parties decided that it needed to be improved.

Raisi and Putin were supposed to meet in September on the margins of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) conference in Tajikistan, but Putin had to cancel due to a COVID-19 outbreak among his officials.

Iran’s bid to join the SCO as a full member was approved with the support of all seven permanent members at the time, indicating a diplomatic win under the harsh US sanctions imposed against it

in 2018, when then-US President Donald Trump pulled from the Iran nuclear deal.

In lieu of sanctions relief, Trump’s successor, Joe Biden, has offered to resurrect the groundbreaking 2015 deal that put a lid on Tehran’s nuclear development.

Raisi is in Moscow with his foreign minister, Hossein Amirabdollahian, his economy minister, Ehsan Khandoozi, and his petroleum minister, Javad Owji.

Raisi will speak to Russia’s lower house of parliament, the Duma, on Thursday, in what will be the first visit by an Iranian president to Russia since 2017.

He’ll also meet with a group of Iranians who live in Russia and attend a meeting with Russian entre-

preneurs.

The visit takes place while talks in Vienna continue to repair the 2015 nuclear deal between global powers, including the United States.

Russia has stated repeatedly that it favors the reinstatement of the historic agreement as well as the complete withdrawal of US restrictions that are incompatible with it.

Iran has expressed interest in obtaining modern Russian weapons, such as fighter planes, helicopters, and tanks, when a United Nations embargo on Iran’s acquisition of conventional arms expired in October 2020, over US concerns.



Israel To Probe Alleged Use Of Pegasus

BY CHRISTINA LEVANDOWSKI

TEL AVIV (Transatlantic Today) – Israel's justice ministry has promised a thorough inquiry into accusations that the infamous Pegasus spyware has been used on Israeli civilians, including those who joined anti-Benjamin Netanyahu protests.

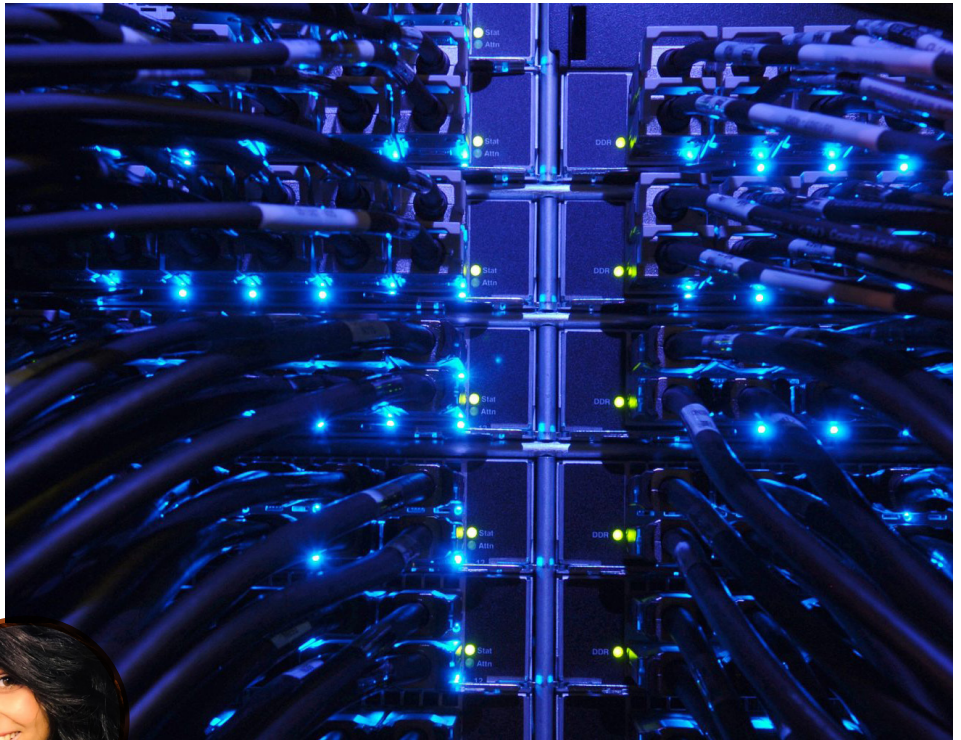
According to Al Jazeera, Israeli police strongly refuted a claim by the business newspaper Calcalist that Pegasus, an Israeli surveillance tool developed by NSO, was utilized on residents at the frontline of last year's anti-Netanyahu riots, as well as reporters and dissidents around the world.

At a parliamentary court hearing on Wednesday, Israel's Justice Minister Gideon Sa'ar said there was an enormous difference between the report and the police's testimonies, and also that the attorney general was also looking into the claims made in the article.

State Comptroller Matanyahu Englman said on Tuesday that the latest Pegasus claims would be included in his ongoing probe into law enforcement's usage of spying technologies.

According to Englman, the examination will look into the proper balance between the utility of surveillance techniques in investigations and privacy infractions.

Most of the charges, according to Public Security Minister Omar Barlev, a Netanyahu opponent who was appointed as part of a new administration that deposed Netanyahu in June last year, were simply false.



With judicial authorization, Israeli security personnel have broad authority to conduct surveillance throughout the country.

Barlev went on to say that the attorney general had instructed the police to react formally to the examples in the article on Tuesday.

Following reports last year that it has been used to spy on reporters and dissidents around the world, Pegasus, which could also turn a cell phone into a secret eavesdropping device, has stirred global uproar.

The Israeli defense ministry, which is responsible for approving all exports of Israeli-made defense industry items, has also launched a probe into Pegasus sales abroad.

The United States has banned the NSO from using American technology, claiming that its services have

been utilized by authoritarian regimes.

In response to the allegations, NSO stated that it was unable to confirm or deny the existence of any existing or future customers. It claims it neither operates nor is engaged in the operation of the system after it is sold to federal customers.

According to those familiar with the situation, the business was weighing alternatives in December last year, including shutting down its contentious Pegasus division and liquidating the entire corporation.

Apple has filed a lawsuit against NSO, trying to prevent the spyware company from utilizing its items and services, and has said that it will begin notifying users who have been victimized by state-sponsored espionage.

Egyptian Human Rights Group Announces Closure

BY KATHY MALOUF

The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information has announced its closing in a statement on its website as of January 10, 2022, citing increasing harassment and repression of human rights organizations in Egypt.

Founded in 2004 by attorney and human rights proponent Gamal Eid, the ANHRI organization was focused on maintaining freedom of expression and the preservation of other individual rights across the Middle East and North Africa. It collected articles and information from close to 140 human rights organizations and published them in a daily format on their website.

The organization worked on behalf of people who had been detained on political grounds. It advocated against censorship by Arab governments across the Middle East. ANHRI is respected by other human rights organizations across the region, and has long been considered a reliable and accurate source of information.

The harassment and abuses by the Egyptian government go back as far as 2013, when the headquar-

ters of ANHRI were raided. Documents, furniture and equipment were confiscated and to date have not been returned to the organization. In 2015, the Wasla newspaper which had been published by ANHRI since 2010, was shut down and not allowed to operate. Mr. Eid, the founder and executive director, has not been allowed to travel since 2016, at which time his assets were frozen. Both the travel ban and asset seizure remain in effect to the present. At that time the court also froze the assets of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, the Hisham Mubarak Law Center, and the Egyptian Right to Education Center, along with the Directors of each of those organizations.

In other examples of harassment, employees of ANHRI have been physically assaulted and threatened with arrest unless they cooperated with the government and became informants against the organization. Eid himself claims to have been beaten by government agents and threatened with guns before being covered in red paint,

and warned to stop his efforts to support human rights victims.

Since President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi took power in 2013, civil rights in Egypt have become more and more restrictive. That same year an Egyptian court forced the closure of several foreign pro-democracy organizations, one of which was U.S. based Freedom House. Jail sentences were ordered for 43 staff members, 15 of whom were Americans who had fled the country.

The El-Sisi government has been working to silence any dissenters or criticisms of his policies. A law which was passed in late 2019 severely restricts the work of human rights groups, and keeps close governmental surveillance on them. It also requires that such groups, including ANHRI, to register with the government Ministry of Social Solidarity, and obtain its permission before engaging in most of its formerly independent activities. ANHRI was also informed it would be necessary to change its name in order to register under the new rules.

In a statement from the ANHRI website regarding their decision to cease operations, the ANHRI team closed with the following:

“Out of concern for the safety and freedom of the team, and due to our inability to deal with such brutal police violations, we decided to suspend our work as an organization, and continue as individual lawyers, to defend human rights and the right of Egyptians to a state of the rule of law.”



2 Ballistic Missiles Intercepted Over Abu Dhabi

BY CHRISTINA LEVANDOWSKI

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (Transatlantic Today) – Authorities say the UAE intercepted 2 missiles launched by Yemen's Rebel groups over the airspace of Abu Dhabi early On Monday, the second strike on the Emirati capital in a week.

The missile launch heightens tensions in the Gulf Region, which have already seen a string of attacks nearby – but never clearly on – Emirati territory. It comes at a critical time in Yemen's years-long conflict, as well as the failure of Iran's nuclear agreement with Western powers. According to an ABC News story, American forces at Al-Dhafra Airforce Base in the city took refuge in bunkers amid the strike.

In a televised statement, Houthi military spokesperson Yehia Sarei claimed responsibility for the strike, stating the rebels used Zulfiqar ballistic missiles and drones to attack numerous targets in the UAE, including Al-Dhafra Air Base. He warned that "as long as attacks on the Yemeni people continue," the UAE would be a target.

Later, the Emirati Defense Ministry released a black-and-white video purporting to show an F-16 destroying the missile launcher involved in the strike in Abu Dhabi. The facility was found near al-Jawaf, a Yemeni region around 1,400 kilometers (870 miles) southwest of Abu Dhabi, according to the Defense Ministry.

The F-16 was identified as Emirati by the state-linked publication The National in Abu Dhabi, raising questions of how intimately involved

the UAE is currently in the conflict after retreating most of its ground soldiers in 2019. The Emiratis have continued to support militias on the ground, such as the Giants Brigade, which has achieved recent successes against the Houthis.

The incident comes a week after Yemen's Houthi rebels claimed responsibility for a drone and cruise missile attack on the Emirati capital, deliberately striking the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company fuel store in the Mussafah district and an airport. Three individuals were killed and six others were injured in the strike on the fuel station.

In recent days, a Saudi-led coalition backed by the UAE launched severe airstrikes against Yemen, throwing the Arab world's poorest nation off the internet and killing more than 80 detainees inside a detention center.

The Houthis threatened to exact vengeance on the UAE and Saudi Arabia over the strikes. A Houthi-fired ballistic missile fell in an industrial sector in Jizan, Saudi Arabia, according to the Saudi-led coalition. According to television footage, the missile ripped a deep crater in the ground and injured 2 immigrants of Sudanese and Bangladeshi nationalities.



Jordanian Military Kills 27 Syrian Smugglers

BY CASEY FENN



AMMAN, JORDAN (Transatlantic Today) –

According to Jordanian officials, 27 suspected traffickers trying to come into the country from Syria were killed, with some others fleeing back into Syria with drugs.

According to a report posted on the Jordanian army's website on Thursday, the army thwarted numerous suspected drug smuggling attempts from Syria and seized huge quantities of narcotics in separate operations in which several people were injured.

Large quantities of cocaine were also discovered disguised in Syrian trucks going through Jordan's major border crossing, according to the army.

It also stated that it would continue to enforce the recently formulated norms of engagement and would hit with an iron fist and fight with

each and every infiltration or smuggling effort to secure the borders with force and firmness.

Jordan's military stated earlier this month that an army commander was slain in a shootout with traffickers along the country's long porous border with Syria.

More than 650,000 Syrian migrants have sought asylum in Jordan, fleeing the country's civil conflict, which has raged for more than ten years.

After Syrian state forces seized rebel-held regions along the Jordanian border in September, Jordanian and Syrian authorities addressed border security.

After the two nations reopened a crucial border crossing, Jordan's King Abdullah II communicated with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad for the very first time in a decade.

After ten years of civil war, Syr-

ia's underground drug business has thrived. According to Al Jazeera, it has become a hotbed for creating and distributing captagon, an unlawful amphetamine, in recent years.

Lebanon and Syria have emerged as major drug transit points in the Middle East, especially in the Gulf.

The spike in smuggling is being blamed on Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah and other armed organizations that control parts of southern Syria, according to Jordanian officials. The claims are denied by Hezbollah.

According to a 2014 report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Middle East's amphetamine market is expanding, with arrests mostly in Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria responsible for more than 55 percent of all amphetamines collected worldwide.

Israel Publicly Joins US Mideast Naval Exercise

BY CHRISTINA LEVANDOWSKI

TEL AVIV, ISRAEL (Transatlantic Today) – Israel is currently participating in a massive US-led naval drill in the Middle East, officially joining Oman and Saudi Arabia, two countries with which it has no diplomatic ties despite normalizing relations with other Gulf governments.

The International Maritime Exercise 2022 (IMX 22) brings together about 60 countries and comes amid rising Gulf tensions following missile assaults by Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi movement against the UAE, along with a foiled attack on a US facility.

According to Al Jazeera, the UAE

intercepted a projectile during a visit by Israel's president on Monday, the third similar attack in 2 weeks by the Houthis, who are fighting a Saudi-led coalition that involves the UAE.

In 2020, Israel improved relations with Gulf neighbors Bahrain and the UAE, which were brought together by common interests about Iran, and performed their first joint naval training in November.

However, this is the first occasion Israel has publicly engaged in an IMX practice with Saudi Arabia, with whom it has no diplomatic relations.

According to US Navy sources, Gulf neighbors Qatar and Kuwait, which likewise have no official ties with Israel, did not participate.

Bahrain is home to the US Navy's Fifth Fleet headquarters as well as some CENTCOM (US military coordination umbrella organization for the Middle East) missions. Last year, Israel was added to CENTCOM.

On Wednesday, a US Navy official stated that while planners were cognizant of the geopolitical background of the participating countries, cooperation was high.

On Monday, the Israeli military announced that some of its forces would take part in a Red Sea practice with the US Fifth Fleet.

IMX 22 kicked off its seventh year on Monday from Bahrain's Fifth Fleet, covering the Arabian Gulf (also known as the Persian Gulf), North Indian Ocean, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea, and Arabian Sea.

Meanwhile, Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz paid a surprise visit to Bahrain.

Israel's defense ministry announced Gantz's travel shortly after he arrived in Manama on Wednesday, saying he will sign a joint military pact with Bahrain.

The Israeli defense ministry said nothing about the Houthi strikes, nor did it provide any specifics about a security agreement with Bahrain, which is home to the US Navy's largest Gulf base.



Activists Say Beijing Olympic Boycotts Are “Simply Not Enough”

BY CHRISTINA LEVANDOWSKI

BEIJING, CHINA (Transatlantic Today) – With the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games on Friday, the campaign to boycott the tournament has grown in recent weeks, as seen by protests in Taiwan, Austria, Indonesia, Germany, and Belgium.

Protesters denounced Chinese President Xi Jinping and his administration’s propaganda, labor conditions, oppression of ethnic and religious minorities, and actions to suppress freedom of expression and the press, among a slew of other issues. Activists and human rights organizations, on the other hand, argue that diplomatic boycotts can only go so far and that much more needs to be done to improve China’s situation.



Human Rights Watch’s China director, Sophie Richardson, told ABC News that the Chinese government’s previous human rights commitments have usually fallen short, despite what it says publicly.

The Chinese government frequently ignores or disputes similar assertions, as it did last year when the United States blacklisted 14 Chinese companies, stating that the government will take appropriate actions to firmly preserve Chinese enterprises’ lawful rights and interests.

Though Human Rights Watch, one of the 243 international organizations that have called for action against China, supports a diplomat-



ic boycott, Richardson believes that in the grand scale of things, it is far more important that governments pursue an UN-backed investigation into potential crimes against humanity prosecutions for Chinese government leaders who are credibly accused of being accomplices in these crimes.

Mabel Tung, Head of the NGO Vancouver Society in Support of Democratic Movement (VSSDM), told ABC News that diplomatic boycotts are “simply not enough.”

Tung’s group claims that boycotting the Olympics is a more effective tool than a diplomatic boycott to hurt China’s economy.

The French government is one of

the few countries that will not boycott the Olympics and will be sending 2 representatives to the games. The French National Assembly, on the other hand, just agreed to recognize the genocide of the Uyghurs.

Raphael Glucksmann, a center-left Eurodeputy and one of the major voices on the issue of the Uyghur in France, told ABC News that these judgments are a “total shame.”

According to Human Rights Watch, up to 1,000,000 Uyghurs and others have been unlawfully arrested in Xinjiang in recent years.

The Winter Olympics will be held in Beijing from February 4 to February 20.

United Nations Security Council Set To Discuss Ukraine Situation

BY CASEY FENN



WASHINGTON (Transatlantic Today) – At the request of the United States, the United Nations Security Council will meet for the first time on Monday to discuss Russia's troop buildup and intimidating actions against Ukraine, and all major players are intended to square off in audience over the prospect of a Russian invasion and its worldwide implications.

Russia's activities, according to US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, are a clear threat to global peace and security as well as the United Nations Charter. While scheduling the meeting on Thursday, she said that members of the Security Council must analyze the facts and evaluate what is at risk for Ukraine, Russia, Europe, and the

key commitments and values of the global order if Russia invades Ukraine again.

Dmitry Polyansky, Russia's deputy United Nations ambassador, responded on Twitter, saying, he can't recall any time when an SC (Security Council) member suggested to debate its own false claims and conclusions as a threat to international order from someone else. Hopefully, fellow UNSC colleagues will not accept this obvious PR attempt that is damaging to the UN Security Council's credibility.

According to Polyansky's reaction, Russia may begin the conference by requesting a procedural poll on whether it should proceed. Russia would require the approval of 9

of the 15 members to prevent the summit from taking place.

According to a top official in the Biden administration, the US is in constant contact with council members and is sure that the meeting will be well-attended.

The stationing of approximately 100,000 Russian troops along Ukraine's border has prompted increasingly harsh warnings from the West that Russia is planning an invasion. Russia is asking that NATO guarantee that Ukraine will never be admitted to the alliance, that NATO armaments will not be deployed near Russian borders, and that NATO forces will withdraw from Eastern Europe. These demands are deemed unachievable by NATO and the US, reported ABC News.



If the meeting goes forward, a senior United Nations official will give a briefing, followed by statements from the council's 15 members, which include Russia, the United States, and European members France, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and Albania. Ukraine will speak as well, according to council norms.

China's U.N. Ambassador Zhang Jun, whose nation has strong relations with Russia, has stated that China supports Russia's opposition to the council meeting.

Nikolai Patrushev, the head of Russia's Security Council, dismissed Western threats of an invasion on Sunday.

Qatar Alleges It Has Been The Target Of A “Smear Campaign”

BY AMBER ERWIN



Doha, (Transatlantic Today) – Ali bin Samikh al-Marri, Qatar’s Minister of Labor, accused shady organizations and lobby groups of conducting a “media” war against Qatar, particularly in relation to the World Cup and migrant labor. In a press statement, he also claimed that, despite Qatar’s landmark reforms, western news organizations are spreading false figures regarding migrant workers.

Reforms and Legislation

“The State of Qatar was keen to adopt legislation which abolished the (Kafala) sponsorship system and allowed the transfer from one employer to another, the cancellation of exit permits, and certificates of non-objection when changing the employer, as well as adopting many legislations to combat forced labor and exploitation,” Ali bin Samikh al-Marri said in a press interview.

Add to that the passage of laws allowing workers’ representatives to be elected to joint committees.

Qatar announced historic labor law changes in August 2020, including the elimination of the necessity for a NOC.

Qatar promised labor reforms in 2019, according to The Guardian. Removing kafala, the system that made it unlawful for migrant workers to change employment or leave the nation without their employer’s consent, thereby trapping people who were abused and exploited, was one of the goals. Other improvements included the region’s first base salary for immigrant employees and tougher penalties for businesses that violated the new labor regulations.

The statement was the latest in a slew of labor changes by the country, whose treatment of migrants

and record on human rights have been a focus since it was granted the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

“We are the first country in the region with an International Labor Organization office, whose mandate will continue beyond 2022,” the minister wrote in a letter to the Financial Times in December 2021. Working with the ILO, we introduced laws in line with international best practice. The next step has been to ensure that changes are fully implemented by shifting the deeply ingrained cultural attitudes of employers.”

Ali bin Samikh al-Marri is a human rights specialist and politician from Qatar. He was the chairman of the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) before becoming a minister and was well-known for his role in enacting numerous human rights reforms.

Turkey To Mediate In Ukraine Crisis

BY CASEY FENN

ISTANBUL (Transatlantic Today) – Turkey is aiming to calm tensions between its NATO partners and Russia amid the Ukraine crisis, with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan set to meet with counterparts from both sides in the upcoming days.

Erdogan stated in a television interview on Wednesday night that Turkey was “ready to do whatever is necessary” to avert a war.

Erdogan meets with Putin frequently and speaks with him on the phone, and on Thursday, Moscow spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said that the Russian president was

willing to visit Turkey, though the precise timing would depend on scheduling and reservations about the coronavirus, according to Al Jazeera.

In the meantime, Erdogan is expected to visit Kyiv in February to meet with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Russia has stationed approximately 100,000 troops along the Ukrainian border, prompting fears among NATO countries that Putin is contemplating an invasion, particularly in eastern Ukraine, which has a strong ethnic

Russian population and where Moscow has previously attempted to establish influence.

Turkey has a stake in Ukraine’s defense sector, having sold the country Bayraktar TB2 drones in 2019, which Ukraine has launched and utilized to target pro-Russian troops in Donbas in previous months.

The use of Turkish drones elicited strong condemnation from Russia, with Putin telling Erdogan in a December phone call that Ankara was engaging in “provocative” and “destructive” operations

Simultaneously, Turkey is militarily involved in numerous confrontations with Russia. In Syria, Russia and Turkey conduct joint military operations and ceasefire accords in a complicated dance involving the US, Kurdish, Iranian and Syrian government forces.

Turkey is also economically dependent on Russia, with thousands of Russian visitors annually pouring in much-needed foreign currency, and Ankara relying significantly on Russian natural gas providers.

Turkey, with the alliance’s second-largest force, will be on the forefront of any protracted conflict with Russia.

While Erdogan is highly unlikely to sway NATO on Russia’s demands, such as blocking Ukraine from membership, Coşkun believes Erdogan can help start a discussion on what appears to be Putin’s greater concern: the unstable nature of the European defense alliance close to Russian territory.



Is Berlin The Weak Link?

BY CHRISTINA LEVANDOWSKI



WASHINGTON (Transatlantic Today) – With Russia's threat to Ukraine escalating, the US and its NATO partners across Europe are ratcheting up their response.

However, one country in particular looks to be standing back: Germany.

While Russian forces have mobilized on the Ukrainian frontier, Berlin has rejected calls from its major allies and neighbors to provide armaments to Ukraine, urging "prudence" in the face of possible economic consequences.

According to NBC News, Europe's largest economic power's refusal to embrace the more forceful Western approach has enraged Kyiv and threatened to derail efforts to show a truly united together against Russian

aggression.

President Joe Biden was chastised for implying that the trans-Atlantic coalition was split on the subject, but his hesitancy, as well as the resignation of Germany's navy chief now over the weekend following pro-Kremlin remarks, have done little to mask the fact that Berlin is the weak link in the West's stance.

According to Reuters, Germany said on Wednesday that it will provide Ukraine with 5,000 military helmets. However, this was in accordance with a particular request, and the nation's resistance to military aid remains unchanged.

So, why is Germany so cautious to use its authority and clout during a crisis?

Germany imports almost a third of

its energy resources from Russia, a reliance that will only grow with the start-up of Nord Stream 2, a multi-billion-dollar project that would bring far more Russian gas to the nation via the Baltic Sea.

The project, labeled "Putin's pipeline," is strongly criticized by most of the West, mainly Baltic nations fearful of Russian aggressiveness. Though Germany has not counted out adding Nord Stream in a sanctions package, it has stated that it would do so only if Russia exploited energy as a threat.

Critics claim that energy dependence and fear of challenging Russia are related.

That attitude may not be viable with 100,000 Russian soldiers mobilized on its neighbor's frontier and tensions rising by the day.

17 Killed In Ghana Blast

BY CASEY FENN

GHANA (Transatlantic Today) – According to police, at least 17 deaths were reported in an explosion in western Ghana on Thursday after one motorcycle collided with a van carrying explosives.

According to information from the bureaus and hospitals, approximately 17 individuals have died, said Isaac Dasmani, the municipal chief executive for the Prestea Huni-Valley Municipal Assembly.

According to AFP, 59 individuals were injured as a result of the blast.

Apiate, a small village in western Ghana, appears to have been completely destroyed by the bomb. Nearly every building in the region had fallen, burying humans under rubble, as Kwadwo Bempah, who works in the vicinity and heard the explosion, told CNN.

The majority of the victims, according to police, have been recently rescued and are being treated at various clinics and hospitals. Their condition was not disclosed any further.

The police have seized command of the situation, providing security so that emergency responders such as the Ghana National Fire Service, NADMO, and the Ambulance Service can handle it.

While recovery efforts are continuing, the public has been encouraged to relocate to surrounding towns for their safety. Nearby towns have been asked to open classrooms, churches, and other facilities to shelter surviving victims.

Bempah claimed the local community acted as first responders in the aftermath of the tragedy, rescuing individuals and animals from fallen debris and sending the injured to health facilities before ambulances arrived.

According to Kwabena Owusu-Ampratwum, a publicity officer at Chirano Gold Mines, the explosives were getting transferred to a neighboring mine run by the firm.

In recent years, Ghana has had a

succession of gas explosions, killing over 150 persons in the capital, Accra, in 2015. Hundreds of citizens were seeking refuge at a local gas station from intense rainfall when the explosion occurred.

According to local media, at least one individual was killed and the other was wounded in a gas-related accident in Accra in October.

In the very same month, three persons were killed in a fire in Ghana's Ashanti region.



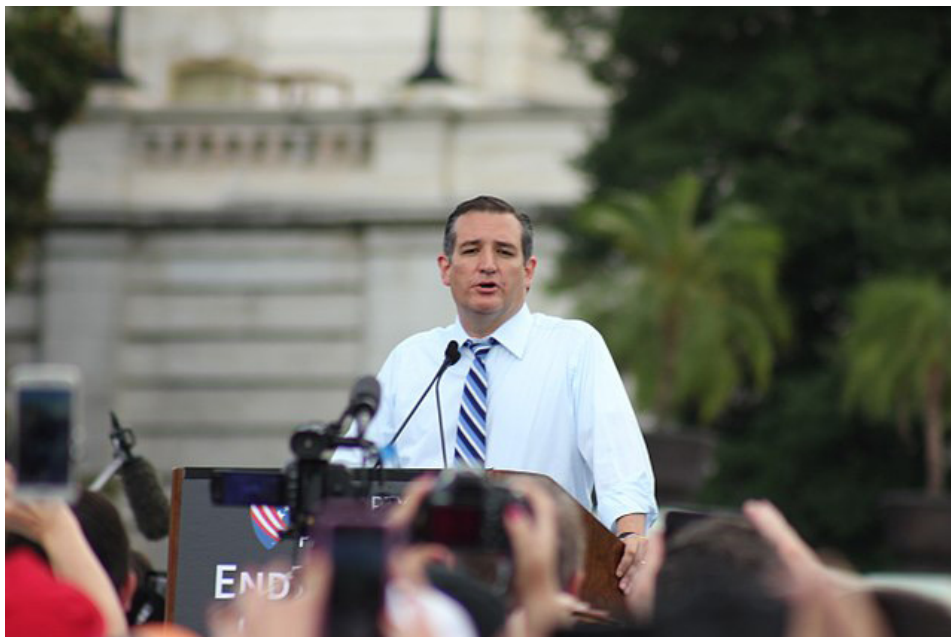
Republicans Continue To Decry Any Possible Resurrected Iran Nuclear Deal – No Matter The Cost Or Risks

BY TRENT NELSON

Even as reports suggest that as of right now, today, the United States and Iran are closer now to a resurrected JCPOA than at any time since Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from it in 2018, there are Republicans who remain as staunch as ever in their sheer and utter disdain for this internationally reasoned and widely accepted diplomatic recourse. They do not wish for America to rejoin any deal with Iran until Iran does all sorts of things that have always seemed unlikely to occur without an internationally sanctioned and reasoned plan or route by which progress could be processed through.

Whether the rumblings come from the United States Senate, the House of Representatives, or simply conservative commentators, they show no ounce of either empathy or comprehension regarding what is, once again, like in 2014, the greatest chance for an improved relationship between the western powers of the world and Iran. Furthermore, restarting the multilateral accord with the United States involved once again remains in Iran's best interests should they wish to rejoin and reintegrate in a reasonable and amicable way, into the international community of nations.

Yet in that intellectual, often theoretical realm, those "great" conservative thinkers believe that, somehow, the same strategy that accelerated Iran's nuclear production and capa-



bilities, that looked to suffocate and starve Iran even as a global pandemic gripped the earth, and that helped to push that nation's political timbre ever closer towards the reactionary, Principlist old guard and away from those reformers like the diplomat and ex-President, Hassan Rouhani. They remain deadset against any innovation by the Biden Administration that might illustrate once and for all the absolute idiocy and real damage of the Trump-JCPOA decision.

The Republicans, however, are in a bit of a proverbial pickle regarding this deal and the entire circumstance in general: They first cried and moaned about the original Iran Nuclear Deal, of which Barack Obama worked with two different Iranian Presidential administrations in order to obtain, as a deal which would essentially guarantee Iran the nuclear bomb by the end of the

original agreement, and pushed and goaded Donald Trump to remove the United States from the deal once he became the President of the United States.

They then, alongside Trump, championed the failed "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran of which failed to produce either diplomatic or literal groveling from Tehran, of which included the assassination by drone strike of Iranian Quds Force Commander Qasem Soleimani in early January of 2020. The renewed sanctions against Iran did not create anything in Iran but greater human suffering and toil, of which only increased as the COVID-19 descended and swept the nation shortly thereafter.

By the time the 46th President of the United States, Joe Biden, took office just a little over a year ago at the time of this piece, Iran was

closer than ever to achieving broad and sweeping nuclear capabilities. In the succeeding months, rulings and pollings would indicate that the coming Iranian Presidential Election appeared likely to bring the internationally recognized criminal against humanity, Ebrahim Raisi, into power as the next President of Iran. Raisi, in all likelihood, according to reports and well placed analysts, could very well also be the next Supreme Leader of Iran too, upon the death of the current Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.



But with all of that on the plate of Joe Biden, and with all of the criticism from folks like me regarding his handling of foreign policy, should this reworked Iranian Deal find the final necessary signature from the likes of the United States, Iran, as well as the rest of the nations still involved in this collective dance, it will be a really important and impressive accomplishment for the former Vice President and Senator from Delaware. Yet even as Biden and the people of the United States, those folks who, generally speaking, agree and wish for a new Iranian Nuclear Deal, celebrate the great breakthrough that so many, at one time or another, believed would not be witnessed again, the GOP will still be sulking, as they always seem to be about one thing or another.

To be sure, it is not as though the GOP have any other plan for dealing with Iran diplomatically speaking; they never brought up or created any other measured, reasonable or thoughtful type of multilateral agreement for Iran or American allies to analyze or work off of either before or after Donald Trump removed the United States from the original multilateral agreement. And today, they still have nothing better or more constructive than this new

Biden JCPOA, yet cannot bear the thought of a positive, mutual or productive agreement either.

While Republicans tell Joe Biden to reject an Iranian Nuclear Deal today, they also promise that any deal that he would sign, without congressional approval, would be subject to a Republican President's whims in the same way as was witnessed previously. It is difficult to imagine what goes through the minds of such hawkish, shortsighted and reactionary men and women, yet what cannot be missed in all of this fuss is that the obstruction to progress, development and humanitarian innovation is nearly criminal if not remarkably immoral, well as diplomatically impractical and counter-productive.

They cannot, however, admit that their obstruction all those years ago during the Obama administration was misplaced and misguided then, or that their choice to push for a revocation of the deal on the part of the United States has created the very circumstances that the original JCPOA was designed to inhibit, that the GOP said would be inevitable with the deal in place, and that we are now, in actuality, closer to than at any previous point in time.

It is, of course, never easy to admit you have made a mistake, and for a political party, it can oftentimes be seen as a real blow to the confidence that a party might emanate as well as the votes they might be able to get, and yet, were circumstances regarding Iran and the multilateral nuclear deal to transpire as they all did during the one term of the 45th President, a major international incident could eventually ensue, and there would likely not be a third opportunity to fix and work on the situation.

To obstruct the honest proceedings of another constituted JCPOA would be not only a slap to the face to a second Presidential administration, all of the diplomats that have worked so diligently on this innovation, again, as well as the very honor and integrity of American international agreements, but would constitute real disrespect to those American allies and their efforts too. Moreover, the disrespect towards Iran would be nearly inescapable too; for Iran, to go into good faith negotiations twice with a nation long held as an adversary, only to be betrayed twice in less than one decade by that polity would be an intolerable innovation and would scar future proceedings with even greater and longer-lasting damage than was even felt last time.

I have stated that the odds of Joe Biden getting a better deal than his Democratic predecessor Barack Obama got would be astronomical, precisely because of the "diplomatic" machinations of the 45th President between them; when the details of the renewed deal entirely come to light, we will have a better understanding of precisely what was lost and what was compromised upon, yet the deficiencies will and should be attributed back to Donald Trump, and not Joe Biden.

Should this iteration of the JCPOA be pulled back from by some future Republican President – Donald Trump or someone else – not only will future negotiations be almost untenable to even suggest, but a miracle deal by some future Democratic President would likely offer little chance or potential for positive progress, whether regarding the American-Iranian relationship, humanitarian and social goals, international diplomatic and economic innovations vis-a-vis Iran, or else

regarding the nuclear capabilities of that nation and their place within the greater international community of nations.

Therefore, present or future Republican interference with the natural happenings of this previously agreed-to multilateral pact must simply not be allowed to occur. What Joe Biden, Democrats, American international allies and Iran themselves must hope for is simply that no Republican becomes President before the reconceived Iranian Nuclear Deal bears tangible fruit, at which time, public opinion and pressure might very well render any future attempt to sabotage the internationally monitored nuclear deal politically dangerous for conservatives.

And of course, this is not the most favorable position for the administration of Joe Biden to be in right now either. Should Donald Trump have had the ability or desire to appraise his predecessor's dealings fairly before castigating them and removing the United States from them, Biden could be worrying exclusively about different domestic and global inequities instead. Yet here we are, and the 46th President appears to be on the verge of another major diplomatic innovation, in rebuke of the sanction regime of which the United States has found itself increasingly "in love" with in some senses.

The risk by Biden is and was obviously worth taking, because not only is it in the best interests of the United States to find an agreement with Iran – as was accomplished in 2014 – in accord with the greater community of nations, but it remains very much in the best interests of Iran itself, no matter if the Ayatollah and his President wish not to say as much publicly. The country of Iran

is in bad shape right now; between sanctions, the ravages of the Opioid Crisis on that nation and its people, those of the waves of COVID-19 variants that have fallen upon the entire world, and their ailing economy, a diplomatic victory for that nation is, at this moment, as important as it will be for President Biden and his administration and first term in office.

To have turned back the tides of the Trump era, especially regarding such a dire and important circumstance as Iran and its place within the world and greater community of nations, should be appraised as a fantastic and major accomplishment of his Presidency. Yet there is still more to be done, regarding Iran and so many others. For after all, there are more nations to conference and work towards progress with, like Cuba, Afghanistan, North Korea or Venezuela, through a JCPOA-esque, gradual reintroduction back into both the regional and greater diplomatic and economic community of nations.

The true test of the administration of Joe Biden regarding foreign policy and sanctions will be in how he handles more of, what some might call, the recalcitrant nations of the world, as well as those Republicans who, even now, spray vitriolic admonitions at both Joe Biden and Democrats for their diplomatic overtures, preferring, I guess, to play a sort of international game of chicken with other, poorly treated, frustrated and highly excitable nations across the entire world.

Accomplishing the goal to reinstate the US as a partner within the Iran Nuclear Deal is a major positive achievement for Joe Biden to campaign with as the 2022 Midterm and 2024 Presidential Elections both

beckon, yet it must only be the start of the things – both within and without America. The US is starved for change both at home and abroad, and wishes to see more humane and empathetic approaches taken with Americans, immigrants to the US, allies as well as those nations we have not always had the best relationships with,

Iran must be but a start, and indeed, the revised Iranian Nuclear Deal must only be the start of things between America and Iran as well, no matter how frustrated it might make Israel – they will manage and acclimate, I'm sure. The US must cultivate the working and constructive relationship with Iran, even after the revised JCPOA is signed and it is time to get to work, not only because it is the right thing to do, and not only because it is beneficial for all parties cooperatively, diplomatically, economically and materially, but also because the American people demand progress, innovation and mutuality from their leaders – not simply hardheaded, unilateral moves and machinations that make the United States appear weak, unintelligent, apathetic and wholly untrustworthy.

While Joe Biden clearly understands this, at least to some degree and extent, it is equally as clear that the Republicans across the nation do not understand this about America, its people, or its spirit. Furthermore, they do not understand – or choose to ignore for political purposes – how working together and with those apparently disagreeable people and polities can yield quite favorable, positive and deeply rewarding results for not only America, but for the world at large, for as long as amiability and cooperation win the day.

Continued Sanctions Are Going To Suffocate Afghanistan, Not Liberate Or Liberalize It – Only International Cooperation Can Help To Do Either

BY TRENT NELSON



There are, to be sure, more than just a few international issues marking the world today, and, somehow, so many of them seem to involve the United States in one way or another; this can be said despite that many instances likely and ac-

tually don't involve America in any practically literal sense at all. Yet whether it be the negotiations with Iran in Vienna that recently ended, discussions with Russia in Geneva regarding the Ukraine and Crimea, a Civil War in Ethiopia, North Kore-

an missile tests, or the continually unfurling international COVID-19 pandemic and the response to it, the world is as busy and unsettled as ever, and America continues to attempt to effect it all.

And sanctions are, indeed, the

recourse with which the United States so often chooses to settle with when a conflict emerges somewhere across the globe; if the US could sanction COVID-19, the Congress would, in fact, have drawn up several copies of ever more intense restrictions across the past two years to subject the illness to. Now, all jokes and joking aside of course, sanctions strike as a diplomatic penalty that might be easily confused, in the right proverbial lighting of course, with an aggressive, war-like and punitive action; and yet, they also must ring out across the world as rendered moral judgments as well, where a powerful nation or nations create a tangible declaration of their own intellectual or philosophical views on a topic or subject, expressed through the admonition of another nation through this economically restrictive act and process.

On Afghanistan

Regarding Afghanistan, a nation that was recently overrun by the Taliban, who had been lying in wait within the region over the course of 20 years and reemerged once American forces had finally pulled out of the polity under the Presidency of Joe Biden, the United States wishes to affect some type of control and pressure upon the Taliban government, to be sure. And, furthermore, the US has used sanctions since the Taliban takeover to attempt this pressure for the desired result. Yet, of course, these sanctions have not stopped the reported executions of former Afghani governmental figures or officials, nor have they created an atmosphere where the Taliban has backed off on many of the cultural and social restrictions that were previously feared for.

In short, sanctions have not

caused many positive innovations for the people of Afghanistan and have, instead, likely caused even greater, magnified suffering in a now disconnected and, in many ways, darkened Emirate. The sanction regime hovering and haunting Afghanistan under the obviously disagreeable Taliban, is the same sanction regime that remains in place across the world – used against nations like Cuba, Russia, Iran, and North Korea as well, to little practical, diplomatic or humanitarian effect. It surely must not be sustained against Afghanistan, any more than against any of the other aforementioned nations, no matter how distasteful the Taliban or anyone else might be. To extrapolate further some points of



which were recently written in a different publication. The Times, apart from the massive humanitarian implications, pushing

Afghanistan to the peripheries of the international community is the surest way to evolve it into a narco and terror state in record time.

Without some means of interacting with the greater international community economically and diplomatically, Afghanistan will find and create other means for pressuring the international community into consideration, and will likely have to resort to some of the more nefarious economic exercises for making money within a largely isolated and suffocated polity, surrounded by nations that do not like them either.

The opiate trade – of which the Taliban declares it wishes to stop entirely – might be the best bet for funding their nation other than acting as a financially compensated safe haven for other groups of a similar ideological or philosophical

ilk; neither courses would be positive innovations for the world or the United States, and the evolving circumstance would be one in which all parties in several years time would grimace and groan regarding, pointing fingers and attempting to fix what was long neglected, diminished, ignored and discarded.

Attempting to work with Afghanistan to find a structure similar to the Iran Nuclear Deal, through which practical, social and diplomatic innovations vis-a-vis the Taliban would result in improving economic and diplomatic standings and functioning between that nation and the amicable and agreeable nations of the world, must be the move here, with the relief of sanctions promised so long as international institutions and their inspectors determine that Afghanistan is taking steps to meet those agreed to conditions and expectations.

Should something like this be achieved, to then derail in the future an Afghani-American diplomatic innovation like this, as happened previously regarding Iran, in favor of a continuance of the sanction regime, such as was seen during the days of Donald Trump and the “maximum pressure” campaign against Iran, would, as it was regarding Iran, be sheer and utter lunacy. It would also be greater evidence of the further failure of American diplomacy and imagination vis-a-vis foreign policy.

For, while the people of Afghanistan have already suffered massively in the months this the country was retaken by the Taliban for the first time in 20 years, reports suggest that the starvation and privatization could intensify dramatically in the coming months and onward should nothing change. It is not for wanting to go “easy” on the Taliban,

who also must make great strides on their own, but because there are millions of people at risk of being suffocated and starved out of existence without the humanitarian empathy of the United States and the greater international community of nations.

And it is not as though the Taliban are really beloved by many in the region either – within or without Afghanistan – as a nation like Iran, filled with Iranians and regional immigrants and refugees alike, have a deep, historically rooted distaste for them, no matter what the current administration in Tehran tries to posture to the contrary. Pakistan, a nation often credited as having given asylum and recruits to the Taliban across the last 20 years of United States occupation, is reportedly not too thrilled to have them as the controlling officials next door either. Meanwhile, those three other border states of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have all intensified border security since the Taliban have taken over; while the latter has accepted Afghani refugees, the two former nations have become further guarded regarding movement coming from Afghanistan.

While Russia has shown itself apparently open to diplomacy and some form of cordial relations with Afghanistan under the rule of the Taliban, they have not necessarily fast-tracked their ties to the new regime of Afghanistan either. China too, has postured similarly, and yet remain at a cautious distance from an entity that they very much naturally do not align with in many ways. And so, as each nation has discussed the need for internationally normalized relations with Afghanistan, that nation remains out of the international loop, and their

populace suffers greatly and without reason as a result; the US and its allies must recognize this and make a profound and positive move in influencing the current governors of Afghanistan towards a better, less violent and more inclusive path both within and without their country in the future, as they have hopefully been attempting to do at Oslo in Norway.

“...The policy of reducing Germany to servitude for a generation, of degrading the lives of millions of human beings, and of depriving a whole nation of happiness should be abhorrent and detestable, – abhorrent and detestable, even if it were possible, even if it enriched ourselves, even if it did not sow the decay of the whole civilized life of Europe. Some preach it in the name of Justice. In the great events of man’s history, in the unwinding of the complex fates of nations Justice is not so simple. And if it were, nations are not authorized, by religion or by natural morals, to visit on the children of their enemies the misdoings of parents of rulers.”
– John Maynard Keynes

While the United States would like to believe that sanctions will liberalize Afghanistan, or perhaps even lead to a time where it could be taken back by more secular, less extreme forces, there is little evidence anywhere else across the globe, either presently or historically, that this is likely to occur. It does neither of those things, nor does it, as I stated in a piece just days ago, soften up or create feelings of positive, mutuality between nations for negotiations or reconciliations going forward. Sanctions instead are a punitive and deeply harmful punishment that always will crush and affect people while the more powerful and entrenched weather the

storms and plagues of international economic warfare.

This action, as will be discussed in a future piece regarding Russia, often serves to create a different effect upon the targetted population and society; in the Afghani example, however, the caustic nature of suffocating and vitriolic sanctions on so many poor innocents spread across a still sparsely connected nation could very well backfire by creating conditions that are ostensibly the fruits of American and Western subjugation, instead of diplomacy. This type of behavior by the United States is the surest way to radicalize entire generations and greater groups of people, and to create deeply rooted opposition to cooperation for decades to come; all of these long-held strategies and assumptions will not suddenly work in Afghanistan where they have previously failed in so many other places and instances.

What is needed, therefore, are more international conferences with delegations from the leading powers of the world, the leading figures of those nations within the regions in question, as well as diplomats who are ready to find innovative, mutually beneficial and constructive paths onward in the search for ever more positive and healthy relationships within the international community of nations. They must endeavor to solve great and difficult, culturally and historically profound questions, and they must look to do so in ways that will hurt the least for all parties going onward into the future. Diplomatic routes are not so fast and unilateral in nature as are sanctions by a nation or group of them, and take tact, time and understanding to mold and develop properly; regarding Afghanistan, this will all take as much

time, effort and consideration as do the discussions with Iran and Russia, and as would those with Cuba, North Korea or Venezuela.

Conferences are then, quite a necessary step in the entire diplomatic process, and will be so necessary in each circumstance in order to come to mutual, constructive and agreeable processes and routes for a better future. Oslo, Geneva and Vienna must be added to further, and should these types of meetings become common place, then all the better. The United States and its allies must properly lean into this recourse, and embrace the reality that nations cannot economically savage a nation or nations into mutuality or submission, but must work together and with one another to create diplomatic pathways and routes towards stronger and more trusting ties and shared accountability, as well as responsibility. To be sure, this path will not be as easy as slapping sanctions on a “problem” and calling it a proverbial day, but the rewards that will be yielded down the years will act as further proof of the good sense that building relationships – even with those polities or governments that might be disdainful or distasteful – makes when one analyzes the circumstances in question.

Yet in the final analysis, history, as well as common sense, has shown us what mistreating nations, even in conferences and grand, multi-lateral dialogue, can create for the world, as well as the United States in particular. When the Allied Powers at the end of the first, great war decided at Versailles to economically and practically barbarize and punish Germany, blaming nearly exclusively that nation and its people for the remarkably nuanced and complicated buildup and chain of

events that would precipitate what posterity has declared to be the First World War, they set in motion circumstances which could, and in short succession did, bloom and blossom into the deadly and genocidal Second World War, in which the Germans barbarized the world and its most vulnerable peoples in even more grotesque and disturbing ways.

And again, just decades later, when the United States blocked the Geneva Agreements from fully being implemented and executed as it related to Vietnam and their joint, collective elections, as was previously agreed to in 1954, they set in motion for themselves a conflict that would absorb countless lives from not only themselves and nations around the world, but also and mostly those from the nations of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. These, alongside the previously mentioned Munich Conference which infamously included both Adolf Hitler as well as Neville Chamberlain, have been the types of international conferences and agreements of which have left diplomatic functioning in low regard, and even disrepute in some circles, and furthermore have positioned proponents of the sanction in higher esteem than that individual who works to parse out complex and oftentimes culturally entangled incidents, ambitions and relationships.

It is this individual, the real and true diplomat who, before war has begun and the bullets can fly through the air and into those innocent men, women and children, must fight and work with vigilance and diligence towards building a brighter tomorrow, even as the grey and blackened storm clouds of violence and conflict appear upon the horizon – however distant or

near that all might suggest itself to be. The diplomat must work on this Afghanistan circumstance with the same spirit he endeavors with when attempting to solve the Russian or Iranian quandaries and riddles too; he must use his knowledge of history, of the contemporary circumstances in question, of the nation, its people, their government and of that greater region, of international form and function, as well as, on top of it all, regarding how best to reconcile the interests of his own nation or collective with those interests of the specific nation and its population.

Afghanistan offers different, and very distinct issues than the other two often mentioned situations, and yet, finding ways to positively affect that nation, all while saving and helping to allow for the development and growth of millions of innocent lives in the present and future, feels like massively important reasons to endeavor with the great resolve and ambition that America and Americans too possess in great abundance to achieve these ends through these purposes. By finding resolutions and recourses to these difficult questions across the globe, from Afghanistan to the Crimea, to Cuba and Tehran, the United States could very well find itself in stronger international positions regarding its diplomatic prestige after years of disappointments, with great, carved out new channels of diplomatic innovation and possibility to explore whenever and wherever international crises involving the US – or even the EU – might emerge, evolve or develop in the future.

Sanctions Alone Could And Will Never Resolve This Current Issue Involving Russia And The Ukraine

BY TRENT NELSON



The current circumstances involving Russian ambitions to acquire, in the eyes of the international community at least, or, at the very least, preserve as a sphere of both strategic value as well as cultural and political influence, the Crimean region of Ukraine. It is a region of which, within the confounded Russian lore that riddles their official history books, is historically “their’s,” despite that it is very much not historically Russian in the sense that they

claim for it. This is, of course, also not the first time that this region of Ukraine has been in the crosshairs of Russia and those forces which find themselves sympathized with, and not even the first time that Putin has amassed troops at the Ukrainian border; Barack Obama and most of Europe brought down “tough” sanctions against Russia in 2014, and those sanctions have since been tightened by the two successive administrations.

There are some that have written that these sanctions on Russia have worked great, are working great and could “be made even more effective” were minor tweaks to be made to them and how they are focused and placed upon industries and oligarchs. Indeed, with Russian military personnel gathering and already upon the border with Crimea, those individuals and institutions, with their fawning support of the sanction regime of this globe, ap-

pear with the same, worn and tired solutions as for decades they have suggested.

But were not sanctions placed upon Russia in 2014 precisely to push back and stop in a short and longer-term sense, the Russian annexation and pressure campaign in Crimea, of which is eternally aided by a shoddily run, and oftentimes reactionary or apathetic Ukrainian nation? And yet here we are, almost eight years later, and the same situation, aided now by the theoretical and practical question of Ukraine joining NATO, has returned; reports suggest that the United States is racing to agree to still further sanctions against Russia in the days ahead, and there are uncertainties at every turn in this circumstance. The diplomatic landscape in Eastern Europe is an absolute mess right now, and those in the rest of Europe, and indeed, the world, don't have the same diplomatic weaponry as they had in 2014 either.

Furthermore, Russia and Vladimir Putin were able to push the western nations into reacting as they have without any of the concessions that were first expected or stated as requirements by the EU and US over the previous eightish or so years. While the economy in Russia is not great, by statistical standards or by practical human ones in many cases, that vast nation with its great bounty of diverse peoples have, to be sure, weathered a sanction storm across nearly a decade already, and just recently forced diplomatic conversations in Geneva, Switzerland despite their ruling elites' eternal recalcitrance and prevarication.

Meanwhile, the administration of Joe Biden has suggested that

American Embassy staffers would do well to depart from the Ukraine, and national allies of the United States in Europe are currently frazzled by this circumstance, and remain vexed regarding what should be done next. The 46th President is considering boosting US military presence in Eastern Europe, and is, like some other allied nations, sending "aid" to the Ukraine as well – mostly military in nature – in what surely would be the worst-case scenario for each and every party involved in this affair.



For me, the solution to this quandary must involve honest discussions regarding NATO, Ukrainian Sovereignty, as well as sanctions. What might be bargained for with the previously applied pressure is, in varying degrees, the proverbial return of that varied and vehement pressure campaign itself; what, ultimately, can the United States and Europe recoup from their all-in gamble to suffocate the Russian Bear with economic sanctions when real diplomatic discussion and organization was likely in order at that particular moment in time?

This is the current test that the United States and its allies find themselves in as this situation involving the Crimean Region of Ukraine and Russia continues to evolve and unfurl itself. It is not desirable for any of the parties involved, other than Russia, who has bullied their way through a massive sanctions campaign only to force the diplomatic entreaties that should have occurred nearly ten years ago; the optics of this for the western allies, diplomatically speaking, are not great. It is, to be sure, a gamble for Russia as well however, but it is one that, given the state of the

nation, was seen as politically and diplomatically viable for the current President Putin to undertake.

While these western powers are looking to cobble together credibility on this issue even as sanctions have not created any tangibly positive change regarding the international or domestic outlook vis-a-vis Russia, it remains worth appraising whether sanctions were applied to frivolously years ago in 2014, and if another recourse might have created a better alternative today. Furthermore, we must analyze whether the overreliance upon sanctions as a sort of diplomatic stopgap of sorts to international innovations of a disagreeable sort has, indeed, backfired and caused those nations who have employed them so often to lose ground in the struggle to maintain some semblance of international peace, equilibrium or control over worldly happenings and circumstances.

"Any man can make mistakes, but only an idiot persists in his error." – Marcus Tullius Cicero

The sanctions imposed in 2014 by the United States and much of Europe, thanks to the European Union, ostensibly hurt Russia and likely pushed them towards signing the Minsk agreements in 2015, it is true. Yet it feels strange to think that anyone back in 2014 could have believed that the sanctions against Russia alone could or would have damaged the long term ambitions of Vladimir Putin regarding Ukraine or the Crimea; regarding that region, because of the links that Ukraine as a whole, and Crimea particularly, has to Russia through the entire history of the city of Kyiv and of greater Kyivan Rus, all the way through the centuries to post-Second World War and alleged post-Cold War agreements

regarding spheres of influence, Russia remains both protective, as well as enamored with and by the Crimean region of Ukraine.

In 2014, the proper diplomatic decision was not to proverbially punt the massive implications of this Russian infatuation and obsession with Ukraine and the Crimea down the road by simply sanctioning them, but to discuss in a grand, multilateral conference similar to the one which recently happened in Geneva, the regional and international realities of the situation and find a real path forward, in a similar spirit as the Iranian Nuclear Deal, or JCPOA. At that time, although Russia was committing a power play of sorts, the sanction recourse had yet to be explored or applied and so, in my mind, greater unified diplomatic coercion and pressure might have been mustered and applied by the US and the EU in order to find some sort of concrete diplomatic resolution at that moment, without the need to resort quite yet to the sanction regime.

In this instance, and through this course of action, solutions for the friction between pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian factions within Crimea, as well as Russia, Ukraine, and the regional and international communities as a whole. These solutions and compromises might have been found through independent international bodies and their agents and inspectors, and this work and their reports could very well have formed the basis of some agreeable set of innovations for the involved nations and that region based upon that collected evidence and the subsequent recommendations extrapolated from it all.

Now, that would have likely seen consolations and compromises from all parties, and would have

likely left all parties feeling frustrated, dissatisfied but in a working relationship of which had some semblance of neutrality within the greater international arbitration process. Negotiations are, for some strange reason, seen today as weakness whereas unilateral or punitive actions are recognizable more as strength or will or what have you; this, of course, is nonsense, and is also unrealistic in the greater context of the global diplomacy of nations. The ghosts of Neville Chamberlain and the Munich Agreement hang over diplomacy, non-violent or caustic diplomatic action and greater international cooperation, in many ways, like a spectre of distrust and mistrust in the midst of any and every international situation.

As Russia lauds and looms over and around Crimea upon the border of Ukraine once again, it is right where it was all those years ago in many ways, and yet, they have weathered a collective storm of economic warfare meant to pressure them into a hitherto absent spirit of friendship or mutuality. Were some agreements ironed out and resolved in 2014, and even in the years since, it is unlikely that this entire circumstance would be unfolding in quite the way that it currently is, and were further negotiations in the same or similar vein to fail at this time, with the innovations of this theoretical 2014 in mind and in pocket, the allies of Ukraine to the west would still, indeed, have the quite sizable cudgel of a decades worth of economic venom to wield in threat and warning should Russia choose to chance international stability, mutual cooperation, economic and social developments, as well as those international partnerships and bonds, for Kyiv or any other border nation

within or without the EU's grasp or influence.

Were this to be the recourse that the nations of the EU, the United States and their collective international allies were to feel obligated to take because of a full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia, despite international protestations and multilateral conferences, then the full brunt of those measures would have to be enacted multilaterally by those western – and/or eastern – allies of Ukraine all at once, alongside whatever other recourse might be afforded to the situation at that time; military force would also likely accompany that. Yet the force of such a collective economic action, as much as the military implications, would be felt more acutely and explicitly in that moment than across eightish or so years, and so would likely push Russia to recoil and sue for some type of relief and compromise accommodation from the collective polities of the international community.

It is at this time in the discussions that, once again, the threat of sanctions should be bartered away in return international diplomatic agreements, domestic innovations, long-standing JCPOA-esque “road maps” or plans and the like. Economic sanctions and measures do not create the sense of inevitability within their victims, as is supposed by proponents of the practice, in the same way it was not supposed, and also not accurate, regarding the infamous terror bombings of the Second World War or Vietnam; under each of these conditions, exerted by allegedly caring polities and their many peoples, target nations and their people do not soften up over time, like a pugilist taking shots round after round after round, but only calcify and prevari-

cate further.

“The secret of politics? Make a good treaty with Russia.” – Otto von Bismarck

Sanctions do not soften nations and their leaders up in any literal sense to greater amicability or diplomacy, but, over time especially, can create polities and populations of which, thanks to their greater disconnection to the international community of nations, act more wantonly and rashly still in their threats, ambitions and actions within the international community. Only the forceful and hopeful energy of diplomatic and intellectual confrontation can solve the problems that can and do sometimes foment between nations, cultures, ideologies and “historical” tracts of territory the world over.

When sanctions are applied to problems of international significance, it is often akin to putting a bandage upon a fresh wound that, while uncleaned and unresolved beneath the fabric, is sure only to fester further under those best intentions and innovations of onlookers and advocates. No, nations, like the people that compromise them, must face their solutions head-on, and must confront behavior that they can well determine is harmful to the larger community of which they themselves make up in part; this is not comfortable always, nor does it always end as each faction or factions would like. Mistakes are made, as can be witnessed down the years and ages of the history of humanity, yet these mistakes do not justify the abstention of true and real diplomacy in favor of a mechanism of which has consistently failed to create the change its proponents have long championed it to be capable of delivering.

If they have any future in international relations, that future will consist of a reimagining of their function and use, as well as when and how it is ever most appropriate to use them at all. They must not be unilateral, but multilateral and collective in focus and spirit; they must not be eternal, nor must they be used too hastily either. The sanctions should be used closer to and into any type of actual militarized conflict most often, if ever international relationships have deteriorated so. Therefore, greater resources and intellectual innovations must be reached for and imagined by those minds whose job it remains to find common ground and mutuality between nations and within the greater international community of nations: Diplomats.

The crisis between Russia and Ukraine was never going to be resolved by sanctions alone, and won't today be solved that way either; that should have been understood back in 2014, and yet it is only now that critics of the global sanction regime are heard and considered as those proponents have long been. In regards to Cuba, Iran and North Korea too, that message too must be appraised, analyzed and considered in the light of these considerations. How long will we look to strangle and suffocate nations and their peoples in their own homelands before we see that these actions bear no fruit down the years? On the contrary, they produce only immediate suffering, pain, hardship and angst in the years to come, and inevitably lead to greater xenophobia between those afflicted parties and those nations and people who sanction and, therefore, punish the people they profess to have deep care and concern for.

Like the siege bygone eras, the

modern sanction suffocates in the name of liberty, sovereignty or freedom. Yet unlike the siege of those bygone eras, it rarely works in any long or short-term sense; it creates hatred and suffering the world over and does not even achieve that which it aims to. On the other hand, by working through the issues which create international conundrums in places like Russia and Iran, the greater calamities which fester from the initial international wounds of nations and ideology cannot be properly born.

Indeed, while Russia and this entire circumstance might have been better handled in 2014 by the Obama administration and its international allies in government, the blusterings and blunders of the Trump administration destroyed the progress that the 44th President's administration did make upon the international, diplomatic landscape regarding both Cuba, as well as Iran. Sanctions are not the answer in any of these circumstances, and must stop being relied upon as such, when, as I stated in a recent piece regarding sanctions for another publication, it is only diplomacy as we are witnessing in Vienna and Geneva that can win the day for a better, more equitable and egalitarian world for all people and nations. Joe Biden must understand this, as it appears he might, and innovations to his policies must be considered while there is still time in his presidency and in these circumstances to correct the courses of which the United States finds itself barreling ever further towards.



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U.S RESTORES IRAN SANCTIONS WAIVER



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