



# Washington Insider

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# OUR TEAM



Danielle Campbell



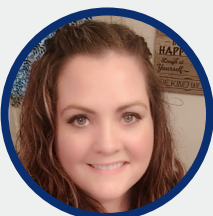
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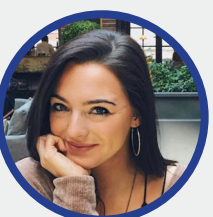
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## Washington Insider

### 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 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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DOUG JONES TO GUIDE SUPREME COURT NOMINEE



6-YEAR-OLD GIRL MISSING SINCE 2019 FOUND ALIVE



GERMANY WILL SEND MILITARY AID TO UKRAINE

# Biden Announces New Sanctions On Russia

by Henry Nicholas

On Tuesday, President Joe Biden issued further sanctions on Russia, claiming that Russian President Putin's recent actions in eastern Ukraine this week equated to "the beginning of a Russian invasion."

The sanctions, which were imposed on Tuesday, target significant Russian financial firms as well as Russia's sovereign debt, effectively barring Russia off from international finance. They also target 5 Russian elites having close links to the Kremlin, although not directly Putin.

After Moscow officially recognized the independence of 2 Moscow-backed separatist regions in eastern Ukraine this Monday as well as ordered soldiers into the regions to carry out "peacekeeping functions," several US allies, such as the European Union, Japan, Germany, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom stated they would impose sanctions on Russia as well.

The sanctions appear to be designed to give Putin the opportunity to de-escalate and participate in dialogue while also deterring Russia from launching a sizable invasion of Ukraine.

According to NBC NEWS, over 150,000 Russian soldiers continue to surround Ukraine, and Russia has stationed military weapons, health supplies, and blood supplies along the border.

After weeks of warnings that



Russia was attempting to build a pretext to invade, Putin's decision to send soldiers into the separatist areas was regarded as a stunning provocation by the U.S. and its European allies, raising fears that Russia may soon be moving even further into Ukrainian territory.

On Tuesday, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said that the regulatory clearance procedure for Nord Stream 2, a pipeline that skips Ukrainian transit facilities to carry Russian gas straight to Germany, will be halted. Scholz refused to promise to shut the pipeline if Moscow invaded during a trip to the White House earlier this month.

Because Russia is among the world's top energy suppliers, an interruption in supply from the nation might push up gas prices

in the United States, which is already experiencing its worst rate of inflation in decades.

Russia is also a significant worldwide exporter of raw minerals including nickel, aluminum, copper and palladium and any interruption in those supplies may shake an already stressed worldwide supply chain.

Biden warned Americans that protecting freedom will come at a price at home, but added that his government was keeping a tight eye on the world energy market "to limit the pain American people are feeling at the gas pump."

But, on Tuesday, State secretary Antony Blinken stated that he was postponing a scheduled meeting with Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Sergey Lavrov, citing Putin's decision on the two separatist territories.



# Biden's Address Brings A Moment Of Unity

by Athena Nagel



President Joe Biden delivered his inaugural State of the Union speech to lambaste Russian President Vladimir Putin and rouse the country in favor of war-torn Ukraine. It did not last very long, though there was a brief moment of political unity in the Capitol on Tuesday night.

Awash in gold and blue scarves, ribbons, dresses, and ties – a nod to the colors of Ukraine's national flag – Republicans and Democrats lawmakers paused their typical partisan attacks and momentarily appeared together to stand in support of a European partner facing unimaginable destruction and death at the hands of Putin, according to NBC NEWS.

Symbols of the United States' solidarity for Ukraine could be found all over the place. As Biden's convoy made the short trip from the White House to the Capitol Building, Ukrainian national flags were hung across Pennsylvania Avenue. Jill Biden greeted Ukraine's envoy to the United States, Oksana Markarova, with a warm greet-

ing as she approached the House floor, earning her a standing ovation.

Rep. Victoria Spartz, R-Indiana, the 1st Ukrainian-born congresswoman, was chosen to assist in escorting Biden into the chamber, and she sat right behind the top 2 House GOP leaders, Louisiana's Steve Scalise and California's Kevin McCarthy. Spartz, who just spoke with her 95-year-old grandmother as well as other friends and relatives in Ukraine, referred to the fatal invasion as "a genocide of the Ukrainian people by a mad man" earlier Tuesday.

Several Republicans agreed Biden hit the appropriate tone on Ukraine, but faulted his foreign policy for indirectly fueling the present crisis, particularly his botched pullout from Afghanistan.

Biden did, however, reveal a number of initiatives his administration is doing in Ukraine, which drew bipartisan applause. He has stated that all Russian planes will be denied access to US airspace.

He also said that he is collaborating with 30 nations to liberate 60 million barrels of crude oil from reserves throughout the world, reducing the reliance on Russian oil.

As Biden gazed out over a sea of yellow and blue, there stood Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, who was criticized by Democrats during the 2012 presidential election campaign for claiming Moscow was Washington's "No. 1 geopolitical foe."



Romney sat across the aisle from West Virginia Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin, who already single-handedly stymied Biden's \$2 trillion social investment proposal, dubbed "Build Back Better," which Biden didn't mention by name in his 62-minute address.

Some members of Congress were not in the mood for bipartisanship. Lauren Boebert, R-Colo., and Reps. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., were 2 conservative bomb-throwers who continuously taunted Biden on Covid regulations on constructing a border wall all through the night.

Greene received backlash this week after speaking at a white supremacist meeting shortly after the organizer made derogatory statements and lauded Putin.

Biden's full cabinet was present, with the exception of Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, who became the night's "designated survivor," which took on fresh meaning in light of Putin's recent nuclear provocations.

# RNC Sues January 6 Committee Over Salesforce Subpoena

by Henry Nicholas

The Republican National Committee filed a lawsuit on Wednesday against the House panel probing last year's Capitol attack, claiming that the panel is collecting potentially private information on RNC members.

The complaint targets a February summon to Salesforce, which is something the January 6 committee claims focuses on communications from the Republican National Committee in the weeks leading up to the Capitol assault, alleging that the 2020 poll was stolen.

The RNC described the subpoena as a "fishing expedition" that may reveal the party's strategy as well as personal information about its members and contributors. According to NBC NEWS, the action targets Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and various members of the house panel as defendants.

Salesforce is the RNC's digital and data communications provider. A subpoena, according to the RNC, might reveal personal details on party members and donors, such as how they replied to and read emails.

The subpoena, according to House panel spokesman Tim Mulvey, centers on financing emails involving former President Donald Trump's administration and the Republican National Committee that include misleading allegations about election fraud.

The emails had been sent through a Salesforce-owned product, according to the subpoena

notice, which was dated Feb. 23.

The committee is looking into the violence sparked by a pro-Trump crowd on Jan. 6, 2021, during a gathering of Congress to officially process the electoral votes confirming President Joe Biden's electoral win. Trump and his supporters had been making false assertions about the election for weeks before the attack.

In a court document earlier this month, the panel said that Trump and many others were involved in a plot to alter the election results but might have committed a felony.

The panel, which is made up of 2 Republicans and 7 Democrats, issued subpoenas to a number of people connected to Trump as well as his allies.

The Republican National Committee has been outspoken in its

condemnation of the panel and its 2 GOP members. The Republican National Committee censured Reps. Adam Kinzinger (R-Ill.) and Liz Cheney (R-Wyo.) for their participation on the panel and their condemnation of Trump earlier this month.

Kinzinger and Cheney were accused in the censure bill of collaborating in a Democrat-led campaign of regular Americans engaged in lawful political debate. RNC Chairperson Ronna McDaniel subsequently labeled it as "political discourse" which had absolutely nothing to do with the Capitol riot.

The RNC's complaint asks a judge to dismiss Salesforce's demand. If the subpoena is not stopped, the RNC argues that an order restricting the scope of the subpoena to only "unprivileged information" should be granted.



# U.S., Japan, South Korea Meet To Discuss North Korea

by Christina Levandowski

After Pyongyang started the year with a string of missile tests, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with his South Korean and Japanese counterparts in Hawaii on Saturday to address the danger presented by nuclear-armed North Korea.

North Korea was “in a phase of provocation,” Blinken said after the meeting, and the three countries denounced the latest missile tests.

In a joint statement, the three urged North Korea to engage in talks and stop its “unlawful activities.” They stated that they had no aggressive intentions against North Korea and that they were willing to meet Pyongyang without restrictions.

North Korea has a history of employing provocations like a missile and nuclear tests to entice Western concessions. The latest tests come as the North’s economy, which has already been ravaged by years of mismanagement and harsh US-led sanctions, is hammered by a plague of border restrictions.

The tests are widely interpreted as an attempt to persuade President Joe Biden’s administration to ease sanctions. The Biden administration has indicated that it will not do so until the North’s nuclear program is significantly reduced, but it has promised open-ended negotiations.

North Korea has turned down US proposals to resume negotiations,

claiming that it would not return to discussions unless Washington abandons what it considers to be hostile policies. According to NBC NEWS, the North is enraged by US sanctions as well as frequent military drills with South Korea.

The tests also have a technological component that allows North Korea to fine-tune its stockpile of weapons. The Hwasong-12 intermediate-range ballistic missile, which was recently tested, is capable of hitting the US island of Guam. It was the North’s first long-range weapon test since 2017.

North Korea appears to be halting its nuclear testing while China, its most significant ally and economic lifeline, hosts the Winter Olympics. Analysts think, however, that after the Olympics, North Korea would drastically intensify its weapons tests.

Blinken flew in from Fiji, where he joined Acting Prime Minister Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum as well as other Pacific leaders to discuss regional challenges, including climate change’s grave threat. It was the first time since 1985 that a US secretary of state has visited Fiji.

He began his Pacific tour in Australia, where he met with Australian, Indian, and Japanese colleagues. The four countries make up the “Quad,” a group of Indo-Pacific democracies formed to fight China’s regional clout.



# Biden's Big Move Toward Government-Backed Crypto

by The Editor

A digital currency in the United States might be on the way.

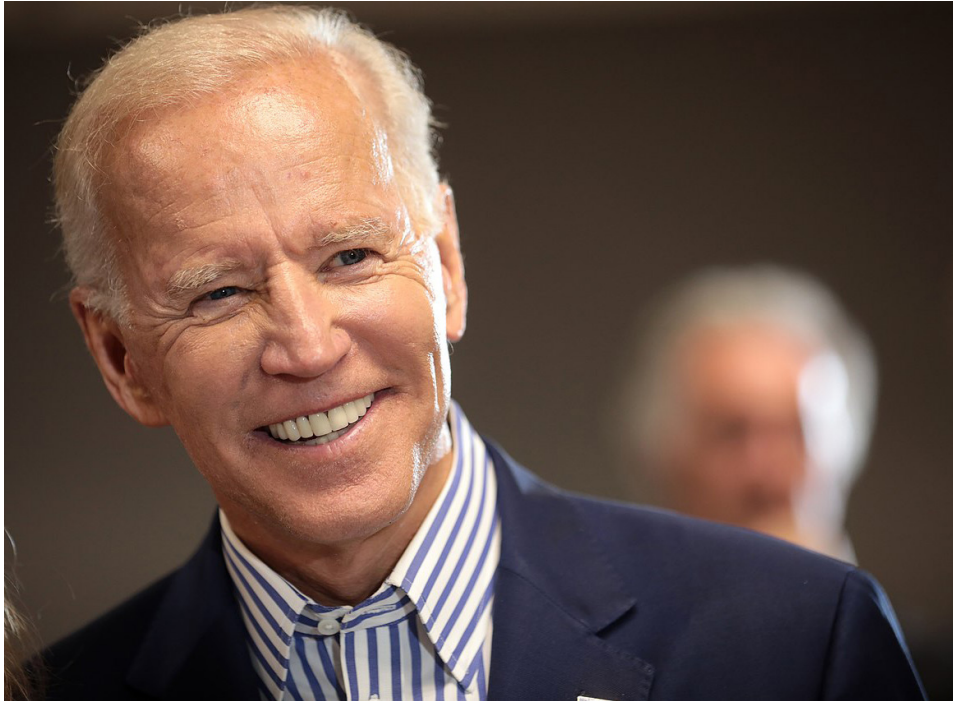
The Biden government is supporting the development and research of a "US Central Bank Digital Currency," or CBDC.

According to NBC NEWS, the action is part of a broad executive order that President Joe Biden is due to sign on Wednesday, authorizing the federal government to investigate potential applications and restrictions for digital assets like cryptocurrency.

Although a digital currency in the United States would not necessarily affect everyday experiences such as buying products or services, economists believe it might impact commercial and central banking, and also government sanctions, banking accessibility, and taxation.

According to a fact sheet provided by the White House, the executive order would direct the administration to explore the technological requirements for a digital currency and push for the Federal Reserve to pursue its study and production.

In January, the Federal Reserve released a white paper on the possibility of establishing a CBDC to supplement existing banking systems. It determined that while a CBDC might make transactions easier and cheaper for consumers, it could also jeopardize the financial system's stability in the United States.



The administration also stated in its fact sheet that it will take efforts to reduce the illicit financing and national security concerns presented by the criminal use of digital assets by focusing an unparalleled focus of concerted response across all key US government agencies.

The United States will not be the 1st country to use digital money. Many other nations have also rolled out and are now creating digital currencies, including China, which has established its own CBDC and has over 140 million consumers who have opened digital "wallets." The Bahamas' Sand Dollar is one of the most popular digital currencies in the world.

The decision by the Biden government, according to David Yermack, a professor and head of the financial department at New York

University, alluded to what he considers is the inevitability of the larger march toward digital currencies.

While the government fact sheet did not go into detail on how a digital currency in the United States could perhaps work, Yermack speculated that the operation could be fairly straightforward, with money transfers flowing straight to and from the Fed, bypassing banking institutions and payment networks and allowing for near-seamless cash flows.

It's a straightforward notion with far-reaching implications. According to Yermack, a widely used digital currency would raise existential problems for banks and other financial firms that facilitate payments.



# U.S. Urges Canada To Use Federal Powers To Remove Truck Blockade

by Reese Furlow

The Biden administration asked Prime Minister Trudeau’s government to utilize federal authorities to ease a truck blockage by Canadians opposing the country’s Covid-19 regulations, which prompted auto factories on both sides of the border to close down or reduce output.

For the fourth day in a row, trucks in the Freedom Convoy shut the Ambassador Bridge, which connects Windsor, Ontario, and Detroit, slowing the movement of car parts and other goods between the two nations.

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, according to the White House, met with their Canadian colleagues and encouraged them to assist in settling the deadlock.

Late Thursday, Trudeau had a virtual meeting with Canada’s opposition leaders and claimed he talked with Windsor’s mayor. On both sides of the border, he claims, it

is wreaking havoc on workers and economies.

Officials in the United States prepared for the prospect of similar truck-borne rallies motivated by the Canadians, and authorities in Belgium and Paris outlawed road blockades to prevent similar disturbances.

In a statement to state and local law enforcement agencies, the US Department of Homeland Security stated it has received allegations that truckers are intending to “possibly block roads in major metropolitan cities” in protest of vaccination mandates and other concerns.

According to a copy of Tuesday’s bulletin acquired by The Associated Press, the convoy may start in Southern California this weekend, potentially affecting traffic around the Super Bowl, and arrive in Washington in March in time for the State of the Union speech.

According to the White House, the agency is “surging additional

staff” to the Super Bowl in case of an emergency.

The Ambassador Bridge is the main U.S.-Canadian border crossing, handling 25% of all traffic between the two nations, and the blockade’s impacts were seen quickly there.

Trudeau has been consistent in his opposition to the repeal of vaccination regulations, including one that requires all truckers entering the country to be fully vaccinated. However, because an estimated 90% of the country’s truckers have already been immunized, some conservatives have urged the prime minister to abandon the mandate, according to NBC NEWS.

The blockade has come at a horrible moment for the car industry in the United States. Because of a global scarcity of computer chips, manufacturers have been forced to temporarily halt manufacturing, new vehicle supplies are already low across the country.



# U.S. Restores Iran Sanctions Waiver

by Eric Gahagan

Two prominent US officials stated Friday that the Biden office has reinstated a sanctions waiver which will allow nations to work with Iran on civil nuclear programs, a measure that arrives as US officials stress that the 2015 Iran nuclear deal is running out of time.

The waiver is not a favor to Iran, according to a key State Department official, nor is it a hint that we are close to reaching an agreement on a shared return to complete adherence to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the nuclear agreement's formal name.

However, the initiative comes as officials engaged in current negotiations in Vienna focused on salvaging the deal — which the US pulled out of in 2018 and after which Iran has been more non-compliant — have reached a point when decisive political decisions are needed. The most recent round of negotiations has been postponed since last Friday.

The waiver reinstatement had been communicated to Capitol Hill, according to a legislative aide.

Companies and countries will be able to continue working on civil nuclear programs at Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant, Tehran Research Reactor and Arak heavy water plant because of the waivers.

Even after withdrawing from the 2015 agreement in 2018,



the Trump administration granted a sanctions waiver for such activity under the 2015 accord, claiming that it served to “preserve oversight of Iran’s civil nuclear program” and “reduce proliferation risks.”

However, then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo indicated in May 2020 that the sanctions waiver will be lifted.

The reinstatement of the waiver, which was originally reported by the Associated Press, was described by a high-ranking State Department official as a restoration to the “status quo.”

Iran has been steadily breaking its pledges under the accord, and US officials have cautioned that due to Iran’s rapid nuclear advancement, there are just weeks left to revert to the pact. Before returning to compliance with the

pact, Tehran has demanded broad sanctions relief.

Iran did not seek for the waiver to be reinstated, according to a senior administration official, and they do not consider it to constitute sanctions relief.

According to CNN, giving waivers to allow civil nuclear collaboration with Iran at a time when Iran is breaking the JCPOA is a strategic blunder, according to Behnam Ben Taleblu of the conservative Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD).

He also stated that the announcement of the waiver is the strongest indication yet that a revived Iran deal is on the way.

# McConnell Calls Jan. 6 A ‘Violent Insurrection’



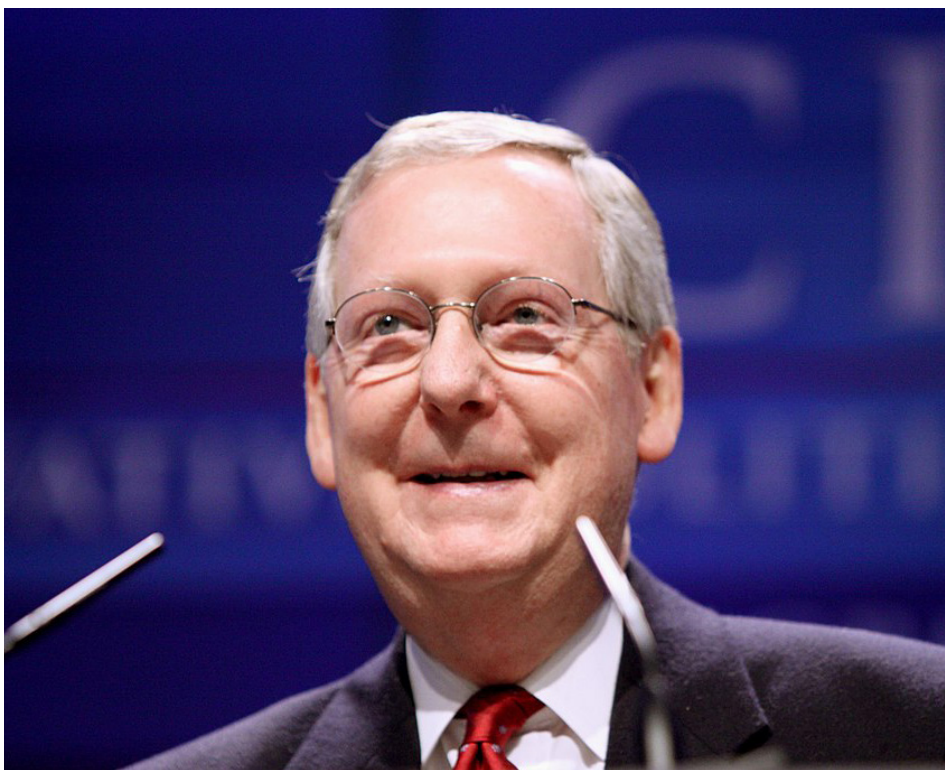
BY CARISSA RICHETTI

Mitch McConnell, the Senate Minority Leader, expressed his displeasure on Tuesday with the Republican National Committee’s recent condemnation of two GOP legislators, as well as its portrayal of the Jan. 6 Capitol incident.

After the RNC approved a resolution Friday accusing Reps. Adam Kinzinger, R-Ill., and Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., of having participated in Democrat-led political persecution of normal citizens involved in legitimate political discourse, a reference to the Jan. 6 committee, his remarks sparked a backlash from Democrats and many Republicans. The only Republicans on the House committee are Kinzinger and Cheney.

McConnell also stated on Tuesday that the RNC should not be in the process of choosing and picking which Republicans should be endorsed, and that the RNC’s mission is to assist all members of the party.

McConnell’s remarks differ from those of House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., who has shied away from concerns about the RNC’s portrayal of Jan. 6. When questioned



about the censure resolution, McCarthy chastised Cheney and Kinzinger.

According to NBC NEWS, the structural split between the 2 Republican lawmakers reveals their opposing tactics for the 2022 midterm election.

McCarthy’s strategy is to stay close to former President Donald Trump, rally core GOP supporters, and depend on conservative optimism to help Republicans reclaim the House majority while relying on Trump’s backing to become Speaker of the House. By making the November poll a reflection on President Joe Biden, McConnell hopes to separate his caucus from some of the extreme wing’s radical undercurrents and attract swing votes.

Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., said of the RNC resolution, “On the substance, I don’t think it was a good idea.”

Other Republicans complained it was a diversion from the GOP’s objective of improving its mid-term electoral prospects.

However, Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., indicated that most Republicans in his state “probably agree” with the RNC’s decision, but he did not specify whether he concurred.

“Listen, whatever you think about the RNC vote, it reflects the view of most Republican voters,” he continued. “In my state, it’s not helpful to have a bunch of D.C. Republicans commenting on the RNC.”

# Ivanka In Talks With Jan. 6 Committee For Voluntary Interview

by The Editor

Ivanka Trump, former President Donald Trump's eldest daughter, is in serious talks with a House panel on January 6 about appearing for a voluntary testimony, according to ABC News. It's the first instance a person of the Trump family has met with a committee without being subpoenaed.

A spokesperson for Trump said in a statement on Wednesday that Ivanka is in talks with the panel about voluntarily appearing for an interview.

On the morning of January 6, 2021, Ivanka Trump was among a small group of advisors with the president within the West Wing as the Capitol was attacked after his address to supporters.

Ivanka's anticipated participa-

tion comes as ABC News earlier revealed that the panel is in active talks with Trump attorney Rudy Giuliani about testifying before the panel for an interview.

The board subpoenaed Giuliani last month, and he was scheduled to testify in early February. That meeting, although, was postponed.

Few members in the former president's close circle have consented to appear before the House panel probing the Capitol attack, which killed 5 people and injured hundreds more, including over 100 law enforcement officers.

The panel is used to "persecute their political opponents," according to Trump, and their requests are "not based on law or reality."

Giuliani and associate Trump attorneys Sidney Powell and Jenna Ellis, strategist Peter Navarro, GOP operatives Andrew Surabian and Arthur Schwartz, and White House speechwriter Ross Worthington have all been subpoenaed by the House panel in recent days.

The panel also wants to talk to Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, a strong confidant of Trump who talked to him the day of the Capitol violence.

Steve Bannon, a longstanding Trump strategist, defied a subpoena to testify before the panel and was prosecuted in November on accusations of criminal contempt of Congress.



# Trump's Tax Firm Says Financial Statements Unreliable

by Athena Nagel

Last week, the Trump Organization was warned by former President Donald Trump's longtime accounting company that it should no longer depend on nearly ten years' worth of financial records and that they will no longer be their accountants, alleging a conflict of interest.

The business also recommended the Trump Organization not to depend on the representations and to tell any beneficiaries of the statements, such as lenders or insurance.

Mazars announced on Monday that it will no longer be Trump's accountant due to a "non-waivable conflict of interest." The only thing left undone,

according to the accounting company, was the submission of Trump and Melania Trump's tax records. It claims they are still looking for information on an apartment for Matthew Calamari Jr., the company's security director, which they have been looking for months but have not received. Donald Bender, Trump's top accountant, appeared before a grand jury probing the Trump Organization last year, according to CNN sources.

The letter was submitted in a court document by the New York attorney general's office, which has been attempting to execute a subpoena for Trump's papers and get his, Donald Trump Jr.'s, and Ivanka Trump's testimony. A court date

has been set for Thursday.

The New York attorney general's office and the Manhattan district attorney's office have been looking into Trump's financial records to see if any insurers, lenders, or others were misleading. Trump has previously stated in depositions in civil inquiries that he would provide his judgment on the worth of specific properties, and that the final amount was "predominantly" chosen by Trump Organization chief financial officer Allen Weisselberg.

Mazars created the financial accounts and included a 2-page preamble stating that Trump was liable for assessments, but that they did not follow US accounting regulations in many areas.

The New York attorney general's office claimed last month that it had discovered "significant evidence" alleging that the Trump Organization was using fraudulent or misleading equity valuations to acquire a host of economic advantages, such as loans, tax deductions and insurance coverage in a lengthy court filing. They claimed there were multiple "misleading statements and omissions" in the financial statements.



# Jason Smith To Forgo Senate Bid

by Christina Levandowski



Rep. Jason Smith, R-Mo., has told colleagues that he intends to become the next chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, which would require him to forgo a crowded GOP primary for a unique available Senate seat.

Smith, the ranking Republican on the Budget Committee, is set to announce his candidacy for a sixth term serving his southeastern Missouri House district in a video on Wednesday.

According to NBC NEWS, Smith's choice will put him against two other senior GOP members of the Ways and Means Committee, Adrian Smith of Nebraska and Vern Buchanan of Florida, who are already fighting for the chairmanship of Republicans retake the House in November's midterm elections.

One of the most influential and valued positions in Congress is the chairmanship of the Ways and Means Committee. All taxes, tariffs, and trade concerns, as well as Social Security, Medicare, and welfare programs are under the committee's authority.

A tight contest to lead the committee is forming as a result of two important departures from the House.

Kevin Brady of Texas, the senior Republican on Ways and Means, is retiring after 13 stints on the committee. He headed the committee throughout the passage of the 2017 tax reform law. Devin Nunes, R-Calif., the legislator widely expected to follow him, quit Congress into becoming CEO of former

President Donald Trump's new media venture.

The Steering Committee, directed by Republican member Kevin McCarthy of California, selects Republican committee members. Smith claims to have talked with a large number of participants of the Steering Committee.

Jason Smith has been considering a run to succeed retiring Sen. Roy Blunt, R-Mo., for the last year, even recruiting former Trump campaign advisor Bill Stepien as a consultant. However, at least a half-dozen Republicans have entered the Senate campaign, including two of Smith's House colleagues, Billy Long and Vicky Hartzler, as well as former Gov. Eric Greitens and state Attorney General Eric Schmitt.

Smith would have been taking a risk by entering a field with so many high-profile competitors. Instead, he'll have a far better chance in the House, where Republicans are expected to flip at least 5 seats and retake control.

Since January 2021, Smith, 41, has served as the leading Republican on the Budget Committee, having previously served on the GOP leadership team. Even if Ryan loses the Ways and Means contest, he'll almost certainly have the inside track on the top Republican spot on the Budget Committee.



# Doug Jones To Guide Supreme Court Nominee

by The Editor

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 Republican, 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.

# America COMPETES Act Is Passed By The House

by Transatlantic Today



In an effort to counter China's expanding economic dominance, the House enacted comprehensive measures on Friday that will spend billions of dollars in American industry and scientific research.

The bill was supported 222-210 on a party-line vote.

Rep. Stephanie Murphy, a Democrat, voted against the bill, citing "problematic, poorly-vetted elements" referring to trade in a statement.

Rep. Adam Kinzinger, a Republican, was the lone Republican who voted "yes" with Democrats.

The law was passed nearly 8 months following the Senate passing its own version of the bill last year. According to ABC NEWS, the two chambers will now meet in the session over the bill to integrate the legislation into a single final language which must clear both

chambers once again before reaching President Joe Biden's desk.

The America COMPETES Act will ensure that America is the world leader in innovation, economic strength and manufacturing that can out-compete any country, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi remarked ahead of the vote on Friday.

House leaders are pushing for quick action on the negotiating process, saying their objective is to deliver it to Biden as early as possible so he may celebrate the victory during his State of the Union speech on March 1st.

The House bill proposes to spend \$52 billion over five years to fund semiconductor research, manufacture, and design. This initiative comes amid a global scarcity of semiconductors, often known as chips, which are required for the

manufacturing of automobiles, smartphones, and medical devices.

Biden also stated that this bill intends to reduce the fiscal burden of economic inflation, which many Americans are suffering due to rising food and gas prices.

The plan also allocates \$45 billion in loans and grants over the next six years to address supply chain challenges.

The bill also contains a number of clauses aimed at putting diplomatic pressure on China's leadership over its violations of human rights against Uyghurs in the Xinjiang region.

While Republicans have also been overwhelmingly supportive of the bill in recent times, House Republican officials urged members to vote no on Friday, claiming that the bill is "extremely weak" on China.



# DeSantis Expressed His Support For The 'Don't Say Gay' Bill

by Christina Levandowski

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis spoke on Monday in support of a controversial legislation that would prohibit certain school discussions about gender identity and sexual orientation.

DeSantis, a Republican, said that it was “very wrong” for educators and school officials to discuss gender identification with students, adding that in certain schools, students are advised, “Don’t worry, don’t pick your gender yet.” “I don’t think it’s happening here in large numbers.” DeSantis conceded.

It’s the first instance DeSantis has publicly expressed support for a bill introduced by state Republican legislators to prohibit certain conversations about gender identity and sexual orientation in schools. When asked about the measure on Monday, DeSantis didn’t specify whether he would sign it if it reached his desk, but his comments looked to clearly indicate he is in favor.

Despite significant criticism from Democrats and LGBTQ organizations, the bill is gaining traction in the Florida Assembly and will be discussed at the Senate Education Committee meeting on Tuesday. According to CNN, a House version of the bill earned a favorable vote from the Education Committee in January.



Opponents of the measure claim that it will further stigmatize homosexual, lesbian, and transgender youth, leading to increased harassment and suicides in an already marginalized group. According to them, the law would remove LGBTQ history from the syllabus and ban teachers from having dialogues with their students about gender identity and sexual orientation.

The bill’s supporters argue that the moratorium is aimed at school districts and that it will not preclude schools from having those discussions if they arise. It would also bar same-sex parents from engaging in classroom activities and teachers from supporting gay

lesbian alliance organizations, according to the authors.

Parents will be able to challenge public schools if they suspect a violation under the bill.

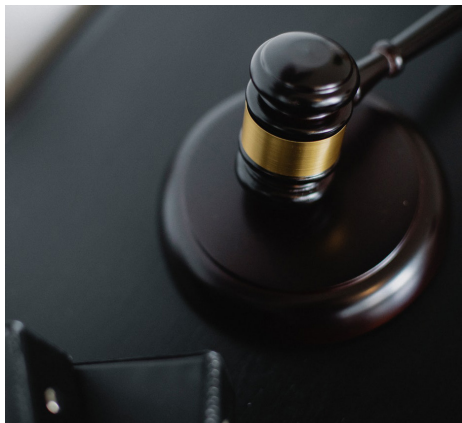
The language addressing gender identity and sexual orientation is part of a bigger bill aimed at keeping parents up to date on their children’s school activities.

The law would prohibit schools from enacting policies that would allow school officials to withhold information concerning a child’s emotional, mental or physical health.

The purpose, according to DeSantis, is to create transparency.

# Dual Citizen Charged With Acting As Illegal Russian Agent In U.S.

by The Editor



Federal prosecutors charged a dual Russian-U.S. national with operating unlawfully as a Russian state operative in the U.S. on Tuesday.

According to the documents filed in federal court of New York, Elena Branson, also known as Elena Chernykh, was accused of operating as an illegal Russian operative for over a decade. She was alleged of attempting to sway US government officials in support of Russian policy positions.

According to the documents, Branson is accused of directly speaking with then-Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, demanding administrative aid so she could host events at the embassy in Washington, D.C. and the consulate in New York.

According to NBC NEWS, she allegedly managed to help propagate Russian goals by coordinating an attempt in April 2016 to approach republican candidate Donald Trump in order to invite him to an annual event known as Russia Forum New York or, if yet he still

could not really make it, to get one of his grown children to attend.

Branson, 61, is also alleged of trying to get Trump to attend the 2016 World Chess Championship, which was held at New York's South Street Seaport. She reportedly approached a Trump associate on Nov. 10, 2016, and requested that Trump, who had been then the president-elect, participate in the event. The FBI officially released photographs from the event to verify whether Dmitry Peskov, Putin's press secretary, was actually present, according to the court filing. Trump was not present, according to the evidence.

According to the court petition, Branson, who was actually born in the USSR before moving to the United States in 1991, had become a US citizen in 1999. She is said to have informed a high-ranking official of a Russia-based think tank that the center's aims were to combat anti-Russian feelings in the U.S., according to the complaint. She founded the Russian Center New York with the support of the Russian government.

According to the lawsuit, Branson was active in several efforts to connect with New York state legislators and New York City authorities, and she is also accused of lobbying Hawaiian officials to keep a fort in Kauai's Russian name.

According to the FBI's court filing, she communicated directly with Russian government officers on various occasions, including

ambassadors in the United States, and she also took part in a strategy to submit relevant data to the US State Department in assistance of visa applications for Moscow officials and their colleagues that she knew comprised materially false and misleading statements.

During September 2020, the FBI questioned Branson and searched her house, finding 34 electronic devices, including 11 smart phones, as per the court filing.

According to lawyers, Branson traveled to Russia one month afterwards but has yet to return to the US. She is still on the loose.

Prosecutors also alleged that Branson came on Russian television in October for a chat with Maria Butina, who was convicted in 2018 of functioning as an illegal operative of a foreign government in a case probed by then-special counsel Robert Mueller.

According to the court document, Branson informed Butina that she departed the United States following the FBI interrogation because she believed she would be imprisoned if she stayed.

Butina attempted to ingratiate herself into the National Rifle Association, according to court records, and she also engaged in contact to the Trump campaign. She was immediately deported after serving her prison term and was appointed to the Russian assembly, the Duma, last year.

# One Killed, Five Injured In Oregon Shooting

by The Editor



An armed man approached demonstrators outside his house in Portland, Oregon, on Saturday, killing one person and injuring five others.

Police claimed some of the protesters were armed, but they didn't say if the gunfire was exchanged on both sides of the fight.

NBC NEWS reported that protesters assembled at the city's Normandale Park around 8 p.m. to protest the officer-involved shooting of Amir Locke in Minneapolis amid a "no-knock" warrant operation in early February.

Responding officers discovered a dead girl or woman shortly after the shooting erupted, according to police. The Portland Police Bureau stated in a statement Sunday that 2 men and 3 women were rushed to hospitals in uncertain conditions.

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler stated in a statement on Sunday that the community's combined sadness and anger over the shooting reinforces his determination to do everything he can to prevent the gun crime that is wreaking havoc on the city.

Witnesses haven't stepped forward, police claim, despite the fact that the violence occurred during a rally against police brutality.

Many of the Black and progressive groups have long chastised Portland police for what they perceive to be discriminatory policing. Last year, the American Civil Liberties Union said that Black individuals are heavily represented in police killings and that cops arbitrarily arrest political left-wing activists.

After a majority of police critics were taken into custody during the demonstration, the organization

said in a declaration that the police bureau has long been used exclusively against liberal and left-wing demonstrators, continuous with their prejudices as mirrored in their lack of policing towards hateful and violent far-right organizations and militias.

"While we need more information about what transpired," Police Commissioner Jo Anne Hardesty posted on twitter Sunday after the nighttime shooting, "I can say that protesting for racial justice should never endanger those exercising their first amendment rights."

In a statement issued Sunday, Multnomah County District Attorney Mike Schmidt stated that he will thoroughly evaluate the evidence and facts and prosecute everyone involved in the violence.

# Philly Officer Who Fatally Shot 12-Year-Old Kid To Be Fired

by Christina Levandowski

Authorities announced Tuesday that a Philadelphia law enforcement officer who shot dead a 12-year-old child after the youngster reportedly shot into an undercover police vehicle and left the scene will be fired.

The policeman will be terminated for 30 days, beginning Friday, before being fired for breaking the department's "use-of-force directive," according to Police Commissioner Danielle Outlaw.

According to authorities, the cop was among 4 undercover police officers in an undercover car doing reconnaissance in South Philadel-

phia slightly before 7:30 p.m. on March 1 when he was shot.

According to Outlaw, the officials approached 2 minors with the vehicle's emergency lights on: a 17-year-old kid who they intended to question and a 12-year-old youngster.

According to investigators, the younger youngster shot at the automobile, hitting the passenger side rear glass. According to authorities, one of the cops was wounded in the eye by glass as a bullet passed through the window of the car.



Two more cops returned fire, each firing once, before the guy escaped on foot with the gun, according to Outlaw. According to her, a cop pursued the youngster and fired his weapon twice, hitting him in the back.

Authorities named the 12-year-old child as Thomas Siderio, who was declared dead at a local hospital, according to police.

The agency has not identified the 4 officers because of security concerns, according to the commissioner.

Following the incident, the cops were assigned to administrative duties, according to authorities. Due to the continuing investigation, the department had no more information on the fate of the remaining officers on Tuesday.

Following the incident, the 17-year-old was arrested. According to Outlaw, he was later freed and not prosecuted.

The incident is the subject of a criminal investigation by the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office. At this time, no allegations have been brought.

On Thursday, Siderio's family launched a civil suit against the 4 policemen involved in the killing, their lawyer, Conor Corcoran told ABC NEWS.

He agreed that the commissioner was right in discharging the officer in issue, but he denied that the youngster was armed.



# National Guard To Assist Ahead Of Possible DC Trucker Protests

by The Editor



Several National Guard personnel will be mobilized in Washington, D.C. to assist police with traffic control in the event of anticipated demonstrations as President Joe Biden prepares to make his State of the Union address, according to government authorities.

Secretary Of Defense Lloyd Austin granted the pleas to assist with traffic management for “First Amendment demonstrations” scheduled in the following days, according to the National Guard.

Approximately 400 troops will come from Washington, D.C. According to the National Guard, up to 300 people from outside of the capital will join.

The help was sought by Washington D.C. Metropolitan Police Department the previous week, according to the statement. The United States Capitol Police also requested assistance on Monday.

The troops from Washington, D.C., comprising 50 heavy tactical vehicles, will offer command – and – control assistance and other support. They will also not be weaponized, and they will not assist in surveillance or police forces, according to the statement.

According to the statement, troops from outside of the city will be ready to help at Capitol access points and traffic checkpoints.

According to NBC NEWS, the news comes after police in Canada suppressed a weeks-long “Freedom Convoy” demonstration in Ottawa opposing Covid-19 regulations and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s government.

QAnon followers, a combination of pro-Trump groups, and anti-vaccine activists have attempted to orchestrate similar protests in the United States, notably at the Super Bowl earlier this month in Los An-

geles. Although the attempt failed, officials are prepared for Biden’s address on March 1.

Last week, the Secret Service and the United States Capitol Police revealed that they were developing a security strategy. The reinstallation of a barrier that had persisted outside the Capitol building for months following the January 6 riot was one of the possible alternatives under discussion.

Several truck convoys with various routes, starting sites, and departure dates have been coordinated through internet forums. Some are expected to arrive in time for President Obama’s State of the Union speech, while others may come later.

The operations are set to commence on Saturday and might go through Monday.

# Gunshots Killed Migrant In Border Patrol Encounter

by Danielle Campbell

Officials reported Tuesday that an autopsy revealed a migrant died from numerous gunshots over the weekend after allegedly getting shot by Border Patrol officers in southern Arizona.

The official cause of death was confirmed by the Pima County Medical Examiner, but no further information will be available until the full examination report is completed. When that will happen is uncertain.

According to ABC NEWS, the shooting took place around 10 p.m. Saturday in mountainous terrain about 30 miles (48 km) northeast of the neighboring town of Douglas during an encounter among a Border Patrol officer and some migrants who had been in the United States illegally, according to the Cochise County Sheriff's Office. Several migrants were apprehended in the same location near Skeleton Canyon by officials.

The Office of Professional Responsibility of Customs and Border Protection, which oversees internal inquiries, is alleged to be participating in the probe, according to the sheriff's office.

New CBP Commissioner Chris Magnus, who was appointed early this year after acting as Tucson police chief, has a slew of hurdles, including use-of-force complaints.

In recent years, officers have been implicated in a growing number of use-of-force situations. CBP documented an estimated 50 use-of-force occurrences per month through Donald Trump's last 28

months in office. Under President Joe Biden, the number of occurrences rose by 20% to a monthly average of 70.

There have also been more Border Patrol official deaths, despite the fact that the number of confrontations with migrants has increased even more rapidly.

In 2021, over 60 Border Patrol interactions ended in fatalities, three times the number in 2019 and 4 times the decade's average. Car pursuits that resulted in deaths increased from 2 in 2019 to twenty-three in 2021.

The sheriff's office said only on Tuesday that the

autopsy of the adult migrant who was killed over the weekend had been completed and that investigators were working on identifying him.

Since an early Tweet claiming that officers were responding to a complaint of a person being gravely hurt, CBP has revealed nothing regarding the incident.

The Mexican Embassy is collaborating with sheriff's officers to locate the migrant and alert his or her family. The embassy in Douglas did not respond to an email requesting further information on Tuesday afternoon.



# Flores Hired As Assistant Coach For Steelers

by The Editor

Brian Flores, the former coach of the Miami Dolphins who is currently suing the NFL over allegations of discrimination, has landed a new position with a new club.

Flores will be the senior defensive assistant/linebackers coach for the Pittsburgh Steelers coming season, the team announced on Saturday.

Steelers coach Mike Tomlin said, “Brian’s career speaks on its own, and we look forward to him lending his experience to help our team.”

Flores’ lawyers, John Elefterakis of EEP Law and Douglas H. Wigdor of Wigdor LLP, stated in an announcement on Saturday that their client’s lawsuit against the NFL will go on.

Flores’ lawsuit alleges that the NFL has discriminated against Black coaches seeking a head coaching position, citing an in-

stance in which he was granted an interview for a head coaching position with the New York Giants, according to ABC NEWS.

After back-to-back successful seasons with the Dolphins, the 40-year-old was dismissed last month and was meeting with other clubs.

Flores claimed he contacted his mentor, Bill Belichick of the New England Patriots, about the forthcoming encounter.

According to copies of the conversations contained in the complaint, Belichick reportedly texted Flores before the meeting to congratulate him on being hired by the Giants.

According to the screengrabs, Belichick later responded back, signaling that he’d made an error and that Buffalo Bills offensive coordinator Brian Daboll would be hired instead – 3 days prior to

Flores’ interview.

Flores’ charges were “without merit,” according to the league, which denied any misconduct.

Despite the reality that Black athletes comprise 70% of the NFL, Flores told ABC News earlier in the month that the League’s answer was a “slap in the face” since there was just one Black head coach at the time, the Steelers’ Tomlin.

Since Flores’ lawsuit, the Houston Texans appointed Lovie Smith, the league’s 2nd Black coach. Mike McDaniel, the Dolphins’ replacement for Flores, has said that he is biracial.

The NFL announced this week that it has engaged Loretta Lynch, the 1st Black female attorney general in the United States, to assist it in defending itself against the lawsuit.



# 6-Year-Old Girl Missing Since 2019 Found Alive

by The Editor



Paislee Shultis, a six-year-old girl who disappeared in 2019, spent hours Monday hiding in a dark and tiny hole beneath a stairway until authorities smashed it apart and found her.

After receiving a lead, police conducted a search warrant at the property of Kirk Shultis Senior., 57, the girl's paternal grandparent, on Monday night.

Shultis was with his son, Kirk Shultis Jr. 32, who denies knowing Paislee's location, despite the fact that detectives discovered a bedroom with Paislee's name scribbled on the wall and a mattress that seemed to have been recently slept in, according to Sinagra.

Ever since the girl disappeared in July 2019 in Spencer, roughly 3 hours away from Saugerties, he claimed police had visited the same residence many times.

Officials in the modest upstate New York city had received infor-

mation for more than 2 years that a young kid was with her birth parents there, despite the fact that they had lost custody in 2019.

Sinagra bemoaned the fact that cops are frequently misled.

According to Sinagra of NBC station WNYT of Albany, authorities were on the verge of calling off the search on Monday after concluding that Paislee was most likely not inside.

Detective Erik Thiele put a torch through the wooden floorboards after seeing something peculiar about a stairway to the cellar, Sinagra claimed and discovered what seemed to be a blanket.

Kimberly Cooper, Paislee's birth mother, was also found under the stairs, Sinagra claimed and had an arrest warrant out of Ulster County.

Paislee was first terrified, but Sinagra claimed she changed her mind after a detective brought her a happy meal. Sinagra claimed the

small child remained happy when she was reunited with her legal guardian and teen sister.

There were no signs of sexual or physical abuse, but authorities discovered she couldn't read or write, according to Sinagra.

Paislee's biological parents, according to Sinagra, will require social welfare assistance in the future.

Kirk Shultis Sr.57, and Shultis Jr., Paislee's grandfather and father, were charged with the offense of parental kidnapping in the 1st degree and misdemeanor risking the child's welfare, according to police. According to authorities, they were freed on their own recognizance.

Cooper was booked with misdemeanor threatening the welfare of a child and second-degree parental kidnapping. According to authorities, she was remanded in detention for the arrest warrant issued by Ulster County.



# US Stock Market Rise After S&P 500 Closed In Correction

by Athena Nagel

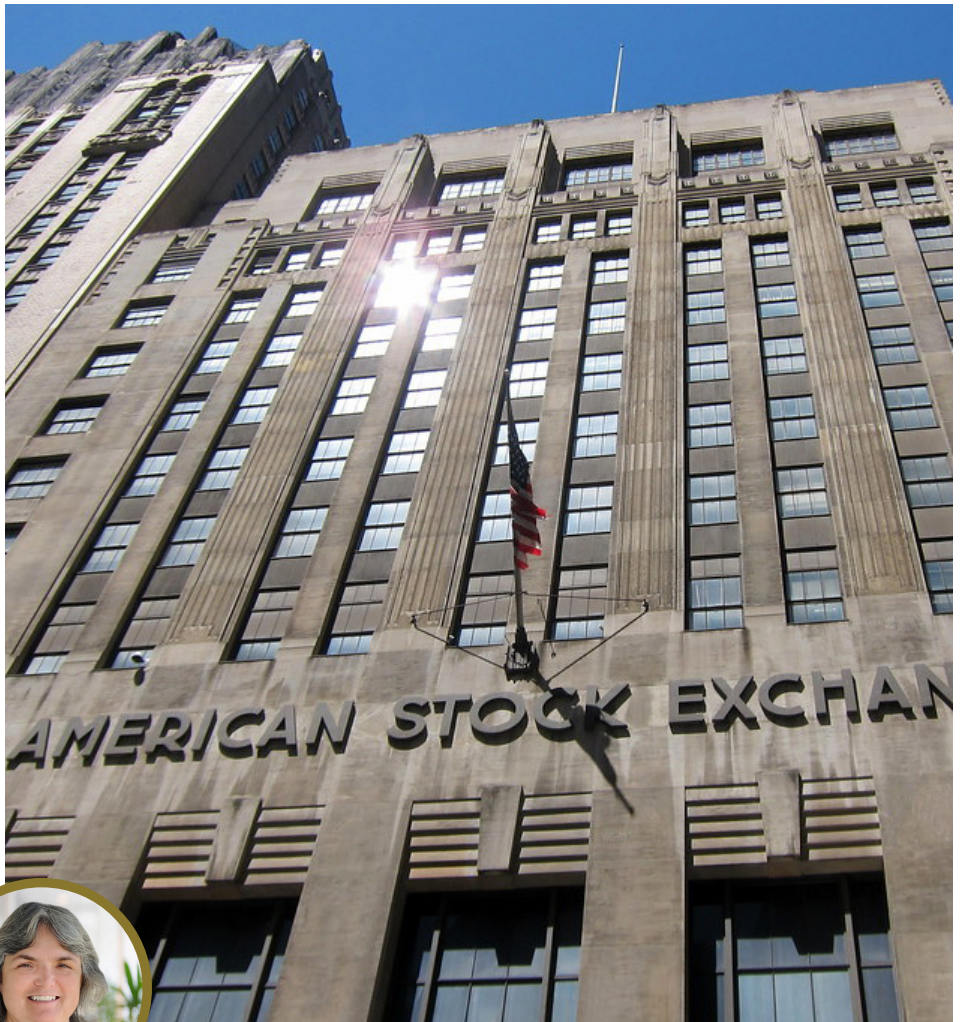
After the S&P 500 ended in correction territory following growing tensions between Ukraine and Russia, U.S. stock market prices were up in early morning trade Wednesday.

The Dow Jones Industrial Standard futures contract gained 242 points. The S&P 500 futures increased by 0.87 percent, while the Nasdaq 100 futures increased by 1.16 percent.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 483 points, or 1.42 percent, in normal trade Tuesday, marking the fourth consecutive down session. The 30-stock index had dropped over 700 points at one time. The S&P 500 index fell 1.01 percent and is currently 10.25 percent below its record closing on January 3, placing it in correction territory. For the 4th consecutive session, the Nasdaq Composite fell 1.23 percent.

President Joe Biden unveiled the first round of sanctions on Russia Tuesday afternoon. According to CNBC, the sanctions are aimed at Russian banks, the country's sovereign debt, and 3 elite individuals.

On Tuesday, all 11 S&P 500 sectors dropped, with consumer discretionary shares leading the way with a 3% drop. Despite an increase in oil prices, energy shares fell. Brent crude rose as high as \$99.50 a barrel on the international market. The US oil benchmark, West Texas Intermediate crude futures, reached a session peak of \$96, the highest level since August 2014.



According to Oanda's Ed Moya, the contagion threat would entirely flow into rising inflation as energy costs increase, derailing huge sections of the improving economy emerging from Covid.

He said that geopolitical uncertainties may lead to a delayed growth cycle, which would exclude the possibility of a half-point federal funds rate rise at the March 16th FOMC meeting.

According to the CME Group's FedWatch program, Wall Street believes there is a 100 percent pos-

sibility of a rate rise at the Federal Reserve's March meeting. With prices on the rise, arguments for a 50-basis-point boost at the March session were growing louder.

As conflicts among Russia and Ukraine escalate, rates have fallen, with the standard 10-year Treasury yield dropping below 2% as traders seek safe-haven assets.

According to statistics from FactSet, 78 percent of S&P 500 businesses that have reported have above profits predictions, while 78 percent have surpassed sales expectations as of Friday.

# Facebook, Twitter Removes Accounts Boosting Russian Propaganda

by The Editor

Twitter and Facebook claimed they removed 2 anti-Ukrainian “covert influence operations” during the weekend, one linked to Moscow and another to Belarus.

One of the programs, a propaganda campaign including a website promoting anti-Ukraine discussion points, was a spin-off of a notorious Russian propaganda operation. A Facebook official stated the company employed computer-generated identities on numerous platforms, such as Instagram, to boost the legitimacy of fictional columnists.

According to NBC NEWS, the other campaign exploited stolen accounts to spread identical anti-Ukraine material and was linked to a recognized Belarusian hacker gang.

Russia is anticipated to continue to find ways to distort perceptions regarding Ukraine, according to propaganda analysts, particularly surrounding Russian President Vladimir Putin’s statements.

Twitter and Facebook took down networks that promoted storylines that Putin himself highlighted in his speech declaring a military campaign that has now grown into a large-scale attack.

The news also shows that Russia is still employing propaganda tactics initially uncovered during the 2016 election, but with certain improvements, including the use of computer software that can generate realistic and unique human faces.



According to Nathaniel Gleicher, Meta’s chief of security policy, the greater of the 2 propaganda groups operating in Russia, and the Russian-dominated Crimea and Donbas territories of Ukraine, and it is linked to the online platforms News Front and South Front, which the US administration has identified as part of a wider propaganda effort with ties to Russian intelligence.

The websites carried articles such as “Why Ukraine will only get worse” and “Zelensky is building a neo-Nazi dictatorship in Ukraine,” which pushed Russian talking points. The bios and computer-generated identities of the columnists were still shown on the websites as of Sunday night, with links to their profiles

on VKontakte, Russia’s Facebook counterpart.

The profiles were a minor component of a broader persona-building effort that expanded throughout Russian social networking sites, Telegram, Twitter, and Instagram, according to Facebook, which removed 40 profiles linked to the propaganda campaign.

On Sunday night, accounts linked to the sites were still live on Russian social media platforms such as Instagram and Telegram. YouTube has declined to comment on the matter.

More than a dozen accounts linked to the South Front and News Front Russian operations were banned from Twitter for spreading

links to a new disinformation site named Ukraine Today.

It permanently terminated well over a dozen profiles on Feb. 27 and prohibited the sharing of many links for violating the platform's spam and manipulation policies. The investigation is still underway, but preliminary findings suggest that the links and profiles originated in Russia and were intended to disrupt public discussion about the current crisis in Ukraine, according to a Twitter spokesperson.

Facebook claimed it deleted a different multipronged misinformation effort targeting Ukrainians run by a recognized hacker gang located in Belarus. According to the firm, it hacked social media profiles to distribute pro-Russian misinformation.

The hackers used hijacked email account credentials to login into the Facebook profiles of local government officials, journalists, and army personnel in Ukraine. The hacked profiles would then broadcast a video of a Ukrainian holding

a white surrender flag, which they claimed was a fake.

The hacker organization Ghostwriter was blamed by Facebook for the attempts, which has previously exploited hijacked accounts to spread disinformation in support of the Belarus government. According to cybersecurity firm Mandiant, the Ghostwriter hacking gang operates for the Belarus government.

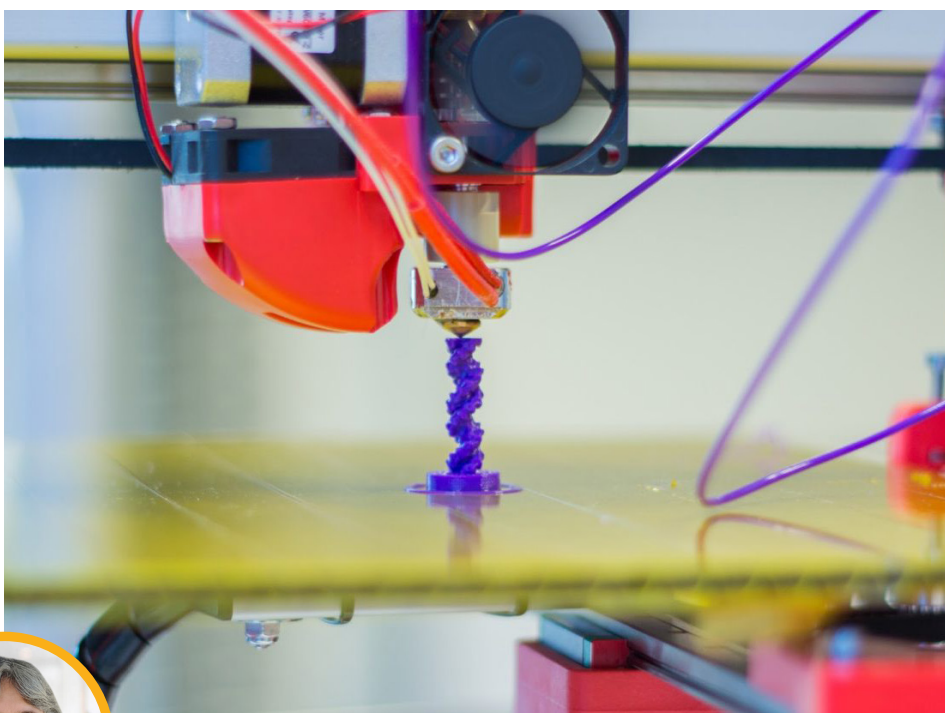
## Navy Is Turning To 3D Printing For Submarine Parts

by Athena Nagel

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 occurrences, 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 cy-

ber 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.

## Defense Industrial Base Down To Failing Grade Due To COVID by Danielle Campbell



As the ongoing COVID epidemic continues to upend the defense industrial foundation, the National Defense Industrial Association has given it an overall failing grade for the very first time ever.

NDIA assigned the industrial base a 69 out of 100 health and preparedness score in its 3rd annual Vital Signs assessment, which it considers an unacceptable and failing grade and "cause for real concern."

NDIA, which collaborated on the

research with decision science firm Govini, assigns a score to each category on a scale of 100 points, with scores below 70 considered poor. According to Defense News, the group focused the majority of their research on statistical data from 2020, the first year of the pandemic and before immunizations were implemented, therefore some of the findings are lagging indicators.

The supply chain and organizations' manufacturing capacity and ability to surge if required, two of the eight essential areas used by NDIA to assess the defense in-

dustry's health, have worsened dramatically, "almost certainly" as a result of the pandemic's effects, according to NDIA. In 2021, three other areas — production inputs, innovation, and industrial security — also earned poor grades, but industrial security and production inputs both improved slightly over the previous two years.

And, if the epidemic continues, it is critical for the country to work out how to address these issues, according to the association. The NDIA, on the other hand, stated that the study did not include policy recommendations, support for particular legislative or regulatory reforms, or a request for investments.

In a Wednesday morning news conference, Govini CEO Tara Murphy Dougherty said that if the military sector can't recruit the most innovative businesses, it might become a national security risk — especially because China's government is significantly investing in developing technology.



systems integrators, manufacturers, technology businesses, service providers, research institutions, labs, and other suppliers around the United States that help supply the military in some form make up the defense industrial base. The conclusions of the NDIA were

not intended to evaluate the firms themselves, but rather the environment in which they operate, according to the organization.

A survey conducted by the NDIA in August received over 400 responses. 71% said the epidemic has harmed their business somewhat

or significantly, and 14% don't feel their company would ever recover.

Pandemic-related aid appears to have dried up as well, with 63% stating that they have not received any financial support from any source since December 2020.

## US Advises Americans In Belarus To Evacuate

by The Editor

The State Department has issued a new warning to American citizens in Belarus, where thousands of Russian soldiers have gathered for dangerous military drills, encouraging them to leave "immediately."

The grim new warning comes as US authorities anticipate a possible Russian strike on neighboring Ukraine in the coming days, causing the State Department to close its embassy in Kyiv and shift its staff to Lviv in western Ukraine.

Belarus and Russia began military drills on Thursday, deploying tens of thousands of Russian troops, as well as modern weaponry and equipment, to the landlocked nation that shares borders with both Russia and Ukraine. Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko, the country's strongman leader, has grown closer to Russian President Vladimir Putin as a result of clamping down on political opponents, fomenting a migrant problem in Europe, and facing heavy Western sanctions, according to ABC NEWS.

Because of the internal crack-down and the potential of "arbitrary enforcement of laws" and incarceration, as well as COVID-19, the State Department had already advised American citizens to "do



not travel to Belarus."

However, a fresh alert issued Monday evening included a warning about Russia's extraordinary and worrying military expansion along Belarus' border with Ukraine and advised US nationals in Belarus to leave immediately by private or commercial means.

The American embassy in Minsk, the capital of Belarus, had earlier ordered the exit of members of the family on January 31, with a very limited team of U.S. diplomats still in the country.

The State Department is also advising Americans to "depart immediately" from Transnistria, which is actually part of Moldova, a landlocked nation on Ukraine's southwestern border.

The urgent warning is limited to Transnistria, an unrecognized breakaway area where Russia has

stationed soldiers as "peacekeepers" against Moldova's will, similar to Russian forces stationed in two disputed parts of Georgia, the fairly small former Soviet republic.

During the present conflict, US officials, notably Secretary of State Antony Blinken, have regularly highlighted Transnistria, along with Georgia and Ukraine, as another example of Russia's aggressiveness in the area in recent years.

Last month, Ukrainian authorities went even further. Its defense intelligence agency claimed it had proof that Russia was plotting a false flag provocation upon its own soldiers in Transnistria in order to justify an invasion of Ukraine, a charge disputed by the Russian government.

With the memories of Afghanistan looming over them, the Biden administration has stated that the US military would not be used to

assist in the evacuation of American civilians if conflict breaks out in the region. That historic, chaotic operation eventually evacuated 124,000 people, but the State De-

partment has stated that it did not set a precedent.

Instead, the US has issued increasingly urgent warnings to in-

dividual Americans in Ukraine, Belarus, and now Transnistria, urging them to evacuate while commercial flights and land border crossings are still accessible.

## Russian Troops Moved To Firing Positions Near Ukraine by Kathy Malouf

While Russia's defense ministry stated Tuesday that some personnel will retreat from Ukraine's borders after finishing military exercises, President Joe Biden said in a speech to the country that the US had yet to witness that.

Russian forces, on the other hand, are advancing closer to the frontline, reportedly with medical supplies, and are being placed in shooting positions, sources told ABC News.

According to the sources, the US believes Russia now has all of the essential components in place, notably 150,000 troops in the entire region, to conduct a rapid and violent invasion of Ukraine, which is why Biden administration officers have openly stated that Russia may act "at any time."

According to ABC News, Russian President Vladimir Putin has directed his armed troops to be prepared to go by February 16, although it is uncertain whether he has decided to launch an attack on his neighbor.

The Russian administration has rejected any preparations to attack Ukraine and has blamed the United States of "hysteria" for issuing these increasingly urgent threats.

According to the sources, the US claims an invasion would start with cyberwarfare and airstrikes against



key infrastructure, followed by special forces units entering Kyiv to dismember the Ukrainian government and resupply troops approaching from Belarus, with plans to finish their operations in 24 to 72 hours.

Biden stated that Russian forces "remain very much in a threatening position" during his speech Tuesday, stressing that an attack is still "distinctly possible" and would result in an "enormous" number of casualties.

However, Biden stated that the US would welcome Russia withdrawing its soldiers and participating in diplomatic negotiations with the US and NATO on matters such as weapons control and military drill transparency.

While Lavrov stated that Russia's answer to those ideas will be sent

in the coming days, Putin stated that Russia's major demands were being disregarded, including the exclusion of Ukraine from NATO and the withdrawal of NATO soldiers from Eastern European union member states.

These are nonstarters, according to the US and NATO, matters that can only be decided by the alliance or individual members, not by Russian coercion.

Biden and Putin spoke for the first time in over a month on Saturday, and their senior diplomats, Antony Blinken and Sergey Lavrov have spoken thrice in recent days. While both parties have stated that the door to further negotiation remains open, there are worries that Russia may resort to war while negotiating.

# US Intensifies Information Warfare Against Russia

by Christina Levandowski

Rather than believing that the Ukraine crisis is receding, the US is intensifying its information warfare effort against Moscow, bringing the world on red alert for a military invasion of Ukraine.

The Biden administration, in order to keep a strain on Russian President Vladimir Putin and keep its allies together, has firmly rejected what it considers to be Moscow's disinformation and warned that the problem is only getting worse. Despite the Kremlin's assurances that some soldiers had retreated to base in statements regarded as an opportunity for negotiation, a senior official revealed Wednesday evening that Russia had mobilized additional 7,000 troops near the Ukrainian frontier in recent days.

The fresh US charges were the latest effort in a very unconventional publicity campaign based

on declassified information aimed at depriving Putin of the surprise factor he enjoys as a result of his mastery of deception tactics.

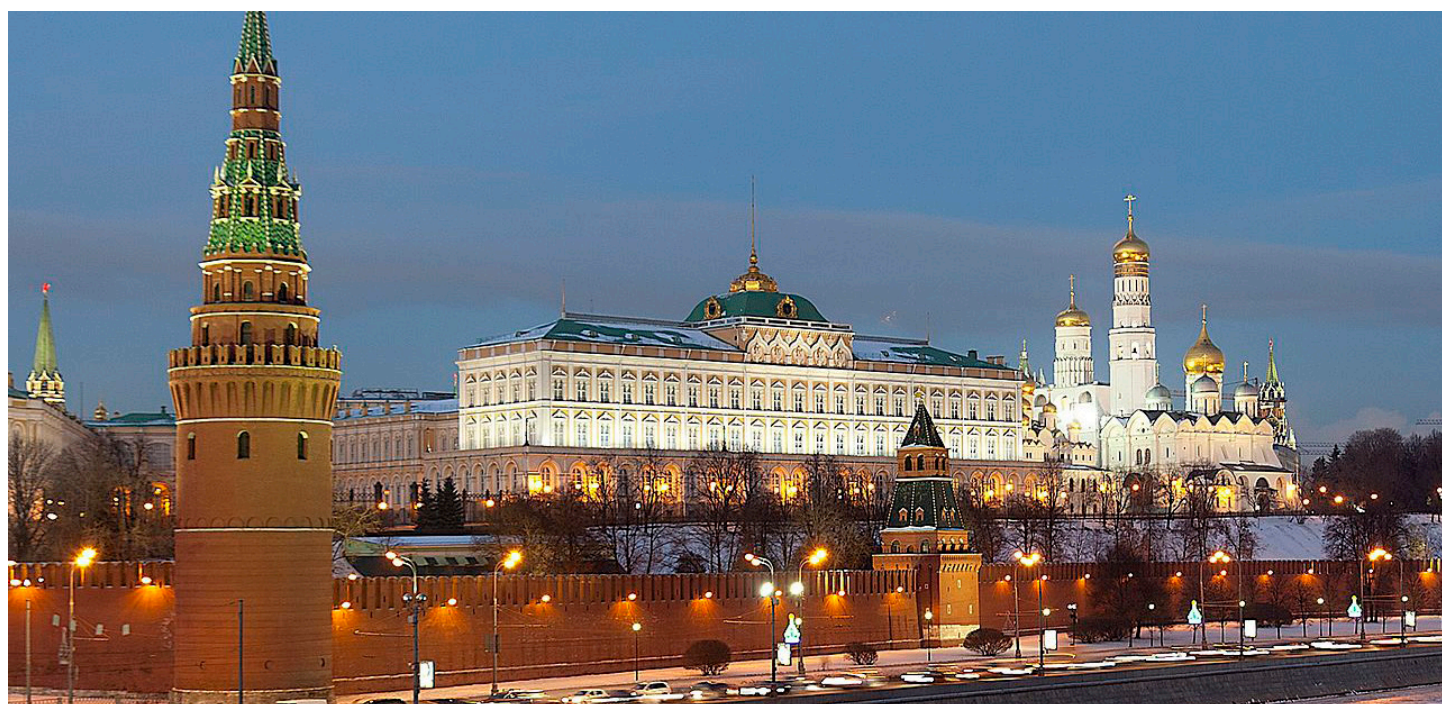
Few people in Washington believe the government's statements that Russia is ready to attack at any time. However, the seriousness of US warnings over the last several weeks may prompt questions about how long Biden can keep the country on high alert, and if the lack of an invasion despite ever-worsening threats would create rifts between NATO partners — and between the Ukrainian and US administrations. Such strains would be detrimental to Putin's long-term geopolitical objectives.

Both Russia and the United States, the world's two most powerful nuclear powers, have stated that they are willing to negotiate.

According to CNN, they are still at odds over Putin's desire to break up current security agreements in Eastern Europe with the withdrawal of NATO forces from former Warsaw Pact countries.

The US' game is risky because it might drive Putin over the brink, particularly if, as some US leaders think, he's becoming increasingly inclined to a bunker mentality and receiving very little advice and insight from officials ready to dispute his positions.

The conflict over Ukraine has escalated into Europe's most dangerous geopolitical standoff since the conclusion of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union.



# Facebook, Twitter Removes Accounts Boosting Russian Propaganda

by The Editor

Lana Prudyvus gets up in the morning with a sinking feeling in her heart.

Prudyvus, a tennis instructor from Ukraine who now resides in California, is “terrified” by what awaits her on her phone: news updates on Russian President Vladimir Putin’s latest statement and messages from her father concerning on-the-ground situations in their homeland.

Prudyvus, 25, is filled with stress about the fate of her nation, concern for her family and loved ones struggling to live there, and wrath at Putin as she follows the news of the rising Ukraine situation.

But she was hit by a fresh feeling this week that astonished her.

She is one of tens of thousands of Ukrainian expats in the United States who are fearful of a full-scale Russian invasion of their nation, as well as the likelihood of Europe’s greatest armed battle since World War II.

Some people felt shame in an interview with NBC NEWS, claiming that they are secure in America while their families, friends, business colleagues, and countrymen are living under the danger of war.

Yara Klimchak, 32, immigrated to the United States in 1993 with her family and brother. She established herself in Chicago, wherein she works as a creative strategist for an advertising agency. (Illinois has the country’s fourth-largest Ukrainian population.)



Her thoughts, however, are frequently focused on her grandmother, who also lives in Lviv. Despite the fact that the city is in Ukraine’s west, distant from the turmoil in the nation’s southeast, Klimchak is continuously concerned about her wellbeing.

Speaking to the media and making people aware on social media, according to Klimchak, are 2 ways she can contribute.

That sentiment was mirrored by Prudyvus. On Tuesday night, she sent a 335-word Instagram statement that summarized her views about the place she formerly called home.

Meanwhile, thousands of Ukrainian Americans gathered just outside of the St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church in San Francisco during the weekend, 400 miles north of her home in Torrance, to pray and express sympathy with their compatriots.

In the meanwhile, Putin’s venom-

ous language and the impending presence of Russian soldiers have made a resolution to the tensions appear a long way off.

“Ukrainians are well aware of who we’re dealing with,” noted Alex Kuzma, chief development officer of the Ukrainian Catholic Education Foundation, the North American branch of Ukraine’s sole Catholic institution.

Despite his feelings of wrath and anxiety, he said he is “encouraged” by the Biden government’s decision to impose sanctions on Russia.

Kuzma went on to say that it’s critical for Americans to recognize that many Ukrainians desire a better future for Russians as well.

On Sunday, Kuzma and other persons of Ukrainian ancestry gathered at the Connecticut state Capitol house in Hartford. He remembers a buddy at the gathering remarking that a confrontation between Russia and Ukraine may be “God’s will—a fight of biblical proportions.”



# Russia Suppresses Dissenting Media And Blocks Facebook

by Dejan Srbinovski

On Friday, Russian President Vladimir Putin stepped up his attack on media organizations and individuals who do not follow the Kremlin line on Russia's conflict in Ukraine, banning Facebook and Twitter and passing a bill criminalizing the deliberate distribution of what Moscow considers "fake" news.

Blocks imposed on BBC, the US government-funded Voice of America and Radio Liberty/Radio Free Europe, as well as the Latvian website Meduza and German station Deutsche Welle, have been imposed. The government's broad campaign against international news organizations that publish in Russian aims to tighten restrictions even more on what information the home audience gets about the attack on Ukraine.

According to Roskomnadzor, the Russian media watchdog, access to Facebook and Twitter has been restricted as a result of a decision made by the prosecutor general's office. Twitter has previously been accused by the watchdog of failing to remove information that had been blocked by Russian officials and of slowing access to it.

While Twitter is "aware of reports" that its platform is being banned in Russia, the company asserted in a statement Friday that it has not been able to verify this.

According to ABC NEWS, the measure, which was rapidly passed by both chambers of Russia's Moscow-controlled parliament and



signed by Putin, mandates jail penalties of up to 15 years for individuals circulating material that contradicts the Russian government's war narrative.

Several news organizations have announced that they will take a break from reporting inside Russia to assess the situation. CNN and CBS News, for example, have said that they will cease broadcasting in Russia, while the BBC and Bloomberg have announced that its journalists will be temporarily suspended from working there.

Russian officials have fraudulently labeled stories of Russian military defeats or civilian casual-

ties in Ukraine as "fake" news on several occasions. Russia's invasion of Ukraine is referred to as a "special military operation" rather than an invasion or war by state media agencies.

For publishing what authorities perceive to be fake news regarding the military, the legislation allows for up to 3 years in prison or a fine, but the maximum penalty is 15 years in situations found to have resulted in "severe consequences."

Roskomnadzor cited Facebook's suspected "discrimination" of Russian media and government information resources as a reason for the ban. The limits imposed by Facebook parent Meta on the Rus-

sian news outlet RT and some other state-controlled media, according to the agency, breach Russian laws.

Russian media restrictions on five international media companies are among the most important and frequently critical foreign media outlets publishing in Russian.

The BBC's Russian-language news service, according to Director-General Tim Davie, will continue to function from outside Russia.

The BBC had earlier in the day tweeted advice on how Russian readers may get past the restriction by using applications or the

"dark web."

The BBC said earlier this week that shortwave radio broadcasting will be restored to Ukraine and regions of Russia, allowing listeners to listen to its programming using simple equipment.

Some well-known Russian media outlets have decided to shut down rather than face severe limitations on what they may cover. The news website Znak announced its closure on Friday morning, just after the draught legislation was adopted by the parliament. Following a warning from the government, Russia's main independent radio

station, Ekho Moskvy, was shut down on Thursday, while independent television network Dozhdh suspended operations.

The government also went on with a broad campaign to attack human rights groups.

The offices of Memorial, one of Russia's oldest and significant human rights groups, were searched by authorities. According to Memorial officials, no explanation was given and no cautions were sent.

Civic Assistance, a major human rights organization, had its Moscow headquarters searched as well.

## Ukrainian Resistance Has Halted Russia's Attack

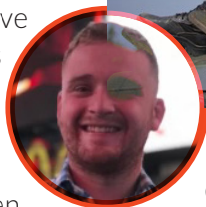
by Liam Flynn

The Russian attack seemed to be stalled two days in due to stronger-than-expected opposition from highly determined Ukrainian military forces.

Despite having an overwhelming advantage in troops and weapons, the Russian advance slowed on Friday, and the swift triumph that Russian President Vladimir Putin had hoped for is no longer certain, according to a senior US defense official.

While Russian troops have threatened the capital, Kyiv, as well as other major cities such as Kharkiv and smaller but strategically important cities such as Rivne, none have been taken so far, according to the official, and Ukrainian air defenses have largely remained intact despite being attacked by ruthless missile strikes.

According to NBC NEWS, western Ukraine, which neighbors NATO



member Poland and has a diplomatic base in the city of Lviv, stays relatively untouched.

While a Russian naval operation with hundreds of soldiers is underway west of Mariupol in the Sea of Azov, the source believes the forces are their route to the Donbas area, a pro-Russian territory where Rus-

sia-backed rebels have been battling the Ukrainian military for months.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine, who has dropped his tailored suits in favor of combat gear, has declined to leave Kyiv and has also been lobbying with Western nations to adopt harder sanctions against Moscow.

According to the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense, the Russians have sustained 800 fatalities, a figure that Moscow denies.

Putin continues to portray the largest European attack since World War II as a preventive operation, insisting that his force is winning the war.

Russian Defense Department spokesperson Igor Konashenkov asserted that Russian forces were winning battles across Ukraine, particularly in the pro-Russian regions of Luhansk and Donetsk in the country's east.

The Ukrainian military has not

been involved in the conflict, according to Konashenkov, and "only battalions of Ukrainian Nazis offer fierce resistance."

For months, the Russians have been spreading false allegations about Nazi groups in Ukraine in order to justify an invasion of the nation.

Both Konashenkov and Putin tried to resurrect the bogus notion that Zelenskyy, Ukraine's struggling president, was employing Ukrainians as "human shields," despite the fact that Zelenskyy is Jewish and lost 3 members of the family in the Holocaust.

Konashenkov further stated that the Russian military units will not conduct any attacks on the Ukrainian capital's civilian districts.

However, footage has already emerged showing residential apartment complexes in Kyiv that seemed to have been struck by missile attacks. Thousands of citizens have already taken refuge in shelters and subway stations, terror and the blaring of warning sirens making sleep impossible.

According to Petraeus, Zelenskyy and his fellow countrymen have won over naysayers who challenged Ukraine's willingness to resist Putin's army.

## Minority Refugees From Ukraine Allegedly Face Discrimination by Dejan Srbinovski

Reporters and locals in the region told ABC News that as Ukrainians fled across Europe in the wake of Russian aggression in Ukraine, non-white migrants have encountered discrimination from extreme organizations monitoring the border.

Witnesses reported hundreds of self-identified right-wing nationalists marauded in Przemysl's city center on March 1 and harassed refugees who seemed to be persons of color. While fleeing Ukraine, a large number of non-white migrants have landed in the city.

As the humanitarian situation continues, many fear that radicalism will continue to wreak havoc on people of color attempting to flee the conflict.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner (UNHCR) for Refugees, well over 836,000 peo-

ple have left Ukraine for neighboring nations since Russian troops attacked the eastern European nation on February 24.

As of March 2, at least 453,000 of those migrants have fled to Poland, according to the UNHCR.

Witnesses stated that radicals targeted anybody who appeared to be Arab or African near the Przemysl railway station on Tuesday, where hundreds of migrants are passing through.

Extremists violently screamed at migrants to leave the nation and reportedly attacked them, according to Julian Würzer, a writer for the German publication Berliner Morgenpost stationed in Poland.

Armed police officers are seen dispersing the confrontation in online footage obtained by ABC News, which Würzer claimed last-

ed around 20 minutes until police came.

However, these fanatics are a minority in the nation. Local residents have made a massive effort to assist individuals escaping from across the Ukrainian-Polish border. Volunteers from all around the region have offered to shelter, clothe, and feed the numerous evacuees, according to ABC News correspondents on the scene.

Witnesses at the border tell ABC News that fanatics have been welcoming Ukrainians while swearing to "defend" Poland from non-Christians. Some fear that Russia is supporting these fanatics.

In recent years, Poland's administration has linked itself with right-wing principles and has been chastised for its anti-refugee attitude. When Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko violently forced hundreds and thousands of Iraqi



and Syrian immigrants out of his nation last year, Poland refused to let them in.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, stated that there had been

cases of prejudice in the acceptance of specific Ukrainian refugees. In their attempts to evacuate, several 3rd-country nationals have reported getting stranded or being denied clearance, he added.

Grandi asserted that governmental actions do not lead to discrimination and that there should be no distinction made among non-Ukrainians and Ukrainians, non-Europeans and Europeans.



# Germany Will Send Military Aid To Ukraine

by Athena Nagel

The German administration said on Saturday that it will dispatch weapons and other supplies straight to Ukraine, which is battling Russia for control of its capital city. Officials said Germany is also willing to approve some limits on the SWIFT international banking network for Russia.

Germany's chancellery stated Saturday evening that 1,000 anti-tank missiles and 500 "Stinger" surface-to-air missiles will be sent to Ukraine as soon as possible.

The announcement arrived after Germany's economy and climate ministry stated on Saturday evening that the Netherlands would be allowed to transfer Four hundred German-made anti-tank weapons to Ukraine. According to ABC NEWS, the administration has also authorized the transport of 9 D-30 howitzers and weapons from Estonia.

Germany has a long history of refusing to transfer lethal weapons to crisis zones, particularly Ukraine. Government officials claimed they will follow the guideline as soon as Friday.

However, Ukrainian authorities and other allies have criticized the UK, which has the strongest economy among the 27-nation European Union, for failing to act aggressively enough to assist Ukraine to fend off the Russian assault. Germany had previously donated 5,000 helmets to Ukraine's military, a gesture that was widely criticized on social media.



In addition, Germany's economics and climate ministry announced on Saturday that Fourteen armored vehicles including up to 10,000 tons of oil will be sent to Ukraine.

Separately, the US provided \$350 million in funding to Ukraine on Saturday, bringing the total amount of security support to \$1 billion when President Biden took office. According to John Kirby, the Pentagon press secretary, the increased help includes "anti-armor, small arms and various ammunition, body armor and related equipment." The support, which comprises Javelin anti-tank weaponry, will be supplied to Ukraine in stages and as quickly as feasible,

according to a senior defense official. To address internal plans, the person spoke on the terms of anonymity.

Other countries have committed military assistance. Italy declared earlier this week that it will deploy non-deadly military equipment such as de-mining equipment and personnel protection systems. Ukraine's demands for equipment are being looked into, according to France. According to Herve Grandjean, spokeswoman for the minister of the armed forces, France provided Ukraine with 100 million euros in armaments before the attack, particularly short-range defense missiles.

# US Navy Aims To Deploy Drone Force In The Mideast

BY CARISSA RICHETTI

As tensions with Iran simmer, the United States Navy's 5th Fleet in the Middle East confirmed the deployment of a newly combined fleet of aerial drones with allied nations to scan broad areas of the region's dangerous waterways.

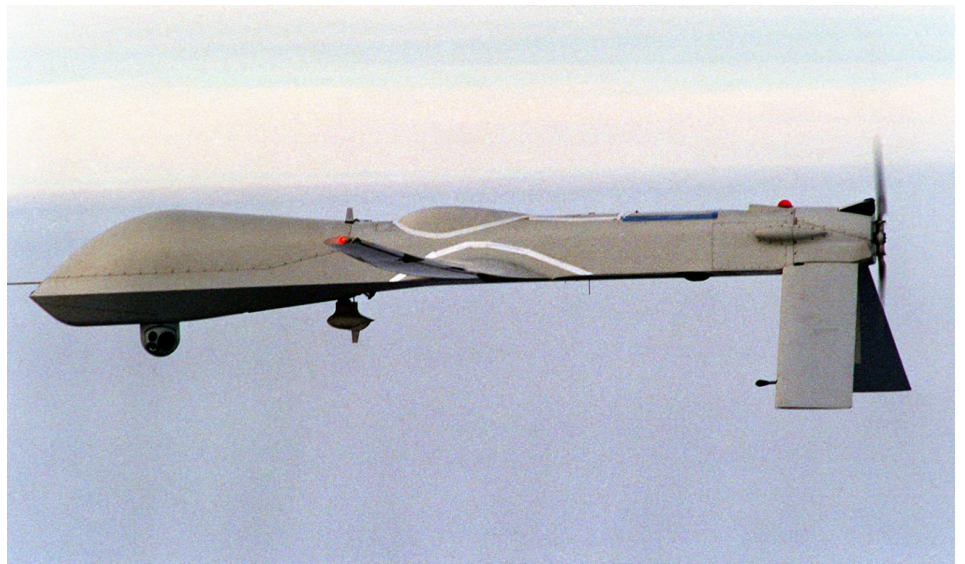
The 5th Fleet commander, Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, told The Associated Press that Hundred military drones, both submersible, and sailing would greatly increase the US Navy's surveillance capabilities, allowing it to maintain a close eye on areas important to the global oil and maritime flows. Since the failure of Iran's nuclear deal with Western powers, maritime trade has been targeted.



The 5th Fleet, which is stationed in Bahrain, is responsible for the vital Strait of Hormuz, the narrow opening of the Persian Gulf by which 20% of all oil travels. According to ABC NEWS, it also reaches as far as the Red Sea near the Suez Canal, Egypt's waterway connecting the Middle East and the Mediterranean, and the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait off Yemen.

Following former US President Trump's move to take the US out of the nuclear agreement and reimpose crippling sanctions, the high seas have seen a succession of attacks and provocations in recent years.

As oil ships have been detained by Iranian authorities and unexplained explosions have damaged



boats in the region, particularly those related to Israeli and Western companies, a maritime phantom war has erupted. Despite proof to the contrary from the West, Iran has disputed involvement in the assaults.

Iran funds proxy armed militias in Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq, giving it military power in the area.

The Iran-backed Houthi rebels have launched bomb-laden unmanned boats toward Saudi waterways, causing damage to vessels and oil installations as Yemen's seven-year civil conflict continues.

In the Middle East, there have also been a series of heated confrontations among American and Iranian navy ships. The clashes have highlighted the danger of an armed conflict between the two countries.

Cooper said, however, that such an incident has not occurred in the

United States in recent months, while officials in Vienna tried to resurrect the shattered nuclear agreement.

The joint danger posed by Iran has driven a fast realignment of Middle Eastern affairs. A series of agreements arranged by the United States, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates mended relations with Israel in 2020.

These strong ties have also spilled over into military diplomacy. Earlier this month, Israel officially participated in a huge US-led naval drill in the area for the first time, among other Gulf Arab governments with which it has no ties, including Saudi Arabia.

Israel is expected to join the Navy's unmanned naval drone joint force in the region, according to Cooper.

# Top US General Arrived In The UAE To Strengthen Defenses

by The Editor

US Marine General Frank McKenzie arrived in the UAE on Sunday for discussions on plans to improve the Gulf state's defenses following a spate of missile assaults in Yemen by Houthi militants.

The Iran-aligned Houthis have launched an unprecedented spate of mostly failed missile strikes on UAE targets in recent weeks, triggering Emirati and US air defenses and forcing American forces to take cover for a short time.

The strikes have brought attention to UN-led efforts to mediate an end to Yemen's war, which has placed the Houthis against a Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen since 2015.

McKenzie, who leads US forces in the Middle East as commander of Central Command, said the Houthi strikes prompted him to accelerate up his planned visit in order to emphasize the US commitment to the Gulf state's protection.

UAE is going through a difficult period, in his opinion. They're on the lookout for help. They were there to assist them in providing that help, shortly before arriving in Abu Dhabi, McKenzie informed reporters.

The Pentagon stated earlier this month that sophisticated F-22 fighter fighters and the USS Cole, a guided missile destroyer, will be deployed to work with the UAE navy ahead of a port call in Abu Dhabi.

The F-22s will give the UAE "one of the best look-down radars in the world," McKenzie added, capable of detecting threats such as land

assault drones and cruise missiles.

The USS Cole will patrol the waters around the UAE, looking out for illicit shipments, he said.

When questioned about the latest Houthi missile assaults, McKenzie speculated that they could have been triggered by a variety of factors, including fighting setbacks.

It was difficult to know all of the Houthi motivations, he said. He didn't believe the Houthis in Yemen were habitual of losing ground.

The US accuses Iran of supplying the Houthis with advanced weapons.

McKenzie stated that the medium-range ballistic missiles fired from Yemen and into the United Arab Emirates were not conceived, constructed, or designed in Yemen. All of this took place somewhere else. As a result, he believes they can clearly establish the Iranian connection.



# Labor Rights Violations At Dubai's Expo 2020

by Reese Furlow



According to a new analysis by a London-based labor rights group, the legions of workers who created and maintain Dubai's lavish Expo 2020 site confront exploitation, deplorable working conditions, and a broad range of labor abuses.

According to Al Jazeera, a report released on Wednesday by consultant Equidem stated that the UAE government has been unable to show that its promises to labor welfare at the multibillion-dollar Expo had addressed, let alone uncovered, rights abuses.

Equidem's findings come after The Associated Press released a report based on interviews with more than 2 dozen Expo employees about their complaints, which included unlawful recruitment fees, passport confiscation by employers, and inadequate meals.



Equidem's prior studies into the circumstances of construction employees a year before the world's fair began, when workers claimed they were refused wages for months due to the coronavirus outbreak, was also referenced in that article.

The Equidem research, which was based on roughly 70 interviews with migrants at Expo over the course of three months last fall, provided a thorough examination of the labor situation at the world's fair. The massive international event has provided the UAE with an important opportunity to bolster its reputation as a globally connected destination that attracts tourists and investment.

In the United Arab Emirates, foreigners outnumber locals by about nine to one. The country's labor sponsoring system, which involves millions of low-paid individuals from Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia and has long been accused of abuse for failing to ensure equitable salaries, hours, and living conditions, is at the heart of daily life.

The majority of the workforce interviewed, according to the Equidem research, were forced to pay unlawful hiring fees to get their positions, which often exceeded their monthly wages. Despite a ban at Expo and around the country, many companies were informed that workers paid high fees to recruitment agencies in their native countries and did not refund them, creating a debt bondage situation, according to the research.

Workers were not presented

with employment agreements or were unable to understand them as they were not converted into their original language, as legally required, according to the Equidem investigation.

Some workers were paid in installments or had to wait well over a week for their monthly income, which also included their meal allowance. Overtime wages, termination benefits, and promised bonuses were regularly denied to employees. Workers claim that while the pandemic wreaked havoc on the economy, employers lowered salaries by much to 75%.

Despite Emirati regulations prohibiting employers from taking workers' identity documents, the majority of workers interviewed handed their passports to their employers, and none of them were able to return them unconditionally.

Workers also claimed to have been discriminated against, detailing how their color influenced their treatment and responsibilities on the job.

In the UAE, where slavery was not technically banned only until the 1960s and dark-skinned laborers from Africa and South Asia often report earning lower pay than their light-skinned counterparts, racism is a deeply rooted issue.

Expo workers told researchers they were afraid of retaliation from employers and authorities, including dismissal and deportation, if they spoke up about working conditions and harassment, according to the paper. In the UAE, founding unions and rallying for improved

treatment are still illegal.

With Dubai in the limelight due to a world expo expected to attract 25 million visitors, officials promised to step up efforts to combat the widespread practice of forced labor. Expo created guidelines outlining strict labor rights protections. Company inspectors are sent by the UAE to verify that workers are not exploited.

The revelation comes only months after Human Rights Watch (HRW) in the United States denounced the Dubai Expo 2020 as an effort to obscure the UAE's human rights violations.

Last year, the European Parliament called on member nations to boycott the fair, citing human rights concerns.

HRW stated in October of last year that the expo is part of the UAE's decades-long drive to "whitewash its image and obscure its abuses."

The UN specialists and human rights investigators, as well as critical media and academics, continue to be denied access by the government, according to the organization.

Last year, the European Parliament called on member nations to boycott the fair, citing human rights concerns.



# Yemen May Lose Humanitarian Aid In March

by Zach Schrader

Unless immediate funding is supplied, 8 million Yemen citizens would probably lose all humanitarian supplies in March, according to UN officials, amid an intensification in a long-running conflict that resulted in the greatest toll of civilian fatalities in 3 years last month.

Nearly two-thirds of significant UN aid programs were downsized or forced to close in January, according to UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths and UN special envoy Hans Grundberg, who spoke to the UN Security Council on Tuesday.

Yemen has been in conflict since 2014, when Houthi rebels seized control of most of the country's north, especially Sanaa, prompting the president to evacuate to the south and subsequently to Saudi Arabia. In March 2015, a Saudi-led military alliance, supported by the US, entered the conflict with the goal of returning President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi to office.

The biggest civilian casualty occurrence in three years, according to Grundberg, was a coalition airstrike on a detention center in Houthi-controlled Saada last month, as he referred to an alarming spike in aerial bombardment in Yemen, particularly the port district of Hodeidah and residential neighborhoods in Sanaa.

However, recent Houthi strikes on the UAE and Saudi Arabia, a fellow alliance member, show how the war risks spiraling out of control unless substantial efforts are made promptly by Yemeni parties,

the region, and the global community to resolve it, according to Grundberg.

According to UN estimates, more than 650 people have been killed or wounded in January by enemy fire, bombing, air attacks, and other forms of violence, the biggest toll in at 3 years.

According to Al Jazeera, the UN has repeatedly warned that Yemen's conflict has generated the world's greatest humanitarian disaster, but Griffiths warned that relief groups are swiftly bleeding money, forcing them to cut life-saving programs.

According to the UN humanitarian agency, the humanitarian plan for Yemen in 2021 got \$2.27 billion out of a total of \$3.85 billion, the lowest amount of funding since 2015. The strategy for 2022 has yet to be revealed.

In December, the UN's World Food Program was obliged to cut food parcels for 8 million people,

and coming March, "those 8 million people may get no food at all – or a reduced ration," according to Griffiths.

Meanwhile, the UN has warned that most humanitarian shipments to Yemen may have to be canceled next month.

3.6 million people might be deprived of clean drinking water as a result of funding shortfalls, as well as programs to prevent gender-based abuse and improve reproductive health.

The severity of the present funding deficits in Yemen is "unprecedented," according to Griffiths, who claims the UN has never considered not feeding millions of starving people or canceling humanitarian flights before.

On March 16, Switzerland and Sweden will co-host a high-level pledge session for Yemen with the United Nations.



# Iran And US Nuclear Talks Nearing Conclusion

by Carissa Richetti



US and Iranian authorities have signaled that talks in Austria to resurrect the Nuclear agreement are approaching completion, boosting expectations that the pact may be revived shortly.

Ali Bagheri Kani, Iran's chief nuclear strategist, remarked on Wednesday that the sides in Vienna are "closer than ever" to achieving an agreement.

According to Al Jazeera, State Department spokesman Ned Price noted that the decision on whether the pact, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), may be revived in the coming days.

The Iranian ambassador also urged his Austrian counterparts to prevent "intransigence" and to learn from the 4 years after former American President Donald Trump canceled the agreement. "Time for their serious decisions," he added.

Iran agreed to cut back its nuclear program in exchange for the removal of sanctions against its economic system in a global accord signed in 2015.

However, following Trump's withdrawal from the agreement in 2018, the US has been executing a "maximum pressure" sanctions campaign on Iran. Iran has re-

sponded by stepping up its nuclear program, which includes uranium enrichment.

As part of the 8th round of talks, earlier this month in Vienna, Tehran and Washington started indirect discussions to revive the accord.

On Wednesday, Price reiterated the United States' request for direct discussions to save the agreement.

Officials from the United States have earlier cautioned that the timeframe for reviving the accord was only a matter of weeks.

Price, on the other hand, stated on Wednesday that negotiations in the "coming days" will be significant, implying that the deal's fate is tied to the conclusion of the ongoing round of discussions in Vienna.

Democrats and Republicans in the United States, along with some major legislators, have recently expressed objection to reviving the agreement, arguing that any accord with Iran should resolve Iran's ballistic missile program and geographical activities, which Iranian authorities have stated they are unwilling to consult with Washington.

Despite mounting hostility in Washington, a Morning Research poll of 2,005 US voters in the state released on Wednesday found that 53 percent of respondents support the JCPOA, while only 24 % reject it.



# Israel's Supreme Court Suspends Palestinian Evictions

by The Editor

The Supreme Court of Israel has decided that a bunch of Palestinian families set to be evicted from the disputed East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah can stay in their houses for the time being.

The court decided on Tuesday that the 4 families may remain in their houses until Israel carries out a land deal, a procedure that might take years or never take place.

According to Al Jazeera, the verdict marks the conclusion of a decades-long campaign for Palestinian inhabitants to remain in their houses, and it may help to relieve tensions in Sheikh Jarrah and some other neighborhoods, where demonstrations and violence triggered Israel's 11-day bombing of Gaza last year.

The family turned down an offer from Israel's top court in August to be registered as safeguarded tenants in return for acknowledging Israeli control of their properties.

According to Gaal Yanovski, advocacy coordinator at Ir Amim, a Jerusalem anti-settlement organization, the new verdict leaves the property's ultimate status up to a ruling by an office under Israel's Justice ministry.

In 1972, numerous Jewish settler groups launched a case over Palestinian families residing in Sheikh Jarrah, claiming that the property belonged to Jews initially. Thousands of Palestinians were forcibly removed from their property and land after Israel was formed in 1948, according to Palestinian ac-



tivists. Their return has never been permitted by Israel.

In the 1967 war, Israel took East Jerusalem, together with the West Bank, and seized it in a move that was largely ignored by the international world.

As a result, several Palestinian households in East Jerusalem have been threatened with displacement, and hundreds more face destruction. Palestinians find it exceedingly difficult to build new houses or extend existing ones due to Israel's discriminatory laws.

Tensions flared last month in Sheikh Jarrah as Israeli police on horses dispersed protestors who had gathered to support Palestin-

ians fearing expulsion by Jewish settlers.

The Israeli court system has no legal power over the people it occupies under international law.

East Jerusalem is home to around 200,000 Israeli residents who are protected by the police and army, with the biggest single settlement structure sheltering 44,000 Israelis.

Sheikh Jarrah is an example of a larger pattern of forced relocation in Palestinian neighborhoods in Jerusalem. Under international law, Israel's settlement project, which aims to consolidate Israel's sovereignty over the city, is likewise deemed unlawful.

# North Korea Conducted Its Eighth Round Of Missile Tests

by Casey Fenn

North Korea fired a long-range missile into the open sea on Sunday, according to its neighbors, in a restart of weapons testing as the US and its allies concentrate on Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

The launch by North Korea was the 8th this year and the 1st since January 30. According to some analysts, North Korea is attempting to develop its weapons technology in order to compel the US into making concessions such as sanctions relief in the midst of long-stalled disarmament discussions. According to them, North Korea may use the United States' concern with the Ukraine war as an opportunity to ramp up testing without fear of a major retaliation from Washington.

The North Korean missile traveled around 190 miles at the highest altitude of around 370 miles prior to actually landing off North Korea's eastern coast and beyond Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone, according to Japanese Minister Of Defense Nobuo Kishi. According to him, no damage to boats or planes has been recorded.

Officials from South Korea claimed they had also identified the launching from the North's capital region and voiced "deep concern and grave regret" over it.

Later Sunday, the US Indo-Pacific Command denounced the launch and urged North Korea to desist from additional provocative actions. Though Sunday's launch did not represent an imminent danger



to US territory or those of its allies, the US pledge to the defense of Japan and South Korea "remains ironclad," according to a command statement.

The launch occurred the day after North Korea issued its first statement on the Ukraine conflict in the form of an essay written by a government expert in which he showed support for Russia while criticizing the US.

Prior to its collapse in the early 1990s, the former Soviet Union was North Korea's largest assistance supplier. Russian President Putin has been attempting to normalize relations with North Korea in what is viewed as an effort to reclaim Russia's old spheres of influence and obtain additional friends to bet-

ter cope with the US.

According to NBC NEWS, Leif-Eric Easley, a senior lecturer at Ewha University in Seoul, the Biden office must demonstrate that it retains a strategic approach on the Indo-Pacific area, especially by forcefully reacting to Pyongyang's provocations.

North Korea launched 7 missile tests this month, setting a new monthly record after supreme leader Kim Jong Un seized control in late 2011. North Korea stopped testing when the Winter Olympics began earlier this month in China, the last of its significant ally and economic lifeline. After the Olympics, several analysts believed that North Korea would restart missile launches and perhaps test larger weapons.

# US And Allies Agree To Restrict Russia's Access To SWIFT Banking

by Chelsea Meece



The US and its allies revealed an accord on Saturday to use SWIFT, a program that facilitates worldwide transactions between hundreds of banking institutions, to target Russia.

"We commit to ensuring that selected Russian banks are removed from the SWIFT messaging system." In a joint declaration, the heads of the European Commission, Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and the United States cautioned that disconnecting these banks from the global financial system would hurt their capacity to function internationally.

President Joe Biden addressed divisions between European countries on penalizing Russia through SWIFT while announcing additional US sanctions against Russia on Thursday. Biden stated that doing so is "always an option." "However, right now, that's not the position

that the rest of Europe wishes to take."

One explanation for the administration's prior reluctance to openly advocate for blocking Russia's access to SWIFT, according to a European official, was a fear that this would expose and draw attention to divides among partners on the issue. According to the source, the Biden office has been attempting to sell the idea that the US and its European partners are in complete lockstep, and that it does not want to move ahead of the Europeans on SWIFT.

Italy and Germany were hesitant to incorporate SWIFT as part of Russia's sanctions. According to NBC NEWS, Europe's economy, which is considerably more tightly linked to Russia's than the US economy, might suffer if Russia's use of SWIFT is restricted or forbidden, especially if banks are denied access.

However, as Russia's hostility has

increased, the sentiment in Europe has shifted.

On Saturday, Germany's government openly stated that it could be in favor of restricting or reducing Russia's access to SWIFT in a selective manner, rather than removing it entirely.

SWIFT's action was announced in a joint statement. Further economic sanctions that the countries will jointly apply were also disclosed on Saturday evening, including limits on the Russian Central Bank's ability to deploy its overseas reserves in a bid to mitigate the effects of its sanctions.

Furthermore, the leaders stated that steps will be taken against anyone who enables the conflict in Ukraine and the Russian government's detrimental operations.

In the United States and the European Union, there exist schemes that provide citizenship to foreigners who invest a particular amount of money in the country. Governments argue that issuing passports benefits the local economy by attracting investment, but the schemes have been challenged as a tool for affluent individuals to purchase citizenship.

These investor visa schemes in the United States comprise the EB-5 and E-2 programs.

Several EU countries, including Bulgaria and Malta, have been accused of providing "golden passports" to Russian oligarchs, and the EU has attempted to prohibit the practice.



# Pope Visits Russian Embassy To Express Concerns Over Ukraine

by Eric Gahagan

On Friday morning, Pope Francis visited the Russian Embassy in the Vatican to convey his concerns over the conflict in Ukraine, according to the Vatican press office.

The Russian Embassy to the Holy See is located on the road that goes into St. Peter's Square, a little distance from outside Vatican City, and was widely regarded as a significant personal papal effort.

The Vatican supplied no more information beyond stating that the visit spanned only over an hour and that no video or images were given. In the front seat of a little white car, the pope was observed leaving the diplomatic building.

The Russian envoy in the embassy, Ambassador Aleksandr Avdeyev, told the Russian press that the pope wished to personally inquire about the condition in Ukraine and Donbas, and conveyed his deep worry about the humanitarian crisis and

living circumstances of the people. He is said to have advocated for the protection of children, the ill, and those who are suffering.

Many Vatican observers were taken aback by the pope's unexpected and uncommon visit to the embassy, as it is standard custom for diplomats to travel the Vatican to speak with the pope, according to ABC NEWS. When he has pressing items to discuss, Pope Francis has stopped in to meet people at Vatican offices beyond the small state's boundaries in the past.

Commentators have remarked that the pope and the Vatican have also been cautious in openly condemning and criticizing Russia, some claiming that this is to avoid upsetting the Russian Orthodox Church.

Pope Francis urged Believers and non-believers to fast and pray for

peace in Ukraine at the conclusion of his general audience inside the Vatican on Ash Wednesday.

He asked individuals in positions of political power to conduct a genuine assessment of conscience before God, and he implored world leaders to avoid taking any action that might worsen people's suffering, destabilize international relations, and dishonor international law.

Due to a flare-up of knee discomfort, the pope will not make his intended one-day journey to Florence this Sunday and will have to miss the Ash Wednesday event in the Vatican at the beginning of Lent, according to the Vatican press office. His doctors advised him he needed more rest, but that didn't appear to stop him from paying a surprise visit on Friday.



# Russian Troops Advance On Ukrainian Capital

by Christina Levandowski



On Friday morning, explosions occurred in Ukraine's capital, and air raid sirens rang for the 2nd time, as a top Pentagon official briefed US lawmakers that Russian troops had advanced to within 20 kilometers of Kyiv.

Head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley informed House legislators about the freshly deployed Russian soldiers in an unclassified meeting on Thursday, according to an insider on the call.

Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin described the current stage of Russia's military assault as the tip of the iceberg, according to a source in the meeting and one key defense official, noting that the large majority of Russian soldiers are not yet in Ukraine.

After Russia started strikes on key towns around Ukraine, killing hundreds of civilians, Ukraine's president warned that saboteurs had infiltrated Kyiv.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced in a statement that at least 137 people were killed and 316 injured in the incident. In a subsequent broadcast speech, he warned of saboteurs nearing the city.

An apartment structure in Kyiv was hit by debris at the moment of Zelenskyy's video statement, according to Ukrainian officials and the country's emergency personnel, after an airplane was gunned down.

At 5 a.m. local time early Thursday, bombings and explosions were reported across Ukraine's major cities, just seconds after Russian President Vladimir Putin gave a pre-dawn televised message authorizing military action. He cautioned other countries that interfering in Russia's affairs will result in retribution unlike any other.

The Russian military seized control of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant north of Kyiv on Thursday, according to NBC NEWS. A nuclear accident at the Chernobyl facility in

1986 released huge amounts of radiation into the environment.

The Chernobyl nuclear plant was captured by the Russians, remarked Anton Gerashchenko, a ministry of interior advisor. A member in Zelenskyy's office verified the information to The Associated Press. The assault appeared to be driven by the need to secure a key location on the invasion route from Minsk to Kyiv and confine it to Ukrainian forces.

According to Gerashchenko, a nuclear waste containment facility strike may release radioactive particles which might cover Belarus, Ukraine, and European Union nations.

Zelenskyy encouraged Ukrainians to defend themselves in the midst of the Russian attack in a televised address early Thursday.

Later, he issued a directive for the military to be mobilized in order to ensure the state's defense.





# WHO To Promote COVID Vaccine Technology To More Countries

by Carissa Richetti

The World Health Organization is establishing a worldwide training center to assist developing nations in developing vaccinations, antibodies, and cancer medications using the same messenger RNA technique that was used to develop COVID-19 vaccines.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that the new center would be in South Korea and it will share mRNA technology created by WHO and collaborators in South Africa, where researchers are attempting to replicate the COVID-19 vaccine produced by Moderna Inc. during a news conference in Geneva on Wednesday. That work is being carried out without the assistance of Moderna.

According to ABC NEWS, this is the first instance WHO has backed such unconventional attempts to reverse-engineer a commercially marketed vaccine, thereby circumventing the pharmaceutical sector, which has largely favored providing affluent nations over poor nations in both sales and manufacture.

The producers of the two approved mRNA COVID-19 vaccinations, Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, have refused to provide their vaccine formula or technical expertise with WHO and its collaborators.

The WHO stated that the shared knowledge would be valuable not just in developing coronavirus vaccines, but also in developing insulin, antibodies, and therapies for diseases such as cancer and malaria.

Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, WHO's chief scientist, estimated that recre-



ating Moderna's vaccine will take until around late next year or maybe 2024 to produce usable injections, but that time scale might be cut in half if the manufacturer agreed to cooperate.

Access to COVID-19 vaccinations is quite uneven over the world. Only 1% of the world's COVID-19 immunizations are produced in Africa, and only around 11% of the population is inoculated. A European country like Portugal, on the other hand, has 84 percent of its population completely vaccinated, with over 59 percent receiving a booster dose.

Six African nations — South Africa, Tunisia, Egypt, Senegal, Nigeria, and Kenya — were given the expertise and scientific know-how to create mRNA COVID-19 vaccines the other week, according to WHO. Tedros announced on Wednesday that the South African hub will now serve 5 more nations: Vietnam, Serbia, Ban-

ladesh, Indonesia, and Pakistan.

Earlier this year, a Cape Town firm aiming to recreate Moderna Inc.'s COVID-19 injection said that it has created a prototype vaccine that will shortly begin laboratory testing.

Moderna's vaccine, according to researchers working on it, has more data available in the public domain and is thought to be significantly easier to develop than Pfizer-BioNTech's.

WHO's initiatives will address the massive worldwide demand for mRNA vaccinations, which have proved to be perhaps the most successful at controlling COVID-19, according to Zain Rizvi, director of research at the advocacy organization Public Citizen.

Rizvi urged the Biden government to put pressure on multinational pharmaceutical manufacturers to disclose their COVID-19 vaccine formulations and expertise.

# Beijing Calls For Talks On Ukraine, Criticizes US

By The Editor

China called for negotiations to settle the Ukraine issue on Thursday, but avoided condemning President Vladimir Putin's invasion, while also approving Russian wheat imports, potentially reducing the severity of Western sanctions.

President Xi Jinping, who recently met Putin in Beijing last month, has strengthened China's ties with Russia. China's multibillion-dollar gas imports for its energy-hungry industry have provided a lifeboat to Putin, who was already facing Western sanctions as a result of his 2014 invasion of Crimea from Ukraine.

The only significant government that has not condemned Putin's strike is China. It did, however, temper this by urging respect and restraint for territorial integrity, according to NBC NEWS.

Meanwhile, the Chinese Embassy in Ukraine has advised its residents to stay at home and to fly a Chinese flag within or over their vehicles if they must travel.

Xi's administration reflects Russian dissatisfaction with what they see as unfair American domination in global affairs, as well as the Kremlin's rejection of NATO's eastward expansion.

China has pinned the crisis in Ukraine on the US and its European allies.

Following their meeting in Beijing, Xi and Putin published a joint statement affirming major foreign policy concerns for both countries, including Moscow's resistance to NATO expansion in former Soviet states and China's claim to the self-gov-

erning island of Taiwan.

The strike by Moscow has put Beijing in a bind between its friendship with Vladimir and its sensitivity to national boundaries, which stems from its desire to keep restive territories like Tibet and Xinjiang.

With NATO's expansion and the installation of a missile defense system, the West compelled Russia to respond, according to Li Xin, head of the Institute of European and Asian Studies at Shanghai University of Political Science and Law.

Although China has not approved Putin's designation of the rebel parts of eastern Ukraine as independent states or his willingness to send in troops, Hua said Beijing has "called on parties to respect others' legitimate security concerns."

By enhancing China's relevance as an export industry and a source of investment, Western financial and trade sanctions on Russia will improve Beijing's position in their relationship.

China's customs department authorized wheat imports from all areas of Russia on Thursday, offering Putin an alternative to European markets which might be blocked as a result of prospective sanctions.

Russia is among the world's largest wheat growers, yet it has been barred from entering China owing to fears of fungus and other contaminants.

After Vladimir Putin became the most high-profile foreign visitor who attended the Beijing Winter Olympics, the two nations announced a deal on Feb. 8 for China



to buy Russian wheat and barley.

According to Russia's notification on Thursday, it would "take all steps" to avoid contamination by the wheat smut fungus and will restrict exports to China if it is discovered.

To counteract the consequences of Crimea-related sanctions, Moscow has spent most of the last decade attempting to grow gas exports and other commerce with Beijing and East Asian markets.

Last month, Russia's state-owned Gazprom secured a 30-year deal to deliver natural gas from the Russian Far East to China's northeast. To lessen their reliance on the US dollar, the dominant currency in resource markets, the two parties decided to pay in euros.

After more than a decade of discussions, the two countries concluded another gas supply pact in 2014. According to industry analysts, Russia caved into Chinese pressure for lenient conditions since it needed export money following the Crimea sanctions.





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**AS THEY DECLINE TO PRODUCE MORE OIL...  
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