

International Briefs

Russia Denounces U.S. Sen. Wicker for Proposing Nuclear First-Strike Option

The Russian Embassy in Washington slammed Mississippi Republican Senator Roger Wicker for suggesting that a nuclear first strike ought to be on the table in a potential war with Russia. “Such statements are irresponsible.... Joking with nuclear weapons is not appropriate for an American politician working at the U.S. legislative body,” an Embassy statement posted on Facebook said on Dec. 8.

The statement continued: “It is noteworthy that the state of Mississippi, which is represented by the legislator, hosts the offices of Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon, General Atomics, etc. This raises questions. Whose interests does the senator promote when calling for war—the Ukrainians’ or the U.S. military industry? How is it possible to place lucrative interests of weapons production above peoples’ aspirations to protect themselves from the threat of a nuclear missile war?” the Embassy message demanded. “We advise all the unenlightened to read the joint statement of the Presidents of Russia and the United States of June 16, 2021 thoroughly. This document reaffirms the two countries’ commitment to the principle that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.”

Oliver Stone: We’re Close to Lighting Fuse for War by Pushing in Ukraine, Taiwan

Oliver Stone spoke Dec. 6 about his new film, “JFK Revisited: A Documentary,” with Krystal Ball and Saagar Enjeti of “Breaking Points.”

He said in part:

“The Kennedy case is perhaps the most important case of American government that we’ve seen in the past 100 years. I can’t think of anything more important than his killing. Why? Because, since Kennedy was killed, no American President, not one—think about it—has been able to touch the military complex, or this intelligence agency complex. Budgets have gone up, up, up. It’s purposeless. Nobody says ‘Stop.’ Nobody says, ‘What about peace?’ Nobody talks about an alternative way of doing business in this country, a strategy for peace. No, it’s all about a strategy for tension.

“Preparing for war is very important for America, much more money is spent on preparing for war. War is not a good thing, they all know that, but we’re coming awfully close to lighting the fuse when we keep pushing in Ukraine, we keep pushing in Taiwan, we keep pushing pretty much everywhere on the map where we create tension. That’s something that Kennedy was totally against.”

U.S., Brits, Canada and EU Slam Belarus with New Sanctions

In what Belarus Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei called “new iron curtains,” the United States, Britain, Canada, and the European Union announced a new round of sanctions against Belarus, the third this year, to punish it for “disregard for international norms,” and particularly, as U.S. Secretary of State Tony Blinken put it in a Dec. 2 statement, for its “callous exploitation of vulnerable migrants from other countries in order to orchestrate migrant smuggling along its border with EU states.” Speaking at the OSCE

Ministerial Council in Stockholm the same day, Foreign Minister Makei said the sanctions reflected a new “Fortress Europe” mentality. His ministry warned in an official statement that “we will take tough and asymmetrical though adequate measures” in response. “The harmful nature and futility of sanctions has long been clear to all sensible people, as well as their negative impact on both parties,” TASS quoted him as saying.

In its document on the sanctions, the Treasury Department adds new restrictions on dealings in new issuances of Belarusian sovereign debt “to restrict the Lukashenko regime’s access to international capital markets.”

MI6 Chief Gives First Public Presentation: ‘China Is the No. 1 Threat’

Richard Moore, who became Chief of the British Empire’s foreign Secret Intelligence Service, better known as MI6, in October 2020, chose London’s International Institute of Strategic Studies for a public appearance on Nov 30. Moore explained the confrontation between his spy service and “what I earlier called the ‘big four’ set of threats: China, Russia, Iran and international terrorism.”

He made clear that China is target number one: “China is an authoritarian state, with different values from ours.... The Chinese Intelligence Services are highly capable and continue to conduct large-scale espionage operations against the UK and our allies.... We are concerned by the Chinese government’s attempt to distort public discourse and political decision-making across the globe.” Perhaps worst, in his eyes: “Worryingly, these technologies of control and surveillance are increasingly being exported to other governments

by China, expanding the web of authoritarian control around the planet.”

Of course, one can't let Russia off the hook, according to Moore, as the UK is still facing “an acute threat” from Russia. With the usual accusations mirroring his own agency's activities, Moore said that Moscow assassinates people, employs cyberattacks, and attempts to interfere in the democratic elections of foreign countries. “We and our allies and partners must stand up to and deter Russian activity which contravenes the international rules-based system.”

Zepp-LaRouche Answers Belt and Road Critics on CGTN ‘Dialogue’ Broadcast

Schiller Institute President and founder Helga Zepp-LaRouche appeared Dec. 2 on China's CGTN TV broadcast, “Dialogue, Ideas Matter,” on which she discussed the eight years of the Belt and Road Initiative, taking up the example of the completion of the China-Laos rail corridor as the latest example, and counterposing to the BRI the Malthusian ideology expressed by World Economic Forum executive chairman Klaus Schwab on behalf of the networks represented at the Forum.

Zepp-LaRouche said that one of the best ways to understand the importance of the BRI is to imagine what the world would be like had the BRI not been launched. As it completed the task of lifting its own population out of extreme poverty, China was able to export its development experience and capabilities to other countries able to benefit from projects and growth at home.

Asked to respond to criticisms of the BRI—that it is not transparent, that it is designed to expand China's influence, and that it is being used to expand China's international military presence—Zepp-LaRouche insisted that one must look at the ideology underlying the objections. For Klaus

Schwab, for example, population and economic growth are themselves a problem, and for him, countries that are currently underdeveloped should remain as underdeveloped sources for raw materials.

“We have reached a point where we need a complete change of the system, and I think the model China has offered is the best available on the planet,” she concluded.

Pakistan Begins Work on Rail Link into Afghanistan

Work has begun on the first 11 km section of the planned rail link between Quetta, Pakistan, and Kandahar, Afghanistan. The first section will connect two border cities—Chaman, Pakistan and Spin Boldak, Afghanistan. The entire distance between Quetta and Kandahar is 100 km, and once that link is completed, it will play an important role in Belt and Road-related rail grids in South and Central Asia. Quetta is also on the north-south rail-and-road grid of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative, extending from Kashi, at the far western end of Xinjiang Province in China, south to the Pakistani port of Gwadar on the Arabian Sea.

Malaria Deaths Rise in Africa, but New Vaccine Is Here, WHO Announces

Mosquito-borne malaria is again on the rise in Sub-Saharan Africa. According to the WHO World Malaria Report released Dec. 6, there were 69,000 more deaths from malaria in 2020 than in 2019. Worldwide, the death total was 627,000, around 602,000 of them (about 95%) in Sub-Saharan Africa. Of those 602,000, about 80% were children under five.

From 2010 until 2017, the worldwide anti-malaria campaign brought

down the number of cases and of fatalities; then progress halted. Funding is down to \$3.3 billion worldwide, about one-third of what is minimally needed. The WHO report describes a failure prior to COVID-19, which was then made worse. WHO Director General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus noted, “In 2020, COVID-19 emerged as an added and formidable challenge to malaria responses worldwide.” The logistics for delivery of mosquito nets and medicines, along with the insufficiency of health clinics and staff, crippled the campaign. WHO estimates that two-thirds of the increase of cases and deaths can be attributed to problems from COVID-19.

WHO had announced on Oct. 6 that it recommends the new RTS,S malaria vaccine for children in Sub-Saharan Africa and in other places with moderate to high *Plasmodium falciparum* malaria transmission, based on a large, successful ongoing pilot program in Ghana, Kenya and Malawi. “This is a historic moment,” said Dr. Tedros.

China Answers U.S. Winter Olympics ‘Diplomatic Boycott’: You Weren’t Invited Anyway

Liu Pengyu, spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Washington, responded to the Dec. 6 White House announcement of its “diplomatic boycott” of the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing by saying that “no invitation has been extended to U.S. politicians whatsoever, so this ‘diplomatic boycott’ simply comes out of nowhere. Such a pretentious act is only a political manipulation and a grave distortion of the spirit of the Olympic Charter. In fact, no one would care whether these people came or not, and it has no impact whatsoever on the [ability of] the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics to be successfully held.”