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Inside C2

Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

Southern Daily News is published by Southern News Group Daily

Wednesday, June 30 2021

U.S., European suppliers scramble to secure Christmas goods as cargo delays worsen

LOS ANGELES/LONDON, June 29 (Reuters) - Suppliers to Walmart (WMT.N), Target (TGT.N), Amazon.com (AMZN.O) and other major retailers told Reuters they are placing holiday orders for Chinese-made merchandise weeks earlier this year, as a global shipping backlog threatens to leave many gift buyers empty-handed this Christmas shopping season.

Reuters surveyed nearly a dozen suppliers and retailers of everything from toys to computer equipment in the United States and Europe. All expect weeks-long delays in holiday inventory due to shipping bottlenecks, including a global container shortage and the recent COVID-related closure of the southern Chinese port of Yantian, which serves manufacturers near Shenzhen.

The risk for retailers is a rash of out-of-stock items just as shoppers are ready to open their wallets to splurge on toys, clothing and other merchandise.

"It's going to be a major, major mess," said Isaac Larian, chief executive of Los Angeles-based MGA Entertainment Inc, which sells LOL Surprise, Bratz, Little Tikes and other toy brands to Amazon, Walmart and Target.

His company has toys stuck in hundreds of containers at the Yantian port. If he can't get enough inventory for his retail clients, "it's going to hurt the Christmas sales big time," Larian said.

The shipping logjams are due to more than just the backlog in Yantian, which is considered Amazon's No. 1 Chinese seaport, - accounting for 32.4% of shipments handled by the e-commerce company in the three months to May 31, according to S&P Global Market Intelligence's trade data firm Panjiva.

While Yantian port reopened on June 24, a shortage of containers was still constraining full activity, globally cargo ships are overbooked, containers are stranded in the wrong places, and ports are congested.

Products are piling up on factory floors, in warehouse parking lots, on seaport docks and at rail yards - threatening more backups than last year's holiday "shipageddon," when many items arrived after Christmas.

Amazon and other retailers did not respond to requests for comment.

'UNABLE TO BUILD INVENTORY'

Retailers generally are selling goods as fast as they can bring them in, said Jason Miller, associate professor of supply chain management at Michigan State University's Eli Broad College of



Business.

"Their sales are so high right now that they're unable to build inventory levels up substantially," said Miller.

If that torrid clip continues, retailers - excluding auto-related operators - would have to add about \$65.1 billion in inventories to be in the same pre-holiday inventory-to-sales position they were in 2019, he said.

Andy Bond, chief executive of Pepco Group, which owns British discount retailer Poundland, told Reuters separately, "it's definitely a day-to-day challenge and a headache that we are facing."

Clothing sellers are looking at air freight as an option - including PVH Corp (PVH.N), which owns the Tommy Hilfiger and Calvin Klein brands.

Christmas-themed inventory "might be here for Thanksgiving weekend - and it might not be," said Balsam Hill CEO Mac Harman, who sells high-end artificial Christmas trees and other holiday décor. Some of his orders from China may not arrive in time for his July sales kickoff - or even by Christmas, he said.

"We're hundreds of containers behind where we should be at this point," he said, with at least 10% fewer products in stock.

Michael Shah, CEO of British-based Easy Equipment, which supplies catering equipment across the United Kingdom, is racing to bring goods in early after already contending with containers held up in China.

"We are already starting to order more stock now knowing that by September-October, we have to be prepared," Shah said. "It gets busy in the run-up to Christmas with the restaurant trade, and we are having to bite the bullet and try and rush in stock."

Carly McGinnis, head of production, sales and logistics at Exploding Kittens, wants to make sure major retailers such as Walmart and Target don't run out of its games. The Los Angeles-based company is making more games this year and began shipping holiday orders in March, about four months earlier than in 2020.

She also gives Walmart and Target the option to import some of their own orders. Because the two retailers are among the top U.S. importers of containerized goods, they may get priority access to

containers and space on cargo ships.

"I've told our investors, and my internal team, something will be out of stock - there will be an issue. I don't know when and I don't know what it will be, but it's certainly going to happen," McGinnis said.

Meanwhile, Bernie Thompson said he has abandoned hope for a holiday restock of laptop docking stations and some other computer equipment he sells via Amazon and other retailers. That's because it can take more than 12 months to get some of his top-selling products, which rely on hard-to-find computer chips.

"It's too late for Christmas," said Thompson, founder of Washington-based Pluggable Technologies.

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WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

CORONAVIRUS DIARY 06/29/2021



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Old Western Town At New Dubina, Texas



My dear friend Dr. Jimmy Helms, a retired dentist whose patients included former President George H. W. Bush, has built his own old western town on his 105-acre ranch. We have known Jimmy for many years and we have become very good friends. He also has named me as a Deputy Sheriff of New Dubina. I brought a lot of my friends to visit the small western town. He always greets us with the warmest party in his house.

Jimmy's New Dubina old west town has been filmed on television many times.

Like many Texans, Jimmy always carries a gun on his compound.

Almost one and a half year later, we visited Jimmy again in his old town. We are so glad this coronavirus pandemic is almost over. We need to go and visit this beautiful land more often.

Even though Texas has passed the gun law, it still applies to people with clear criminal records who are 21 or older, or at least 18 for the people serving in the military.

facilities, amusement parks and bars.

After all, the new law really opens a new chapter for the State of Texas.

The places where the carrying of handguns is not permitted under present law do not change. Such places include polling place, government buildings, courthouses, high schools, racetracks, correctional

Before we became part of the United States, Texas was a nation state. Because Texas is such a rich state, we have rich natural resources. Many people moved to Texas looking for opportunity.



Southern DAILY Make Today Different

Editor's Choice



Emergency workers conduct search and rescue efforts at the site of a partially collapsed residential building in Surfside, near Miami Beach, Florida. REUTERS/Joe Skipper



Performers rally around the Red Flag during a show commemorating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China at the National Stadium in Beijing, China. REUTERS/Thomas Peter



Lotto-Soudal's Caleb Ewan and Bora-Hansgrohe's Peter Sagan crash during stage 3 of the Tour de France. Pool via REUTERS/Christophe Ena



Members of Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) carry the mock coffins of fellow members of PMF, who were killed by U.S. air strikes on the Syria-Iraq border, during a symbolic funeral in Baghdad, Iraq. REUTERS/Saba Kareem



Armed men who are against Taliban uprising stand at their check post, at the Ghorband District, Parwan Province, Afghanistan. REUTERS/Omar Sobhani



A giant American flag, billed as the largest free flying flag in the world by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, flies on Flag Day from the western towers of the George Washington Bridge between New York and New Jersey, in Fort Lee, New Jersey, June 14, 2021. REUTERS/Mike Segar

U.S. Announces Destinations For 55 Million More COVID Vaccine Doses



President Biden at a press conference on the final day of the G7 summit. (Photo: Brendan Smialowski/AFP via Getty Images)

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

The Biden administration on Monday announced a list of countries that will receive the remaining 55 million COVID-19 vaccine doses that the U.S. has pledged to allocate by the end of this month.

The state of play: The White House had previously named the recipients of the first 25 million of the 80 million doses that the U.S. has pledged to export, as it took its first step toward becoming a global vaccine supplier.

• The WHO-backed COVAX initiative has been short of doses due to its inability to tap into global supply.

• Countries from all over the world have been requesting doses from the U.S., but many have had to turn to Russia or China for supply instead.

By the numbers: The U.S. will share 75% of these doses through COVAX, while 25% will be shared directly with individual countries.

• The specific breakdown of doses by country was not provided, but 41 million doses will be split through COVAX between countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.



• 14 million doses, or 25% of the next batch, will be shared directly with “regional priorities” in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Eastern Europe, such as Afghanistan, the West Bank and Gaza, Ukraine, Georgia and more.

What they’re saying: “Our goals are to increase global COVID-19 vaccination coverage, prepare for surges and prioritize healthcare workers and other vulnerable populations based on public health data and acknowledged best practice, and help our neighbors and other countries in need,” the White House said in a statement.

• “And, as we have previously stated, the United States will not use its vaccines to secure favors from other coun-

tries.”
 • “The specific vaccines and amounts will be determined and shared as the administration works through the logistical, regulatory and other parameters particular to each region and country.”



The big picture: President Biden and G7 leaders have pledged to send 1 billion doses to the developing world, including 500 million from the U.S. alone. It’s not entirely clear where the remaining doses will come from.

Related

States Most Vulnerable To COVID Are Also Some Of The Least Vaccinated

Some states — particularly those in the South — are at much higher risk for bad coronavirus outbreaks not only due to low vaccination rates, but also because their populations were more vulnerable to begin with.

Why it matters: In many ways, the pandemic feels over in the U.S. But in some parts of the country, that feeling may be short-lived, especially as new variants continue to spread.

COVID vulnerability scores vs. vaccination rates across the U.S.



Reproduced from Surgo Ventures; Data: CDC, Surgo Ventures; Note: Vaccination rate indicates the percentage of the state population that is fully vaccinated; Map: Connor Rothschild/Axios

Driving the news: Although experts are concerned about the growing prevalence of the Delta variant in the U.S., evidence is accumulating that vaccines work well against it.

• “The Delta variant accounts for a rapidly rising proportion of US cases, and that proportion will continue to grow and could cause clusters and outbreaks, particularly in areas of the country and in demographic groups that have lower vaccination rates,” tweeted former CDC director Tom Frieden.



• The virus will continue to evolve as long as it’s given the opportunity to continue spreading around the world.

Between the lines: Certain risk factors, like a high rate of underlying conditions or poor access to health care, make some communities more vulnerable to severe outbreaks than others.

• Arguably, people who live in these areas would benefit most from vaccination, as they’re at highest risk.

• But that’s not what’s happening. Instead, some of the most vulnerable states in the country — like Alabama, Mississippi and Georgia — have some of the country’s lowest vaccination rates, according to an analysis by Surgo Ventures.



The bottom line: Until vaccines were

widely available, Americans suffered through the pandemic together.

• Going forward, most of the suffering will likely be concentrated among people who remain unvaccinated. (Courtesy Axios.com)



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Pandemic Brain: Half Of Americans Fear They’ll Never Fully Recover From COVID Pandemic Stress



Illustration by John S. Dykes

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

In record numbers, Americans are anxious, worried, sleep-deprived, distracted, and depressed. The Covid-19 pandemic’s triple whammy of an invisible and omnipresent threat (coronavirus infection), profound disruptions in daily life, and uncertainty for the future has thrust many people into a chronic, high-stress state that is, let’s just say, less than optimal for rational thinking or any other sort of higher-order cognitive functioning.

While the Covid-19 pandemic rages on worldwide, the immediate mental health impact of this collective trauma is coming into focus even as the outlook for long-term psychological effects remains considerably fuzzier.

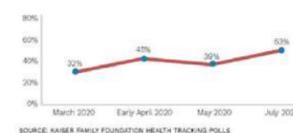
Are we experiencing a pandemic of mental illness? Much has been reported about the ill-termed “mental health pandemic” that seems to be surging through the U.S. and other countries in lockdown with lockdowns and the death, societal disruption, and economic devastation of the viral pandemic. Many experts have sounded the alarm for an approaching tsunami of psychological maladies that could sink an already overburdened mental healthcare system.



A growing cache of data seems to bear out those fears. One of the most recent, a population survey conducted in April and May, found a three-fold increase in depression since the pandemic began. The researchers examined mental health problems relative to 13 pandemic-specific stressors, including loss of a job, death of someone close to you due to Covid-19, and financial problems (see box for full list). The more stressors people reported, the more likely they were to also report symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Other studies show similar rises. From April to June, the Census Bureau tracked anxiety and depression symptoms among Americans in weekly emergency surveys, finding a sharp rise in both. In a Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking Survey conducted in July, more than half of U.S. adults (53 percent) said worry and stress related to coronavirus has had a negative impact on their mental health, up from 39 per-

cent in May. Percentage of Adults Who Report That Worry and Stress Related to Coronavirus Has Had a Negative Impact on Their Mental Health



Half of Americans say that the COVID-19 pandemic has been so stressful they worry they’ll never fully be able to de-stress, even after it’s all over.

A survey of 2,000 Americans finds stress levels have been so bad since 2020 that 25 percent would go as far as escaping to a cabin in the woods by themselves in order to get away from the daily stresses of life. Another 15 percent would need to be even more remote, choosing a desert island as their de-stressing sanctuary. Crucially, respondents add they’d have to be totally alone to truly be able to de-stress. The study, conducted by OnePoll and commissioned by CBDistillery, also finds that for many, getting rid of stress is all about the finer things in life. In fact, 35 percent of respondents think a trip to a luxury resort would do the trick.



De-stressing still takes work

The average American feels they would need 10 days in their ideal location to completely de-stress. This is borne out by the numbers, too; 55 percent admit their current stress levels have left them feeling burnt out.

Researchers also discovered that stress has a major impact on personal relationships. Seven out of 10 Americans say they get upset or frustrated with someone in their household for no reason at least once a week. These spats aren’t surprising though, as 51 percent admit they find it difficult to de-stress because they live with others.

“Sometimes it’s the smallest things that can trigger stress,” says a spokesperson for CBDistillery in a statement. “Our

results found 45 percent of respondents admitted their coping mechanisms for dealing with stress aren’t the healthiest — which can then create a cycle of stress, making these issues worse.”



With all of this in mind, it’s no wonder 46 percent say they’re desperate for a more effective way to handle stress. Nearly three in five respondents believe just having one extra hour of free time to do nothing every day would help their stress levels immensely.

Entertainment is the top coping mechanism for pandemic stress

In attempts to find their happy place and find peace, some of the top coping mechanisms Americans use include listening to music (45%), taking a walk (38%), binge-watching TV (33%), and exercising (29%). Other common coping mechanisms include cuddling with a pet, taking deep breaths (both 29%), eating a snack (28%), reading a book (26%), and playing video games (24%).

“It’s clear Americans are desperate to find a solution for their stress,” the spokesperson adds. “Whether it’s grabbing your favorite snack, taking a walk — there are so many things you can try until you find what works for you.”

Related

From The CDC: Coping With Stress

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major effect on our lives. Many of us are facing challenges that can be stressful, overwhelming, and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Public health actions, such as social distancing, are necessary to reduce the spread of COVID-19, but they can make us feel isolated and lonely and can increase stress and anxiety. Learning to cope with stress in a healthy way will make you, the people you care about, and those around you become more resilient.

Stress can cause the following:

•Feelings of fear, anger, sadness, worry, numbness, or frustration. Changes in appetite, energy, desires, and interests. Difficulty concentrating and making decisions. Difficulty sleeping or nightmares. Physical reactions, such as headaches, body pains, stomach problems, and skin rashes. Worsening of chronic health problems. Worsening of mental health conditions. Increased use of tobacco, alcohol, and other substances

It is natural to feel stress, anxiety, grief, and worry during the COVID-19 pandemic. Below are ways that you can help yourself, others, and your community manage stress.



Healthy Ways to Cope with Stress

•**Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories**, including those on social media. It’s good to be informed, but hearing about the pandemic constantly can be upsetting. Consider limiting news to just a couple times a day and disconnecting from phone, tv, and computer screens for a while.

•**Take care of your body.**

•Take deep breaths, stretch, or . Meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals. Exercise regularly. Get plenty of sleep. Avoid excessive alcohol, tobacco, and substance use. Continue with routine preventive measures (such as vaccinations, cancer screenings, etc.) as recommended by your healthcare provider. Get vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine when available.

•**Make time to unwind.** Try to do some other activities you enjoy.

•**Connect with others.** Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

•**Connect with your community- or faith-based organizations.** While social distancing measures are in place, try connecting online, through social media, or by phone or mail. (Courtesy https://www.studyfinds.org/ and CDC.gov)