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Southern DAILY

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Putin says Russia has 'nowhere to retreat' over Ukraine



Russian President Vladimir Putin attends an expanded meeting of the Defence Ministry Board in Moscow, Russia December 21, 2021. Sputnik/Mikhail

Dec 21 (Reuters) - President Vladimir Putin said on Tuesday that Russia had no room to retreat in a standoff with the United States over Ukraine and would be forced into a tough response unless the West dropped its "aggressive line".

Putin addressed his remarks to military officials as Russia pressed for an urgent U.S. and NATO reply to proposals it made last week for a binding set of security guarantees from the West. "What the U.S. is doing in Ukraine is at our doorstep... And they should understand that we have nowhere further to retreat to. Do they think we'll just watch idly?" Putin said.

"If the aggressive line of our Western colleagues continues, we will take adequate military-technical response measures and react harshly to unfriendly steps." Sponsored by Advertising Partner Report ad Putin did not spell out the nature of these measures but his phrasing mirrored that used previously by Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, who has warned that Russia

may redeploy intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe in response to what it regards as NATO plans to do the same. read more

Russia rejects Ukrainian and U.S. accusations that it may be preparing an invasion of Ukraine as early as next month by tens of thousands of Russian troops poised within reach of the border.

It says it needs pledges from the West - including a promise not to conduct NATO military activity in Eastern Europe - because its security is threatened by Ukraine's growing ties with the Western alliance and the possibility of NATO missiles being deployed against it on Ukrainian territory.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Friday that he was ready to meet Russia for "direct talks, tête-à-tête, we don't mind in what format". But Moscow has said repeatedly it sees no point in such a meeting without clarity on what the agenda would be.

A Kremlin statement said Putin stressed in a phone call with French President Emmanuel Macron that reconvening the four-power Normandy group - which

brings together the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany - would require concrete steps by Kyiv to implement existing peace agreements. Ukraine says it is Russia and its proxies who are refusing to engage.

With Western powers keen to show Russia they are solid in their support of Ukraine and NATO, Germany's new Chancellor Olaf Scholz also spoke by phone with Putin.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday ruled out an in-person meeting between Biden and Putin for now. "I think we have to see if, in the first instance, there's any progress diplomatically," Blinken said in a news briefing when asked if an in-person summit could happen to try to ease the tensions.

U.S. SUPPLIES

Karen Donfried, the U.S. State Department's top diplomat for Europe, said in a briefing with reporters that Washington was prepared to engage with Moscow via three channels - bilaterally, through the NATO-Russia Council that last met in 2019, and at the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

In the meantime, she said, the United States would continue to send military equipment and supplies to Ukraine in the weeks and months ahead - something that has antagonised Moscow.

"As President (Joe) Biden has told President Putin, should Russia further invade Ukraine, we will provide additional defensive materials to the Ukrainians above and beyond that which we are already in the process of providing," she said.

Washington is considering tough export control measures to disrupt Russia's economy if Putin invades Ukraine, a Biden administration official told Reuters, and the measures would be discussed in a meeting of senior officials on Tuesday. read more

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said the alliance would seek meaningful discussions with Moscow early next year.

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu alleged that more than 120 U.S. private military contractors were active in eastern Ukraine, where Ukrainian troops have been fighting Russian-backed separatists since 2014, and said they were

preparing a "provocation" involving chemical substances.

He offered no evidence in support of the claim, which Pentagon spokesman John Kirby described as "completely false".

Throughout the crisis, Russia has veered between harsh rhetoric, calls for dialogue and dire warnings, with Ryabkov repeatedly comparing the situation to the 1962 Cuban missile crisis when the world stood on the brink of nuclear war.

Many of Moscow's demands, including for a block on NATO membership for Ukraine and the withdrawal of U.S. and other allied troops from Eastern Europe, are seen as non-starters by Washington and its partners.

But rejecting them out of hand would risk closing off any space for dialogue and further fuelling the crisis.

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WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

12/21/2021



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Senator Manchin Refuses To Support Biden's Bill



Senator Joe Manchin has called off negotiations with President Biden on the Build Back Better bill.

The plan centered on universal pre-kindergarten programs to be funded for a full ten years as well as an expansion of the Affordable Care Act and hundreds of billions dollars to address climate change.

White House Press Secretary

Psaki said that Senator Manchin came to the White House and submitted in person to the president a written outline for the Build Back Better bill that was the same size and scope as the president's framework. Later, the senator said "no," and ended the negotiation. He said, "I cannot vote to continue with this piece of legislation. I just can't."

The Senator also was

concerned about what the legislation would do to the nation's rising debt and soaring inflation.

Today the Biden administration is really facing big challenges and not just the pandemic. They can't control the economy which is also headed in the wrong direction with higher prices. And inflation is making the people's lives more difficult while the world's politics are also in chaos.

It has been almost one year since Biden became President. Both parties in Congress are still fighting in many areas. Republican members just can't agree on many bills sponsored by the Democrats.

It is very sad that we are living in such a difficult time here at home and around the globe. Unless we have real leaders, we don't see any bright future.



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Editor's Choice



People queue to be tested for COVID-19 in Times Square, as the Omicron coronavirus variant continues to spread in Manhattan, New York City. REUTERS/Andrew Kelly



Sisters Julianna Sims, 21, and Natalie, 15 comfort each other while visiting the destroyed theater at the American Legion after a devastating outbreak of tornadoes ripped through several U.S. states in Mayfield, Kentucky. REUTERS/Cheney Orr



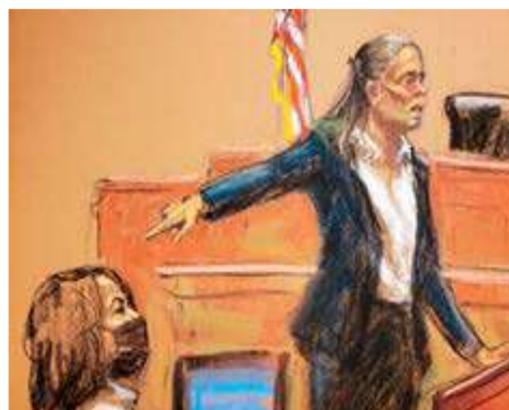
Aerial view shows vehicles and buildings inundated by floods in Shah Alam's Taman Sri Muda, one of the worst hit neighborhoods in Selangor state, Malaysia. REUTERS/Ebrahim Harris



Supporters of Chile's President-elect Gabriel Boric celebrate after their candidate won the presidential election, in Santiago, Chile. REUTERS/Ivan Alvarado



A man walks next to a truck carrying the coffin of Daniel Arnulfo Perez Uxla, who died in a truck crash along other Guatemalan migrants in southern Mexico, on their way to a mass in El Tejar, Guatemala. REUTERS/Sandra Sebastian



Maurene Comey points at Ghislaine Maxwell as she delivers the rebuttal argument during the trial of Maxwell, the Jeffrey Epstein associate accused of sex trafficking, in a courtroom sketch in New York City. REUTERS/Jane Rosenberg

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

BUSINESS

U.S. Army Pools Resources To Aid In Race For Coronavirus Vaccine



A research assistant with the Emerging Infectious Disease Branch (EIDB), at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR), studies coronavirus protein samples, June 1, 2020. The EIDB is part of WRAIR's effort to produce a COVID-19 vaccine candidate. (Photo/Mike Walters/U.S. Army)

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

A supply cart rolls down the long corridors at the institute just outside Washington, D.C., past labs and displays picturing nineteenth century scientists, letters and artifacts. There are closed doors with small signs on the wall. One says "Viral diseases." Another simply, "Malaria." Inside one of these offices is the scientist heading Army efforts to aid in the race for a vaccine for the current pandemic: Kayvon Modjarrad, a civilian doctor. He's a large man, with wireless glasses and an easy-going manner. His parents came from Iran to New York City back in the 1970s. He became interested in vaccines after taking a class as a medical student.

"I decided that I wanted to work on vaccines," he says, "because it is the most cost effective and impactful public health tool that we have to saving lives." Modjarrad says he knew he was interested in medicine early on, "I got my first Fisher-Price doctor's kit when I was four for the Persian New Year." Modjarrad is developing the Army's coronavirus vaccines, but is also part of Operation Warp Speed, the government's efforts to help private companies in the U.S. and internationally create coronavirus vaccines.



Agi Hajduczki is a research scientist at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Infectious Diseases. She is part of a team working on a COVID-19 vaccine. (Photo/Tom Bowman/NPR)

"The most cost effective and impactful public health tool"

"So our institution and our network of sites here in the US and internationally are involved with many different companies," he says. That means sharing the Army's expertise. Labs. Research animals. Locations for human trials, in Washington, D.C., San Diego and San Antonio. The Army also has partners and labs in Europe,

Asia and Africa. Modjarrad and other officials liken the vaccine effort to a horse race, with multiple companies coming out of the gate at the same time. "Sort of whole of government approach has been putting our bets on multiple horses because we're not interested in one particular horse," he says. "We're interested in a horse, at least one horse, making it across the finish line as fast as possible and being safe and effective and accessible for our entire public and population."

"It's not like after the Phase three trial, 'Hey, the vaccine is ready for everyone,'" Modjarrad says. "We start to phase it into the population and we still collect information on how people are responding to that vaccine until we get to a point where it becomes broadly available to the entire population."



Kayvon Modjarrad is the scientist heading Army efforts to aid in the race for a vaccine for the current pandemic. (Photo/Samir Deshpande/Walter Reed Army Institute of Infectious Diseases)

Modjarrad says that this pandemic will pass, there will be multiple vaccines and people will be protected from this going on in the future, "but we have to be prepared" for future pandemics, he says, "these emerging infectious threats, Zika, Ebola coronavirus, a new strain of influenza. It's not going away." The Army has a long history of producing vaccines. Modjarrad worked on vaccines for Zika and MERS. And one recently approved for Ebola. And then there's Walter Reed, the namesake. He was an Army major in the early 1900s who discovered that yellow fever was spread by mosquitos, not poor sanitation as some believed at the time. The virus had a devastating effect on soldiers and those working in tropical climates.

"So we sprayed and killed all mosquitoes," Modjarrad says. "People weren't dying. They built the Panama Canal."

Diversity and inclusion
Modjarrad's boss, Nelson Michael, director

of the Center for Infectious Disease Research, is in a nearby office. There are colored maps of Africa and the world in Michael's office. A picture of him in his uniform, when he was an Army colonel. He's often on the phone talking with participants of Operation Warp Speed, a name that has caused some to worry the speed has more to do with politics than science. President Trump himself has fed that perception by suggesting a vaccine



could be ready before Election Day, a view scientists say is unlikely.

"There's been a lot of concern about what's being sacrificed by moving so quickly," he acknowledges. "And I can tell you, one thing is very clear it's being sacrificed and it's money." Michael says in the past vaccine development would take so long — often years — in part because companies and governments were wary of making an investment. A vaccine would be manufactured only after all approvals were done. The coronavirus changed all that. "Now, everyone's throwing financial caution to the winds and billions of dollars are in play," Michael says. "But now you have, of course, a worldwide pandemic that's costing trillions of dollars and impacting, you know, millions of people's lives." Michael is also concerned about another controversy: Are human trials getting to a good cross section of the population, especially by race? "If you look at the impact of the SARS-CoV-2 infection and the disease it causes, COVID-19, there is a disproportional impact on people of color in the United States," he says. "So you are at much greater risk if you're over 65, if you have comorbidities, hypertension, obesity."

All those working on the vaccine, whether private or government efforts "want to do better. I can tell you that."



Nelson Michael, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research, says a strong public health campaign will be needed to convince Americans the vaccine is safe and effective. (Photo/Tom Bowman/NPR)

Michael acknowledges the suspicions especially in the Black community, who have been victims of government studies. The most horrific was the Tuskegee Experiment, which from the 1930s in the 1970s followed hundreds of Black men with syphilis over the course of their lives, failing to tell them about the diagnosis and refusing to treat them. For this vaccine, says Michael, the government has created community engagement groups to reach out to African American and Native Americans in particular. "I'd say Native populations are also very mistrustful because of the history," Michael adds. "And you know there are lots of issues, of course, that are hitting our country right now all at the same time, systemic racism."

But he says there likely to be an even greater challenge once a vaccine is approved. "I am more concerned about how we're going to execute a vaccine campaign than I am about how we're going to test this vaccine," he says. "How are we going to convince Americans that they should sign up for their vaccine?" Some polls show at least 30% of Americans say they won't take the vaccine. There are scientists who say at least 40% of Americans must take the vaccine. Michael puts that percentage even higher. "What we really need is to have somewhere between 70% and 90% of Americans that either have been vaccinated and have immunity that way or have been exposed and survived and have immunity because of natural infection," he says. A vaccine from at least one of the private companies is expected earlier next year. The Army also continues to work on its own vaccine that can target future coronaviruses. No matter what, a strong public health campaign will be needed, Michael says, to convince Americans the vaccine is safe and effective. One part of that is to reach out to those people Americans tend to trust most: Their family doctor. (Courtesy <https://www.npr.org/>)

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

COMMUNITY

People Got Tired Of All The Restrictions

People Got Fed Up With Flu Pandemic Measures One Hundred Years Ago – And Paid A Price



Armistice Day celebrations on Nov. 11, 1918, worried public health experts as people crowded together in cities across the U.S. (AP Photo)

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

Picture the United States struggling to deal with a deadly pandemic. State and local officials enact a slate of social-distancing measures, gathering bans, closure orders and mask mandates in an effort to stem the tide of cases and deaths. The public responds with widespread compliance mixed with more than a hint of grumbling, pushback and even outright defiance. As the days turn into weeks turn into months, the strictures become harder to tolerate. Theater and dance hall owners complain about their financial losses. Clergy bemoan church closures while offices, factories and in some cases even saloons are allowed to remain open. Officials argue whether children are safer in classrooms or at home. Many citizens refuse to don face masks while in public, some complaining that they're uncomfortable and others arguing that the government has no right to infringe on their civil liberties. As familiar as it all may sound in 2021, these are real descriptions of the U.S. during the deadly 1918 influenza pandemic. In my research as a historian of medicine, I've seen again and again the many ways our current pandemic has mirrored the one experienced by our forebears a century ago.



No mask, no service on streetcar in 1918. (Photo/Universal History Archive/Universal Images Group via Getty Images)

As the COVID-19 pandemic enters its second year, many people want to know when life will go back to how it was before the coronavirus. History, of course, isn't an exact template for what the future holds. But the way Americans emerged from the earlier pandemic could suggest what post-pandemic life will be like this time around.

Sick and tired, ready for pandemic's end
Like COVID-19, the 1918 influenza pandemic hit hard and fast, going from a handful of reported cas-

es in a few cities to a nationwide outbreak within a few weeks. Many communities issued several rounds of various closure orders – corresponding to the ebbs and flows of their epidemics – in an attempt to keep the disease in check. These social-distancing orders worked to reduce cases and deaths. Just as today, however, they often proved difficult to maintain. By the late autumn, just weeks after the social-distancing orders went into effect, the pandemic seemed to be coming to an end as the number of new infections declined.



People were ready to be done with masks as soon as it looked like the flu was receding. (PhotoQuest/Archive Photos via Getty Images)

People clamored to return to their normal lives. Businesses pressed officials to be allowed to reopen. Believing the pandemic was over, state and local authorities began rescinding public health edicts. The nation turned its efforts to addressing the devastation influenza had wrought.

For the friends, families and co-workers of the hundreds of thousands of Americans who had died, post-pandemic life was filled with sadness and grief. Many of those still recovering from their bouts with the malady required support and care as they recuperated. At a time when there was no federal or state safety net, charitable organizations sprang into action to provide resources for families who had lost their breadwinners, or to take in the countless children left orphaned by the disease.

For the vast majority of Americans, though, life after the pandemic seemed to be a headlong rush to normalcy. Starved for weeks of their nights on the town, sporting events, religious services, classroom interactions and family gatherings, many were eager to return to their old lives.

Taking their cues from officials who had – somewhat prematurely – declared an end to the pandemic, Americans overwhelmingly hurried to return to their pre-pandemic routines. They packed into movie theaters and dance halls, crowded in stores and shops, and gathered with friends and family.

How many extra deaths occurred in 1918-1920 pandemic?

Excess deaths in the state of Michigan over the course of the influenza pandemic reflect the disease surges that occurred across the nation – an initial wave in

spring 1918, a second bigger wave in fall of that year, another that extended into that winter and a final wave at the start of 1920. Excess deaths are those above the average amount public health officials expect for the time of year, based on what's happened normally in the past.

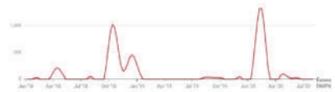


Chart: The Conversation, CC-BY-ND Source: Siddharth Chandra, Julia Christensen, Madhur Chandra, Nigel Paneth, "Pandemic Reemergence and Four Waves of Excess Mortality Coinciding With the 1918 Influenza Pandemic in Michigan: Insights for COVID-19", American Journal of Public Health 111, no. 3 (March 1, 2021): pp. 430-437.

Officials had warned the nation that cases and deaths likely would continue for months to come. The burden of public health, however, now rested not on policy but rather on individual responsibility. Predictably, the pandemic wore on, stretching into a third deadly wave that lasted through the spring of 1919, with a fourth wave hitting in the winter of 1920. Some officials blamed the resurgence on careless Americans. Others downplayed the new cases or turned their attention to more routine public health matters, including other diseases, restaurant inspections and sanitation. Despite the persistence of the pandemic, influenza quickly became old news. Once a regular feature of front pages, reportage rapidly dwindled to small, sporadic clippings buried in the backs of the nation's newspapers. The nation carried on, inured to the toll the pandemic had taken and the deaths yet to come. People were largely unwilling to return to socially and economically disruptive public health measures.



No matter the era, aspects of daily life go on even during a pandemic. Chicago History Museum/Archive (Photos via Getty Images)

It's hard to hang in there
Our predecessors might be forgiven for not staying the course longer. First, the nation was eager to celebrate the recent end of World War I, an event that perhaps loomed larger in the lives of Americans than even the pandemic.

Second, death from disease was a much larger part of life in the early 20th century, and scourges such as diphtheria, measles, tuberculosis, typhoid, whooping cough, scarlet fever and pneumonia each routinely killed tens of thousands of Americans every year. Moreover, neither the cause nor the epidemiology of influenza was well understood, and many experts remained unconvinced that social distancing measures had any measurable impact.

Finally, there were no effective flu vaccines to rescue the world from the ravages of the disease. In fact, the influenza virus would not be discovered for another 15 years, and a safe and effective vaccine was not available for the general population until 1945. Given the limited information they had and the tools at their disposal, Americans perhaps endured the public health restrictions for as long as they reasonably could.



The COVID-19 vaccine won't end the pandemic right away.

A century later, and a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, it is understandable that people now are all too eager to return to their old lives. The end of this pandemic inevitably will come, as it has with every previous one humankind has experienced.

If we have anything to learn from the history of the 1918 influenza pandemic, as well as our experience thus far with COVID-19, however, it is that a premature return to pre-pandemic life risks more cases and more deaths.

And today's Americans have significant advantages over those of a century ago. We have a much better understanding of virology and epidemiology. We know that social distancing and masking work to help save lives. Most critically, we have multiple safe and effective vaccines that are being deployed, with the pace of vaccinations increasingly weekly. Sticking with all these coronavirus-fighting factors or easing off on them could mean the difference between a new disease surge and a quicker end to the pandemic. COVID-19 is much more transmissible than influenza, and several troubling SARS-CoV-2 variants are already spreading around the globe. The deadly third wave of influenza in 1919 shows what can happen when people prematurely relax their guard. (Courtesy <https://theconversation.com/>)