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Pandemic Cancels Texas African Business Summit



Inside C2

Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

Southern Daily News is published by Southern News Group Daily

Thursday, December 09 2021

Evergrande's debt deadline passes as Kaisa adds to China's property crisis



MOSCOW, Dec 8 (Reuters) - Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday that Russia would send ideas to Washington within a week

MOSCOW, Dec 8 (Reuters) - Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday that Russia would send ideas to Washington within a week to follow up his talks with U.S. President Joe Biden on the Ukraine crisis.

Neither side spoke of a breakthrough after the two-hour video call but they agreed to keep talking about what the Kremlin called "this complex confrontational situation".

"We agreed we will continue this discussion and we'll do it in a substantive way. We will exchange our ideas in the very near future. Russia will draw up its ideas literally in the coming days, within a week we will give this to the U.S. side to consider," Putin told reporters.

The two leaders used Tuesday's call to set out their opposing positions on Ukraine, which says it is braced for a possible invasion by tens of thousands of Russian troops close to its border.

Biden warned Putin that the West would impose "strong economic and other measures" on Moscow if it invaded, while Putin demanded

guarantees that NATO would not expand eastward. read more

In his first public comments since the conversation, Putin said it was "provocative" to pose the question of whether Russia planned to attack Ukraine, and once again accused Kyiv and NATO of threatening Russia's security.

"We cannot fail to be concerned about the prospect of Ukraine's possible admission to NATO, because this will undoubtedly be followed by the deployment there of military contingents, bases and weapons that threaten us," he said.

It would be "criminal inaction" on Russia's part not to respond, he said.

"We are working on the assumption that our concerns, at least this time, will be heard."

FIGHTER JETS
Russia, Ukraine and NATO have all stepped up military exercises as tensions have mounted in the past month.

Russian President Vladimir Putin chairs a meeting on economic issues via a video link in Sochi, Russia December 7,

2021. Sputnik/Mikhail Metzel/Pool via REUTERS

U.S. President Joe Biden holds virtual talks with Russia's President Vladimir Putin amid Western fears that Moscow plans to attack Ukraine, as Secretary of State Antony Blinken listens with other officials during a secure video call from the Situation Room at the White House in Washington, U.S., December 7, 2021. The White House/Handout via REUTERS

Russian military aircraft were scrambled on Wednesday to escort French Rafale and Mirage fighter jets flying over the Black Sea, RIA news agency quoted the defence ministry as saying.

Russia's foreign ministry said it had handed a note of protest to the U.S. embassy over "dangerous" flights of U.S. and NATO military planes near Russia's borders.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy welcomed Biden's "personal role" in trying to attain peace in eastern Ukraine, where Ukraine says more than 14,000 people have been killed in seven years of

fighting with Russian-backed separatists. read more

Zelenskiy said he hoped Ukraine and Russia could agree a new ceasefire and prisoner exchanges when their representatives held talks on the conflict in Ukraine's easterly Donbass region on Wednesday.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba told Reuters the talks between Biden and Putin had served the purpose of "deterrence and de-escalation". read more

A Russian foreign ministry official was quoted as saying the United States might be included for the first time in a group of countries working to end the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

RIA quoted the official, Oleg Krasnitsky, as saying there was no reason why the United States should not join the so-called Normandy grouping - comprising Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany - that has tried but so far failed to end the war.

"A lot depends on the position of Washington in settling the Ukrainian conflict. In principle, if the U.S. is really ready to

make a contribution, we've always been open to America exercising its influence on Kyiv," he was quoted as saying.

The remarks appeared to indicate that Moscow was open to an offer by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken last week for Washington to facilitate talks on the fighting.

In eastern Ukraine, some residents were sceptical that the Biden-Putin call would make any difference.

"We have been living in war for many years. And it is terrible that we got used to it. I don't know what will happen next. We'll see," said a 55-year-old teacher who gave his name as Vladislav.

Alexander Pipchenko, 52, said: "It was pointless. It's been going on for eight years already. In my opinion, it will not bear any fruit."

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WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

12/08/2021



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U.S. Will Boycott The Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics

President Biden made it official: The U.S. will not send any American government officials to the 2022 Winter Olympics. White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said that while American athletes would be able to compete in the Winter Games in Beijing, there would be no delegation of American officials sent to the games. She said the

boycott was a response to human rights abuses in Xinjiang.

In the meantime, the Chinese government said that those calling for a boycott were "grandstanding," and further stated that, "If the U.S. insists in willfully clinging to its course, China will take resolute countermeasures."



The U.S. Olympic committee issued a statement saying that it did not support a boycott preventing American athletes from competing in Beijing.

Just a couple of weeks ago, the world Ping Pong championship tournament held successful events in Houston, Texas. We are so

glad that many of the young people came together not only to compete in the games, but also to promote friendship between all the people.

Today our world already has more trouble than it can handle. We hope the two countries will continue to improve their relationship which really relates directly to world peace and prosperity.



Southern DAILY Make Today Different

Editor's Choice



A Saudi girl exercises during her training session in the Fight Club gym in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia December 8, 2021. REUTERS/Ahmed Yosri



German Chancellor Angela Merkel, a top candidate of the Christian Democratic Union Party (CDU) for the upcoming general elections reacts at the final election rally in Munich, Germany September 22, 2017. REUTERS/Michaela Rehle



Pope Francis stumbles as he boards his plane before departing from Athens International Airport, in Athens, Greece. REUTERS/Akis Konstantinidis



German Chancellor Angela Merkel and leader of the Christian Democratic Union party CDU stands in front of her election campaign tour bus before a CDU board meeting in Berlin September 16, 2013. REUTERS/Fabrizio Bensch



German Construction Minister Angela Merkel (L) jokes with Justice Minister Sabine Leutheuser-Schwarzenberger (R) as she notices they are dressed with similar jackets prior to a weekly cabinet meeting, February 22, 1995. REUTERS/Michael Urban



A combination picture shows German Chancellor Angela Merkel wearing jackets of different colours while attending various public events from August 2004 to August 2021. REUTERS/Staff/File Photos

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

BUSINESS

COVID-19 Toll Not As Heavy, But The Pandemic Is Not Over

U.S. COVID-19 Deaths Officially Surpass 1918 U.S. Flu Deaths



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

U.S. COVID-19 deaths have now surpassed the 675,000 estimated deaths that occurred during the H1N1 influenza pandemic of 1918...

With a national population of around 103 million people at that time -- about a third of the current total of 330 million Americans -- the 1918 pandemic killed roughly 1 in 150 people in the U.S.;

Globally, the 1918 flu wrought more havoc than COVID, too, infecting about 500 million people, or a third of the world's population at that time.

SARS-CoV-2 has infected nearly 230 million people around the world and killed some 4.7 million of them.

There are many reasons for the differences in infection and mortality. The 1918 pandemic hit while the world was enmeshed in World War I and international travel was frequent; hospitals didn't have the same medicines and technology at their disposal to treat patients;



During the COVID-19 pandemic, global travel came to a halt and public health measures such as social distancing and masking were implemented relatively rapidly...

Still, misinformation and disinformation campaigns stymied the effectiveness of some of those approaches in the U.S., and the virus threw humanity a curveball with the far more transmissible Delta variant.

"Since May, [more than] 100,000 Americans unnecessarily lost their lives because they chose not to get vaccinated," tweeted Peter Hotez, MD, PhD, of Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

With the U.S. now averaging some 2,000 deaths per day, and the potential for sustained, high levels of transmission to spawn another variant, SARS-CoV-2 can still wreak much more havoc.

the risk that influenza poses. Since 1918, three other influenza pandemics occurred in the U.S.: H2N2 in 1957, H3N2 in 1968, and H1N1 in 2009.

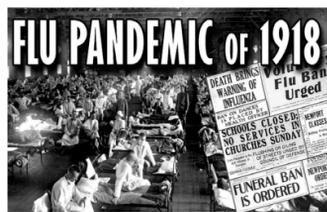


A reflection on the progress made since the 1918 pandemic by two CDC scientists published in Science for the 100-year anniversary of that outbreak concludes: "Philosopher George Santayana pointed out, 'Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.'"

COVID Has Now Killed As Many Americans As The 1918-19 Flu COVID-19 has now killed as many Americans as the 1918-19 Spanish flu pandemic did -- approximately 675,000.

The U.S. population a century ago was just one-third of what it is today, meaning the flu cut a much bigger, more lethal swath through the country. But the COVID-19 crisis is by any measure a colossal tragedy in its own right, especially given the incredible advances in scientific knowledge since then and the failure to take maximum advantage of the vaccines available this time.

midst. Instead, scientists hope it becomes a mild seasonal bug as human immunity strengthens through vaccination and repeated infection. That could take time.



"We hope it will be like getting a cold, but there's no guarantee," said Emory University biologist Rustom Antia, who suggests an optimistic scenario in which this could happen over a few years.

For now, the pandemic still has the United States and other parts of the world firmly in its jaws. While the delta-fueled surge in infections may have peaked, U.S. deaths are running at over 1,900 a day on average, the highest level since early March, and the country's overall toll topped 675,000 Monday, according to the count kept by Johns Hopkins University, though the real number is believed to be higher.

The 1918-19 influenza pandemic killed 50 million victims globally at a time when the world had one-quarter the population it does now. Global deaths from COVID-19 now stand at more than 4.6 million.

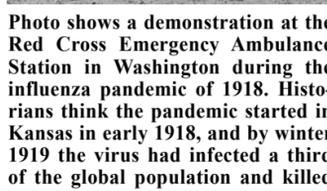


Photo shows a demonstration at the Red Cross Emergency Ambulance Station in Washington during the influenza pandemic of 1918. Historians think the pandemic started in Kansas in early 1918, and by winter 1919 the virus had infected a third of the global population and killed

at least 50 million people, including 675,000 Americans. Some estimates put the toll as high as 100 million. (Library of Congress via AP, File)

The Spanish flu's U.S. death toll is a rough guess, given the incomplete records of the era and the poor scientific understanding of what caused the illness. The 675,000 figure comes from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The ebbing of COVID-19 could happen if the virus progressively weakens as it mutates and more and more humans' immune systems learn to attack it. Vaccination and surviving infection are the main ways the immune system improves.

Under that optimistic scenario, schoolchildren would get mild illness that trains their immune systems. As they grow up, the children would carry the immune response memory, so that when they are old and vulnerable, the coronavirus would be no more dangerous than cold viruses.

The same goes for today's vaccinated teens: Their immune systems would get stronger through the shots and mild infections.

"We will all get infected," Antia predicted. "What's important is whether the infections are severe."



Something similar happened with the H1N1 flu virus, the culprit in the 1918-19 pandemic. It encountered too many people who were immune, and it also eventually weakened through mutation. H1N1 still circulates today, but immunity acquired through infection and vaccination has triumphed.

Before COVID-19, the 1918-19 flu was universally considered the worst pandemic disease in human history. Whether the current scourge ultimately proves deadlier is unclear.

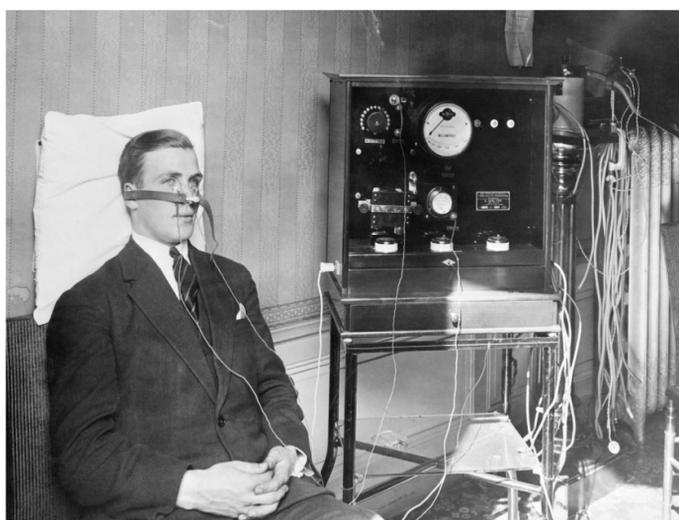
(Article continues below)

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

COMMUNITY

(Article continues from above)

U.S. COVID-19 Deaths Officially Surpass 1918 U.S. Flu Deaths



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

In many ways, the 1918-19 flu -- which was wrongly named Spanish flu because it first received widespread news coverage in Spain -- was worse. Spread by the mobility of World War I, it killed young, healthy adults in vast numbers.

No vaccine existed to slow it, and there were no antibiotics to treat secondary bacterial infections. And, of course, the world was much smaller.

Yet jet travel and mass migrations threaten to increase the toll of the current pandemic. Much of the world is unvaccinated. And the coronavirus has been full of surprises.

Professor Border of the University of Lyon in France demonstrates a machine he claimed could cure cold and flu symptoms in under one hour in about 1919.

Markel said he is continually astounded by the magnitude of the disruption the pandemic has brought to the planet. "I was gobsmacked by the size of the quarantines," the Chinese government undertook initially, Markel said, "and I've since been gob-gob-smacked to the nth degree."

Just under 64% of the U.S. population has received at least one dose of the vaccine, with state rates ranging from a high of approximately 77% in Vermont and Massachusetts to lows around 46% to 49% in Idaho, Wyoming, West Virginia and Mississippi. Globally, about 43% of the pop-

ulation has received at least one dose, according to Our World in Data, with some African countries just beginning to give their first shots.

"We know that all pandemics come to an end," said Dr. Jeremy Brown, director of emergency care research at the National Institutes of Health, who wrote a book on influenza. "They can do terrible things while they're raging."

COVID-19 could have been far less lethal in the U.S. if more people had gotten vaccinated faster, "and we still have an opportunity to turn it around," Brown said. "We often lose sight of how lucky we are to take these things for granted."

The current vaccines work extremely well in preventing severe disease and death from the variants of the virus that have emerged so far.

It will be crucial for scientists to make sure the ever-mutating virus hasn't changed enough to evade vaccines or to cause severe illness in unvaccinated children, Antia said. If the virus changes significantly, a new vaccine using the technology behind the Pfizer and Moderna shots could be produced in 110

days, a Pfizer executive said Wednesday. The company is studying whether annual shots with the current vaccine will be required to keep immunity high.

One plus: The coronavirus mutates at a slower pace than flu viruses, making it a more stable target for vaccination, said Ann Marie Kimball, a retired University of Washington professor of epidemiology.

So, will the current pandemic unseat the 1918-19 flu pandemic as the worst in human history? "You'd like to say no. We have a lot more infection control, a lot more ability to support people who are sick. We have modern medicine," Kimball said. "But we have a lot more people and a lot more mobility. ... The fear is eventually a new strain gets around a particular vaccine target."

To those unvaccinated individuals who are counting on infection rather than vaccination for immune protection, Kimball said, "The trouble is, you have to survive infection to acquire the immunity." It's easier, she said, to go to the drugstore and get a shot. (Courtesy apnews.com)

The 1918 Flu Pandemic Never Really Ended After infecting millions of people worldwide, the 1918 flu strain shifted -- and then stuck around.

An unthinkable 50 to 100 million people worldwide died from the 1918-1919 flu pandemic commonly known as the "Spanish Flu." It was the deadliest global pandemic since the Black Death, and rare among flu viruses for striking down the young and healthy, often within days of exhibiting the first symptoms.



What's even more remarkable about the 1918 flu, say infectious disease experts, is that it never really went away. After infecting an estimated 500 million people worldwide in 1918 and 1919 (a third of the global population), the H1N1 strain that caused the Spanish flu receded into the background and stuck around as the regular seasonal flu. But every so often, direct descendants of the 1918 flu combined with bird flu or swine flu to create powerful new pandemic strains, which is exactly what happened in 1957, 1968 and 2009.

pandemics."

The Deadly Virus Struck in Three Waves

Jeffrey Taubenberger was part of the pioneering scientific team that first isolated and sequenced the genome of the 1918 flu virus in the late 1990s. The painstaking process involved extracting viral RNA from autopsied lung samples taken from American soldiers who died from the 1918 flu, plus one diseased lung preserved in the Alaskan permafrost for nearly 100 years. Now chief of the Viral Pathogenesis and Evolution Section at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Taubenberger explains that genetic analyses of the 1918 flu indicate that it started as an avian flu and represented a completely new viral strain when it made the leap to humans shortly before 1918. Lab tests of the reconstructed 1918 virus show that in its original form, the virus's novel encoded proteins made it 100 times more lethal in mice than today's seasonal flu. The 1918 pandemic struck in three distinct waves over a 12-month period. It first appeared in the spring of 1918 in North America and Europe largely in the trenches of World War I, then reemerged in its deadliest form in the fall of 1918, killing tens of millions of people worldwide from September through November. The final wave swept across Australia, the United States and Europe in the late winter and spring of 1919. But did the 1918 flu simply "go away" after that third wave? Absolutely not, says Taubenberger.

Virus Mutates Into Seasonal Flu



Since the whole world had been exposed to the virus, and had therefore developed natural immunity against it, the 1918 strain began to mutate and evolve in a process called "antigenic drift." Slightly altered versions of the 1918 flu reemerged in the winters of 1919-1920 and 1920-1921, but they were far less deadly and nearly indistinguishable from the seasonal flu. "The 1918 flu definitely lost its real virulence by the early 1920s," says Taubenberger. But what's truly incredible, according to genetic analyses, is that the same novel strain of flu first introduced in 1918 appears to be the direct ancestor of every seasonal and pandemic flu we've had over the past century. "You can still find the genetic traces of the 1918 virus in the seasonal flu that circulate today," says Taubenberger. "Every single human infection with influenza A in the past 102 years is derived from that one introduction of the 1918 flu."

Welcome to the Pandemic Era

The 1918 flu pandemic was by far the deadliest flu outbreak of the 20th century to date, but it wasn't the only one to qualify as a pandemic. Even with the advent of the first seasonal flu vaccines after World War II, the flu virus has proven capable of some unexpected and deadly genetic tricks. In a normal flu season, vaccine scientists can track the most active viral strains and produce a vaccine that protects against changes in the human flu virus from year to year. But every so often, viral genes from the animal kingdom enter the mix. "If one animal is infected with two different influenza viruses at the same time," says Taubenberger, "maybe one virus from a bird and another from a human, those genes can mix and match to create a brand new virus that never existed before." That's what happened in 1957 when the 1918 flu, which is an H1N1 virus, swapped genes with another bird flu giving us the H2N2 pandemic, which claimed a million lives worldwide.



A man receives a shave from a barber wearing a mask during the ongoing flu pandemic, Chicago, Illinois, 1918. Chicago Sun-Times/Chicago Daily News Collection/Chicago History Museum/Getty Images.

It happened again in 1968 with the creation of the so-called "Hong Kong Flu," an H3N2 virus that killed another million people. The so-called "Swine Flu" pandemic of 2009 has an even deeper backstory. When humans became infected with the 1918 pandemic flu, which was originally a bird flu, we also passed it on to pigs. "One branch of the 1918 flu permanently adapted to pigs and became swine influenza that was seen in pigs in the US every year after 1918 and spread around the world," says Taubenberger. In 2009, a strain of swine flu swapped genes with both human influenza and avian influenza to create a new variety of H1N1 flu that was "more like 1918 than had been seen in a long time," says Taubenberger. Around 300,000 people died from the 2009 flu pandemic. All told, if 50 to 100 million people died in the 1918 and 1919 pandemic, and tens of millions more have died in the ensuing century of seasonal flu and pandemic outbreaks, then all of those deaths can be attributed to the single and accidental emergence in humans of the very successful and stubborn 1918 virus.

"We're still living in what I would call the '1918 pandemic era' 102 years later" says Taubenberger, "and I don't know how long it will last." (Courtesy history.com)