

## INTERNATIONAL

G-7

## 'Belt and Road Initiative'

## Biden urges G-7 leaders to 'compete' with China

CARBIS BAY, England, June 12, (AP) — Leaders of the world's largest economies unveiled an infrastructure plan Saturday for the developing world to compete with China's global initiatives, but there was no immediate consensus on how forcefully to call out Beijing over human rights abuses.

Citing China for its forced labor practices is part of President Joe Biden's campaign to persuade fellow democratic leaders to present a more unified front to compete economically with Beijing. But while they agreed to work toward competing against China, there was less unity on how adversarial a public position the group should take.

Canada, the United Kingdom and France largely endorsed Biden's position, while Germany, Italy and the European Union showed more hesitancy during Saturday's first session of the Group of Seven summit, according to a senior Biden administration official. The official who briefed reporters was not authorized to publicly discuss the private meeting and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Biden held talks with France's Emmanuel Macron, who said cooperation was needed on a range of issues and told the American president that "it's great to have a U.S. president part of the club and very willing to cooperate." Relations between the allies had become strained during the four years of Donald Trump's presidency and his "America first" foreign policy.

Biden also met with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in between Saturday's G-7 sessions, according to photographs her spokeswoman tweeted. Merkel is scheduled to meet with Biden at the White House next month.

White House officials have said Biden wants the leaders of the G-7 nations — the U.S., Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Japan and Italy — to speak in a single voice against forced labor practices targeting China's Uyghur Muslims and other ethnic minorities. Biden hopes the denunciation will be part of a joint statement to be released Sunday when the summit ends, but some European allies are reluctant to split so forcefully with Beijing.

China had become one of the more compelling subplots of the wealthy nations' summit, their first since 2019. Last year's gathering was canceled because of COVID-19, and recovery from the pandemic is dominating this year's discussions, with leaders expected to commit to sharing at least 1 billion vaccine shots with struggling countries.

The allies also took the first steps in presenting an infrastructure proposal called "Build Back Better for the World," a name echoing Biden's campaign slogan. The plan calls for spending hundreds of billions of dollars in collaboration with the private sector while adhering to climate standards and labor practices.

## Projects

It's designed to compete with China's trillion-dollar "Belt and Road Initiative," which has launched a network of projects and maritime lanes that snake around large portions of the world, primarily Asia and Africa. Critics say China's projects often create massive debt and expose nations to undue influence by Beijing.

Britain also wants the world's democracies to become less reliant on the Asian economic giant. The U.K. government said Saturday's discussions would tackle "how we can shape the global system to deliver for our people in support of our values," including by diversifying supply chains that currently heavily depend on China.

Not every European power has viewed China in as harsh a light as Biden, who has painted the rivalry with China as the defining competition for the 21st century. But there are some signs that Europe is willing to impose greater scrutiny.

Before Biden took office in January, the European Commission announced it had come to terms with Beijing on a deal meant to provide Europe and China with greater access to each other's markets. The Biden administration had hoped to have consultations on the pact.

But the deal has been put on hold, and the European Union in March announced sanctions targeting four Chinese officials involved with human rights abuses in Xinjiang. Beijing responded with penalties on several members of the European Parliament and other Europeans critical of the Chinese Communist Party.

Biden administration officials see an opportunity to take concrete action to speak out against China's reliance on forced labor as an "affront to human dignity."

While calling out China in the G-7 communique would not create any immediate penalties for Beijing, one senior administration official said the action would send a message that the leaders were serious about defending human rights and working together to eradicate the use of forced labor.

An estimated 1 million people or more — most of them Uyghurs — have been confined in reeducation camps in China's western Xinjiang region in recent years, according to researchers. Chinese authorities have been accused of imposing forced labor, systematic forced birth control, torture and separating children from incarcerated parents.

Beijing rejects allegations that it is committing crimes. The G-7 leaders also hope three days of meetings at a seaside resort in southwestern England will help energize the global economy and sharpen a focus on combating climate change. The leaders planned to attend a barbecue Saturday night, complete with toasted marshmallows, hot buttered rum and a performance by a sea shanty troupe.

## Protesters

Hundreds of environmental protesters took to the Cornish seaside early Saturday in a bid to draw the attention to climate issues. A crowd of surfers, kayakers and swimmers gathered on a beach in Falmouth for a mass "paddle out protest" organized by Surfers Against Sewage, a group campaigning for more ocean protections.

British Prime Minister Johnson opened the summit on Friday by warning that the world must not repeat errors of the past 18 months, or those made during the recovery from the 2008 global financial crisis. If not, he said the pandemic "risks being a lasting scar" that entrenched inequalities.

Johnson said the goal of the measures was "to make sure that never again will we be caught unawares."

Brexit was casting a shadow over Johnson's meetings with European leaders, including Merkel and Macron, amid tensions over Britain's implementation of U.K.-EU divorce terms.

Biden ends the trip Wednesday by meeting in Geneva with Russia's Vladimir Putin. The White House announced Saturday that they will not hold a joint news conference afterward, which removes the opportunity for comparisons to the availability that followed Trump and Putin's 2018 Helsinki summit, in which Trump sided with Moscow over his own intelligence agencies. Only Biden will address the news media after the meeting.

Putin, in an interview with NBC News, said the U.S.-Russia relationship had "deteriorated to its lowest point in recent years."

He added that while Trump was a "talented" and "colorful" person, Biden was a "career man" in politics, which has "some advantages, some disadvantages, but there will not be any impulse-based movements" by the U.S. president.



Trump

four years of Donald Trump's presidency and his "America first" foreign policy.

Biden also met with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in between Saturday's G-7 sessions, according to photographs her spokeswoman tweeted. Merkel is scheduled to meet with Biden at the White House next month.

White House officials have said Biden wants the leaders of the G-7 nations — the U.S., Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Japan and Italy — to speak in a single voice against forced labor practices targeting China's Uyghur Muslims and other ethnic minorities. Biden hopes the denunciation will be part of a joint statement to be released Sunday when the summit ends, but some European allies are reluctant to split so forcefully with Beijing.

China had become one of the more compelling subplots of the wealthy nations' summit, their first since 2019. Last year's gathering was canceled because of COVID-19, and recovery from the pandemic is dominating this year's discussions, with leaders expected to commit to sharing at least 1 billion vaccine shots with struggling countries.

The allies also took the first steps in presenting an infrastructure proposal called "Build Back Better for the World," a name echoing Biden's campaign slogan. The plan calls for spending hundreds of billions of dollars in collaboration with the private sector while adhering to climate standards and labor practices.

## Projects

It's designed to compete with China's trillion-dollar "Belt and Road Initiative," which has launched a network of projects and maritime lanes that snake around large portions of the world, primarily Asia and Africa. Critics say China's projects often create massive debt and expose nations to undue influence by Beijing.

Britain also wants the world's democracies to become less reliant on the Asian economic giant. The U.K. government said Saturday's discussions would tackle "how we can shape the global system to deliver for our people in support of our values," including by diversifying supply chains that currently heavily depend on China.

Not every European power has viewed China in as harsh a light as Biden, who has painted the rivalry with China as the defining competition for the 21st century. But there are some signs that Europe is willing to impose greater scrutiny.

Before Biden took office in January, the European Commission announced it had come to terms with Beijing on a deal meant to provide Europe and China with greater access to each other's markets. The Biden administration had hoped to have consultations on the pact.

But the deal has been put on hold, and the European Union in March announced sanctions targeting four Chinese officials involved with human rights abuses in Xinjiang. Beijing responded with penalties on several members of the European Parliament and other Europeans critical of the Chinese Communist Party.

Biden administration officials see an opportunity to take concrete action to speak out against China's reliance on forced labor as an "affront to human dignity."

While calling out China in the G-7 communique would not create any immediate penalties for Beijing, one senior administration official said the action would send a message that the leaders were serious about defending human rights and working together to eradicate the use of forced labor.

An estimated 1 million people or more — most of them Uyghurs — have been confined in reeducation camps in China's western Xinjiang region in recent years, according to researchers. Chinese authorities have been accused of imposing forced labor, systematic forced birth control, torture and separating children from incarcerated parents.

Beijing rejects allegations that it is committing crimes. The G-7 leaders also hope three days of meetings at a seaside resort in southwestern England will help energize the global economy and sharpen a focus on combating climate change. The leaders planned to attend a barbecue Saturday night, complete with toasted marshmallows, hot buttered rum and a performance by a sea shanty troupe.

## Protesters

Hundreds of environmental protesters took to the Cornish seaside early Saturday in a bid to draw the attention to climate issues. A crowd of surfers, kayakers and swimmers gathered on a beach in Falmouth for a mass "paddle out protest" organized by Surfers Against Sewage, a group campaigning for more ocean protections.

British Prime Minister Johnson opened the summit on Friday by warning that the world must not repeat errors of the past 18 months, or those made during the recovery from the 2008 global financial crisis. If not, he said the pandemic "risks being a lasting scar" that entrenched inequalities.

Johnson said the goal of the measures was "to make sure that never again will we be caught unawares."

Brexit was casting a shadow over Johnson's meetings with European leaders, including Merkel and Macron, amid tensions over Britain's implementation of U.K.-EU divorce terms.

Biden ends the trip Wednesday by meeting in Geneva with Russia's Vladimir Putin. The White House announced Saturday that they will not hold a joint news conference afterward, which removes the opportunity for comparisons to the availability that followed Trump and Putin's 2018 Helsinki summit, in which Trump sided with Moscow over his own intelligence agencies. Only Biden will address the news media after the meeting.

Putin, in an interview with NBC News, said the U.S.-Russia relationship had "deteriorated to its lowest point in recent years."

He added that while Trump was a "talented" and "colorful" person, Biden was a "career man" in politics, which has "some advantages, some disadvantages, but there will not be any impulse-based movements" by the U.S. president.



From left, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, President of the European Council Charles Michel, US President Joe Biden, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi, French President Emmanuel Macron, President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, during the leaders official welcome and family photo in Carbis Bay England on Friday, June 11, 2021. (AP)

## Britain

## Elizabeth II honors key women in vaccine drive

## After charming leaders, Queen views parade

LONDON, June 12, (AP) — Fresh from charming leaders at the Group of Seven summit, Queen Elizabeth II was back at her residence at Windsor Castle on Saturday to view a military parade to mark her official birthday.

The 95-year-old monarch sat on a dais to watch the ceremony that despite ongoing social distancing restrictions did not disappoint on the pomp and pageantry front. If she was tired after meeting G-7 leaders, including U.S. President Joe Biden, on Friday evening, it didn't show.

The ceremony is a gift from the Household Division of army regiments, which has a close affinity with the monarch. It featured soldiers who have played an integral role in the COVID-19 response, as well as those who have been serving on military operations. She was seen beaming from ear to ear as the nine planes of the Royal Air Force's Red Arrows flew past in formation and let loose their red, white and blue smoke.

The traditional Trooping the Color ceremony is normally staged in London and features hundreds of servicemen and women and thousands of spectators. However, for the second year running, that was not possible and it was a slimmed-down affair in the grounds of Windsor Castle, which is around 27 miles (44 kilometers) west of the capital.

Dubbed a mini Trooping the Color, it featured soldiers in ceremonial scarlet coats and bearskin hats. The servicemen and women on parade numbered almost 275, with 70 horses, compared with the 85 soldiers who took part in the ceremony last summer. A small handful of seated guests lined part of the quadrangle — a change from last year when only the military were present.

The ceremony originated from traditional preparations for battle. The colors — or flags — were "trooped," or carried down the lines of soldiers, so they could be seen and recognized in battle. Lieutenant Colonel Guy Stone, who planned the queen's official birthday celebrations in Windsor Castle's quadrangle, said he wanted to create a "memorable and uplifting day" for the monarch.

The ceremony took place a couple of months after the death of her 99-year-old husband Prince Philip,

whose funeral also took place at Windsor Castle.

Though she has been mourning the loss of her husband of 73 years, the queen has carried on performing her duties, including delivering a government-scripted speech to mark the new session of parliament.

On Friday, she was the star turn at a reception with the G-7 leaders and their spouses at the Eden Project, a futuristic botanical garden housed inside domes that features the world's largest indoor rainforest.

She drew laughter from her guests as she chided them during a group photo session: "Are you supposed to be looking as if you're enjoying yourself?"

## forefront

Meanwhile, Queen Elizabeth II used her birthday honors list to celebrate those at the forefront of the U.K.'s rapid rollout of COVID-19 vaccines over the past few months, which has been credited with turning around the country's pandemic response.

Two of the most high-profile women in the vaccination drive, Professor Sarah Gilbert of the University of Oxford, and venture capitalist Kate Bingham, the former head of the U.K. Vaccines Taskforce, have been recognized with damehoods in the list published late Friday.

Gilbert was instrumental in the development of the vaccine being manufactured by pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca, while Bingham has been widely lauded for the country's successful vaccine procurement program. Though the U.K. has seen Europe's highest virus-related death toll, with nearly 128,000 people having lost their lives, the vaccination program has been deemed as one of the world's speediest and most coherent rollouts.

In December, a 90-year-old British grandmother became the first person in the world to be given the Pfizer vaccine outside of a trial. Since then, around 61% of the U.K. population has received at least one dose of vaccine, while about 43% has had two. The rollout, which has primarily been based on age, was earlier this week extended to 25- to 29-year-olds.

Also honored are a multitude of specialists from across the scientific community for their efforts in developing

vaccines, running clinical trials, delivering testing and tracking coronavirus infections. The selfless work of people to help others during the pandemic, from running free taxis for key workers to making bottles of hand sanitizer, was also recognized by the 95-year-old monarch.

Of the 1,129 people receiving honors, 62% are being recognized for community work, with nearly a quarter recommended for their activities during the pandemic.

One of those was 25-year-old Rhys Mallows, who was awarded a British Empire Medal for helping to repurpose Mallows Bottling, a Welsh firm, to produce more than one million bottles of hand sanitizer following a deal with a Scottish distiller. He estimates that around 81 million hands have been sanitized.

"We're not scientists, but we really felt that if we can give people little bullets to protect themselves, then it'd make a big difference," he said.

Lulu, the veteran singer, was also awarded a CBE alongside keyboardist and songwriter Rick Wakeman, whose career has seen him collaborate with a varied bunch — from David Bowie to Black Sabbath.

The youngest recipient was 21-year-old Amika George, founder of the FreePeriods campaign, who was made an MBE for services to education after campaigning against period poverty.

Among the oldest recipients was 95-year-old Sylvia McKeegan, who was honored with a BEM for her decades of support for the elderly, new mothers, and children in Londonderry, Northern Ireland.

Siblings John Brownhill and Amanda Guest were also awarded the British Empire Medal for setting up Food4Heroes, which delivered more than 200,000 meals to the National Health Service.

"You see in a time of crisis the strengths of humanity I think", Brownhill said.

The honors list is also a record-breaking one in terms of diversity, with 15% of recipients from an ethnic minority background. Meanwhile, 9% of those honored had a disability and 5% identified as LGBT. More women, 50.2%, than men feature on the list, for the first time since 2015.



Britain's Queen Elizabeth II during a ceremony to mark her official birthday at Windsor Castle, Windsor, England, Saturday, June 12, 2021. In line with government advice The Queen's Birthday Parade, also known as Trooping the Colour, will not go ahead in its traditional form. (AP)



Johnson



Chacon

## America

**YouTube suspends Sen. Johnson:** Sen. Ron Johnson was suspended Friday from uploading videos to YouTube for one week, after the company said he violated its COVID-19 "medical misinformation policies."

The Wisconsin Republican's removal stems from statements he made during a June 3 Milwaukee Press Club event, which were posted to YouTube. He criticized the Trump and Biden administrations for "not only ignoring but working against robust research (on) the use of cheap, generic drugs to be repurposed for early treatment of COVID," the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported.

A YouTube spokesperson said: "We removed the video in accordance with our COVID-19 medical misinformation policies, which don't allow content that encourages people to use Hydroxychloroquine or Ivermectin to treat or prevent the virus."

The company's policy says it doesn't allow content that spreads medical misinformation contradicting local health authorities or the World Health Organization's information about COVID-19. Johnson blasted the website. (AP)

**US closes Trump-era office:** The Biden administration said Friday it has dismantled a Trump-era government office to help victims of crimes committed by immigrants, a move that symbolizes President Joe Biden's rejection of former President Donald Trump's repeated efforts to link immigrants to crime.

Trump created the Victim Of Immigration Crime Engagement Office, known by its acronym VOICE, by executive order during his first week in office in January 2017.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement said it was replacing VOICE with a "more comprehensive and inclusive victim support system."

VOICE will be replaced by The Victims Engagement and Services Line, which will combine longstanding existing services, such as methods for people to report abuse and mistreatment in immigration detention centers and a notification system for lawyers and others with a vested interest in immigration cases. The new office will add a service for potential recipients of visas designated for victims of human trafficking or violent crimes in the United States. (AP)

**Attacker wounds 13 in Austin:** Someone opened fire in a busy entertainment district in downtown Austin early Saturday, wounding 13 people, including two critically, before getting away, authorities said.

Investigators were looking into what sparked the shooting and weren't able to get a detailed description of the shooter, but they believe it was a man. Police Chief Jo-



US First Lady Jill Biden meets military surfers and their families in Newlyn, Cornwall, England, on the sidelines of the G7 summit, Saturday, June 12, 2021. Jill Biden met with veterans, first responders and family members of Bude Surf Veterans, a Cornwall-based volunteer organization that provides social support and surfing excursions for veterans, first responders and their families. (AP)

The reenactment was scheduled for June 19 — the traditional commemoration date of the emancipation of enslaved people in the United States, known as "Juneteenth."

Officials in Mecklenburg County said via Twitter on Friday that the performances at Latta Plantation Nature Preserve, which among other things would have portrayed Confederate soldiers lamenting the downfall of the Confederacy, would not take place as previously announced.

"We immediately reached out to the organizers and the event was cancelled," the tweet said.

The county said it has "zero tolerance" for programming that does not represent equity and diversity. As a result, the county said it was reviewing its contract with the facility vendor regarding future programming.

A screen grab from the museum website showed people were invited to the one-night event to hear stories from a "massa," or an actor portraying the owner of an enslaved person during a time when federal troops were pursuing those who owned slaves. The word mocks the Black pronunciation of "master." (AP)

**2 dead in bus, SUV collision:** Two people were killed and many more injured when an SUV collided with a Greyhound bus Friday on Interstate 65 in northwestern Indiana, police said.

The driver of a Chevrolet Tahoe lost control while traveling south on the interstate when the vehicle was sideswiped by a Mazda Miata.

The Tahoe then crossed the median and collided with the bus in the northbound lanes, state police said.

Two people in the Tahoe were killed. Their names were not released. (AP)