

**09/23/21 Thursday**

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**Tennessee Kroger Shooting Leaves 1 Person Dead, 13 Hospitalised After Gunman Opens Fire  
By - Morgan Artyukhina**

According to local media reports, at least 14 people have suffered gunshot wounds at a Kroger grocery store in Collierville, Tennessee, at about 1:30 p.m. Thursday afternoon.

Collierville Police Chief Dale Lane told reporters that 12 people had been transported to area hospitals, while another victim checked themselves into a hospital. One person has died, and the shooter is also dead, possibly of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. His body was found at the rear of the store, and his car was parked in the parking lot.

He said little other information was available about the age of the victims or whether the shooter was an employee of the store.

Video filmed outside the grocery store in a suburb of Memphis captured the sound of a gunshot just seconds before police arrive on the scene.

Warning: following video footage contains content that may disturb viewers' sensibilities.

Videos on social media also showed a person standing on the roof of the Kroger with their arms raised as police arrived. While social media users wondered whether it was the shooter, police later confirmed the person was a store employee who was working on the roof when the shooting started.

Fox 13 noted nearby Collierville High School had been placed on lockdown. However, Lane did not say if there was another shooter or if they were believed to still be active.

"This is a horrible day in Collierville", Dale said. "Our hearts go out to the victims, families, and friends involved in the senseless tragedy. Please keep our community in your thoughts and prayers. At this time, there are no known threats to the Collierville community and our department is working diligently to prevent further violence".

According to a media release by the department, their investigation has been joined by state and federal police agencies.

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**Video: Protesters Storm Namibia's Parliament as Opposition Rejects 'Fake Genocide Deal' With Berlin**

**By - Morgan Artyukhina**

As the Namibian parliament debates acceptance of a \$1.3 billion settlement with the German government after Berlin admitted to committing genocide against the country's Herero and

Nama peoples in the early 20th century, protesters outside demanded the basics of the deal be renegotiated, saying it won't help the affected communities.

"That document does not address our issues, it does not speak about reparations and genocide. It is speaking about reconstruction," Esther Muinjangu, president of the opposition National Unity Democratic Organisation [NUDO] party, [said in the Namibian](#) parliament on Wednesday.

"We are not asking for reconstruction, you committed genocide and for that you pay reparations. Simple as that," she added. The majority of NUDO supporters are Ovaherero, one of the tribes the Germans targeted for extermination between 1904 and 1908, when Namibia was a colony called German South-West Africa.

Defence Minister Frans Kapofi defended the agreement as "an achievement, of some measure, to get the Federal Republic of Germany accepting responsibility" for the genocide.

He acknowledged that the final payment amount, which amounts to roughly \$40 million per year for the next 30 years, is regarded by many as inadequate, and said that "an improvement of the terms of reparations, particularly on quantum, is not out of the question."

Mike Kavekatora, leader of the Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP), a small opposition party split from the ruling South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), urged that the government should seek at least \$9 billion from Germany instead.

The final deal will have to be approved by both German and Namibian parliaments and signed by their respective prime ministers.

'People Don't Eat Projects'

Outside, an estimated 400 protesters marched to the National Assembly, surrounding much of the building and coming up the terrace to the legislature's front doors. They chanted, sang, and danced, and carried placards reading "Say no to the fake genocide deal"; "the blood of our ancestors was not in vain" and "proper reparation now," [according to Africa News](#).

The negotiations began six years ago, but many Nama and Herero people believe the Namibian government [wasn't willing to fight](#) for a better deal, including one that would transfer wealth to the affected communities instead of being invested into social programs, because the ruling SWAPO party is dominated by the Ovambo tribe, which was not targeted for genocide.

"The agreement that was negotiated is highly skewed and extremely favours the German government rather than the descendants of the victims of the 1904-1908 Ovaherero Nam Genocide," Chief Manasse [Zeraeua told New Era](#), a Namibian daily paper published by the government, earlier this month, urging it to be referred back to committee for renegotiation.

"We don't have a problem with acknowledgment and apology, we have an issue with reparations, and they are talking about grants and it is different from reparations and whatever terminology is being used, that money is simply not enough," Zeraeua added. "A 90-year-old will benefit more from social grants so that they can afford things they couldn't. People don't eat projects, people eat food. Confining that money to projects over 30 years is an insult."

"We want to be treated equally, like other victims of genocide that Germany has paid out and said sorry to," Vipuakuje Muharukua, a lawmaker from the Popular Democratic Movement who is a descendant of genocide victims, told [Deutsche Welle](#). Many Hereros have [contrasted the effort](#) Germany has put into making restitution for the Nazi-era genocides of Jews and other lighter-skinned minorities with their treatment of Black African victims.

"A government should govern for all people," Muharukua added. "We do not need a government that will budge to the demands of Germany, regardless of the fiscal situation. We have history on our side. We Namibians will accept nothing less than just reparations."

#### Mixed Messages From Berlin

In Berlin on Wednesday, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier urged the nation to square with its colonial past, which included pillaging of several African nations' wealth and artwork, in addition to the mass deaths.

"Especially the countries in Africa have lost an immense part of their art through the raids of the Europeans," the Social Democratic Party member and head of state said, according to the [Associated Press](#).

"The injustice committed by Germany during colonial times must concern all of us, the entire society," he added. "We will only be able to understand and overcome the deeper roots of everyday racism if we shine a light on the blind spots of our memory and if we face our colonial history much more than we have done so far."

However, Steinmeier's words were spoken in front of the [Humboldt Forum](#) on the occasion of its opening. The museum, a reconstructed replica of an imperial palace torn down by the socialist government that ruled East Germany between 1945 and 1990, was built to house 20,000 pieces of African, Asian, and other non-European art.

Among them are the famous Benin Bronzes, intricate sculptures taken from the Kingdom of Benin, which is today part of Nigeria, despite the existence of the country of Benin, which was a German colony. Berlin has drawn up plans to eventually [return the sculptures](#) to Nigeria, and all 16 German states have [made similar pledges](#) for the colonial-era art in their local collections. A study commissioned by the French government in 2018, another former major colonial power in Africa, found that more than [90% of African art](#) is housed in museums outside the continent. However, even in Europe, much of the art [pillaged by the Nazis](#) in their continent-spanning wars in the 1930s and 1940s also has not been returned and continues to be traded.

#### Colonialism and Resistance

The new German Empire laid claim to the territory of Namibia in 1884 amid the Scramble for Africa, when European empires divided up the continent in their hunger for national resources, export markets, and national prestige. As German settlers seized more and more of the country's scarce tillable land, the indigenous African tribes were increasingly forced off the land. In 1904, several Herero and Nama tribes joined forces and launched a major revolt against the land seizures as well as plans to force them into reservations like those created in the United States for Native American tribes amid similar land seizures. In response, German commander Lothar von Trotha, who was sent to crush the uprising, ordered that "every Herero, with or without rifles, with or without cattle, will be shot," giving a similar order for the Nama people the following year.

The German colonial forces drove the African tribes off their lands and into the harsh deserts of the interior, sealing off their wells and watering holes to stop them from returning. Those who survived the desert were put into concentration camps and used as slave labor, where many more died. In the end, 80% of the 100,000-strong Herero people and 50% of the 10,000-strong Nama people had been killed by 1908.

After World War I, the territory was passed to the victorious United Kingdom and became a colony of South Africa, being subjected to the same Apartheid white supremacist system as the

rest of the country. However, SWAPO led the insurgency against South African rule and secured independence for Namibia in 1990, as South Africa's invasion of neighboring Angola collapsed and the anti-Apartheid movement inside South Africa grew stronger. White Apartheid rule in South Africa ended just four years later, in 1994.

SWAPO has been the ruling party ever since and has overseen attempts at [reforming land ownership](#) and [the legal code](#). However, the country's colonial legacy persists in many ways, including in the distribution of wealth: white descendants of German and South African settlers constitute just 6% of Namibia's population, but [hold roughly 80%](#) of its wealth, including [72% of all agricultural](#) land.

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'Perhaps You Remember Your First Edible': Brian Williams Zinger After Montage Gets Internet Rolling

By - Morgan Artyukhina

MSNBC journalist Brian Williams had viewers in stitches on Wednesday night after closing out his show "The 11th Hour" with an incredible zinger.

At the end of the hourly news show on Wednesday, Williams finished up with a montage created by video news outlet The Recount that featured clips of particularly irate speakers from community forums, school boards, and other public-oriented government events across the country.

"People like to say, and I think a good many of us still like to believe, that local board meetings are still the backbone of our country. Town and city council meetings, PTA [parent-teacher association] meetings, school board meetings. But you know what's happened in so many of our communities? Masks happened. Vaccines happened," [Williams said](#).

"And perhaps you don't follow your local news anymore and it's tempting to pass it off as just in the 'red states,' but it's hard to find a jurisdiction anywhere where the anti-vaxxers haven't objected to a public health measure of late. Well, the folks over at The Recount put together some of the most vocal and, frankly, the most imaginative," he continued.

The 93-second video featured a cast of mostly unnamed everyday Americans - although US Rep. Madison Cawthorn (R-NC) also makes an appearance - furiously raging about school mask mandates, vaccines, and various other pandemic-related issues, generally with a very creative interpretation of the facts.

After the video was over, Williams signed off with an epic mic drop by asking viewers: "perhaps you remember your first edible?"

Some netizens loved the zinger, while others pointed out that their unhinged ravings weren't typical reactions to taking marijuana edibles.

"My first edible' stories usually involve misjudging the dose, and lying on the living room rug, giggling and communing with the dog," one user wrote in response to Williams' joke. Others said it was clear the MSNBC host had never actually done an edible before.

Indeed, it wouldn't be the first time Williams has claimed to do things he hasn't. In 2015, the then-NBC Nightly News host was [forced to apologize](#) after fancifully embellishing a story about a US Army helicopter crash-landing in Iraq with him on board in 2003 after coming under fire from a rocket-propelled grenade. In fact, Williams arrived at the scene about an hour after the event took place, having never been on the chopper.

In the aftermath of the revelation, several other incidents Williams claimed to have been a part of or witness to were also proven to have been embellished or were outright false, including a suicide inside the New Orleans Superdome after Hurricane Katrina in 2003 and being at the Brandenburg Gate the night the Berlin Wall came down in 1989.

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Leader of Drought-Stricken Madagascar Urges UNGA to Take Tougher Action Against Climate Change

By - Morgan Artyukhina

Malagasy President Andry Nirina Rajoelina urged the United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday to take more urgent action in the fight against climate change. The Indian Ocean island nation is facing a catastrophic drought that the UN's food program has warned could become the first climate change-driven famine.

"While the world was fighting against the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate crisis also struck at full force," [Rajoelina said](#) in New York.

"Madagascar finds itself a victim of climate change," he said. "There are recurrent waves of drought in the south. The water sources dry up and all the means of subsistence become almost impossible. My compatriots in the south are bearing the weight of climate change which they did not participate in creating."

"In the fight against climate change, all our efforts will be in vain if the implementation of measures and sanctions to stop climate change continue to be lax," Rajoelina said. "If we do not act, the crisis will continue and get worse. Madagascar calls upon each state to act in an equitable fashion and commensurate with their polluting activities."

According to [World Bank data](#), Madagascar produces just 0.01% of the world's annual carbon emissions, or 0.128 metric tons per capita.

The island's climate is strongly dictated by the El Nino-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) cycle, with its tropical eastern coast being bombarded by typhoons and monsoon rains driven westward by the trade winds. Its southern regions are more arid, getting what little moisture makes it over the central highlands.

However, for the past four years, a catastrophic and [unprecedented drought](#) has ravaged the massive island. Swarms of locusts, which devour what little produce remains, have only made the situation worse.

According to the UN World Food Program (WFP), 1.4 million people are food insecure due to crop failures and at least 30,000 people have been pushed to the agency's highest level of

famine, with the WFP warning that the number could soon rise dramatically, even [quadrupling among children](#).

"These are people who live off the land, survive off the land, and have been displaced by drought. They've lost their livelihood, they've had to sell everything," WFP spokesperson Shelley [Thakral told Al Jazeera](#) earlier this month.

"The situation has been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. While some were looking for seasonal labour and tourism, there have not been any tourists coming into the country for the last 18 months," she said.

"This is not because of war or conflict, this is because of climate change," WFP Executive Director [David Beasley said](#) in June.

Several mothers the [BBC spoke with](#) last month described how their families were surviving by eating insects and cactus leaves.

"I clean the insects as best I can but there's almost no water," Tamarina, a mother of four, told the news agency. "My children and I have been eating this every day now for eight months because we have nothing else to eat and no rain to allow us to harvest what we have sown."

In 2019, the US space agency NASA, which has specialized satellites in orbit for monitoring climate activity, [warned that changes](#) in ENSO-driven rainfall was creating drier and drier soils in southern Africa, threatening famine. Namibia, Angola and Zimbabwe have faced similar dry spells in recent years, [causing them to struggle](#) with crop failures and water shortages.

The relative underdevelopment of the former colonies, including Madagascar, is also a factor in their vulnerability to drought. Madagascar's economy is heavily geared toward exporting cash crops like vanilla, which [formed 20.3% of its exports](#) in 2019, which was 80% of the world's natural vanilla supply. That same year, its second-largest export was raw nickel, which requires huge amounts of water to mine.

Madagascar was a French colony from 1897 until 1960, when it regained independence. In the 1930s, it was considered by the Nazi German leadership as a possible deportation site for European Jews. In 1947, Malagasys mounted [a major uprising](#) against French rule, which was put down with mass executions and terror that included throwing victims from aircraft. An estimated 100,000 people were killed.

In 1975, a Marxist government achieved success for a time by nationalizing key industries, but changes in the global economy undercut their efforts. By 1982, Antananario was forced to accept loans and the associated neoliberal economic reforms mandated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which undermined further efforts at economic autonomy.

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'This Moment Demands Action': Biden Eyes Executive Actions After Fruitless Police Reform Talks

By - Adriana Montes

US President Joe Biden says he will review executive actions after bipartisan police reform talks between Democrats and Republicans - sparked by the death of Minnesota man George Floyd - are officially over without a deal.

In a statement released Wednesday on police reform investigations, Biden acknowledged his support for the US House-passed George Floyd Justice Policing Act and his urge to the US Senate to enact “meaningful” federal police reforms that “includes accountability to when law enforcement officers violate their oaths.”

Biden criticized Senate Republicans for rejecting [modest reforms](#) that were supported by the previous president in office, noting that lawmakers refused “to take action on key issues that many in law enforcement were willing to address.”

“This moment demands action, and we cannot allow those who stand in the way of progress to prevent us from answering the call.”

The bipartisan negotiating team led by US Rep. [Karen Bass](#) (D-CA), [Sens. Cory Booker](#) (D-NJ) and [Tim Scott](#) (R-SC), could not reach an agreement on the Democratic proposal to reform [qualified immunity](#), which protects police officers from civil liability for misconduct.

“We made it clear from the beginning of our negotiations that a bill must ensure true accountability, transparency and the policing standards necessary to bring an end to horrific incidents of violence Americans are routinely seeing – like the murder of George Floyd,” Booker said in a [statement](#) on Wednesday.

“After months of exhausting every possible pathway to a bipartisan deal, it remains out of reach right now.”

Biden has indicated that he still hopes to sign into law a “comprehensive and meaningful change,” with the administration already taking important steps with the US Justice Department in announcing new policies that will be implemented toward police officers.

“The White House will continue to consult with the civil rights and law enforcement communities, as well as victims’ families to define a path forward, including through potential further executive actions,” added Biden, in hopes to advance their efforts to “live up to the American ideal of equal justice under law.”

Negotiations over police reform gained steam among lawmakers after nationwide protests after fired Minnesota police officer Derek Chauvin was convicted of murder in April. Chauvin was seen on cellphone footage kneeling on Floyd’s neck in spite of pleas that the Minnesota man was unable to breathe.

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Italian Authorities Arrest Ex-Catalan Head Carles Puigdemont, Spanish Media Reveals  
By - Adriana Montes

Italian authorities arrested Carles Puigdemont, the former Catalan president, on Thursday in line with an arrest warrant previously filed by Spanish officials.

The detainment took place in Sardinia, Italy, by virtue of an international search and arrest order issued by Supreme Court Judge Pablo Llarena, an instructor in a criminal case related to the Catalan sovereign process.

The former Catalan leader arrived in Sardinia to meet with regional politicians to take part in a folk festival and visit the town of Alghero —a town that shares cultural ties with Catalonia.

The arrest has been confirmed by a variety of Spanish media outlets, as well as Puigdemont's lawyer.

"He has been detained in [the town of] Alghero. I think that tomorrow in the morning official information will be published. The media reports are true," a spokesperson for the police said on late Thursday.

It's believed that a court hearing on the possible deportation of Puigdemont to Spain may take place on Friday.

Puigdemont has been a fugitive of the Spanish Court since late 2017 and fled to Belgium after declaring Catalonia's independence from Madrid — following an illegal referendum on secession.

A Belgian judge suspended the extradition process against Catalan politician Carles Puigdemont and Toni Comin, due to their parliamentary immunity after being elected as members of the European Parliament, as the EU Court of Justice ruled.

A German court allowed the extradition of Puigdemont to Spain in December 2020, where he was charged with misuse of public funds — freeing him from the more grave charge of rebellion.

On Monday, Spain's Supreme Court convicted 12 Catalan separatist leaders of sedition, disobedience and the misuse of public funds.

The 12 Catalan leaders have been sentenced to prison terms of up to 13 years apiece for leading the region's ongoing secession push.

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Pakistan-Afghanistan Border Clash Reportedly Caused Deadly Stampede  
By - Adriana Montes

As tensions intensify between the Taliban and Pakistan, thousands of Afghan civilians and families are enduring danger in an attempt to be granted entrance into the neighboring country. Afghan civilians and families are at the mercy of tense confrontations at the border crossing point in Chaman. "Kids, women, and patients are waiting in line and losing their lives from the heat," [laments Mohammad Sadiq Sabery](#), 28, an insider who [reported](#) to the New York times. Alleged [visuals](#) of families and the disabled pushed in wheelbarrows convey the desperate journey some Afghans are enduring to flee their country, many waiting days to pass through the shuttered gate into the city of Chaman.

The [United Nations](#) estimates that almost 10,000 refugees have arrived in Pakistan since mid-August, after the control of the country was secured by the [Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan](#). Pakistani authorities have been reluctant to allow new Afghan refugees to enter, however, leaving large crowds of wounded Afghans crying and begging at the gates.

"Pakistan is creating problems. We have an understanding with Pakistan to allow Kandahar people to cross into Pakistan. In return, people from Chaman and Quetta can enter Afghanistan using National IDs," said Sabery.

"They have not stood on their word. We don't have any other solution for people, as both sides are interconnected."

Sabery added that Pakistan had a full army on their side of the border — indicating that "Pakistan is ready to fight, but the Taliban isn't."

The government justified its course of action to seal the border, stating that it is putting its national security interests first.

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FBI Issues Arrest Warrant for Brian Laundrie in Connection With Gabby Petito's Death  
By - Evan Craighead

Authorities believe Gabby Petito, 22, was murdered while on a cross-country trip with her boyfriend, Brian Laundrie. Reported missing on September 11th, Petito's remains were located earlier this week in a remote area of Wyoming's Grand Teton National Park.

Law enforcement officials are on the [hunt for Brian Laundrie](#) following the Wednesday issuance of a federal arrest warrant issued after a grand jury indictment, according to a statement published on Thursday by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Denver branch.

"While this warrant allows law enforcement to arrest Mr Laundrie, the FBI and our partners across the country continue to investigate the facts and circumstances of Ms Petito's homicide", FBI-Denver Special Agent in Charge Michael Schneider said in a quoted statement.

"We urge individuals with knowledge of Mr Laundrie's role in this matter or his current whereabouts to contact the FBI", he added. "No piece of information is too small or inconsequential to support our efforts in this investigation".

[The FBI is particularly interested](#) in assistance from anybody who used the Spread Creek Dispersed Camping Area, a section of the Grand Teton National Park and Bridger-Teton National Forest, between August 27th through August 30th.

Authorities are also scouring the Carlton Reserve, a 25,000-acre Florida reserve, in search of Laundrie, who has been missing since he returned home on September 14th, without Petito. Law enforcement officials, including the North Port Police Department, have mobilised several resources to search the sprawling Florida swamplands.

"ATVs, UTVs. We have multiple drone operators that have been sent out in numerous teams. So we will mix the resources and deploy them out, so if they encounter flooded areas, or terrain they can't access with these wheeled vehicles, we'll deploy our drones", said North Port Police Commander Joe Fussell, [as reported by CBS News](#).

"Terrain's very difficult. Essentially, 75% of it is underwater, and other areas that are dry, we're trying to clear", Fussell added.

Authorities [have concluded their search](#) of the Florida swamplands for the day.

FBI-Denver confirmed earlier this week that agents searching a remote area near the park on Sunday [located and assisted in the recovery of remains](#) that were consistent with Petito's description.

Teton County Coroner Dr Brent Blue later [confirmed that the remains are those of Petito](#). The coroner, who has yet to release the autopsy results, made the initial determination that the 22-year-old had been killed.

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NY Gov. Hochul Announces Resignation of State Health Commissioner Who Oversaw Nursing Home Scandal

By - Evan Craighead

New York Senate Republican Leader Rob Ortt in January demanded the resignation of New York State Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker, after a report from New York State Attorney General Letitia James found that the health official's office had significantly underreported COVID-19-related deaths in state-operated nursing homes.

New York Governor Kathy Hochul (D) announced during a Thursday COVID-19 news briefing that Zucker would be stepping down as the state's health commissioner.

"He has been a dedicated public servant for over seven and a half years. He worked hard through the pandemic, and I want to thank him for his service on behalf of the people of the state," Hochul said.

The New York governor highlighted that she had made it "very clear" to officials that she would be looking to "build a new team" in the wake of former New York Governor Andrew Cuomo's resignation.

"He understands that, in this time, I've wanted to take the first 45 days to assemble a new team going forward," Hochul said, noting the process is "ongoing."

Zucker has agreed to remain in his position until a replacement is found.

"With a fierce dedication to the public's health, I have carried it through many a crisis in the last seven years and five months and placed the welfare of our residents at the forefront of all things, professional and personal," Zucker wrote in his resignation letter.

He also expressed that he looks forward to "pursuing new opportunities" that explore the unknowns of medicine.

[Dr. Zucker's Resignatio...](#) by [George Stockburger](#)

Zucker, who was appointed to the position in 2015 by then-Governor Cuomo, has drawn pandemic-era criticism over his office's handling of death data, as well as his signing off on a March 2020 mandate that allowed COVID-positive nursing home residents to return to their facilities.

While Zucker shied away from mentioning the COVID-19-related New York nursing home death scandal, state lawmakers did not.

"Howard Zucker's resignation is welcome news to all the local public health officials whose input into COVID-19 he ignored, to all the medical professionals who had to endure a Department of

Health agenda driven by politics over public health necessities, and to the thousands of families whose loved ones' deaths were covered up by him, under orders he falsely claimed were based on science," New York Senate Republican Leader Rob Ortt [wrote in a Thursday statement](#).

"To be clear, his resignation should've happened in January, when I first called for it," Ortt added.

Ortt previously stated that Zucker had "betrayed the public trust" by incorrectly reporting that some 8,200 had died in nursing homes during the pandemic.

According to a [January report released by the New York Office of the Attorney General](#), the number provided at the time undercounted the actual nursing home death toll by as much as 50%. The issuance noted that the data does not account for those who contracted COVID-19 at a state-run nursing home facility and later died in a hospital.

New York State Assemblyman Ron Kim, a progressive Democrat, [told the New York Post](#) that Zucker's resignation is merely the "first step."

"I think it's the first step; but, just like with Andrew Cuomo, a resignation does not equate to accountability and Howard Zucker and all of Cuomo's enablers must be held accountable," Kim asserted.

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US Mainstream Media Silent as Book Suggests Authenticity of Hunter Biden Emails on Burisma, China

By - Evan Craighead

Earlier this week, the editorial board of the New York Post touted that at least two emails reportedly retrieved from a laptop belonging to Hunter Biden had been confirmed as authentic by a "person who had independent access" to the emails in question.

New York Post columnist Michael Goodwin joined [Radio Sputnik's "Fault Lines"](#) hosts Jamarl Thomas and Shane Stranahan on Thursday to discuss the paper's bold op-ed that celebrated a section of Politico reporter Ben Schreckinger's new book, ["The Bidens: Inside the First Family's Fifty-Year Rise to Power."](#)

Schreckinger's book, released on September 21, focuses in part on two emails previously judged by other mainstream media outlets as "unsubstantiated" evidence from a laptop purported to have belonged to Hunter Biden.

According to the author, "[a] person who had independent access to Hunter Biden's emails confirmed he did receive a 2015 email from a Ukrainian businessman thanking him for the chance to meet Joe Biden." The latter was the US vice president at the time.

The alleged email, issued from an adviser at Burisma Holdings Limited, could act as a primary example of how Biden may have monetize his vice presidency through Ukraine, according to Goodwin.

Though the White House initially dodged questions about the April 2015 meeting, the [New York Post has since claimed that it has received confirmation](#) that Joe Biden did attend the dinner with his son, Hunter, and Burisma adviser Vadym Pozharskyi.

The unnamed source also reportedly confirmed a 2017 email regarding a potential equity breakdown for a venture with executives at CEFC China Energy, an energy conglomerate listed as one of China's top private companies, prior to declaring bankruptcy in 2020.

The email, said to be authored by James Gillar, included a breakdown of "office expectations," as well as an agreement regarding equity distribution.

One line of the email reportedly asks, "10 held by H for the big guy?"

Goodwin noted that Schreckinger's source was not the first to verify alleged evidence from a Hunter Biden laptop.

Tony Bobulinski, a business associate of the Biden son, in October 2020 asserted the authenticity of the 2017 email, which, notably, listed him as the recipient. Bobulinski also confirmed that the referenced 'big guy' was Joe Biden, while 'JB' referred to Jim Biden, Joe Biden's brother.

Despite Bobulinski's assertion, the emails have been roundly derided as foreign interference by both the US intelligence community and most mainstream US media, Goodwin noted.

The New York Post columnist contended that confirmation was rejected because it could damage then-Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden's chances of beating Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election. Big Tech is also said by some to have played a role, as platforms like Twitter removed images of the leaks and prohibited publication of such content until after the election.

Schreckinger's book emphasized that emails from the Swedish government parallel the reported leaks from the so-called 'lost laptop' belonging to Hunter Biden.

The anonymous source who offered confirmation to Schreckinger of the emails' authenticity refused to juxtapose the NY Post images with the original emails.

"This person recalled seeing both emails, but was not in a position to compare the leaked emails word-for-word to the originals," Schreckinger observed.

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Trump Vows to Use 'Executive Privilege' to Stonewall Jan. 6 Panel Subpoenas

By - Evan Craighead

The Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol has issued a round of subpoenas to four individuals who either had close ties to then-US President Donald Trump, or were in close contact with the White House in the days leading up to the deadly storming of the US Capitol building.

The 45th US president issued a same-day response to the [Select Committee's Thursday decision](#), vowing pushback against the move.

"We will fight the Subpoenas on Executive Privilege and other grounds, for the good of our Country", Trump said in a statement aimed at the Select Committee.

It is unclear how Trump could use Executive Privilege, as he is no longer a US president. The former US president referred to the nine-member House committee as the "Unselect Committee of highly partisan politicians".

The Select Committee is made up of seven Democratic lawmakers and only two Republican lawmakers: Reps. Liz Cheney (R-WY) and Adam Kinzinger (R-IL) - both appointed by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA).

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) was allowed up to five nominations for the group, but pulled all five recommendations after Pelosi rejected Reps. Jim Banks (R-IN) and Jim Jordan (R-OH), citing integrity concerns for the committee.

McCarthy panned Pelosi's decision as "an egregious abuse of power" and announced that Republicans would carry out a separate probe that would primarily focus on the security situation at the US Capitol on January 6th.

The Select Committee, led by Rep. Bennie Thompson (D-MS), is scheduled to convene on October 14th and 15th to hear depositions from former White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows, former White House Deputy Chief of Staff for Communications Daniel Scavino, former US Department of Defence official Kashyap Patel, and a former Trump adviser, Steve Bannon.

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US House Passes National Defense Authorization Act to Fund Pentagon in Fiscal Year 2022  
By - Gaby Arancibia

WASHINGTON (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives on Thursday passed the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) with which it appropriated funding for the Defense Department for Fiscal Year 2022 and implemented several policies, including imposing sanctions against the Nord Stream 2 pipeline.

The bill, which establishes spending guidelines for the Pentagon's defense policies, cleared the chamber with a 316-113 vote.

The amendments considered in the funding package touch on a variety of issues ranging from sanctions over the Nord Stream 2 pipeline and even the limiting the US military involvement in Syria in Yemen.

One of the adopted provisions include an end to logistical support to Saudi aircraft involved in conducting strikes against Houthis across Yemen. Similarly, another measure that was introduced by US Rep. Gregory Meeks (D-NY) seeks to end US maintenance and sustainment of those Saudi aircraft.

Debates regarding the NDAA had been underway since Tuesday, and had seen the conservative House Freedom Caucus claim that the measures were providing the Biden administration a "blank check" following the chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The Thursday clearance in the House of Representatives was hailed by US Rep. Adam Smith (D-WA), who serves as the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee.

"For 61 consecutive years, the House has proven that our collective commitment to U.S. national security can help us rise above partisanship. Instead of focusing on what divides us, each year we choose to pass a defense bill that fulfills Congress' constitutional obligation to 'provide for the common defense' – and we do so by focusing on what we have in common as Americans," Smith said in a [statement](#).

"The NDAA represents the legislative process at its best. This year, like every year, we worked for months to identify policies where we agree, and where we don't, and engaged in thorough, thoughtful debate on all of them. In an era where our politics is so dominated by divisiveness, it has never mattered more to show the American people that democracy still works."

Smith went on to describe the NDAA as one that will provide "transformational policy changes with direct benefits for our service members and their families."

Although the passage sets the stage for the \$768 billion measure to be enacted into law, the bill still needs to go through the US Senate, with the two congressional chambers later working to iron out the details in their respective versions of the bill.

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#### Audit Mania - Cartoon

Since losing the 2020 presidential election, former US President Donald Trump has demanded that officials conduct audits of the results over unsubstantiated voter fraud claims. One of the more major audits was carried out in Arizona's Maricopa County.

Former US President Donald Trump has done the unthinkable and called for an audit of the 2020 election results in Texas, a state he carried by a decent margin.

Although Trump won Texas by a comfortable 6% margin, he recently [sent a letter](#) to Texas Gov. Greg Abbott (R) urging the latter to undertake an audit over claims that voter irregularities and fraud were detected in "some" counties within the Lone Star State.

"Despite my big win in Texas, I hear Texans want an election audit! You know your fellow Texans have big questions about the November 2020 Election," Trump offered. "Texas needs you to act now. Your Third Special Session is the perfect, and maybe last, opportunity to pass this audit bill."

"Texans know voting fraud occurred in some of their counties. Let's get to the bottom of the 2020 Presidential Election Scam!"

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CDC Panel Endorses Pfizer Booster Shots for Older, At-Risk Americans  
By - Nevin Brown

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention voted Thursday to recommend the distribution of Pfizer-BioNTech's vaccine booster shots.

The panel's decision comes a day after the US Food and Drug Administration authorized the use of Pfizer-BioNTech's covid vaccine booster shot. The [CDC is recommending that all adults](#) over the age of 65 and adults with underlying medical conditions receive the booster.

The panel's decision is just the first round of voting. In a later vote, they will decide on a recommendation for adults who are frequently exposed to the virus. This group includes health care workers, people in nursing homes and prisons, and essential workers.

The panel's recommendations are not final, but Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the Director of the CDC, is expected to accept their verdict.

In the build-up to the panel's decision, some experts worried that recommending booster shots would hinder the vaccination efforts of the unvaccinated and spark fear that the vaccine does not work.

FDA authorization of Pfizer's booster shot only extends to those that received Pfizer in their initial round of vaccination. The CDC's recommendations will follow the FDA's guidelines.

The FDA is expected to determine the efficacy of Moderna and Johnson & Johnson's vaccine booster over the coming months.

US President Joe Biden had hoped to make booster shots available to all adults. With the FDA and CDC's rulings, his administration will have to wait to achieve those lofty goals.

The argument over recommending boosters for all adults centered on how vaccine protection from the disease has been seen to decrease over time. A study found that while protection from mild covid symptoms were shown to ease over time, protection from severe symptoms, that result in hospitalization and death, persists.

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US House Committee Chairman Issues Subpoenas to Meadows and Bannon Over Jan 6 Riot  
By - Nevin Brown

Bennie Thompson (D-MS), Chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, has issued four rounds of subpoenas for documents and testimony individuals who had close ties to former US President Donald Trump in the days leading up to the January 6, capitol insurrection.

The [subpoena orders went out to](#) former [White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows](#), former [White House Deputy Chief of Staff for Communications Daniel Scavino](#), former [Defense Department official Kashyap Patel](#), and former [Trump advisor Stephen Bannon](#).

Chairman Thompson wrote, "The Committee is investigating the facts, circumstances, and causes of the January 6th attack and issues relating to the peaceful transfer of power, to identify and evaluate lessons learned and to recommend corrective laws, policies, procedures rules, or regulations," underscoring the Select Committee's authority established by House Resolution 503.

The Committee on Homeland Security's interest in Mark Meadows is a result of reports that he had communications with officials at the state level and in the Department of Justice to prevent

the election's certification by congress or overturn the results of the 2020 election. Meadows was also reportedly in contact with organizers of the January 6th rally.

Daniel Scavino was with former President Trump on January 5th as he discussed how to convince Members of Congress not to certify the election for Joe Biden. Scavino promoted the January 6th rally on Twitter, and tried to galvanize support, suggesting the rally would "be a part of history."

Kashyap Patel discussed with senior Pentagon officials before and on January 6th how to handle security at the Capitol. He told reporters that he was in [constant contact with Mark Meadows](#) on January 6th.

It has been reported that Stephen Bannon got in contact with former President Trump on December 30th, 2020, and urged him to focus his attentions on January 6th. [He was quoted saying](#), "All Hell is going to break loose," in reference to the January 6th rally. He also reportedly attended the Willard Hotel the day before the rally to persuade Members of Congress to block the certification of the election.

The subpoenas instruct Meadows and Scavino to appear at depositions on October 14th, 2021, and Patel and Bannon on October 15th, 2021.

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Batting Below the Poverty Line: How MLB Exploits Its MiLB Workforce

By - Nevin Brown

Major League Baseball has long emphasized its ties to a distant, more idyllic past. Underneath all the marketing, it is and has always been a cold hard business. MLB rakes in billions in revenue, while most of its workforce are paid poverty wages.

Major League Baseball has the public perception of providing its employees with lucrative compensation. And to an extent, it's true. Mike Trout signed a 12-year \$426.5 million contract extension to stay with the Anaheim Angels, Mookie Betts inked a 12-year \$365 million extension with the Los Angeles Dodgers, Bryce Harper signed for 13-years and \$330 million with the Philadelphia Phillies, and the list of massive contracts goes on and on.

However, the 30 MLB franchises that employ these highly compensated players have a much larger labor force than meets the eye. Every team has a sprawling 'farm system' that consists of 120 teams and makes up Minor League Baseball (MiLB). While the Major League ball clubs attract all the attention and most of the revenue, the fact remains, they make up roughly 20% of a team's player labor force. Unlike their Major League peers, this massive group of players is woefully underpaid.

The name "farm system" is all too astute, as players are compensated like they work down on a farm.

[According to the United States Department of Agriculture](#), the average farmworker made \$14.58 an hour in 2020. A minor league baseball player, depending on what level they play at, receives a minimum salary [anywhere from \\$500 to \\$700 a week](#). A farmworker, working 40 hours a week, would earn \$583.20 for their labor. Minor League Baseball was nicknamed the 'farm

system' because it's where players were grown into Major Leaguers, not because its employees were compensated like a migrant farmer.

What makes these wages even more discouraging, is that they're a massive improvement from just last year. In 2020, the minimum weekly salary for Minor League players ranged from \$290 to \$502. While the substantial improvement in wages was applauded in some sectors, it comes with yet another massive caveat.

In 2020, there were 160 Minor League teams, which was cut to 120 heading into 2021. For Major League teams to pay their players slightly better poverty wages, they cut 40 teams from existence. In reality, the total pool of money headed to minor leaguers hardly budged; it was just redirected at the cost of over 1,000 jobs.

The problems for Minor League Baseball players only worsen when their five-month-long season ends. During the season, Minor Leaguers are paid near or below minimum wage, but when the off-season comes, they stop seeing a paycheck altogether. While getting a job in the off-season remains an option, it is hardly conducive to maximizing one's potential.

Teams expect players to workout and improve their skills, doing that is both expensive and time-consuming. For a lot of Minor Leaguers, they depend on their family, their credit card, and their signing bonus.

Defenders of the current Minor League system will point to the MLB's draft and international signing bonus system as reasons to not quibble over poor wages. There is some merit to the argument, [players selected within the first 60 picks](#) can expect to land a signing bonus in excess of \$1 million. It isn't until the 313th pick that the slotted bonus drops to \$125,000. That's a large check, but it obscures reality.

Teams are assigned a total amount they can dole out in signing bonuses every draft, but are under no obligation to pay players in accordance with their draft slot. A club may give a player a \$5,000 bonus to use the \$120,000 from his slot elsewhere. Another factor to consider is that it is a one-time check, and most Minor Leaguers never make it to the Majors. Even if they do, if it takes five years to make it, a \$125,000 check is only \$25,000 a year, and that's in a pretend world with no taxes.

The system is designed to benefit a lucky few. These highly-rated prospects land massive signing bonuses that are enough for them to live comfortably off of as they work their way towards the Majors. Everyone else is simply there to provide for their development. Sometimes a lowly drafted player defies the odds and makes it. They still had to fight through a system set up to fail them. Exceptions to the rule don't make the rule just.

The worst part of the semi-feudal system known as Minor League Baseball is that there is more than enough money to go around.

[According to a study conducted by Sportico](#), the average valuation of a Major League Baseball franchise was \$2.2 billion. There are approximately 116 players in a team's farm system across four levels of Minor League Baseball. If teams were to increase their weekly pay by \$1,000 in-season and give them a weekly stipend of \$1,000 in the off-season, it would only cost them \$6.03 million a year. The [average major league salary is \\$4.17 million](#). For approximately the cost of one and a half Major Leaguers, 116 minor leaguers could be dragged out of literal poverty.

America's pastime has a massive Minor League problem. In a league worth an estimated \$66 billion, it should be downright shocking that close to 80% of their workforce is in poverty. Yet, it isn't. For as much as baseball claims to be America's pastime, exploitation has it beat. It's time for Major League Baseball to stop clinging to America's true pastime, exploitation, and provide their workforce with livable wages.

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US Judge Orders Facebook to Turn Over Deleted Posts That Promoted Hate Toward Rohingya People

By - Nevin Brown

A District of Columbia judge has ruled that Facebook must turn over deleted posts made by Myanmar officials encouraging hate towards the Rohingya people to the Gambian government. The ruling [comes a year after Facebook denied Gambia's request](#) as it tries to build a genocide case against Myanmar for the ongoing persecutions against the Rohingya people that began in 2016.

The presiding judge, Zia Faruqui, commented that "Facebook taking up the mantle of privacy rights is rich with irony. News sites have entire sections dedicated to Facebook's sordid history of privacy scandals."

The [UN Human Rights Council found that the role of social media](#), and Facebook in particular, was instrumental in pushing false information and sparking hatred towards the Rohingya. They also found that Facebook was "slow and ineffective" in its response to the escalating persecution.

The posts in question were eventually deleted by Facebook, but many in the international community believe the damage has already been done. Facebook had provided information to the UN, but believed that the Gambia's requests were too broad and intrusive.

The attacks on the Rohingya people by the Myanmar government have led to hundreds of thousands of deaths and the displacement of close to 700,000 people. The Rohingya are a predominantly Muslim ethnic minority in the predominantly Buddhist country of Myanmar. Persecution of them dates back to the 1970s.

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Earthquake With 6.3 Magnitude Registered Off Alaska Coast

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - A 6.3 magnitude earthquake was registered off the coast of the US state of Alaska, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) said on Friday. The epicenter was located 50 kilometers (31 miles) deep in the northern Pacific Oceans, 184 km southwest of the community of Adak, the southernmost community in Alaska.

There has been no information about possible casualties and damage.

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**RPT - US Envoy Lenderking Says Dialogue With Russia on Yemen 'Very Helpful'**

UNITED NATIONS, September 23 (Sputnik) - US Special Envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking told Sputnik he finds the dialogue he maintains with Russia on the situation in the Arab Republic helpful.

"I keep a regular dialogue with the Russians on Yemen, which I find very helpful," Lenderking said on Thursday.

In addition, Lenderking said the five permanent member states of the UN Security Council have to be united on the agreed approaches to end the protracted conflict in Yemen.

When asked what needs to be done to push the peace process in Yemen, Lenderking said, "Several things have to happen. One is the international community has to stay very united around agreed approaches to end the Yemen conflict."

"First of all, there's only a political solution, there's no military solution, that the UN or the new UN envoy has to have unconditional access to all the parties," he said. "Relating to the first point that's the where the P5 as one of the crucial institutions staying united and focused on Yemen can be very constructive toward achieving these goals."

Lenderking also noted that he just returned from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, earlier in the week, where he participated in a P5 meeting.

"We also traveled to Muscat to meet with the Omanis," he added. "I know that the UN envoy will go to the P5 capitals."

Lenderking spoke with Sputnik on the sidelines of the UNGA in New York.

The envoy shared that he has had a number of bilateral engagements in New York on Yemen.

"It's all designed to force, foster that kind of united approach toward Yemen," he said. "And by the way, that's the main issue that the Secretary stressed in the GCC ministerial that took place this afternoon is getting the GCC countries all working on the same page."

Yemen has been engulfed in an internal conflict between government forces and the Houthi movement since August 2014. The situation in the Middle Eastern nation is further complicated after Saudi Arabia joined the conflict on the Yemeni government's side in 2015 and began conducting occasional air, land and sea operations against the Islamist rebel movement.

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**RPT - Russia Regrets Ex-Nazi Oberlander Evaded Punishment - Ambassador in Canada**

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - Moscow regrets that Ex-Nazi death squad member Helmut Oberlander evaded punishment, Russian Ambassador to Canada Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.

"We regret that Oberlander escaped justice and punishment for the crimes he committed," Stepanov said.

Oberlander died in Canada before the deportation hearings against him were concluded, the Canadian Press reported on Wednesday.

The 97-year-old died in his home surrounded by loved ones, according to a family statement obtained by the news agency.

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RPT - Maduro Would Like to Meet Putin 'Any Time,' Their Relations 'Good for World' - Minister

UNITED NATIONS, September 23 (Sputnik) - Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro is ready to hold a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin at any time, Venezuelan Foreign Minister Felix Plasencia told Sputnik, adding that their relationship is advantageous for the world.

"I am sure President Maduro would like to Meet President Putin any time. They've met before many times and he is willing. They are good friends, good allies. Our relationship with Russia is a strategic bilateral important relationship. It's good for the world because we are working with the international community," Plasencia said.

He spoke to Sputnik on the margins of the UN General Assembly.

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RPT - US to Find Ways to Get More Help to Haitian Migrants After US Envoy Resigned - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - The United States is working to identify ways to provide more comprehensive assistance to Haitian migrants following the resignation of US Special Envoy for Haiti Daniel Foote, a State Department Spokesperson told Sputnik.

The State Department confirmed that Foote submitted his resignation to State Secretary Antony Blinken on Wednesday. A letter of Foote's resignation saying that his move was made in protest of the deportation of thousands of Haitians apprehended at the southern US border was shared on social media. Foote said that he would not be associated with the United States' "inhumane, counterproductive decision to deport thousands of Haitian refugees and illegal immigrants to Haiti."

"We are working to identify ways to provide more comprehensive assistance going forward.

Over the long-term, the U.S. government is committed to working with the Haitian government and stakeholders across Haiti to strengthen democratic governance and the rule of law,

increase inclusive economic growth, and improve security and the protection of human rights in Haiti," the statement said.

Washington is now is working with the International Organization on Migration to ensure that returning migrants from Haiti are met at the airport and provided with immediate assistance, according to the State Department.

The state department thanked Foote for his service in this role.

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RPT - US Must Leave Syria or Face Same 'Humiliation' as In Afghanistan - Foreign Minister

NEW YORK, September 23 (Sputnik) - The United States should withdraw from Syria or face the same humiliation as it did in Afghanistan, Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad told Sputnik on the margins of the UN General Assembly.

"We believe the humiliating withdrawal by the Americans and their allies from Afghanistan will give them a good lesson on how to behave internationally and to how to behave inside Syria," Mekdad said. "What we need now in Syria is work to force the Turkish government to discontinue its military presence illegally in Syria, in Syrian territories and for the Americans to leave Syria. Otherwise they will be faced with the same result as in Afghanistan."

He also said the US should stop supporting terrorist groups, not interfere in Syria's internal affairs, and not impose sanctions "because sanctions are against the population, against innocent people."

Mekdad, in addition, said he had a great meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on the margins of the UN General Assembly during which they talked about the coordination of efforts.

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RPT - Canada Agrees to End Deportation Hearings Against Deceased Ex-Nazi Oberlander - IRB

TORONTO, September 23 (Sputnik) – Canada has agreed to end the deportation hearings against Helmut Oberlander following the former Nazi death squad member's passing, an Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) spokesperson told Sputnik, citing the position of Public Safety Canada.

On Wednesday, Oberlander's legal counsel Ronald Poulton submitted an application to the IRB to end the proceedings, saying that the ex-SS interpreter's death renders the matter "moot." In his letter, Poulton noted that he has not received Oberlander's death certificate.

"Further to Mr. Poulton's correspondence ... the Minister agrees that the admissibility hearing should be terminated upon receipt of the death certificate," Anna Pape said, citing the Public Safety Canada's position.

Russian Ambassador to Canada Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik Moscow regrets that Oberlander evaded punishment.

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RPT - UNSC P5 Members Should Stay United on Approach to End Yemeni Conflict - US Envoy

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - The five permanent member states of the United Nations Security Council have to be very United on the agreed approaches to end the conflict in Yemen, US Special Envoy for the country Tim Lenderking told Sputnik.

"Several things have to happen. One is the international community has to stay very united around agreed approaches to end the Yemen conflict," Lenderking said. "The P5, as one of the crucial institutions, staying united and focused on Yemen can be very constructive toward achieving these goals."

The envoy also said there is only a political solution to the conflict in Yemen, not a military solution.

He called for the UN to have unconditional access to all the parties.

The envoy shared that he has had a number of bilateral engagements in New York on Yemen.

"It's all designed to force, foster that kind of united approach toward Yemen," he said. "And by the way, that's the main issue that the Secretary mentioned in his that he's stressed in the GCC ministerial that took place this afternoon is getting the GCC countries all working on the same page."

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RPT - US WWII Veteran on Oberlander's Death: There Are No 'Former' Nazi Criminals

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - Crimes of Nazi evil-doers have no limitation period and should be punishable by law despite age, US World War II veteran Frank Cohn told Sputnik on Thursday, commenting on the news about the death of Nazi Helmut Oberlander in Canada.

"There are no 'former' Nazi criminals. The statute of limitation does not expire for murder," Cohn said.

Oberlander, 97, died in his home in Canada on Wednesday before the deportation hearings against him were completed.

"We are approaching the time when the search for Nazi criminals can end, most are dead by now, but if there are any left, I have no pity for them and they would not get a 'poor old man' pass from me," said Cohn, a 96-year-old retired US colonel.

Born in Germany in a Jewish family, Cohn had to leave his country because of Nazis and fled to the United States in 1938. He came back as a US soldier several years later and fought against Hitler's army. In late April 1945, Cohn has participated in the historic meeting between American and Soviet troops at the Elbe River.

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RPT - Hungary Will Not Receive Any Refugees From Afghanistan - Foreign Minister

UNITED NATIONS, September 23 (Sputnik) - Hungary will not be taking in any refugees from Afghanistan, Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told Sputnik.

"We are not going to receive any further migrants from from Afghanistan. We made it very clear that we will reject any kind of distribution mechanism... be it based in the European Union, be it based in NATO. No way," Szijjarto said.

The foreign minister also said it was regrettable that some European countries are making the same mistake as during the 2015 migratory crisis by promising to host Afghan refugees fleeing the country after its takeover by the Taliban (banned in Russia).

"The European Union, Brussels and some member states in the western part of Europe commit exactly the same mistakes, which were committed back in 2015, when the irresponsible statements of Western European leaders created a situation that illegal massive migratory pressure arrived to Europe," Szijjarto said.

In late August, Szijjarto described the developments in Afghanistan as a threat to Hungary given that Afghan refugees might get in the country via Turkey and the southern Balkans.

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RPT - Damascus' Top Diplomat Says Iran Plans to Open One More Consulate in Syria

NEW YORK, September 23 (Sputnik) - Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad on the margins of the UN General Assembly told Sputnik Iran will open another consulate in his country.

"They [Iranians] will open one consulate. They opened one in Aleppo and soon we shall have another one," Mekdad said without providing details about the date of the opening or the place where it will be located.

Iran opened its consulate in the Syrian city of Aleppo in May 2021.

Iran's newly appointed foreign minister, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, visited Damascus last month for talks with Syrian officials, according to SANA.

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**UN Must Target Houthi Financial Networks, Not Only Individuals - Yemeni Foreign Minister**

NEW YORK, September 23 (Sputnik) - The United Nations has to impose sanctions against Houthis' financial networks as personal sanctions are not working, Yemeni Foreign Minister Ahmad Awad bin Mubarak told Sputnik.

"Sanctions are already there. I think we have to be more clever about sanctions," Mubarak said. "I mean, we have to target their financial networks by sanctions more than just individuals."

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**Houthi Cooperation on Safer Tanker Would Send Positive Message - Yemen's Top Diplomat**

NEW YORK, September 23 (Sputnik) - Houthis are not being cooperative on the Safer oil tanker which could be their first step in showing that they can respect their obligations, Yemeni Foreign Minister Ahmad Awad bin Mubarak told Sputnik.

"They are not cooperating in Safer tanker. This is one of those issues where the international community, where Russia, where everyone concerned about the environment, about the globe, can apply pressure," Mubarak said. "I mean Safer is a test, if Houthis behave and change their behavior in Safer, I think that will send a positive message to the entire world that Houthis can respect their obligations."

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**UN Must Apply More Pressure on Houthis to Accept Ceasefire - Yemeni Foreign Minister**

NEW YORK, September 23 (Sputnik) - The United Nations must apply more pressure on the Houthis to get them to agree to a cessation of hostilities, Yemeni Foreign Minister Ahmad Awad bin Mubarak told Sputnik.

"The international community [and] the UN has to apply more pressure on the Houthis to accept this practical proposal, starting with a ceasefire," Mubarak said. "They can by being more clear and practice some more pressure using all the tools that the [UN] Security Council has, and make Houthis accountable."

Mubarak said the international community also needs to act strongly against Houthi human rights violations.

"They just executed nine innocent people just four days ago, one of them was a child, and you didn't hear anything from the media, the Russian media about that," he added.

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#### Yemen's Top Diplomat Says He Will Meet UN Chief Friday to Discuss New Approach to Conflict

NEW YORK, September 23 (Sputnik) - Yemeni Foreign Minister Ahmad Awad bin Mubarak told Sputnik he will meet with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on the sidelines of the ongoing General Assembly on Friday to talk about a new approach to the Yemeni conflict. "I will discuss everything with him. I mean, evaluating the peace process and the new approach that has to be adopted by the new [UN] Special Envoy in Yemen," he said. Although he does not have plans to meet with Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov while in New York, Mubarak said Yemen is enjoying a very good relationship with Russia.

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#### UNSC P5 Members Should Stay United on Approach to End Yemeni Conflict - US Envoy

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - The five permanent member states of the United Nations Security Council have to be very United on the agreed approaches to end the conflict in Yemen, US Special Envoy for the country Tim Lenderking told Sputnik. "Several things have to happen. One is the international community has to stay very united around agreed approaches to end the Yemen conflict," Lenderking said. "The P5, as one of the crucial institutions, staying united and focused on Yemen can be very constructive toward achieving these goals." The envoy also said there is only a political solution to the conflict in Yemen, not a military solution. He called for the UN to have unconditional access to all the parties. The envoy shared that he has had a number of bilateral engagements in New York on Yemen. "It's all designed to force, foster that kind of united approach toward Yemen," he said. "And by the way, that's the main issue that the Secretary mentioned in his that he's stressed in the GCC ministerial that took place this afternoon is getting the GCC countries all working on the same page."

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#### US Envoy Lenderking Says Dialogue With Russia on Yemen 'Very Helpful'

UNITED NATIONS, September 23 (Sputnik) - US Special Envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking told Sputnik he finds the dialogue he maintains with Russia on the situation in the Arab Republic helpful. "I keep a regular dialogue with the Russians on Yemen, which I find very helpful," Lenderking said on Thursday.

In addition, Lenderking said the five permanent member states of the UN Security Council have to be united on the agreed approaches to end the protracted conflict in Yemen.

When asked what needs to be done to push the peace process in Yemen, Lenderking said, "Several things have to happen. One is the international community has to stay very united around agreed approaches to end the Yemen conflict."

"First of all, there's only a political solution, there's no military solution, that the UN or the new UN envoy has to have unconditional access to all the parties," he said. "Relating to the first point that's the where the P5 as one of the crucial institutions staying united and focused on Yemen can be very constructive toward achieving these goals."

Lenderking also noted that he just returned from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, earlier in the week, where he participated in a P5 meeting.

"We also traveled to Muscat to meet with the Omanis," he added. "I know that the UN envoy will go to the P5 capitals."

Lenderking spoke with Sputnik on the sidelines of the UNGA in New York.

The envoy shared that he has had a number of bilateral engagements in New York on Yemen.

"It's all designed to force, foster that kind of united approach toward Yemen," he said. "And by the way, that's the main issue that the Secretary stressed in the GCC ministerial that took place this afternoon is getting the GCC countries all working on the same page."

Yemen has been engulfed in an internal conflict between government forces and the Houthi movement since August 2014. The situation in the Middle Eastern nation is further complicated after Saudi Arabia joined the conflict on the Yemeni government's side in 2015 and began conducting occasional air, land and sea operations against the Islamist rebel movement.

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Canada Agrees to End Deportation Hearings Against Deceased Ex-Nazi Oberlander - IRB

TORONTO, September 23 (Sputnik) – Canada has agreed to end the deportation hearings against Helmut Oberlander following the former Nazi death squad member's passing, an Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) spokesperson told Sputnik, citing the position of Public Safety Canada.

On Wednesday, Oberlander's legal counsel Ronald Poulton submitted an application to the IRB to end the proceedings, saying that the ex-SS interpreter's death renders the matter "moot." In his letter, Poulton noted that he has not received Oberlander's death certificate.

"Further to Mr. Poulton's correspondence ... the Minister agrees that the admissibility hearing should be terminated upon receipt of the death certificate," Anna Pape said, citing the Public Safety Canada's position.

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US Does Not Have Agreement With Iran to Return to Vienna Talks - Blinken

NEW YORK, September 23 (Sputnik) - The United States and Iran do not currently have a deal in place to restart negotiations on the nuclear agreement in Vienna, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said.

"We don't have, yet, an agreement by Iran to return to the talks in Vienna," Blinken told reporters on Thursday, emphasizing that the United States is prepared to restart negotiations.

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Hungary Will Not Receive Any Refugees From Afghanistan - Foreign Minister

UNITED NATIONS, September 23 (Sputnik) - Hungary will not be taking in any refugees from Afghanistan, Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto said in a an interview with Sputnik.

"We are not going to receive any further migrants from from Afghanistan. We made it very clear that we will reject any kind of distribution mechanism... be it based in the European Union, be it based in NATO. No way," Szijarto said.

The foreign minister also said it was regrettable that some European countries are making the same mistake as during the 2015 migratory crisis by promising to host Afghan refugees fleeing the country after its takeover by the Taliban (banned in Russia).

"The European Union, Brussels and some member states in the western part of Europe commit exactly the same mistakes, which were committed back in 2015, when the irresponsible statements of Western European leaders created a situation that illegal massive migratory pressure arrived to Europe," Szijarto said.

In late August, Szijarto described the developments in Afghanistan as a threat to Hungary given that Afghan refugees might get in the country via Turkey and the southern Balkans.

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CFO of Russia's Novatek Arrested in US on Tax-Related Charges - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - The US authorities have arrested Mark Gyetvay, Florida-based CFO of the Russian energy company Novatek, on tax evasion charges related to a sum of \$93 million stored offshore, the Justice Department said in a statement on Thursday.

"A federal grand jury in Fort Myers, Florida, returned an indictment on Sept. 22 charging a Florida businessman [Mark Gyetvay] with defrauding the United States by not disclosing his substantial offshore assets, failing to report substantial income on his tax returns, failing to pay millions of dollars of taxes and submitting a false offshore compliance filing with the IRS [Internal Revenue Service] in an attempt to avoid substantial penalties and criminal prosecution," the statement said.

The Justice Department said from 2005 to 2016, Gyetvay allegedly engaged in a scheme to defraud the United States by concealing his ownership and control over substantial offshore assets and by failing to file and pay taxes on millions of dollars of income.

"After working as a certified public accountant (CPA) in the United States and Russia, Gyetvay allegedly became the chief financial officer of a large Russian gas company. As part of his compensation package, Gyetvay allegedly received lucrative stock options and/or stock-based compensation. Beginning in 2005, Gyetvay allegedly opened the first of two different Swiss bank accounts to hold these assets, which at one point had an aggregate value of over \$93 million," the statement said.

The Justice Department said Gyetvay concealed his ownership and control over the foreign accounts and associated assets during several years and did not provide tax information timely and properly.

"The indictment also alleges that Gyetvay submitted a false offshore compliance filing with the IRS through the Streamlined Filing Compliance Procedures in which he attested that his prior failure to file FBARs and tax returns was non-willful," the statement said.

Gyetyay is scheduled to appear before the US District Court for the Middle District of Florida later on Friday. If convicted, he faces a multi-year term in prison, the statement added.

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#### US Stocks Rally for 2nd Day as Federal Reserve Assures Care Over Stimulus Taper

NEW YORK, September 23 (Sputnik) - Stocks on Wall Street rose broadly for a second straight day on Thursday, with the blue-chip S&P 500 index notching its best gain in two months, after the Federal Reserve assured investors of a soft landing for the US economy from the planned discontinuation of its stimulus and near-zero interest rates.

All three of the major equity indexes on the New York Stock Exchange finished the day up more than 1%, extending Wednesday's rebound that came after the market opened the week with one of the worst trading days of the year on concerns about contagion from the debt crisis at China's biggest property developer Evergrande.

The S&P 500, which groups the top 500 stocks on the New York Stocks Exchange, settled up 53.34 points, or 1.2%, at 4,449. It was index's biggest one-day advance since July 20.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average, comprising mostly industrial stocks, rose 506.6 points, or 1.5%, to close at 34,765.

The technology-laced Nasdaq Composite Index, led by Big Tech names such as Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix and Google, finished up 155 points, or 1%, at 15,052.

Stocks rallied the past two sessions after the Federal Reserve said at the conclusion of its September policy meeting on Wednesday that it will extend stimulus support for the US economy beyond next year, if necessary. It also said it will exercise care in raising interest rates, which have been at near zero since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020.

"There's been a lot to take in this week but investors appear very comfortable with what they're seeing, taking the Evergrande debacle and Fed tapering warnings in their stride," Craig Erlam, analyst at online trading platform OANDA, said. "It's quite remarkable just how relaxed investors are with the situation. On the taper discussion, the reaction is probably a testament to the Fed's effective communication over a long period of time. While some may argue that taking this action during such an uncertain period is needlessly risky, they can't argue that the central bank hasn't been clear and consistent."

The Federal Reserve says it will tentatively end its monthly stimulus program of \$120 billion by mid-2022. The first rate since the pandemic is planned anytime between the end of next year and 2023.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) -

#### UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- \* Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov exchanged greetings with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on the sidelines of the meeting of the UN Security Council five permanent member states, but there was no "on the feet" meeting between them, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.
- \* The foreign ministers of the five permanent member states discussed the Iran's nuclear program, a coordinated response to the events in Afghanistan and the coronavirus pandemic at the meeting, UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said.
- \* The European Union is working on opening a joint representative office in Kabul, Afghanistan, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told reporters.
- \* Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Borrell met on the sidelines of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly in New York to discuss the situation in Afghanistan, Ukraine, Mali as well as the Iran nuclear deal, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

#### US ARRESTS RUSSIA'S NOVATEK CFO

- \* The US authorities have arrested Mark Gyetvay, Florida-based CFO of the Russian energy company Novatek, on tax evasion charges related to a sum of \$93 million stored offshore, the Justice Department said on Thursday.

#### NORD STREAM 2

- \* Possible US sanctions against the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline are not tied to reality; this is a continuation of the policy of containment, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Thursday.
- \* The US Senate Foreign Relations Committee will hold a closed hearing on the Biden administration's efforts with respect to energy security, including the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project that has been strongly opposed by US lawmakers and a number of European states, according to the committee's hearings schedule.

#### AFGHANISTAN

- \* The Taliban movement (banned in Russia) will appoint new ambassadors in countries that will officially announce the recognition of the new Afghan authorities, Zabihullah Mujahid, deputy minister of culture and information of the interim Afghan government, said in an interview with Sputnik.
- \* The Taliban movement plans to form a commission next year to draft a new constitution, Mujahid said.
- \* The representation of the Taliban in the United Nations is a difficult issue, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Vershinin told journalists, adding that the main thing at present is to provide urgent humanitarian aid to Afghanistan.

#### EX-NAZI OBERLANDER DIES

- \* Former Nazi Helmut Oberlander died in Canada before the deportation hearings against him were concluded, the Canadian Press reported on Thursday.

\* Russia will not close the case against Oberlander after his death as the crimes against humanity have no statute of limitations, Russian Ambassador to Canada Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.

#### US SPECIAL ENVOY FOR HAITI RESIGNS

\* US Special Envoy for Haiti Daniel Foote has resigned in protest of the deportation of thousands of Haitians apprehended at the southern US border, according to his resignation letter distributed on social media.

\* Foote mischaracterized the circumstances of his resignation and failed to take advantage of a chance to raise concerns about migration during his tenure, US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said.

\* Foote had multiple opportunities to express his concerns over the situation with Haitian migrants on the US-Mexico border, White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki said.

\* The United States is working to identify ways to provide more comprehensive assistance to Haitian migrants following the resignation of Foote, a State Department spokesperson told Sputnik.

#### COVID-19

\* The European Union and the United States are launching a joint partnership for vaccinating the global population and boosting health security, European Commission chief spokesman Eric Mamer announced on Thursday.

\* Hungary started construction of plant to produce Russian coronavirus vaccine Sputnik V, its commissioning is expected by fall 2022, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told Sputnik.

\* The Russian Ministry of Health has received a set of documents from the Gamaleya research center for registration of the Gam-COVID-Vac-M coronavirus vaccine for teenagers, a decision on possible registration will be made when the documents are examined, Assistant Minister Alexey Kuznetsov told Sputnik.

\* Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said no decisions on possible new restrictions and lockdowns were made at the federal level and at the level of the presidential administration in light of an increase in daily cases.

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#### Twitter Says Bitcoin Now Part of its Tipping Service

NEW YORK, September 23 (Sputnik) - Twitter announced on Thursday that it has added Bitcoin to the payment modes on its tipping service, extending business legitimacy to a cryptocurrency that many regulators across the world called risky.

"Starting today, we're rolling out Tips to everyone on iOS globally and bringing it to people on Android in the coming weeks," Esther Crawford, product head at Twitter said in a post on the microblogging site. "We're also adding new payment options and, for the first time, allowing people to send Bitcoin tips through the use of a Bitcoin address or Lightning-enabled wallet."

In a separate statement, Twitter said users on its site can seamlessly tip using Bitcoin via Strike, the payments application built on the Bitcoin Lightning Network that allows people to send and receive the digital currency.

"Strike offers instant and free payments globally," Twitter said, noting that with the exception of Hawaii and New York, the payment app was available to people throughout the United States, as well as in El Salvador.

The reference to El Salvador is particularly important because it is the first nation to adopt Bitcoin as legal tender and has touted it as a way to attract investments.

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**Two Virginia Contracting Companies Agree to Settle Kickback Cases - US Justice Dept.**

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - Two companies based in the US state of Virginia have agreed to pay more than \$1.1 million to settle claims that they sought and took financial kickbacks they were not entitled to, the Justice Department said in a release on Thursday.

"Two Virginia-based companies agreed to pay a combined \$1,174,584 to settle allegations that they solicited and received kickbacks in connection with federal government contracts reserved for '8(a)' small businesses," Acting US Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia Raj Parekh said in the release.

Index Systems in Fairfax and its president Chinna Nemelidinne agreed to pay \$1,010,084 to settle claims under the Anti-Kickback Act and False Claims Act and Capital Consulting Group (CCG) in Arlington agreed to pay \$164,500 to settle claims under the Anti-Kickback Act, the release said.

"According to the US allegations, in 2018, Index and CCG agreed that Index would use its 8(a) certification to bid on a government contract on which CCG was not eligible to bid. Index and CCG allegedly agreed to subcontract all the work on that contract to CCG in exchange for a 'fee,'" the release added.

The United States also alleged that, between 2018 through 2020, Index had a similar kickback arrangement in place with Sage Consulting Group, Inc. (Sage), in connection with three federal 8(a) set-aside contracts, according to the release.

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**One Killed, 12 Injured in Supermarket Shooting in US State of Tennessee - Reports**

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - One person was killed and another dozen were wounded in a shooting at a Kroger grocery store in Collierville, Tennessee on Thursday, Police Chief Dale Lane said during a news conference cited by local media.

Lane said that there was only one shooter involved in the incident, and that they took their own life prior to apprehension by law enforcement, according to CBS News.

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CFO of Russia's Novatek Arrested in US on Tax-Related Charges - Justice Dept.

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The Justice Department said from 2005 to 2016, Gyetvay allegedly engaged in a scheme to defraud the United States by concealing his ownership and control over substantial offshore assets and by failing to file and pay taxes on millions of dollars of income.

"After working as a certified public accountant (CPA) in the United States and Russia, Gyetvay allegedly became the chief financial officer of a large Russian gas company. As part of his compensation package, Gyetvay allegedly received lucrative stock options and/or stock-based compensation. Beginning in 2005, Gyetvay allegedly opened the first of two different Swiss bank accounts to hold these assets, which at one point had an aggregate value of over \$93 million," the statement said.

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New \$100Mln Factory Near Dallas to Manufacture Advanced Technologies - Raytheon

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - A new 178,000 square foot "intelligent" factory complex being built at Mc Kinney in the US state of Texas will focus on developing new digital products and high tech manufacturing processes, Raytheon Intelligence & Space (RI&S) said on Thursday.

"RI&S opened a new 178,000-square-foot Advanced Integration and Manufacturing Center at its McKinney, Texas location" the company said in a press release. "The center is a result of a \$100 million investment from the McKinney Economic Development Corporation."

RI&S described the new facility as a new intelligent manufacturing facility and said it was already generating 500 skilled new jobs.

"Our new Advanced Integration and Manufacturing Center and plans for greater expansion reflect a deliberate strategy to transform ourselves by investing in new digital capabilities. We are laser focused on improving our agility," RI&S President Roy Azevedo said. RI&S is also planning to build a 400,000-square-foot factory, lab and office space at its McKinney campus to develop, build, test and deliver more advanced technology by 2025 that will generate another 700 jobs, the company said.

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Straw Donor in 2016 US Election Pleads Guilty to Breaking Campaign Laws - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - A US business executive has admitted to breaking federal election laws by making a presidential campaign donation with cash from another person seeking to avoid legal contribution limits, the Justice Department said on Thursday. "[Ahmad] Khawaja gave [Stevan] Hill \$100,000 to contribute in Hill's name to a political committee supporting a candidate running for U.S. president in the 2016 election cycle," the Justice Department said in a press release.

The contribution was made in connection with a political event hosted by Khawaja in October 2016, the release said.

Hill pleaded guilty on Thursday for conspiring to make and conceal conduit and excessive campaign contributions during the US presidential election in 2016 and thereafter, the release said.

The Justice Department did not name the candidate favored by Hill and his benefactor, however media reports said the donations were to Hillary Clinton's campaign.

Hill also admitted that, in June 2017, Khawaja gave him approximately \$50,000 to contribute in Hill's name to another political committee, the release said.

Hill faces a statutory maximum of five years in prison, the release added.

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Bipartisan US Majority Wants Government to Hold Big Tech Responsible for Content - Poll

WASHINGTON, September 22 (Sputnik) - An overwhelming majority of American voters - Republicans and Democrats alike - backs strong online privacy protections, with eight in ten favoring accountability for social media, a poll commissioned by the Future of Big Tech advocacy group said on Thursday.

"The survey finds that nine in ten voters across party lines support 'privacy by default' and that eighty percent of American voters overall - 83% of Democrats and 78% of Republicans - believe the federal government 'needs to do everything it can to curb the influence of big tech companies,'" a press release explaining the poll said.

The Future of Big Tech Commission is co-chaired by former Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick, former Education Secretary Margaret Spellings and Common Sense Media Founder and CEO James Steyer, the release said.

"Americans have made clear that broadband is a core utility in their lives... but they have also made clear that tech companies must operate within boundaries," the release added.

The poll conducted by Benenson Strategy Group consisted of 2,016 interviews from July 20-29, with data weighted to ensure a representative sample of US voters, according to the release.

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**Modi Invites US Vice President to Visit India, Calls for Cooperation in Space**

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) – During a meeting on Thursday, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited US Vice President Kamala Harris to visit India and called for cooperation in emerging technologies and space between the countries.

"I extend to you a special invitation to visit India," Modi said during a joint press conference with Harris. "As far as the new and emerging technologies are concerned, and space, these are the areas of special interest for you, these are areas which are of interest to me and a special priority. These areas are where our cooperation is very important."

During the meeting, Harris underscored the importance of the two countries working together to maintain an open and free Indo-Pacific region while the Indian Prime Minister noted that both countries share geopolitical interests and democratic values.

The Indian Prime Minister is in the United States to take part in the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly and the first in-person Quad summit on Friday alongside Prime Minister Scott Morrison of Australia and Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga of Japan.

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**Russia Awaiting Canada's Response on Request to Probe Nazi War Crimes in Yeysk - Envoy**

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - The Russian General Prosecutor's Office is awaiting a response from the Canadian Justice Ministry on its request to transfer materials related to war crimes committed by the Nazis in the city of Yeysk during World War II, Russian Ambassador to Canada Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.

"The Prosecutor General's Office of Russia is awaiting a response from the Ministry of Justice of Canada on the request for the transfer of materials within the framework of the criminal case on the mass murder of orphans from an orphanage in the city of Yeysk in 1942," Stepanov said.

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**US House Adds Amendment to NDAA Ending Support to Saudi in Yemen Conflict**

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives on Thursday adopted a set of amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that would terminate US military support to Saudi Arabia as it relates to the war in Yemen.

The first amendment, backed by Representative Ro Khanna, passed the House with a vote tally of 219 to 207. The second, backed by Representative Gregory Meeks, passed with a vote tally of 223 to 204. The full NDAA has yet to be voted on by the House or Senate, although a vote is expected in the House later on Thursday.

Khanna's amendment would terminate US military logistical support and transfer of spare parts to Saudi warplanes that conduct airstrikes in Yemen. It would also permanently end intel sharing as it relates to the conflict in Yemen.

Meeks' amendment would similarly suspend US sustainment and maintenance support to the Saudi air force units responsible for airstrikes in Yemen that result in civilian casualties.

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**Russia Will Not Close Case Against Oberlander - Ambassador in Canada to Sputnik**

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - Moscow will not close the case against Former Nazi Helmut Oberlander after his death as the crimes against humanity have no statute of limitations, Russian Ambassador to Canada Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.

"Russia will not close his case, since crimes against humanity have no statute of limitations," Stepanov said. "This case should be brought to a close even post-mortem."

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**Russia Regret Oberlander Evaded Punishment – Ambassador in Canada to Sputnik**

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - Moscow regrets that Ex-Nazi death squad member Helmut Oberlander evaded punishment, Russian Ambassador to Canada Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.

"We regret that Oberlander escaped justice and punishment for the crimes he committed," Stepanov said.

Oberlander died in Canada before the deportation hearings against him were concluded, the Canadian Press reported on Wednesday.

The 97-year-old died in his home surrounded by loved ones, according to a family statement obtained by the news agency.

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#### Damascus' Top Diplomat Says Iran Plans to Open One More Consulate in Syria

NEW YORK, September 23 (Sputnik) - Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad on the margins of the UN General Assembly told Sputnik Iran will open another consulate in his country.

"They [Iranians] will open one consulate. They opened one in Aleppo and soon we shall have another one," Mekdad said without providing details about the date of the opening or the place where it will be located.

Iran opened its consulate in the Syrian city of Aleppo in May 2021.

Iran's newly appointed foreign minister, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, visited Damascus last month for talks with Syrian officials, according to SANA.

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#### Next Assad-Putin Meeting to Take Place 'Whenever Necessary'- Syrian Foreign Minister

NEW YORK, September 23 (Sputnik) - The next meeting between Syrian President Bashar Assad and Russian President Vladimir Putin will be held whenever necessary, Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad told Sputnik on the margins of the UN General Assembly.

"I think whenever necessary, they will meet," Mekdad said when asked about the timing of the next meeting.

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#### **US WWII Veteran on Oberlander's Death: There Are No 'Former' Nazi Criminals**

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) – Crimes of Nazi evil-doers have no limitation period and should be punishable by law despite age, US World War II veteran Frank Cohn told Sputnik on Thursday, commenting on the news about the death of Nazi Helmut Oberlander in Canada. "There are no 'former' Nazi criminals. The statute of limitation does not expire for murder," Cohn said.

Oberlander, 97, died in his home in Canada on Wednesday before the deportation hearings against him were completed.

"We are approaching the time when the search for Nazi criminals can end, most are dead by now, but if there are any left, I have no pity for them and they would not get a 'poor old man' pass from me," said Cohn, a 96-year-old retired US colonel.

Born in Germany in a Jewish family, Cohn had to leave his country because of Nazis and fled to the United States in 1938. He came back as a US soldier several years later and fought against Hitler's army. In late April 1945, Cohn has participated in the historic meeting between American and Soviet troops at the Elbe River.

"That whole Holocaust scene is unforgettable and unforgiving as far as I am concerned. Yet, in spite of it all, I came out the lucky one, with an American citizenship (none could be better) and a past life after I fled, which I would not want to change," said the veteran, many of whose relatives died were killed by Nazis.

He went on to say he was not aware of any old Nazis hiding in the United States, but expressed regret that many young people want to continue their ideology.

"As good Americans, we must take care that this should not happen again," he said.

Oberlander, a Ukrainian-born ethnic German, was conscripted into the Schutzstaffel (SS) at the age of 17 where he worked as an interpreter in death squad Einsatzkommando, responsible for the killing of tens of thousands of Jewish and Soviet civilians.

Oberlander has been embroiled in a legal battle with the Canadian government since 1995, when the latter began trying to strip him of his citizenship, citing his failure to disclose his links to death squads. After a lengthy legal battle, Oberlander was stripped of his citizenship for the fourth and final time in 2017 and Canada's Supreme Court issued a ruling last December that blocked any possibility for Oberlander to appeal this decision.

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#### **Syrian Foreign Minister Says Held 'Great' Meeting With Lavrov at UNGA**

NEW YORK, September 23 (Sputnik) - Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad told Sputnik he had a great meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on the margins of the UN General Assembly during which they talked about the coordination of efforts.

"It was great as usual. We are coordinating our efforts," Mekdad said. "Recently there was a visit by [Syrian] President [Bashar] Assad, where together with the [Russian] President [Vladimir] Putin, they arranged our strategy for the next to come."

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#### US Must Leave Syria or Face Same 'Humiliation' as In Afghanistan - Foreign Minister

NEW YORK, September 23 (Sputnik) - The United States should withdraw from Syria or face the same humiliation as it did in Afghanistan, Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad told Sputnik on the margins of the UN General Assembly.

"We believe the humiliating withdrawal by the Americans and their allies from Afghanistan will give them a good lesson on how to behave internationally and to how to behave inside Syria," Mekdad said. "What we need now in Syria is work to force the Turkish government to discontinue its military presence illegally in Syria, in Syrian territories and for the Americans to leave Syria. Otherwise they will be faced with the same result as in Afghanistan." He also said the US should stop supporting terrorist groups, not interfere in Syria's internal affairs, and not impose sanctions "because sanctions are against the population, against innocent people."

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#### House Passes Legislation Funding Israeli Iron Dome Defense System

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives on Thursday passed legislation that appropriates around \$1 billion in funding for the replenishment of Israel's Iron Dome air defense system.

The legislation, which was made separate from the larger defense budget measure simultaneously making its way through Congress, surpassed the 290 vote threshold and passed with 420 yea votes, 9 nay votes and two present votes.

A debate leading up to the vote included accusations of anti-Semitism by Republican lawmakers against their Democrats and retorts that the Republicans previously voted against aid for Israel. It allocates \$1 billion to replenish the Iron Dome air defense system, which is used to shoot down incoming rockets and artillery fire.

The system was depleted in May during the outbreak of aggression between Israel and Hamas militants in Gaza which saw the system shoot down a majority of the reportedly 4,000 rockets fired at Israel.

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#### **UNICEF Concerned Over US Expulsion of Haitian Refugees From Border With Mexico - Statement**

UNITED NATIONS, September 23 (Sputnik) - The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) issued a statement on Wednesday expressing concern about the well-being of Haitian migrants expelled from the US border with Mexico, most of whom are women and children.

"According to UNICEF initial estimates, over two in three Haitian migrants who have been returned to Port-au-Prince are women and children. Some of them are newborn babies, with specific and immediate needs," the statement said.

UNICEF also expressed concern about the situation of Haitian families in the US border town of Del Rio, Texas, where about 40 per cent of Haitian migrants, mostly children, live in unacceptable conditions and are in need of basic humanitarian support.

"Haiti is reeling from the triple tragedy of natural disasters, gang violence and the COVID-19 pandemic," UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore said in the statement. "When children and families are sent back without adequate protection, they find themselves even more vulnerable to violence, poverty and displacement - factors that drove them to migrate in the first place."

Some 15,000 migrants, mostly from Haiti, arrived to Del Rio over the last week, prompting the Texas government to declare a state of emergency and deploy border agents on horseback. Images of officers on horseback running down, corralling and subduing the Haitian migrants have prompted criticism by human rights activists in the United States and abroad.

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## White House Says Biden Administration Never Planned to Send Haitian Migrants to Guantanamo

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration has never planned to send Haitian migrants from the US southern border to its military base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, White House spokesperson Jen Psaki said on Thursday.

"We will not, there's never been a plan to do that. I think there was some confusion related to the Migrant Operations Center, which has been used for decades to process migrants interdicted at sea for third-country resettlement. This request for information that went out publicly yesterday, which I think caused some confusion because of the timing, was posted in a typical, routine, first step in a contract renewal and unrelated to the southern border," Psaki said during a press conference.

Psaki's statement came in response to a question about conflicting media reports based on a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) document published on September 17 that the DHS Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) division needs to contract unarmed custody and security officers at the Migrant Operations Center at Guantanamo Bay.

The document said the facility has a capacity for 120 people, an estimated daily population of 20 people, and the ability to construct temporary housing for populations of up to 400 in case of a surge event. The document also said that at least 10 percent of the personnel must speak Spanish or Haitian Creole, according to reports.

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## White House Says Working to Prevent Potential Government Shutdown, Mitigate Impacts

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is working to prevent a possible government shutdown and to mitigate its impacts amid the pressing issue of the federal debt limit, White House spokesperson Jen Psaki said on Thursday.

"We are doing everything we can to prevent a government shutdown and planning to prevent the impact that we've seen in the past that has been quite devastating on different components of government," Psaki said during a press briefing.

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## Rights Groups Report Massive Taliban Abuses of Women in Afghan City of Herat

WASHINGTON, September 22 (Sputnik) - Woman in the western Afghan city of Herat, now under Taliban rule, find themselves trapped indoors, afraid to leave their house without a male family member and without access to education and employment, a joint report by Human Rights Watch and San Jose University's Human Rights Institute said on Thursday.

"Since taking over the city on August 12, 2021, the Taliban have instilled fear among women and girls by searching out high-profile women; denying women freedom of movement outside their homes; imposing compulsory dress codes; severely curtailing access to employment and education; and restricting the right to peaceful assembly," the report said.

The two rights groups based the report on lengthy telephone interviews conducted in Dari with seven women in Herat about their experiences since the Taliban takeover. Interviewees included activists, educators and university students, all of whom spoke on the condition of anonymity fearing for their safety, the report said.

Within days of the Taliban takeover of Herat, a group of women asked to meet with local Taliban leaders to discuss their rights, and several days later they were able to meet with a Taliban representative. However, the official was inflexible: he told the women to stop insisting on their rights and that if they supported the Taliban, they would be rewarded with full amnesty for their past activities and maybe even get positions in the new government, the report added.

Women in Herat were also among the first to organize protests in defense of women's rights after the Taliban gained control. The Taliban did not intervene in the first protest with 60 to 80 women on August 2.

But a subsequent protest on August 7 with drew a violent reaction, with Taliban operatives lashing protesters and firing weapons indiscriminately, killing at least two and wounding at least eight more. The Taliban subsequently banned protests, according to the report.

Taliban has pledged to respect to respect human rights, especially for women - a promise being watched closely by other nations that are considering sending aid to help Afghanistan cope with severe drought and widespread hunger, according to media reports.

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**White House to Tell Federal Agencies to Brace for Shutdown Amid Debt Crisis - Reports**

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - The White House budget office will tell federal agencies on Thursday to begin preparing for the first shutdown of the US government since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, as lawmakers in Congress struggle to reach a funding agreement, the Washington Post reported.

Administration officials stress the request is in line with traditional procedures seven days ahead of a shutdown and not a commentary on the likelihood of a congressional deal. Both Democrats and Republicans have made clear they intend to fund the government before its funding expires on September 30, but time is running out and lawmakers are aiming to resolve an enormous set of related tasks in a matter of weeks.

The Post report emerged as US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi vowed on Thursday to overcome political opposition and pass a temporary funding bill to raise the country's debt limit in order to keep the government running.

House Democrats approved on Tuesday the temporary legislation to keep the government funded through early December, lift the limit on federal borrowing through the end of 2022 and

provide emergency money for Afghan refugees and natural disaster recovery. But their Republican rivals have expressed unwillingness to back the measure in the Senate. A bill to raise the US debt limit is needed to avert a government shutdown when funding lapses next week.

A group of six former US Treasury secretaries urged in a letter to Pelosi on Wednesday to not let a politically divided Congress be the reason for the world's largest economy to default on its fiscal commitments.

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#### **White House Says Homeland Security Will No Longer Use Horses in Del Rio**

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas informed civil rights leaders that the border agents will no longer use horses to detain illegal migrants on the border as was in the case with the Haitian refugees, White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki said on Thursday.

Images emerging from the border showed border agents on horseback accosting and lashing migrants that had amassed in the Texas border town caused widespread condemnation and furor from rights groups.

"The Secretary [Mayorkas] also conveyed to civil rights leaders, earlier this morning, that we would no longer be using horses in Del Rio," Psaki said at a press briefing.

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#### **White House Says US Special Envoy to Haiti Had Ample Opportunity to Raise Concerns**

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) – US Special Envoy for Haiti Daniel Foote, who resigned on Wednesday, had multiple opportunities to express his concerns over the situation with Haitian migrants on the US-Mexico border, White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki said on Thursday.

"Special Envoy Foote had ample opportunity to raise concerns about migration during his tenure, he never once did it," Psaki said at a press briefing.

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#### **Canada Charges SNC-Lavalin Corporate Entities, Ex-Executives With Fraud, Forgery - Police**

TORONTO, September 23 (Sputnik) - Two of Canadian engineering giant SNC-Lavalin's corporate entities and two former executives have been charged with several corruption charges, Canada's federal police announced on Thursday.

"On September 23, 2021, two Montreal-area men were arrested in connection with the investigation. Normand Morin is a former vice-president of SNC-Lavalin, and Kamal Francis a former vice-president at SNC-Lavalin International Inc," the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) said in a statement.

The pair face charges of forgery, conspiracy to commit forgery, fraud, conspiracy to commit fraud, fraud against the government and conspiracy to commit fraud against the government, the statement said.

SNC-Lavalin Inc. and SNC-Lavalin International Inc., two of the engineering giant's corporate entities, have been charged with the same offenses.

Morin and Francis face more than 30 years behind bars, if convicted. The former executives have been released and are scheduled to appear in a Montreal court on September 27, along with representatives for the two corporate entities.

Earlier this year, a Quebec oversight body blacklisted four SNC-Lavalin subsidiaries after the company reached a settlement in court regarding its activities in Libya between 2001 and 2011 by pleading guilty to a single charge and agreeing to pay a \$213 million fine.

The bribery scandal surrounding SNC-Lavalin rocked the Canadian political landscape after former Attorney General Jody Wilson-Raybould claimed, and later testified before lawmakers, that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's office pressured her in order to help the construction company avoid criminal prosecution on corruption charges.

Wilson-Raybould, was ultimately forced out of the Attorney General role by Trudeau after going public with her allegations.

Last August, Canada's Ethics Commissioner Mario Dion following an investigation concluded that Trudeau had violated the Conflict of Interest Act while handling the corruption case of the SNC-Lavalin company.

SNC-Lavalin did not immediately respond to Sputnik's request for comment.

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US Senate Committee to Discuss Energy Security, Nord Stream 2 Pipeline - Hearings Schedule

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - The US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations will hold a closed hearing on the Biden administration's efforts with respect to energy security, including the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project that has been strongly opposed by US lawmakers and a number of European states, according to the committee's hearings schedule.

Amos Hochstein, a senior adviser for energy security at the US State Department, will deliver his testimony during the hearing.

On August 10, Secretary of State Antony Blinken appointed Hochstein to become a Energy Security Envoy to implement the US-German deal on Nord Stream 2 pipeline project.

In July, Germany and the United States struck a deal on the completion of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline without the threat of US sanctions. Among the conditions stipulated in the deal, Germany vowed to prevent Russia from "using energy as a weapon" and to use all possible leverage to prolong Russian gas transit through Ukraine.

Nord Stream 2 is a joint venture of Gazprom, Royal Dutch Shell, OMV, Engie, Uniper, and Wintershall. The pipeline is designed to carry natural gas from Russia to Germany beneath the Baltic Sea. On September 10, Russia's Gazprom announced that the project was completed.

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**Resignation of US Special Envoy for Haiti Over Deportations 'Mischaracterized'- State Dept**

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - US Special Envoy for Haiti Daniel Foote, who resigned on Wednesday, mischaracterized the circumstances of his resignation and failed to take advantage of a chance to raise concerns about migration during his tenure, US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said.

Earlier on Thursday, the State Department confirmed that Foote submitted his resignation to Secretary of State Antony Blinken the previous day. Foote's resignation letter said his move was in protest of the deportation of thousands of Haitians apprehended at the US border with Mexico and he would not be associated with such inhumane and counterproductive decision. Foote also said US policy toward Haiti remains "deeply flawed" and his recommendations to improve it have been ignored or dismissed.

"This is a challenging moment that requires leadership. It is unfortunate that, instead of participating in a solutions-oriented policy process, Special Envoy Foote has both resigned and mischaracterized the circumstances of his resignation. He failed to take advantage of ample opportunity to raise concerns about migration during his tenure and chose to resign instead," Price said.

There have been multiple discussions on Haiti in which all proposals, including those provided by Foote, were fully considered "in a rigorous and transparent policy process," Price also said. "Some of those proposals were determined to be harmful to our commitment to the promotion of democracy in Haiti and were rejected during the policy process. For him to say his proposals were ignored is simply false," he added.

Earlier on Thursday, in a statement to Sputnik, the state department said that the US is working to identify ways to provide more comprehensive assistance to Haitian migrants following the resignation of Foote. It said Washington was now working with the International Organization on Migration to ensure that returning migrants from Haiti are met at the airport and provided with immediate assistance.

Nearly 13,000 migrants, mostly from Haiti, arrived to the Texas town of Del Rio along the US-Mexico border over the last week, prompting the government to declare a state of emergency and deploy border agents on horseback, video clips of which went viral.

Images of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers on horseback running down, whipping and seeking to subdue Haitian migrants have prompted anger from activists who likened the corralling of those seeking asylum and refuge to a lynching.

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#### **US House Speaker Pelosi Vows to Pass Temporary Funding Bill to Keep Government Open**

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi vowed on Thursday to overcome political opposition and pass a temporary funding bill to raise the country's debt limit in order to keep the government running.

"On the floor today, we'll be doing it," Pelosi said, referring to the attempt by ruling Democrats to put the temporary bill to vote. To her rival Republicans, she said: "Stop holding the debt and the economy hostage again. Congress will not throw this kind of unnecessary wrench into the gears of our job growth and thriving economy."

House Democrats approved on Tuesday the temporary legislation to keep the government funded through early December, lift the limit on federal borrowing through the end of 2022 and provide emergency money for Afghan refugees and natural disaster recovery. But their Republican rivals have expressed unwillingness to back the measure in the Senate.

A bill to raise the US debt limit is needed to avert a government shutdown when funding lapses next week.

A group of six former US Treasury secretaries urged in a letter to Pelosi on Wednesday to not let a politically divided Congress be the reason for the world's largest economy to default on its fiscal commitments.

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**US Supreme Court Approval Rating Plunges to New Low of 40%, Down From 49% in July - Poll**

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - The approval rating of the US Supreme Court has hit a new low of 40% in September, down from 49% in July following a series of unpopular decisions, a new Gallup poll revealed on Thursday.

Today, more Americans, or 53%, disapprove the job of the US Supreme Court, which exceeds the last high disapproval of 52% in 2016, the poll found.

The rapid fall of the US Supreme Court's popularity among Americans can be tracked to a number of unpopular decisions over the summer, including the cases when the court declined to block a controversial Texas anti-abortion law as well as to support a Biden administration attempt to extend a moratorium on evictions during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, according to a press release accompanying the poll.

The past year has also witnessed a steep decline of trust and confidence in the federal judiciary from 67% in 2020 to 54% now, the poll found.

Democrats, Republicans and Independents are less likely to say they approve of how the US Supreme Court performs its duties. Only 36% of Democrats, 41% of Independents and 45% of Republicans today approve of the Supreme Court compared to 49%, 53% and 57% respectively in September of 2020, the poll found.

The poll was conducted between September 1-17 among 1,005 adults, aged 18 and older, living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia.

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**China Demand For Airliners to Double by 2040 to 8,700 Planes Worth \$1.5Trln – Boeing**

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) – China's market for commercial airliners will double over the next 20 years to a total of 8,700 new planes costing \$1.7 trillion, Boeing said Thursday in a forecasting report.

"Boeing forecasts that China's airlines will require 8,700 new airplanes by 2040, valued at \$1.47 trillion, to meet expanding commercial air travel demand," the company said in a press release. "The 20-year forecast reflects the China market's rebound and further evolution of its airline business models."

Boeing shared the China forecast as part of the 2021 Commercial Market Outlook (CMO), the company's long-term forecast of demand for commercial airplanes and services, the release explained.

"China's economic fundamentals lay the foundation for healthy air traffic increases... By 2030, China's domestic passenger market will exceed intra-European traffic; by 2040, China's domestic traffic is expected to also exceed air travel within North America," Boeing said. Boeing's CMO also forecasts that China's civil aviation industry will require more than 400,000 new aviation personnel by 2040, including pilots, technicians and cabin crew. Boeing plans to train nearly 100,000 Chinese aviation professionals with more than 2,500 Boeing employees in the country, the release added.

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#### **US Seeks Limits on Hydrofluorocarbon Imports to Combat Climate Change - Homeland Security**

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - A new US interagency task force charged with limiting imports of hydrofluorocarbons (HFC) reflects broader efforts to limit production of the climate-warming chemicals used for refrigeration, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said in a release on Thursday.

"We look forward to working with the EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] and our other government partners to ensure that importers do not undermine our emissions-reduction targets or put businesses who are complying with the rules at a competitive disadvantage," DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said in the release.

HFCs are potent greenhouse gases with global warming potential that can be thousands of times greater than carbon dioxide, the release said.

The task force targeting HFC imports reflects a broader effort to limit use of the chemicals mandated by the American Innovation and Manufacturing Act of 2020, the release said.

The law directs the EPA to address the adverse environmental effects of HFCs by, among other things, phasing down HFC production, consumption and importation, the release added.

Earlier this week, the EPA issued its first regulations to implement the act's phasedown of HFC production, according to the release.

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#### US to Find Ways to Get More Help to Haitian Migrants After US Envoy Resigned - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - The United States is working to identify ways to provide more comprehensive assistance to Haitian migrants following the resignation of US Special Envoy for Haiti Daniel Foote, a State Department Spokesperson told Sputnik on Thursday.

The State Department confirmed that Foote submitted his resignation to State Secretary Antony Blinken on Wednesday. A letter of Foote's resignation saying that his move was made in protest of the deportation of thousands of Haitians apprehended at the southern US border was shared on social media. Foote said that he would not be associated with the United States' "inhumane, counterproductive decision to deport thousands of Haitian refugees and illegal immigrants to Haiti."

"We are working to identify ways to provide more comprehensive assistance going forward. Over the long-term, the U.S. government is committed to working with the Haitian government and stakeholders across Haiti to strengthen democratic governance and the rule of law, increase inclusive economic growth, and improve security and the protection of human rights in Haiti," the statement said.

Washington is now is working with the International Organization on Migration to ensure that returning migrants from Haiti are met at the airport and provided with immediate assistance, according to the State Department.

The state department thanked Foote for his service in this role.

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#### Former Nazi Helmut Oberlander Dies in Canada Before He Could Be Deported - Reports

TORONTO, September 23 (Sputnik) - Former Nazi Helmut Oberlander died in Canada before the deportation hearings against him were concluded, the Canadian Press reported on Wednesday.

The 97-year-old died in his home surrounded by loved ones, according to a family statement obtained by the news agency.

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#### US Investment Firm Purchases Italy's Oldest Football Team - Statement

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) – US-based investment firm 777 Partners announced on Thursday it was purchasing of Genoa, Italy's oldest football club.

"The new ownership group will purchase 99.9% of the share capital in Genoa, inject fresh capital into the club and will assume certain related liabilities," the company said in a statement. Genoa, which plays in the domestic top-flight Serie A, one of Europe's so-called Big Five leagues, was established in 1893 and has won the Italian championship nine times in the early years of its history.

"We understand and respect the responsibility we are inheriting to preserve and protect the proud legacy of [Genoa], and we are committed as custodians of that legacy to help the club reclaim its place at the top of Serie A," 777 Partners founder and managing partner Josh Vander said.

By acquiring Genoa, the company has expanded its portfolio in the sports industry, which also includes a big stake in Spain's Sevilla FC, and the London Lions from the British Basketball League.

American businessmen and companies own several major European football clubs, including British Manchester United, Liverpool and Arsenal, French Olympique Marseille, and Italian Milan.

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**Maduro Would Like to Meet Putin 'Any Time,' Their Relations 'Good for World' - Minister**

UNITED NATIONS, September 23 (Sputnik) - Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro is ready to hold a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin at any time, Venezuelan Foreign Minister Felix Plasencia told Sputnik on Thursday, adding that their relationship is advantageous for the world.

"I am sure President Maduro would like to Meet President Putin any time. They've met before many times and he is willing. They are good friends, good allies. Our relationship with Russia is a strategic bilateral important relationship. It's good for the world because we are working with the international community," Plasencia said on the margins of the UN General Assembly.

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**Taliban Representation in UN Difficult Issue - Russian Deputy Foreign Minister**

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - The representation of the Taliban (terrorist group, banned in Russia) in the UN is a difficult issue, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Vershinin told journalists on Thursday, adding that the main thing is urgent humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. A day prior, the UN announced it had received a letter from the Taliban requesting participation in the 76th UN General Assembly and nominating a new permanent representative in place of the current one appointed by the toppled government.

"This is a very difficult question, bearing in mind that the UN has its own rules that determine who represents the country in an official way in the UN, these are all issues that have to be resolved. The main issue that is now being discussed is the question of coordinating the actions of the international community with regard to the situation in Afghanistan and, first of all, its international humanitarian dimension. We need urgent humanitarian aid," Vershinin said when asked by a Sputnik reporter about the matter.

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**There Should Be No Deadlines for Taliban to Form Inclusive Government – Russian Diplomat**

UNITED NATIONS, September 23 (Sputnik) – There should not be any deadlines for the Taliban (banned in Russia) to create a new inclusive Afghan government in order to stabilize the situation in the country, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin said on Thursday. "I don't think there should be deadlines [for inclusive government creation]. This is a very correct requirement for an inclusive government to be created and this is what the Taliban representatives tell us in their contacts. Such a government should reflect the political and ethnic forces that exist in Afghanistan, thereby making the overall situation [in the country] more stable," Vershinin said.

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**US Jobless Claims at 351,000, Below Key 400,000 Mark for 8th Week Running - Labor Dept.**

WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - US jobless claims were at 351,000 last week, remaining below the key 400,000 level for an eight week in a row in continued recovery from the coronavirus pandemic, data from the Labor Department showed on Thursday.

"In the week ending September 18, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims was 351,000," the department said in a news release.

While claims in the latest week rose by 16,000 from the previous week's revised level of 335,000, they have not crossed the 400,000 bar since the week ended July 31.

Economists polled by US media forecast 320,000 unemployment claims for the latest week on file, putting what the department reported somewhat above target.

Economist Greg Michalowski, in a comment posted on ForexLive, described the latest weekly jobless report as a "so-so employment report" that he said still fell within the Federal Reserve's definition of a recovering labor market.

"Fed's Powell (has said that he is not looking for (a) stellar jobs report, just advancing ones, suggesting it is full steam ahead regardless of the ebbs and flows in the jobs reports going forward," Michalowski added.

Fed Chairman Jay Powell, in a news conference on Wednesday, said the central bank "just needs reasonably good employment reports" for ending its stimulus and low-interest-rate support for the pandemic-impaired economy. Since the COVID-19 outbreak of March 2020, the Fed has been providing \$120 billion in monthly stimulus support and keeping interest rates at between zero and 0.25%.

Continuing claims for the week ended September 11 — reported with a one-week lag — was at 2.85 million, versus 2.71 million for the week to September 4. That brought the weekly unemployment rate up by 0.1% to 2.1%.

More than a year into the COVID-19 crisis, restoring job growth remains one of the main concerns of US policymakers.

The United States lost more than 21 million jobs between March and April 2020, at the height of business lockdowns forced by the coronavirus. More than 7 million of those jobs have yet to return, officials say.

The US economy itself shrank 3.5% in 2020. This year though, growth has been quite dynamic, with a 6.5% rebound for the second quarter though that was still below the 8.5% expected by economists.

The Fed thinks growth will average at 6.5 percent for all of 2021. But Chairman Powell also says it may take a while for "full employment" — defined by a monthly unemployment rate of 4% or lower — to occur. The monthly unemployment rate stood at 5.2% in August.

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#### **Blinken Urges Gov'ts to Invest in Financing Countries Impacted by Climate Change**

UNITED NATIONS, September 23 (Sputnik) - The United States is urging other governments to make investments in financing countries that are particularly impacted by climate, US State Secretary Antony Blinken said on Thursday at the meeting with the UN Security Council on Climate and Security.

Speaking at the UN General Assembly on Tuesday, US President Joe Biden announced he will seek to double climate investment to help the world cope with climate change.

"Back in April, President Biden announced that the United States would double our public international financing for developing countries most impacted by the climate crisis. Earlier this week, he announced that we will work with the US Congress to double this number again. We urge other governments to step up and make these investments particularly those, like the United States, are biggest emitters," Blinken said.

Meanwhile, Blinken stressed that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, released in August, underscores the need to dramatically cut global emissions.

The IPCC said that the global temperature has increased by 0.99 degrees Celsius (1.78 degrees Fahrenheit) in the last 20 years, compared with the 1850-1900 period, and will keep rising and fueling highly destructive natural phenomena. The IPCC also reported that the sea level increased within the last hundred years, and the land biosphere underwent changes due to global warming and human activity.

US President Joe Biden regularly raises the climate issue at the meeting with world leaders. The president is reportedly planning to visit Europe this fall to attend the G20 summit in late October and the 26th UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in November. The Scottish city of Glasgow is set to host the COP26 summit from October 31 to November 12. The G20 summit will take place in Rome from October 30-31.

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Rate of Unruly US Airline Passenger Incidents Drop, Remains Higher Than in 2020 - FAA  
WASHINGTON, September 23 (Sputnik) - The incidence of unruly passenger incidents on US airlines has decreased significantly since the start of 2021 but it remains much higher than in 2020, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) announced on Thursday.

"As of last week, unruly passenger incidents were occurring approximately six times per every 10,000 flights. That's an approximately 50 percent drop from early 2021, but it's more than twice as high as the end of 2020," the statement said.

According to FAA Administrator Steve Dickson, the agency's work is having an impact and the trend of unruly passenger incidents is moving in the right direction.

"But we need the progress to continue. This remains a serious safety threat, and one incident is one too many," he stressed

He added that the FAA will continue its Zero Tolerance policy and will keep its public awareness campaign going.

"We appreciate the tremendous work of all our partners in the airline, airport, labor, and law enforcement communities," Dickson concluded.

In the summer of this year, the US Transportation Security Administration (TSA) told the US Congress that the assaults on their officials rose six times per capita during the coronavirus pandemic, usually because of complaints about the enforcement of regulations to wear masks during flights.

Numerous videos posted across social media this year show US airline passengers getting violent and kicked off flights for refusing to comply with the federal mask mandate.

In August this year, the TSA extended its federal mask mandate to January 18 which aims to minimize the spread of COVID-19 on public transportation.