Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

8/16/23 Wednesday

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

China Launches Ludi Tance-4, First Geosynchronous Radar Satellite Able to Map One-Third of Earth

China's space program has rocketed upward in recent years, dramatically expanding its network of high-tech satellites and sending probes to the moon and Mars. Recently, Beijing unveiled plans for a manned lunar base in the next decade.

Early Saturday, a Long March 3B rocket blasted off from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in China's Sichuan Province carrying the Land Exploration-4 01 (Ludi Tance-4 (01)) satellite.

The orbital device is a first: it will sit in a geosynchronous Earth orbit and use an L-band synthetic aperture radar (SAR) to monitor up to one-third of the planet at once.

According to the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC), the Ludi Tance-4 "was developed by the Fifth Academy of China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation to meet the application needs of disaster prevention and reduction, earthquake monitoring, land and resources survey, ocean, water conservancy, meteorology, agriculture, environmental protection, forestry and other industries in my country and surrounding areas."

Even though a geosynchronous orbit is among the highest occupied by satellites, at some 22,370 miles (36,000 kilometers) above the Earth's surface, the satellite will be able to monitor the entire-Asia-Pacific region to a resolution of about 65 feet (20 meters).

Last year, China launched two other Ludi Tance satellites at much lower orbits of just 372 miles (600 kilometers) to monitor landslides, earthquakes and other geological phenomena.

The radar has significant advantages over traditional photography in that it can penetrate any kind of weather. China's High-resolution Earth Observation System (CHEOS) satellites, which are also geosynchronous, suffer from this limitation, despite having higher resolution on clear days.

Stephen Hobbs, a professor in space systems and sensors from Cranfield University in England, told US media the satellite's resolution "is actually quite good for geosynchronous radar."

"It should be able to observe subtle, millimeter-level ground motions due to landslides and earthquakes, which is a powerful measurement capability," he said.

"The main advantage of the geosynchronous orbit is the permanent view of Earth over continental scales – about 30 % of the Earth's surface – so that rapid repeat viewing of a particular area with a single satellite is possible," the expert added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Europe's Self-Imposed Sky-High LNG Prices 'Putting Lights Off' in Poorer Nations

An industry expert told Sputnik on Wednesday that Europe's strategy for pressuring Russia with an energy boycott was causing chaos around the globe, driving gas prices higher and depriving poorer nations of much-needed fuel.

Renewed talk of a strike at Australia's largest liquefied natural gas (LNG) production facility has triggered a sharp spike in LNG prices, including a whopping 40% rise on the European market. It's unclear if Woodside employees at the North West Shelf liquefaction facility, Australia's largest, or Chevron employees at the nearby Gorgon facility, the country's second-largest LNG operation, will strike, even though a strike has been authorized. However, Europe's self-imposed LNG shortage, caused by its boycott of Russian energy exports, has driven prices sky-high and put such pressure on markets around the world that the mere threat of a supply disruption on the other side of the planet has destabilized markets.

Thierry Bros, professor at the Paris Institute of Political Studies and a contributor to the independent specialized website Natural Gas World, told Sputnik that while European governments will be inconvenienced by the higher prices, the greatest sufferers will be developing nations who are priced out by European buyers.

"We shouldn't be complacent. The crisis is ongoing and we've put €800 billion in subsidies to help our people and industry last year alone," he said of the European Union's efforts. "We haven't so far signed new long-term contracts in a massive way. So what we are facing is the fact that because of the IEA [International Energy Association] net-zero scenario in 2021, we've viewed oil and gas as bad, which is why we are in this situation. And so we need this to change. It's changing slightly. I mean, you've seen US President Biden asking the oil industry in the US to produce more oil. You've seen Norway in the beginning of this year, launching a new concession in the Arctic. You've seen two weeks ago, the UK was going to offer new oil and gas concessions."

"So I think the narrative is slightly shifting away, but unfortunately some people still believe that oil and gas is evil. And so, if we do not invest, there is less competition in the market. Let me phrase this very clearly: if TotalEnergies, Shell, BP - i.e. what we call international oil companies - invests less in oil and gas, let's take oil in this case, then if Saudi Arabia or Russia want to reduce their own production, there is no spare capacity available. We cannot provide those extra volumes. And so the price needs to go up," he explained.

"So that's how the commodity works. And if you do not understand how commodities work, you're not going to solve the problem. You need to be able to understand it and you need to be able to say, 'Well, what the IEA recommended in 2021,' which was, I remind you, no new investment in oil and gas, 'was wrong.' And so therefore, we need to invest, we need to invest in a way to make it acceptable for the climate. So we need to invest in a way to try to push coal out. But if we do not do this, then we are going to see what we are seeing right now: an energy crisis, oil and coal at record levels in terms of demand, which is very bad for the environment."

Bros explained that gas prices are mostly regional, and while Europe itself might receive only a tiny amount of the gas produced in Australia, its hunger for gas in closer markets nonetheless puts pressure on those far away, too.

"On the pricing level, we need to attract all those cargoes. What's happening here is we've increased prices to be sure that we are going to continue to attract cargos from the rest of the

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

world. And last year we managed to keep the lights on, but we did this by rerouting LNG cargo [using] extremely high prices. And by putting the lights off in poorer countries, in Bangladesh, in Pakistan, and possibly in India, because we've taken the LNG away from their hands into our hands."

"It's going to cost us a lot. And then there is the question of the sustainability of our own budget. But I think it's a question for poorer countries and poorer countries are looking at us and are not going to trust us in the long run. Because we failed in our energy transition - and Germany being, I think, the best example of failure - we cannot lecture poorer countries on how to do this, first of all. Secondly, those countries know that if there is a problem, we will increase prices to be able to reroute the LNG away from their hands. So they have to not only think by themselves, but find solutions that are resilient without us interfering. And unfortunately this is more coal. I think, because we failed on the transition, or because Germany failed its energy transition, we are pushing some other countries back to coal, which is horrible in terms of climate."

"We managed last winter to keep our lights on in Europe because we had the warm winter, but we managed again so far to refill our storage in Europe to 90% full because there was plenty of LNG available and we've managed to reduce demand in Europe. But we need all the supply that's available - be it in gas, be it in oil. And so what this is showing us is the fact that the market is extremely worried. And that's a wake-up call," Bros said.

"It's interesting to me that the wake-up call is coming in plain summer at a time where our storage is full and we are only talking about potential strikes and you see this massive increase in prices. I think it is a testimony that the energy crisis is still ongoing in Europe."

"The ones who benefit from the overall situation are what we call the portfolio players, i.e. big integrated international oil companies - and in particular Shell and TotalEnergies, number one and number two - that are going to make profitable arbitrage. And the ones that are going to lose are less well-off countries and our European budget that will have to provide subsidies. So indirectly we are providing our European neighbors subsidies for the IOC to be more profitable. I leave you to think about the moral of this."

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Gas Prices Spike 40% After Workers at Australia's Two Largest LNG Facilities Vote to Strike

Workers at two of Australia's largest liquefied natural gas (LNG) production facilities are poised to strike as negotiations with their bosses show little chance of yielding a new contract.

The path toward a strike was cleared last week by Australia's Fair Work Commission, which ruled that workers at Woodside's North West Shelf and Chevron's Wheatstone and Gorgon LNG facilities could ballot for a strike action. The subsequent vote saw 99% of Offshore Alliance trade union members at NWS approve a strike if an agreement on wages and benefits increases cannot be reached with Woodside Energy. Chevron workers are expected to vote by next week.

Following the FWC's decision, LNG prices spiked around the world. In Europe, where fuels are in short supply thanks to the European Union's boycott of Russian energy exports, prices rose by 40%. They jumped another 10% on Monday in the wake of the union vote.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

“What's happening here is we've increased prices to be sure that we are going to continue to attract cargos from the rest of the world,” Thierry Bros, a professor at the Paris Institute of Political Studies and a contributor to the independent specialized website Natural Gas World, told Sputnik on Wednesday.

“And last year we managed to keep the lights on, but we did this by rerouting LNG cargo [using] extremely high prices. And by putting the lights off in poorer countries, in Bangladesh, in Pakistan, and possibly in India, because we've taken the LNG away from their hands into our hands,” Bros added.

The LNG facilities are Australia’s largest and are part of a vast offshore mining operation for petroleum products off the continent’s North West Shelf operated by a consortium of companies including Woodside and Chevron, as well as BHP, BP, Mitsubishi and Mitsui.

By themselves, NWS, Wheatstone and Gorgon account for 11% of global LNG exports. Woodside’s facility has an export capacity of 16.9 million tonnes per annum (tpa), while Gorgon produces 15.6 million tpa and supplies a domestic gas power plant capable of producing 300 terajoules of power per day for Western Australia. Wheatstone pumps out some 8.9 tpa.

“Gas producers like Woodside and Chevron might be used to throwing their weight around in countries with weak industrial laws but Australian workers have fought for over 100 years for strong industrial rights,” Australian Workers’ Union (AWU) Western Australia secretary Brad Gandy said last week. The Offshore Alliance trade union, a partnership between AWU and the MUA (Maritime Union of Australia).

“The sooner these huge, profitable gas producers approach these negotiations pragmatically and get back around the bargaining table the better.”

According to media reports on Tuesday, Woodside said negotiations with the trade union have yielded some “positive progress” and that “the parties have reached an in-principle agreement on a number of issues,” but labor leaders were less optimistic.

"Woodside are well off the pace on key bargaining issues including job security and remuneration," Offshore Alliance said in a Wednesday statement.

“If OA members on the Platforms carried on like Woodside's HR management did yesterday, they'd be on the first chopper out,” the union said, noting that Woodside’s labor chief called a key union negotiator a “d*ckhead” during the talks.

“Woodside's values are a sham and yesterday's bargaining meeting shows that the Woodside bosses pick and choose when these values apply,” the union continued. “Woodside's actions and bargaining position at yesterday's meeting will determine the destiny of our bargaining campaign.”

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

East Palestine Lesson for Maui Victims: ‘Don’t Take for Granted’ You’ll Get Help Needed

A journalist and activist who recently reported on the situation in East Palestine, Ohio, six months after the disastrous train derailment and chemical leak told Sputnik that a socialized health care system could better provide for victims’ needs than one centered on corporations.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

The derailment, chemical leak, and "controlled burn" of toxic vinyl chloride in East Palestine on February 3, 2023, is continuing to affect the health of residents, who have gotten little help from either the Norfolk Southern railroad responsible for the disaster or from the federal government, said Dr. Margaret Flowers, a medical doctor, co-director of Popular Resistance, and a member of the steering committee of HOPE (Health Over Profit) that aims to achieve Medicare for All.
The Radio Sputnik interview with Flowers can be seen here and starts at time index 1:32:00.
Flowers recently spoke on her podcast Clearing the FOG with an activist fighting for the rights of victims of the disaster: Hilary Flint of Enon Valley, Pennsylvania, the vice president of the Unity Council for the East Palestine Train Derailment.
"They definitely have not been able to resume normal life," Flowers told Sputnik.
"What she reported is just a failure at every level - local, state and federal - from the beginning and they continue to be failed. The waterways are still very dirty, there's lots of videos you can find on social media of people who just overturn a rock or poke a stick in the creek and it gets an oily sheen. Peoples' homes have been contaminated, many who still can't return to their homes. And the chemicals have soaked into soft surfaces and even the wood in the homes, so when there's a hot day, it off-gasses and they continue to be exposed over and over again, but they're not getting the monitoring that they need to let them know when that's happening, whether it's safe, etc etc."
"The stuff that Norfolk Southern is doing is all PR. 'Oh, we're going to invite you to a fair and you get free admission,' or 'we'll clean your dog' - they had dog shampoo day," she explained. "You know, so all of this stuff really has nothing to do with the actual crisis."
"Meanwhile, people are not getting the financial aid they need to be able to replace the items in their homes, like their mattresses or their carpets or the things like that that are contaminated. They're not getting the testing, there are only certain areas where they would do the testing, but the contamination, especially after they burned the railroad cars and that toxic plume - I think people saw the photo of that - went pretty far and wide."
"Where Hillary lives, which is five miles from the actual site, she had her home tested and found vinyl chloride and other toxic chemicals in her home. So, people having to get their own water testing, their own soil and air testing, and then trying to secure air monitors inside their homes - this is all stuff that the government should be doing, not relying on a private corporation to do, because we know they're going to skimp and lie. The government should be seeking funds from Norfolk Southern and then overseeing a process of ensuring people get what they need."
Flowers said it "would make a difference" if US President Joe Biden had declared an emergency in Ohio, as the state's governor requested a month ago after months of pressure from East Palestine residents.
"What that would do is then make it official that that area would be declared an emergency site and be able to qualify for federal funding and support. But the state of Pennsylvania - you know, this happened right on the border - can't request an emergency declaration unless Ohio gets one, so this is really a first step," she explained.
"Also, moving to try to get health care that they need, they're talking about pursuing getting Medicare for the residents there, because they are being told now that they are at risk for cancer. Many of these people are low-income, maybe not covered [by health insurance], so getting that monitoring and care - there's no guarantee that they'll be able to cover that without some form of public insurance," Flowers said.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

She compared the situation to that in Libby, Montana, which was declared a superfund site by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2009 after more than 400 people died due to asbestos exposure from the vermiculite mines. In 2011, a pilot program was set up under the aegis of the Affordable Care Act to provide the victims with Medicare access, and in 2020, the Montana Supreme Court found BNSF Railway liable for the chemical exposure.

Flowers said the East Palestine residents requested and have been denied a urinalysis test to determine if they have the toxic chemicals in their bodies. A local resident told her that area physicians were "told not to do that" because it wouldn't show anything, but some did it anyway and found that the chemicals did, in fact, show up in residents' urine.

"So what they really want is the monitoring to know what they've been exposed to, and then have ongoing monitoring to see what are the impacts - if they develop cancer, can they get early screening for that, and then can they get treatment," she explained.

"Because you know, the way that the health care system is in the United States, so much of the responsibility financially is put onto the individual. So if you can't afford to get that test done, if you can't afford to see that doctor, you can't get it. And then, if you have a serious problem like cancer, many people then go through financial ruin trying to cover the costs of the care that they need. So they would like to see that they get the same thing that the Libby, Montana, folks got, and that some people with chronic diseases in the US get. They would like to be able to have Medicare for life."

The activist said that is why she advocates for a national health service.

"It is the government that is responsible for paying for the health care, so it has an impact on public policy. They're going to be less likely to subsidize, to permit a polluting industry to come into the middle of a community knowing that the government is going to be the one bearing the costs of the health care impact of that. So there's a lot of ripple effects that would come out of a national, improved Medicare for All," Flowers said.

Turning to the wildfire on the Hawaiian island of Maui, where thousands of homes have been destroyed and more than 100 people killed, and where the federal government has actually declared an emergency.

"The lesson would be: don't take it for granted that you're going to get the help you need and start organizing early-on and being vocal early-on in making the demand. And don't let the government pass this off onto corporations - no, the government needs to be the one that steps in and provides what is needed for the community and then it can go to the corporations and get reimbursed. But they need to make those demands early and continue to make them and just keep putting the information out there so that folks don't forget."

"I think one thing that we really have to be aware of in Maui is they're already having privateers coming in and wanting to buy up the property there and displace the community. We need to be vocal against that and support them to be able to heal and rebuild and to get back to their lives again," Flowers said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Hawaii Wildfires Death Toll Increases to 111 - Maui County

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) - The official death toll in the Hawaii wildfires has increased to 111, according to a Maui County release.

The release stated that 111 fatalities had been confirmed as of Wednesday, with nine of the individuals identified. The families of five of the deceased have been notified so far.

The death toll is expected to increase, as authorities continue to search burned areas. Hawaii Governor Josh Green said Wednesday that there are likely more than 1,000 people still unaccounted for.

The death toll makes the wildfires, which began as brushfires on the islands of Maui and Hawaii last week, the deadliest in the United States since 1918.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Democrats Hold Narrow Lead Over Republicans in 2024 Race for Congress – Poll

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) – US Democrats hold a very slight advantage over Republicans in a hypothetical race for seats in Congress ahead of the 2024 Congressional elections, a new Morning Consult poll showed on Thursday.

"Our latest survey found that 45% of voters would back the Democratic candidate in their district while 43% would support the Republican. Another 12% of voters are uncertain who they would vote for," Morning Consult said in a summary of the poll's findings, while noting that these figures have remained similar since the 2022 midterms.

A huge majority, or 94% of both Democrats and Republicans said they would support the candidate from their party. Among independents, 35% plan to vote for Republicans and 30% for Democrats, the poll found.

As for the 2024 presidential race, 94% of Democrats expressed support for US President Joe Biden, and 87% of Republicans said they back former President Donald Trump.

More than 9 out of 10 Democrats (91%) said they "strongly approve" Biden's job performance, compared with 6% of Republicans. On the other hand, 84% of Republicans and 5% of Democrats "strongly disapprove" his work, the poll found.

The survey was conducted Aug. 4-6, 2023, among 8,753 registered voters.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Weighing Options to Keep Forces in Niger Even If Coup Determination Made - Reports

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) - The United States is looking at options to preserve its troops in Niger even if the State Department determines that the military takeover was a coup,

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

CNN reported on Thursday, citing US officials.

The Pentagon is assessing what authorities it can use to continue to operate in a primarily intelligence gathering role in the country, the report said, noting that the potential determination of the power shift as a "coup" by the Department of State could strip the US military of authorities and funding to cooperate with Nigerien forces.

In case such a determination is made by the State Department, a waiver could be issued to allow certain US military activities to continue, a possibility first introduced by Congress in the 2023 omnibus spending bill, the officials said.

US officials are reportedly concerned that withdrawing forces from Niger could be irreversible and represent a permanent loss of presence in the region deemed crucial to US intelligence gathering efforts.

The military seized power in Niger last month, ousting President Mohamed Bazoum. Most Western leaders and ECOWAS have condemned the coup. In early August, the West African bloc agreed to activate a standby force to potentially compel the Nigerien military to reinstate Bazoum.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Record High Number of Americans See Moderate Drinking as Unhealthy – Poll

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) – A record-high 39% of Americans see consuming one to two drinks per day as unhealthy, according to a Gallup poll released Thursday.

The result, an increase of 11 percentage points since 2018, marked a record high across the nine times Gallup had surveyed respondents about the question since 2001.

Only 10% of Americans in the latest poll, conducted July 3-27, saw moderate drinking as healthy.

The record-high 39% is largely due to the growing view among the18-34 age group – an increase of 18 percentage points since 2018.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Charges Texas Woman for Threatening to Kill Judge in Trump's Case – Complaint

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) – The US Federal Protective Service charged a Texas woman for threatening to kill the judge overseeing a criminal case on former US President Donald Trump's alleged attempts to overturn the 2020 election results and a democratic congresswoman, according to a criminal complaint unveiled on Thursday.

The complaint was filed on August 11 and states that at about 7:51 p.m. EST (23:51 GMT) on August 5, Abigail Jo Shry, 43, from Alvin, Texas, called to the chambers of District of Columbia US District Judge Tanya Chutkan and left a threatening voice message that also mentioned

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, and the LGBTQ community.

"If Trump doesn't get elected in 2024, we are coming to kill you, so tread lightly, bitch," Shry allegedly said in the voicemail message. "You will be targeted personally, publicly, your family, all of it."

Shry added that she wanted to kill Sheila Jackson Lee and anyone who went after Trump, the complaint said.

During questioning by Department of Homeland Security (DHS) agents on August 8, Shry admitted that it was she who left the message, but said she had no plans to come to Washington D.C. At the same time, she stated that if Sheila Jackson Lee comes to Alvin, they need to get worried.

On Wednesday, the US District Court for the Southern District of Texas ordered Shry detained for the next 30 days and set a hearing in the case for September 13 at 11:00 a.m. (15:00 GMT). The court explained its decision to arrest the defendant by pointing out that she had prior convictions and violations of probation, among others factors.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

CIA Informs Blinken Ukraine Counteroffensive Not Going to Work - Hersh

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) -The CIA has notified Secretary of State Antony Blinken that the ongoing Ukraine counteroffensive is unlikely to yield results, US veteran investigative journalist Seymour Hersh reported on Thursday, citing a US intelligence official.

"The word was getting to him [Blinken] through the Agency [CIA] that the Ukrainian offense was not going to work. It was a show by Zelensky and there were some in the administration who believed his bullshit," the US official was quoted as saying.

Blinken, the official said, wanted to broker a peace deal between Russia and Ukraine as his predecessor Henry Kissinger did in Paris in 1973 to end the Vietnam war, but "it was going to be a big lose."

Ukraine launched its counteroffensive in early June after multiple delays. As of August 4, Ukraine has lost over 43,000 troops and 4,900 units of military equipment in the counteroffensive, according to the Russian Defense Ministry.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

George Santos Fundraiser Indicted for Impersonating Aide of Top House Republican - Filing

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) - Samuel Miele, a campaign fundraiser for recently-indicted lawmaker George Santos, was charged for allegedly impersonating a top aide of then-US House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, a court document revealed.

"In or about and between August 2021 and December 2021, the defendant SAMUEL MIELE

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

falsely and without authorization impersonated Person #1, in both email and telephone communications with potential contributors, for the purpose of soliciting financial contributions to support the Campaign and enriching himself through commissions earned on these financial contributions to the Campaign," the document, filed on Tuesday, said. "Person #1, an individual whose identity is known to the Grand Jury, was a high-ranking aide to a member of the House with leadership responsibilities."

Although the aide's name is not mentioned in the indictment, the organization End Citizens United in February said it filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission accusing Miele of impersonating Dan Meyer, the former McCarthy chief of staff, during the past two election cycles.

According to the court document, Miele even allegedly signed the emails with the staffer's name, according to the indictment.

Over the scheme's months-long span, Miele allegedly solicited contributions from more than one dozen potential contributors, receiving a 15% commission for his labor, according to the filing.

USA Today reported that he also allegedly admitted to the identity theft in a message to Santos in September 2022.

Miele has pleaded not guilty and was released on a $150,000 bail, the report said.

Santos himself was indicted in May on seven counts of wire fraud, three counts of money laundering, two counts of lying to the House of Representatives, and theft of public funds.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Azerbaijan's UN Envoy Says Armenia 'Deliberately' Obstructing Diplomatic Efforts

UNITED NATIONS, August 17 (Sputnik) - Armenia is purposefully hindering diplomatic negotiations, Azerbaijani Ambassador to the United Nations Yashar Aliyev told the UN Security Council.

Last week, two UN special rapporteurs and an independent UN expert called on Azerbaijan to immediately lift its blockade of the Lachin corridor, saying it has caused a "humanitarian emergency" in the disputed region.

"Armenia has been deliberately obstructing diplomatic efforts," Aliyev told the Security Council members Wednesday.

The envoy also said Armenia is also misleading the international community.

Earlier in the day, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzonyan told the UNSC that Azerbaijan has "undermined" efforts to reach a comprehensive peace and stability in the region. He said the current humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh has the full potential to deteriorate the prospects for peace in the whole region of South Caucasus and even beyond.

The corridor, which serves as a lifeline through which food, medical essentials and humanitarian aid reach Nagorno-Karabakh from Armenia, was blocked in 2022 by people described by Azerbaijan as climate activists protesting alleged Armenian mining in the region. On July 11, Azerbaijan's State Border Service suspended the Lachin checkpoint, citing an

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

investigation into alleged smuggling of goods disguised as humanitarian aid.

Armenia and Azerbaijan fought wars over the Armenian-majority enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh in the 1990s and 2020, with numerous sporadic clashes. The 1.5-month war in 2020 ended with a Russia-mediated ceasefire and the deployment of Russian peacekeepers to the region. The Lachin corridor runs next to a Russian peacekeeping post.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UN Security Council Condemns in 'Strongest Terms' Terror Attack in Shiraz - Statement

UNITED NATIONS, August 16 (Sputnik) - The members of the UN Security Council issued a statement condemning in the "strongest terms" the recent terrorist attack in Shiraz, Iran, earlier this week.

"The members of the Security Council condemned in the strongest terms the heinous and cowardly terrorist attack on innocent people and pilgrims at the Shah-e-Cheragh shrine in Shiraz, Iran, on 13 August, 2023," the statement said on Wednesday.

The Islamic State terror group (banned in Russia), which is also known as Daesh, claimed responsibility for the attack, the statement said.

The attack resulted in the death of two Iranians and the injury of eight innocent people, the statement said.

The perpetrators and organizers of the terrorist attack must be held accountable, the statement added.

On Sunday, Iranian media reported that two terrorists had attacked the Shiite shrine Shah Cheragh in the city of Shiraz.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Whelan Family Confirms Paul's Call, With Blinken, Say Case Resolution Not Impacted

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) - The family of US citizen Paul Whelan, who is imprisoned in Russia for espionage, confirmed to Sputnik that he spoke with Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

"I was aware the call was being made. I don't know anything other than Paul seems to have had a frank discussion with Secretary Blinken," Paul's brother David Whelan told Sputnik on Wednesday.

The call did not impact the perception about the likelihood that Paul's case would be resolved, David said.

"Secretary Blinken is a very kind person and I think the fact that someone so busy takes the

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

time to speak to Paul reflects that," he added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US, Brazil Presidents Discuss Climate, Venezuela, Haiti – White House

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden and his Brazilian counterpart Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva discussed climate change and initiatives to solve the issue, as well as situations in Venezuela and Haiti, the White House said.

"The two leaders spoke at length about cooperation on climate and preparations for COP28, including President Biden's commitment to request $500 million from Congress over five years to support the Amazon Fund and related activities, as well as ongoing efforts to help mobilize up to $1 billion to support the restoration of degraded lands in Brazil and the Amazon region through the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation," the statement said.

Biden supported Brazil's leadership in regional and global efforts to combat climate change. He also previewed US plans for an upcoming "green trade mission" to Brazil in September. This mission aims to promote forest, land use, and energy investments, according to the statement.

Both presidents also discussed the situations in Venezuela and Haiti, as well as the protection of worker rights, the White House added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, August 17 (Sputnik) -

SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA

* Switzerland has aligned itself with the European Union's eleventh package of sanctions against Russia for undertaking the special military operation in Ukraine, the Federal Council said on Wednesday.

* The United States has sanctioned entities based in Russia, Slovakia and Kazakhstan for alleged ties to North Korea, the US Treasury Department said.

NIGER DEVELOPMENTS

* The Peace and Security Council of the African Union has decided to refrain from using force against rebels in Niger, Le Monde reported on Wednesday, citing sources.

* Niger's rebel-appointed prime minister, Ali Mahaman Lamine Zeine, is holding consultations with a view to launching a national dialogue toward political stabilization, Al Arabiya reported, citing sources.

* Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, who also chairs the Economic Community of West

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

African States (ECOWAS), has met with Gabonese Foreign Minister Hermann Immongault and stressed the importance of maintaining ECOWAS sanctions in the wake of the coup in Niger.

ARMENIA-AZERBAIJAN RELATIONS

* Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and his Armenian counterpart, Ararat Mirzonyan, discussed the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and processes around normalization between Yerevan and Baku during a phone conversation on Wednesday, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

* Russia is an "important partner" in the mediation talks on Nagorno-Karabakh, French Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations Nathalie Estival-Broadhurst said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby on Wednesday said reports about a NATO official's suggestion that Ukraine could gain membership into the alliance in exchange for giving up land are not accurate.

* A six-member Ukrainian sabotage group tried to enter Russia's Bryansk Region morning, Governor Alexander Bogomaz said, adding that five militants were killed.

* The Russian Federal Security Service said on Wednesday that it had prevented an attempt by a Ukrainian sabotage group to cross into the Bryansk Region, adding that four saboteurs were killed during the operation.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Concerned Over Threat of Violence in Mali Amid Withdrawal of UN Mission - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The United States is very concerned over the threat of violence in Mali after the United Nations announced its decision to withdraw its mission from the country, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Wednesday.

"The United States is deeply concerned about the threat of worsening violence in Mali as the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission there (MINUSMA) begins its withdrawal," Miller said in a statement.

The recent attacks in Mali, which resulted in several injured peacekeepers, highlight that threat, he said.

Miller urged all parties in Mali to resolve their differences peacefully and in accordance with the 2015 Algiers Peace Accord.

"It is critical that MINUSMA be permitted to conduct its withdrawal in a safe and orderly manner, and we call on the transition government to cooperate fully until the final MINUSMA element departs. We urge all parties to facilitate MINUSMA's drawdown, withdrawal and liquidation," Miller said.

Earlier in August, MINUSMA announced that it would expedite the withdrawal of UN troops from Mali due to the worsening security situation there.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Nagorno-Karabakh Situation Can Undermine Peace Prospects in South Caucuses - Armenian FM

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The current situation in the Nagorno-Karabakh region threatens to erode any possibility for peace in the South Caucasus region, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzonyan said during a UN Security Council meeting on Wednesday.

"Today I am here to seek the support of this august body in maintaining the prospect of reaching just and comprehensive peace and stability in our region, which is seriously undermined by Azerbaijan and the humanitarian calamity on the ground in Nagorno-Karabakh," Mirzonyan said. "During the last two years, Armenia with the help of the international community spared no efforts to establish peace and stability in our region … But the current humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh has the full potential to deteriorate the prospects for peace in the whole region of South Caucasus and even beyond."

Last week, two UN special rapporteurs and an independent UN expert called on Azerbaijan to immediately lift its blockade of the Lachin corridor, saying it has caused a "humanitarian emergency" in the disputed region.

The corridor, which serves as a lifeline through which food, medical essentials and humanitarian aid reach Nagorno-Karabakh from Armenia, was blocked in 2022 by people described by Azerbaijan as climate activists protesting alleged Armenian mining in the region. On July 11, Azerbaijan's State Border Service suspended the Lachin checkpoint, citing an investigation into alleged smuggling of goods disguised as humanitarian aid.

Armenia and Azerbaijan fought wars over the Armenian-majority enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh in the 1990s and 2020, with numerous sporadic clashes. The 1.5-month war in 2020 ended with a Russia-mediated ceasefire and the deployment of Russian peacekeepers to the region. The Lachin corridor runs next to a Russian peacekeeping post.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Nagorno-Karabakh Has No Economic Activity Due to Blockade - Armenian Top Diplomat

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) -Nagorno-Karabakh has no economic activity in the region because of the blockade, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzonyan said during the UN Security Council on Wednesday.

"Due to the blockade, there's no economic activity in Nagorno-Karabakh," Mirzonyan said. "Thousands of people are left unemployed as there is no possibility to pay salaries. Even people that have money, are not able to buy anything as the shelves in the stores are empty."

Mirzonyan spoke at an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council convened at Yerevan's

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

request over the deteriorating situation in Nagorno-Karabakh.
Last week, two UN special rapporteurs and an independent UN expert called on Azerbaijan to immediately lift the blockade of the Lachin corridor, saying it has caused a "humanitarian emergency" in the disputed region.
The corridor, which serves as a lifeline through which food, medical essentials and humanitarian aid reach Nagorno-Karabakh from Armenia, was blocked in 2022 by people described by Azerbaijan as climate activists protesting alleged Armenian mining in the region. On July 11, Azerbaijan's State Border Service suspended the Lachin checkpoint, citing an investigation into alleged smuggling of goods disguised as humanitarian aid.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Russia in Contact With Parties to Resume Supplies to Nagorno-Karabakh - Deputy Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, August 16 (Sputnik) - Russia is in contact with Armenia and Azerbaijan in order to resume supplies of food and energy to Nagorno-Karabakh, Russian Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy said on Wednesday.
"We continue to remain actively in contact with all parties involved to rapidly resume the stable provision of food, medicines and other essential goods to Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as electricity and gas," Polyanskiy told the Security Council members.
The diplomat reiterated that Russia supports the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan.
Earlier on Wednesday, France decided to allocate an additional $3.26 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross to complement its humanitarian aid to Nagorno-Karabakh.
Also on Wednesday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and his Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzonyan discussed over the telephone the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and the processes to normalize relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Russia Makes Every Effort to Normalize Relations Between Armenia, Azerbaijan - UN Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, August 16 (Sputnik) - Russia is doing its best to normalize relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the Russian Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Dmitry Polyanskiy said on Wednesday.
“The Russian Federation in support of both parties is making every effort to rapidly resolve this crisis and to support normalization of relations between our friendly countries of Azerbaijan and Armenia,” Polyanskiy told the Security Council members.
Russia is doing whatever it can through all diplomatic channels to prevent humanitarian

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

tragedy, he added.

Earlier today, France decided to allocate an additional 3 million euros to the International Committee of the Red Cross to assist its humanitarian aid in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Also on Wednesday, the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and his Armenian counterpart, Ararat Mirzonyan, discussed the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh during a phone conversation.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Blinken in Call With Whelan Says Doing Everything to Bring Him to US From Russia - Reports

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke by telephone with convicted spy Paul Whelan and told him that the Biden administration is doing everything possible to bring him home, CNN reported on Wednesday.

During the call, Blinken urged Whelan to keep the faith and told him that the Biden administration is doing everything to bring him to the United States as soon as possible, the report said, citing a source in the know.

Whelan was arrested in Moscow in December 2018 and subsequently sentenced to 16 years in prison on charges of espionage.

Whelan, a US citizen who is also a citizen of Canada, Ireland and the United Kingdom, has maintained that he is innocent and has insisted that he arrived in Russia to attend a friend's wedding.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Personal Information of Grand Jury Responsible for Indicting Trump Posted Online - Reports

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The personal information of grand jury members in the US state of Georgia responsible for indicting former President Donald Trump was posted online, NBC News reported on Wednesday.

The grand jurors' information, including names and addresses, was posted on a "fringe website" that frequently features violent speech, the report said, opting not to name the site.

The information was found by the research group Advance Democracy Inc., the report said.

The website's users were posting the names and images of people believed to be grand jurors to other sites as well, the report added.

Earlier this month, the Georgia grand jury indicted Trump on charges linked to alleged efforts to overturn 2020 US presidential election results. Trump has denied the allegations and reiterating that the Georgia elections were rigged.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Air Force Says Tapped JetZero to Develop Blended Wing Body Prototype Aircraft by 2027

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) – The US Air Force announced on Wednesday that it selected startup JetZero to build and test a full-scale Blended Wing Body prototype aircraft with initial flight testing in 2027.

"The Department of the Air Force selected JetZero for the next phase of a blended wing body prototype aircraft project Aug. 16," the Air Force said in a press release. "The Air Force Operational Energy Office expects completion of initial flight testing as early as 2027."

The US Air Force has awarded the startup company from California a total of $235 million over a period of four years, as was outlined in the 2023 National Defense Authorization Act, the release said.

"Blended wing body aircraft have the potential to significantly reduce fuel demand and increase global reach," the release cited Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall as saying. "Moving forces and cargo quickly, efficiently, and over long distance is a critical capability to enable national security strategy."

The innovative technology will allow the Air Force to create several military configurations of military transport aircraft that account for approximately 60% of its total annual jet fuel consumption, the release added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Fulton County Prosecutor Proposes March 4 as Trial Date in Trump Case - Court Document

(Adds background, details in paras 2, 5)

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - A Fulton County prosecutor has proposed that the trial date for former US President Donald Trump in the Georgia election interference case be set for March 4, 2024, according to a court document published on Wednesday.

On Monday, a Fulton County grand jury in the state of Georgia indicted Trump on 13 criminal charges related to alleged attempts to overturn the results of the 2020 election. The former president and 18 others have until noon on August 25 to voluntarily surrender.

"The trial shall commence on March 4, 2024," the document said.

The arraignment date for the trial should be set for the week of September 5, the document added.

The proposed first day of the trial would fall one day before Super Tuesday on March 5, 2024, the day when most US states hold primary elections and caucuses and nearly one third of all delegates to the presidential nominating conventions can be won — more than any other day in the election cycle.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Russia 'Important Partner' in Nagorno-Karabakh Talks - French Deputy Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, August 16 (Sputnik) - Russia is an "important partner" in the mediation talks on Nagorno-Karabakh, French Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations Nathalie Estival-Broadhurst said on Wednesday.

"They [Russia] are an important partner, obviously, in the talks," Estival-Broadhurst told journalists.

The diplomat noted that there were also ongoing mediation efforts led by the United States and the European Union.

Estival-Broadhurst also reiterated France's decision to allocate an additional $3.26 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross in its humanitarian aid efforts in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Earlier on Wednesday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and his Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzonyan spoke over the telephone and discussed the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and the processes intended to normalize relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

STRATCOM Chief Expresses Confidence in B21 Stealth Bomber Program

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - US Strategic Command (STRATCOM) Commander Gen. Anthony Cotton said on Wednesday that he is comfortable with the status of the B-21 stealth bomber program.

"I'm pretty comfortable of where we are with the B-21 program ," Cotton said during a discussion at the 2023 Deterrence Symposium. "That 6th generation airplane is I think in a really good place."

The presentation of the new B-21 bombers was held at the US Air Force Plant in the city of Palmdale in California on December 2.

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said the most sophisticated air defense systems will struggle to detect the stealth aircraft. The B-21 bomber, according to Austin, is designed to deliver both conventional and nuclear munitions with formidable precision. Moreover, the aircraft will be able to gather intelligence to integrate with allies and partners.

According to Pentagon Press Secretary Patrick Ryder, the B-21 Raider will incrementally replace the B-1 and B-2 bombers, becoming the backbone of the US Air Force's bomber fleet.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

STRATCOM Concerned by China's Nuke Capabilities, Says Beijing Can Develop Any Weapons

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The United States is concerned by all of China's nuclear capabilities as Beijing is capable of developing any system under development, US Strategic Command (STRATCOM) Commander Gen. Anthony Cotton said on Wednesday.

When asked which Chinese nuclear weapons concern him the most, Cotton said: "All of them."

"I think that the difference even when it comes to Russia, and when it comes to the United States, we've been at this for seven decades ... They get to start fresh, so they get to look at best of breed," Cotton told reporters at the 2023 Deterrence Symposium. "What they also get the opportunity to do is they can develop, for example, most of the systems that are being developed, and even at the modernization of the Russian systems, most of them are dual use. So that in itself will tell you that it gives them an opportunity to have a larger, you know, a larger portfolio by doing that."

Cotton's predecessor, Adm. Charles Richard, said last year that China is on course to achieve superiority over the United States in land-based strategic nuclear forces unless Washington invests heavily in modernizing its land-based long-range missile force.

Richard said he had previously warned that China's nuclear and conventional military forces had reached a new level of capability amounting to a strategic "breakout" that changed the global balance of power.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Fulton County Prosecutor Proposes March 4 as Trial Date in Trump Case - Court Document

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - A Fulton County prosecutor has proposed that the trial date for former President Donald Trump in the Georgia election interference case be set for March 4, 2024, according to a court document.

"The trial shall commence on March 4, 2024," the document said on Wednesday.

The arraignment date for the trial should be set for the week of September 5, the document added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Majority of US Disapproves of Biden's Handling of Economy, Foreign Policy - Poll

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - A majority of adults in the United States disapprove of US President Joe Biden's handling of the country's economy and foreign policy, according to a Quinnipiac Poll published Wednesday.

Fifty-eight percent (58%) of Americans disapprove of Biden's handling of the economy, and 55% disapprove of his foreign policy approach, the poll said.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

A significant majority of respondents, 71%, rated the US economy as either “not so good” or “poor,” the poll said. More than half of Americans believe the economy is getting worse and 20% believe it is improving, the poll said.

A majority of Americans, 51%, also disapprove of Biden’s handling of the conflict in Ukraine, the poll said. Approximately one-third of respondents believe the US is doing too much to help Ukraine and 21% think the US should do more, the poll said.

The poll surveyed 1,818 US adults, including 1,632 voters, between August 10-14. The poll maintains a margin of error of plus-or-minus 2.3 percentage points.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Sees No Indication of China Slowing Down Its Military Buildup - STRATCOM

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The United States does not see that China is slowing down its military build-up, US Strategic Command (STRATCOM) Commander Gen. Anthony Cotton said on Wednesday.

"We are not seeing any indication that they are slowing down," Cotton said, stressing that the United States is monitoring that.

In April, a Pentagon official said US military planners believe any future war with China over Taiwan would start, escalate and be concluded very quickly and that it would focus on an intense exchange of missiles across the 100 mile wide Taiwan Strait.

US Senator Roger Wicker said during a congressional hearing in March that China will outstrip the United States with a superior strategic nuclear arsenal that is greater in size and more modern by the early 2030s.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Forensic Report in ‘Rust’ Shooting Concludes Gun Used by Baldwin Not Modified - Filing

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The firearm involved in the fatal shooting of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins by actor Alec Baldwin on the set of the film “Rust” was not modified prior to the incident, according to a document filed in the First Judicial District Court in the US state of New Mexico on Wednesday.

The document was filed by defense attorneys representing Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, who worked as the film’s armorer. Prosecutors dropped manslaughter charges against Baldwin based on their belief that the firearm was modified prior to the incident. However, the charges against Gutierrez-Reed remained.

“The special prosecutors have previously stated that they had information that there was an alleged modification of the gun used by Baldwin on the Rust set,” the filing said. “The Haag [forensic] report does not indicate any modification to the gun.”

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

The report found that Baldwin had to have pulled the trigger for the gun to go off, despite his denial of having done so, the filing said.

Evidence at trial will show that Gutierrez-Reed had asked to be called back to the film set if Baldwin was going to use a firearm, but never was, the filing said. Gutierrez-Reed would have checked the rounds in the firearm and not allowed Baldwin to perform a cross draw with his finger on the trigger or point the gun at another person, the filing added.

Gutierrez-Reed's defense attorneys requested the court provide instruction to the jury regarding causation and homicide charges.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Fed Says Probability of Avoiding US Recession Through 2024 Grows Noticeably

(Adds details, comments and context, paragraphs 3-7)

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The Federal Reserve said the odds of avoiding a US recession through all of next year has grown meaningfully, though its staff was still bracing for lower than expected growth over the next two years.

"The probability of avoiding a recession through 2024 grew noticeably, but the staff continued to expect that real GDP growth in 2024 and 2025 would run below their estimate of potential output growth," the Fed said in Wednesday's published minutes of the discussions on the economy and interest rates held by its policy-makers last month.

A survey publicly carried out by the Fed continued to place a significant probability of a recession occurring by the end of 2024, according to the minutes from the July meeting of the central bank's policy-making Federal Open Market Committee, or FOMC.

"However, the timing of a recession expected by survey respondents was again pushed later, and the probability of avoiding a recession through 2024 grew noticeably," the Fed said, indicating that the outcome of the survey and opinion of its staff were similar on this.

Most recent stress-test results at large banks indicated that they were well positioned as well in withstanding a severe recession, the minutes said.

Adding to that, the survey's respondents anticipated that both headline and core personal consumption expenditures inflation were expected to decline to 2% per annum by the end of 2025, meeting the central bank's cherished target.

Inflation hit four-decade highs of more than 9% in June 2022, largely due to the trillions of dollars of relief spending by the government on the 2020 coronavirus outbreak. To counter the runaway inflation, the Fed embarked on its most aggressive rate hike campaign in more than 20 years, adding 5.25% to rates which previously stood at just 0.25%. While the government's pandemic-related spending has long ended, jobs and wage growth have continued to fuel inflation, prompting the Fed to say keep adding to rates until inflation returns to its target.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

New Lawyer Convinced He Will Prove Vinnik's Innocence

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - US attorney Arkady Bukh told Sputnik he has filed a note of appearance with a California federal court to represent Russian national Alexander Vinnik and expressed confidence he will prove his innocence.

"We are convinced that we will be able to prove his innocence, and he will come back home as a free man," Bukh said.

The legal team now intends to secure the evidentiary base of the government.

"It will be a very active exchange of the documents, it is terabytes and terabytes of data," Bukh said, adding that this is just the beginning of his representation of Vinnik.

The US government accuses Vinnik of enabling criminal activity through cryptocurrency exchange BTC-e by obscuring and anonymizing transactions and sources of funds. Vinnik denies the charges against him.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

FEMA Chief Says Extra Funding Beyond Biden's Supplemental Request May Be Needed

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) may potentially need additional funding on top of the supplemental request for disaster relief that President Joe Biden sent to Congress last week after the devastating wildfires in Hawaii, FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell said on Wednesday.

"We may potentially need more beyond that [supplemental request], and my team is assessing that now," Criswell said during a press briefing.

Criswell noted that currently FEMA has enough funds to support the ongoing response efforts across the United States, including in Hawaii, but a potential funding deficit may delay some of the recovery projects and push them into the next year.

On Friday, Biden asked Congress to provide the administration with $40.1 billion in emergency spending to fund future assistance packages for Ukraine, emergency relief and more.

As part of the request, the White House requested $12 billion to replenish the Disaster Relief Fund amid concerns that it would run out of money in August.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Says No Indication of N. Korea Nuclear Test During Trilateral Summit at Camp David

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The United States sees no indication that North Korea would conduct a nuclear weapons test during the US-Japan-South Korea trilateral summit later

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

this week, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said on Wednesday.
"I don't have any information on that or any indication to share with you," Jean-Pierre said during a press briefing, when asked about the potential for North Korea to conduct a nuclear weapons test during the trilateral summit.
On Friday, US President Joe Biden will meet with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and South Korea President Yoon Suk Yeol for a summit at Camp David in the US state of Maryland. The summit marks the first visit to Camp David by foreign leaders since 2015 as well as the first standalone summit between the three nations.
Earlier on Wednesday, National Security Council Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said the three leaders will discuss during the summit enhanced security cooperation, military integration and other concrete efforts to advance trilateral ties moving forward.
The bolstered security ties come in response to provocative actions by North Korea, Kirby added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Fed Says Probability of Avoiding US Recession Through 2024 Grows Noticeably

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The odds of avoiding a US recession through all of next year have grown meaningfully, though its staff is still bracing for lower than expected growth over the next two years, according to minutes from the Fed's most recent meeting, released Wednesday.
"The probability of avoiding a recession through 2024 grew noticeably, but the staff continued to expect that real GDP growth in 2024 and 2025 would run below their estimate of potential output growth," the Fed said in the minutes from the discussions on the economy and interest rates held by its policy-makers last month.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Reviewing Whether Can Meet Challenges After New START Expires in 2026 - STRATCOM Chief

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The United States is reviewing whether it can meet the challenges that may present themselves after the New START arms control treaty expires in 2026, US Strategic Command (STRATCOM) Commander Gen. Anthony Cotton said on Wednesday.
"This command right now is looking into that...to see if we have the right force sizing and right force posture to meet the challenges which we would face," Cotton said during a discussion at the 2023 Deterrence Symposium.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Has Not Received Response From N. Korea About Army Private King - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The United States has not received any response from North Korea regarding information about Army private Travis King despite US efforts, State Department spokesperson Vedant Patel said on Wednesday.

"We have raised this case through the appropriate channels that exists to send messages and communicate to the DPRK [North Korea], we have done so over the course of this process, and have not gotten, aside from that one confirmation message to UN officials, have not received any communication from the DPRK on this," Patel said during a press briefing.

Earlier in the day, North Korea's state-run Korean Central News Agency said King, who crossed the border from South Korea to North Korea in mid-July, intruded illegally in seek of refugee in North Korea or another third country as he was "disillusioned" at the unequal American society."

The soldier illegally intruded into the territory of North Korea on July 18 in the joint security area of Panmunjom and was detained by soldiers of the Korean People's Army, the report said.

King admitted that he illegally intruded into the territory of North Korea and confessed that he had decided to seek refuge in North Korea or another third country as "he harbored ill feeling against inhuman maltreatment and racial discrimination within the US Army," the report said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Oil Output at New Post-Pandemic High Even as Number of Drilling Rigs Decreases - EIA

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - US oil output is estimated to have hit the highest level since the coronavirus outbreak three years ago, the Energy Information Administration (EIA) in a report on Wednesday.

Crude production was projected at 12.7 million barrels per day during the week ended August 11, the EIA said in its Weekly Petroleum Status Report. That production level was even higher than the daily output of 12.6 million barrels the agency reported for the prior week to August 4.

The EIA output estimate for the two back-to-back weeks was the highest since the record peak of 13.1 million barrels per day noted before the March 2020 coronavirus outbreak and the subsequent measures that effectively destroyed demand for oil for a few months in a row.

The EIA's weekly tabulation of US crude production does not come with accompanying notes, thus leaving unexplained the output hike in a situation of a sheer drop in the number of rigs drilling for oil in the United States since the beginning of the year.

The oil services company Baker Hughes said the US oil rig count was unchanged last week at 525. Still, that was significantly lower than the 2023 high of 623 rigs noted during the week that ended on January 13.

"The only explanation I can think for this is that we have higher drilling efficiency today," John

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Kilduff, partner at New York energy hedge fund Again Capital, said. "The US technology for oil extraction is getting better by the day; thus the higher production, even with the decline in the number of drilling rigs."

The higher US production comes at a time when Saudi Arabia, one of the world's largest oil producers and head of the 13-nation OPEC cartel, is unilaterally cutting one million barrels per day of its own output to bring about higher oil prices.

US crude futures rose from $65 per barrel in May to nearly $85 last week, largely due to the Saudi campaign. This week, however, the price has declined, falling below $80 in Wednesday's trading due partly to reports of the surging US oil production and worries over an economic slowdown in China - the world's largest oil importer.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Starlink Shipped, Distributed Free Wi-Fi Kits to Help People in Maui - Statement

UNITED NATIONS, August 16 (Sputnik) - Elon Musk's internet company Starlink on Wednesday said it sent and distributed free Wi-Fi equipment for the people of Maui.

"To help provide connectivity in Maui, the Starlink team has shipped and distributed more than 650 kits to 40+ organizations on the island supporting recovery efforts," Starlink posted on its X page profile.

Elon Musk himself also commented via a post on X.

"Tesla & SpaceX/Starlink doing our best to be helpful to Hawaii," Musk said.

Earlier today, the White House announced that President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden will travel to Maui on August 21 in the wake of the deadliest wildfires in Hawaii's history.

As of Tuesday night, the death toll from the wildfires in Maui County reached 106.

The wildfires in Hawaii broke out due to dry and hot weather and are exacerbated by strong winds brought by Hurricane Dora. The fire destroyed several settlements, including the popular tourist town of Lahaina. The authorities are forced to block roads and suspend public transport. Hundreds of locals were evacuated from the area.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US-Japan-S. Korea Summit to Enhance Security Integration, N. Korea Key Reason -White House

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The trilateral summit between the United States, Japan and South Korea aims to improve security integration among the parties especially because of North Korea's advancements with its missile program and continued nuclear ambitions, US National Security Council Communications Coordinator John Kirby said on Wednesday.

"Without getting ahead of the leaders on Friday, I think you're going to continue to see that sort

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

of focus on the security front going forward to improve military interoperability and integration and coordination," Kirby said during a press briefing. "Certainly a key reason why we all feel a need to improve that security cooperation is because of the continued provocative actions by Pyongyang and what was coming out of North Korea: the missile launches, the continued advancement of their program, the continued nuclear ambitions. All of that is of great concern."

Kirby said the three countries will announce initiatives on Friday that cement trilateral cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

On Monday, media reported that the three countries are expected to announce new plans at the summit for expanded military cooperation on ballistic missile defenses and technology development amid growing concerns about the development of North Korea's nuclear program.

Biden will host Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol for a one-day summit at Camp David on Friday.

Friday's summit will mark the first visit by foreign leaders to Camp David since 2015 and it is the first standalone summit ever between the three countries.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Does Not Put Much Stock in N. Korea's Statements About Private King - White House

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The United States does not put a lot of stock in Pyongyang's statements about US Army private Travis King, who defected to North Korea in July, National Security Council Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said on Wednesday.

"We don't tend to put a lot of stock in statements coming out of Pyongyang. I don't think we're going to do much handwringing over a statement coming out of there," Kirby said during a press briefing.

Kirby was asked about Pyongyang's statement claiming King is seeking asylum in North Korea because the United States has treated him inhumanely.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Korean Central News Agency reported that King intruded illegally into North Korea from South Korea to seek refuge there or in a third country given that he has been disillusioned with the inequality in the United States.

King entered North Korea on July 18 in the joint security area of Panmunjom and was detained by soldiers of the Korean People's Army, the report said.

King admitted that he illegally entered North Korea and confessed that he had decided to seek refugee in North Korea or another country as "he harbored ill feeling against inhuman maltreatment and racial discrimination within the US Army," the report said.

Kirby said the North Korean statements notwithstanding, the United States still wants to know the whereabouts and condition of private King because it fears for his safety.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UN Will Be Present at BRICS Summit in South Africa - Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, August 16 (Sputnik) - The United Nations will be represented at the BRICS summit in South Africa, spokesperson Farhan Haq said on Wednesday.
"The United Nations will be present at the BRICS summit in South Africa. We hope to have an announcement for you probably early next week about that," Haq told a briefing.
The BRICS summit will be held in Johannesburg from August 22-24. Russian President Vladimir Putin is expected to participate in the summit via a video link.
In July, South African Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor said that 23 countries had officially expressed their interest in joining BRICS. In May, Belarus applied for BRICS membership.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Sanctions Lebanese Environmental NGO for Hezbollah Ties - Treasury

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The United States designated a Lebanese environmental group and its leader for providing support to Hezbollah, the Department of the Treasury said on Wednesday
"Today, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated Lebanon-based Green Without Borders and its leader," the statement said.
The US accused Green Without Borders (GWB) of supporting and covering for Hezbollah's operations in southern Lebanon along the "Blue Line" between Lebanon and Israel over the last decade while publicly operating under the guise of environmental activism, it added.
Washington also designated the organization's leader, Zuhair Subhi Nahla.
"Although Nahla claims that he and GWB are not part of Hizballah, he has publicly acknowledged his and GWB's affiliation with the terrorist group," the statement noted.
Sanctions require blocking all assets owned by designated persons and entities that are under US control. The law also prohibits American citizens from dealing with blacklisted people and organizations.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US-Japan-S.Korea Summit Not to Demonstrate 'Some Sort of NATO Alignment' - White House

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The trilateral summit between the United States, Japan and South Korea will not demonstrate any kind of alignment with NATO, National Security Council Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said on Wednesday.
"I wouldn't expect that you're going to see any deliverables or any demonstrable discussion

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

about some sort of NATO alignment," Kirby said during a press briefing when asked if there will be talks about closer integration of Japan into NATO.

A discussion regarding closer integration of Japan into NATO would have to take place in the context of the alliance and it would not be appropriate to have a lengthy discussion on this matter at the trilateral summit, Kirby said.

Although the trilateral summit is not solely about the Indo-Paciifc, it is very much focused on regional security, stability and economic opportunity, Kirby added.

President Joe Biden will host Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol for a one-day summit at Camp David on Friday.

Friday's summit will mark the first visit by foreign leaders to Camp David since 2015 and it is the first standalone summit ever between the three countries.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Medical Groups Urge Emergency Mental Health Care Reform Amid Youth Crisis - Statement

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - Three US medical groups in a joint policy statement on Wednesday called for reforms to the United States' emergency mental health care system amid an increase in mental and behavioral health emergencies in children.

"Mental and behavioral health emergencies in children and youth continue to increasingly affect not only the emergency department, but the entire spectrum of emergency medical services for children," the statement said.

The statement was issued by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Emergency Physicians and the Emergency Nurses Association.

Emergency departments lack adequate personnel, capacity and infrastructure to provide optimal care for youth mental health emergencies, which are increasingly referred to emergency departments, the statement said.

The US lacks adequate community and institutional infrastructure, the statement added, to care for youth with mental health conditions, making emergency departments an "essential part" of the health care safety net for such patients.

The medical groups recommend addressing the crisis by addressing inequities in mental health care, increasing mental health screenings, optimizing telehealth and improving access to resources for patients and staff.

"A dedicated multipronged, multidisciplinary approach will be necessary to provide patient-centered, trauma-informed services to improve the care of children and youth with mental and behavioral health emergencies," the statement said.

In May, US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy in an advisory warned that adolescents who spend more than three hours per day on social media face double the risk of developing symptoms of depression and anxiety. Murthy said children have become unknowing participants in a decades-long experiment involving social media.

The advisory was part of a broader effort by Murthy to address the US youth mental health

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

crisis.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US-Japan-S. Korea Summit Not to Focus on China, Specific Regional Challenges - White House

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The United States- Japan- South Korea trilateral summit is not focused on China or any other specific challenge in the region, National Security Council Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said on Wednesday.

"So there will be a range of topics discussed, everything from economics to diplomacy to certainly the security realm, but it is not about the PRC [People's Republic of China], and it's not about a specific challenge in the region," Kirby said during a press briefing.

The trilateral summit will produce initiatives that are very forward-looking and will commit the three countries to long-term initiatives that will improve trilateral cooperation, Kirby added.

On Monday, media reported that the three countries are expected to announce new plans at the summit for expanded military cooperation on ballistic missile defense and on technology development amid growing concerns about North Korea’s nuclear program.

Biden will host Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol for a one-day summit at Camp David on Friday.

Friday's summit will mark the first visit by foreign leaders to Camp David since 2015 and it is the first standalone summit ever between the three countries.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Pentagon Says Docs on Cluster Munition Dud Rate Classified, Not for Publication

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The US Department of Defense is not going to publish any documents related to studies on the dud rates in US-made cluster munitions, as they are classified, spokesperson Maj. Charlie Dietz said on Wednesday.

"These documents are classified, so are not publicly releasable at this time. While we appreciate external expertise, I can assure you that the Department of Defense is committed to ensuring its actions and decisions are based on the best available data and analysis," Dietz said in a statement.

In July, the Biden administration sent its first military assistance package for Ukraine that included cluster munitions in a move widely criticized by human rights activists, and opposed by some US lawmakers.

The Biden administration justified its decision to send banned bombs on the fact that US-made munitions allegedly have a very low failure rate and thus do not cause as much harm as cluster bombs from other countries.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

On top of that, both the US Department of Defense and the State Department refuse to confirm whether Ukraine has been using its own cluster munitions since the beginning of the conflict with Russia in February 2022.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

White House Says Has No Updates on ATACMS to Ukraine

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - White House Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby told reporters on Wednesday he does not have any updates to provide with respect to the potential delivery of Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS) to Ukraine.

"I don't have any updates on ATACMS, the president said they're in play. They're in play. I'm not going to get into internal discussions one way or another about the security systems that we are providing Ukraine," Kirby said.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba urged US Secretary of State Antony Blinken to facilitate the delivery of ATACMS during a phone call earlier in August.

ATACMS are a long-range missile system capable of striking deep into Russian territory, prompting concerns about potential escalation upon their delivery.

Also earlier in August, Kirby told Sputnik that there have been no updates within the Biden administration on the potential provision of ATACMS.

In May, President Joe Biden when asked about sending the weapons to Ukraine said ATACMS were "still in play."

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Sanctions Russian, Slovak, Kazakh Entities Over Links to North Korea - Treasury

(Updates with more details in paras 5-7)

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The United States is sanctioning entities based in Russia, Slovakia and Kazakhstan for their alleged ties to North Korea, the US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) said on Wednesday.

The United States sanctioned the Russian Limited Liability Company Verus, the Slovak Versor SRO and the Kazakh Defense Engineering Limited Liability Partnership, OFAC said in an update to its Specially Designated Nationals list.

The entities were designated based on North Korea-related sanctions regulations, with all three linked to Ashot Mkrtychev, OFAC said.

The United States had designated Mkrtychev in March for arms-related activities involving Russia and North Korea.

The three entities were tied to a sanctions evasion network to enable arms deals between Russia and North Korea, the Treasury Department said in a statement.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Mkrtychev is the owner of Verus, the president of Versor and the director of Defense Engineering, the statement said.

"The United States continues to root out illicit financial networks that seek to channel support from North Korea to Russia's war machine," Treasury Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Brian Nelson said in the statement.

The United States and its allies remain committed to disrupting the arms trade between Russia and North Korea, the statement added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

State Dept Says No Discussion on NATO-Type Alignment Expected With Japan, South Korea

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The leaders of the United States, Japan and South Korea will not discuss any type of NATO alignment during the trilateral summit this week, White House Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said on Wednesday.

"I wouldn't expect that you're going to see any deliverables or any demonstrable discussion about some sort of NATO alignment," Kirby told reporters.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said in May that his country was in talks to open a NATO liaison office in Tokyo to facilitate consultations with the alliance.

French President Emmanuel Macron said in July he opposed establishing a NATO liaison office in Japan to avoid creating the impression that the alliance was expanding its geography.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US, Japan, S. Korea to Announce Initiatives to Cement Trilateral Cooperation - White House

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The United States, Japan and South Korea will announce significant initiatives at the end of the week to further advance their trilateral cooperation, White House Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said on Wednesday.

"Our three countries will announce significant initiatives on Friday which will help cement our trilateral cooperation going forward," Kirby said during a press briefing.

Biden will host Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol for a one-day summit at Camp David on Friday.

On Monday, media reported that the three countries are expected to announce new plans at the summit for expanded military cooperation on ballistic missile defenses and technology development amid growing concerns about the development of North Korea's nuclear program.

Friday's summit will mark the first visit by foreign leaders to Camp David since 2015 and it is the first standalone summit ever between the three countries.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

White House Says 'Not Accurate' Ukraine Could Gain NATO Membership For Concessions

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby on Wednesday said reports about a NATO official's suggestion that Ukraine could gain membership into the alliance in exchange for giving up land are not accurate.
"There's nothing to that. That's not accurate. We've already talked about trying to help find a path towards membership," Kirby said during a press briefing.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Sanctions Russian, Slovak, Kazakh Entities Over Links to North Korea - Treasury

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The United States is sanctioning entities based in Russia, Slovakia and Kazakhstan for alleged ties to North Korea, the US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) said on Wednesday.
The US sanctioned Russian entity Limited Liability Company Verus, Slovak entity Versor SRO, and Kazakh entity Defense Engineering Limited Liability Partnership, OFAC said in an update to its Specially Designated Nationals list.
The entities were designated based on North Korea-related sanctions regulations, with all three entities linked to Ashot Mkrtychev, OFAC said.
The US designated Mkrtychev in March for arms-related activities involving Russia and North Korea.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Bars Entry of 3 DRC Public Officials Over Protected Wildlife Trafficking - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The United States has barred three Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) public officials from entering the country over their alleged involvement in "significant corruption" by trafficking protected wildlife, the State Department said on Wednesday.
"The United States is designating the following individuals as generally ineligible for entry into the United States, due to their involvement in significant corruption: Cosma Wilungula Balongelwa, the former Director General of Congolese Institute for the Conservation of Nature (ICCN); Leonard Muamba Kanda, the former Department Head of the DRC Management Authority for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Flora (CITES) and Director of ICCN; and Augustin Ngumbi Amuri, the Director-Coordinator of the DRC CITES Management Authority and Legal Advisor to ICCN," spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a statement.

The three abused their public positions by trafficking protected species such as chimpanzees, gorillas, and okapi, the statement said. Most of those were trafficked to China, aided by falsified permits obtained through bribery, it noted.

Miller said that through their involvement in the illegal trafficking, the officials have contributed to the erosion of the rule of law and government transparency in the country and undermined wildlife conservation efforts.

The designations demonstrate the US's commitment to support those who disrupt trafficking operations in the DRC and promote accountability for corrupt officials, the State Department stressed.

The wives of Kanda and Wilungula have also been designated as ineligible for entry into the US.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

IS No Longer Controls Territories in Iraq, Having Suffered Significant Losses - US General

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The Islamic State (banned in Russia) does not control any territories in Iraq and has suffered significant losses, US-led coalition against the terror group commander Matthew McFarlane said on Wednesday.

"Certainly, Daesh [Islamic State] no longer controls any territory and has suffered losses of the leaders and fighters at large," McFarlane said.

The commander pointed out that the US-led coalition sees a significant decrease in terrorist attacks by more than 65% or greater this year than in 2022.

McFarlane described the last Islamic holiday of Ramadan as being the most peaceful in recent history.

However, McFarlane also said that the remaining Islamic State fighters continue to try to rebuild the so-called caliphate in Iraq.

"We work very closely with our Iraqi counterparts, we share intelligence, to make sure we address any possible reemergence or any possible threats that emerge from those [Islamic State] fighters that are still at large out there," McFarlane said.

The coalition is also working with its Iraqi partners on addressing long-term issues such as repatriation of internally displaced people, McFarlane added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Top US General to Visit Israel Amid Concerns Over Crisis in Israeli Military – Reports

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley will visit Israel next week to assess first-hand whether the ongoing judicial overhaul and related mass protests have impacted the readiness of the Israeli military, Axios reported on Wednesday.

Milley is expected to meet with Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi and other senior Israeli security officials as the Biden administration is increasingly concerned about the ongoing social stand-off in the country and potential implications for US forces in the Middle East, the report said.

Since the beginning of the crisis, thousands of Israeli military reservists, including fighter pilots and members of the intelligence, cyber and special operations units, have reportedly suspended their service in protest against efforts by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government to limit the Supreme Court's powers, according to the report.

Israeli Air Force commander Maj. Gen. Tomer Bar is one of the senior IDF leaders who sees a real degradation in preparedness stemming from the socio-political crisis, the report said. Last week, Bar met with reservist pilots and admitted that there has been a significant decrease in preparedness — remarks that reportedly drew Netanyahu's outrage.

Washington is worried that the crisis in the Israeli military may make Israel vulnerable to possible attacks by Iran or Lebanon's Hezbollah that could escalate the situation in the region and make the United States send even more troops, the report said.

Since January 2023, Israel has been gripped by mass protests sparked by the judicial reform proposed by Netanyahu's cabinet. In July, the Israeli parliament approved for second and third readings one of the key clauses of the judicial reform, which limits the power of the Supreme Court to overturn government decisions by declaring them unreasonable.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Russia Finds Foreign Naval Presence in Yemen Manipulate UNSC Decisions - UN Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, August 16 (Sputnik) - Russia is worried about foreign vessels inspecting other ships in Yemen's nearby waters and manipulating UN Security Council resolutions, the Russian Deputy Permanent Representative Dmitry Polyanskiy said on Wednesday.

"We are concerned to note that some foreign naval presences unscrupulously are manipulating Security Council decisions when inspecting vessels in nearby waters," Polyanskiy told the Security Council members.

Russia is against broadening interpretations of Security Council resolutions on Yemen, he added.

The conflict between the government forces and the Houthi rebels in Yemen has been ongoing since 2014. The situation worsened in 2015 after a Saudi-led coalition joined the conflict on the side of the government and began conducting air, land and sea operations against the Houthis. The movement has since gained strength in the southern part of Yemen, advocating for the secession of the country's southern provinces to form an independent state.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Says Numbers of Refugees in Syria's Al-Hol Decreasing But Camp Remains Security Concern

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - The Al-Hol refugee camp in Syria remains a security concern and the United States is working to steadily decrease their numbers, the US-led coalition against the Islamic State terror group (banned in Russia) said on Wednesday.

"In terms of the Al-Hol camp, it is certainly a security concern over time, as… the conditions within that camp can contribute to a radical ideology," Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve commander Matthew McFarlane told reporters.

Addressing issues to improve conditions at the Al-Hol camp was an important part of the long-term defeat of the Islamic State, McFarlane said.

The commander also said the US State Department has been working with its international counterparts to reduce the number of people at the camp in order to improve conditions there.

The number of refugees had decreased from more than 53,000 last year to 48,000 because of repatriations by international partners, McFarlane added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

'Clear Agreement' Needed in Yemen to Move Forward, Restart Political Process - UN Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, August 16 (Sputnik) - The parties to the conflict in Yemen continue to show willingness to resolve it, but a "clear agreement" is needed to enable them to move forward and restart the political process, UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg said on Wednesday.

“The sides continue to display general willingness to seek solutions, but this still needs to translate into concrete steps, in particular, a clear agreement on the way forward that includes restarting an inclusive Yemeni political process,” Grundberg said.

In March, the parties to the conflict agreed to release some 900 detainees under the auspices of the United Nations.

The conflict between the government forces and the Houthi rebels in Yemen has been ongoing since 2014. The situation worsened in 2015 after a Saudi-led coalition joined the conflict on the side of the government and began conducting air, land and sea operations against the Houthis. The movement has since gained strength in the southern part of Yemen, advocating for the secession of the country's southern provinces to form an independent state.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

US Trade Rep. Says Pleased WTO Recognizes Aluminum, Steel Tariffs as Security Measure

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - US Trade Representative (USTR) Spokesperson Sam Michel said on Wednesday that the United States is pleased with the World Trade Organization's (WTO) recognition of US tariffs on aluminum and steel imports as a national security measure.

"The United States is pleased with the World Trade Organization panel report released today, recognizing that the US Section 232 actions on steel and aluminum are security measures, and that the People's Republic of China illegally retaliated with sham 'safeguard' tariffs.," Michel said in a statement.

In March 2018, former US President Donald Trump exercised authority under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act to impose a 25% tariff on steel imports and a 10% tariff on aluminum imports, with exemptions for Canada and Mexico.

The WTO rejected China's claims that the actions are safeguard measures subject to rebalancing by the organization, the statement said. China's decision to pursue the dispute highlighted its "hypocrisy" by both challenging the US tariffs at the WTO and retaliating with their own tariffs, the statement said.

China's use of the WTO's dispute settlement system to challenge US national security actions has caused "grave systemic damage" to the organization, the statement added.

The US condemns China's refusal to correct its non-market excess capacity for steel and aluminum that sparked the US national security actions, the statement said. The Biden administration is committed to standing up for US workers and creating a fair trading system, the statement said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Citizens Face Significant Delays in Obtaining Passports From State Dept. - Reports

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - Americans seeking to travel abroad this summer are facing significant delays in obtaining passports despite the fact that the US State Department has received a decreased number of requests for travel documents, the New York Times reported on Wednesday.

The State Department, which is the government agency responsible for issuing passports, is now receiving 430,000 requests for travel documents per week, or 130,000 less than in March, the report said.

However, the State Department has announced that it plans to provide 25 million passports this year, three million more than in 2022, the report said.

Passport application processing takes between ten and 13 weeks and wait has been frustrating to Americans who are seeking to travel abroad during the summer, the report said.

The processing time may be shortened to seven weeks for an additional fee, but even this time-frame is too lengthy for many travelers who have already planned a trip during the month of August, the report said.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM

State Department officials have emphasized that their goal is to reduce the processing time to about six to eight weeks for routine service and two to three weeks for expedited service, the report said.

Lawmakers from both aisles of Congress have called the situation a “crisis” and “an unacceptable failure,” the report said.

They have sent a letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken informing him that their constituents report being placed on hold for hours by passport offices before calls inexplicably drop, while those who succeed getting through have been given incorrect information over the telephone, the report added.

The State Department noted that it is still recovering from the disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic measures, which are allegedly the main reason for the continuing backlog, according to the report.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trump Will Be Booked at Fulton County Jail Where Inmate Was 'Eaten Alive' by Bugs

WASHINGTON, August 16 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump in the Georgia 2020 election probe will be arrested and booked at Fulton County Jail, according to the local sheriff's office, but he will likely only spend a very brief period of time at the Atlanta facility notorious for overcrowding, bedbugs, scabies outbreaks and unhygienic conditions

"At this point, based on guidance received from the district attorney's office and presiding judge, it is expected that all 19 defendants named in the indictment will be booked at the Rice Street Jail," the sheriff's office said in a media advisory.

The jail is known for egregious conditions, including overcrowding, a lack of hygiene, and malnourishment, which have led to prisoner deaths. Earlier this year, the family of Fulton County jail inmate Lashawn Thompson said the 35-year-old man found dead in a filthy jail cell in September 2022 was "eaten alive by insects and bed bugs."

Prosecutors have not detailed how Trump will be booked, but at his previous arraignments in New York, Florida, and DC for his first three criminal indictments, Trump was treated with a light touch.

After having his basic information and fingerprints taken, Trump was sequestered from other defendants and accompanied by Secret Service agents and US Marshals to a courtroom. He also did not have to take a mugshot and be handcuffed. After the hearing concluded, he was allowed to leave rather than languish in jail until his trial, escorted under heavy security to his motorcade and then his private plane.

Trump, whose fourth indictment of the year was announced this week, must surrender for arraignment by August 25.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 08/17/2023 10:37:41 AM