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Mummy's Musk: Scientists Identify Recipe for Ancient Egyptian 'Scent of Eternity' Perfume

Scientists have uncovered the chemical components of a perfume used in ancient Egyptian death rituals that texts refer to as the "scent of eternity," and plan to present the musk for all to smell at a forthcoming exhibition at the Moesgaard Museum in Denmark.

The paper summarizing their findings and methods was published on Thursday in Scientific Reports, a peer-reviewed journal.

Ancient Egyptian mummification rituals and methods were elaborate and systematic, preserving bodies for thousands of years in an effort to ensure their trip to the afterlife was successful. Heavily inscribed with religious and spiritual significance, the process included the removal of the deceased's internal organs and preservation of their body, as well as decoration and inscription of their caskets with blessings, instructions, and other texts.

"'The scent of eternity' represents more than just the aroma of the mummification process," Barbara Huber, an archaeologist from Germany's Max Planck Institute of Geoanthropology and the principal co-author of the paper, said in a news release.

"It embodies the rich cultural, historical, and spiritual significance of Ancient Egyptian mortuary practices."

A relatively unknown part of that process has been the use of a perfume which, despite its name, has not persisted to the present - that is, until a team of researchers found some sealed canopic jars that still contained the perfumes inside them.

The jars were used to embalm a noble woman named Senetnay around the year 1,450 BCE, during Egypt's 18th Dynasty - the time when the Egyptian Empire was at the peak of its power and stretched from modern-day Sudan to modern-day Turkiye.

The researchers analyzed the liquids using Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry, High-Temperature Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry, and Liquid Chromatography-Tandem Mass Spectrometry to separate the individual substances that made up the balms.

"We analyzed balm residues found in two canopic jars from the mummification equipment of Senetnay that were excavated over a century ago by Howard Carter from Tomb KV42 in the Valley of the Kings," Huber said.

Researchers found the jars contain a blend of beeswax, plant oil, fats, bitumen, Pinaceae resins, a balsamic substance, and dammar or Pistacia tree resin. The ingredients range from as far away as Southeast Asia.

"These complex and diverse ingredients, unique to this early time period, offer a novel understanding of the sophisticated mummification practices and Egypt's far-reaching trade-routes," Christian E. Loeben, Egyptologist and curator at the Museum August Kestner in Hannover, Germany, where the jars were kept.

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Visitors to the Moesgaard Museum in Højbjerg, Denmark, will get to experience the ancient scent at a forthcoming exhibition, the date for which has not yet been announced.

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UK's New Defense Minister Shapps Vows Not to Bring TikTok Into Government Buildings

UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's pick to head the Defense Ministry, Grant Shapps, has vowed not to bring devices with the TikTok social media app into government buildings or to put the app on government-owned devices.

An avid user of the app as part of his public relations efforts, the MP for Welwyn Hatfield has said he will abide by the government's restrictions out of respect for "security concerns," but doubled down on its utility for reaching the masses.

"Grant knows that TikTok can be a valuable tool for communicating with his constituents," a spokesperson for Shapps told UK media on Friday, adding that "Aware of security concerns, he doesn't have the app on his phone and the account is instead managed by his constituency staff."

In March, Sunak's government clamped down on the use of TikTok, which is owned by the Chinese company ByteDance, by banning civil servantsand government officials from downloading the app onto their phones. Shapps fired back, saying that he would not be deleting his official account because politicians who choose not to engage with the public on the platforms they use "are unlikely to continue to represent these voters for long."

However, according to UK media, Shapps has not had the app on his personal phone at least as far back as last year, when he bought a new device, and the account is run by his staff, not him.

Hysteria has swept parts of the West over the use of Chinese technology, including apps like TikTok as well as Chinese-made smartphones and internet hardware, following claims that the tech poses a "security risk" because of the makers' connections to the Chinese government. Firms have repeatedly rejected and disproven accusations that their products contain secret "backdoors" to allow the Communist Party of China to spy on users, or that they collect a larger or different amount of data about users than other, Western-made appsdo.

Shapps, who has held four different ministerial posts this year, was appointed by Sunak to head the Defense Ministry after Ben Wallace retired from the position after four years of service. While Wallace was a former soldier, Shapps has never been in the military and is seen by his Conservative Party as an effective political communicator. According to UK media, the move is likely part of Sunak's preparations for a general election next year.

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Christie's Cancels Jewelry Auction From Heiress Fortune Made by Nazi Anti-Jewish Laws

Christie's auction house in the United Kingdom has announced it is canceling a forthcoming auction of jewels from the fortune of an Austrian heiress whose wealth was made as a result of anti-Jewish discriminatory laws passed by the Nazis in the 1930s.

The auction house said on Friday that it would not go ahead with the auctioning off of jewels from the estate of Heidi Horten, which was scheduled to take place in Geneva, Switzerland, in November, due to international pressure.

Anthea Peers, the president of Christie's Europe, Middle East and Africa, told a US newspaper that "the sale of the Heidi Horten jewelry collection has provoked intense scrutiny, and the reaction to it has deeply affected us and many others, and we will continue to reflect on it."

She added that the proceeds raised "important support for philanthropic causes, including medical research, children's welfare, and access to the arts."

Horten, who died last year, was the widow and heiress of Helmut Horten, a German industrialist who started the Horten AG brand of department stores. When the Nazis seized power in Germany in 1933, Helmut Horten worked for the Alsberg Brothers department store in Duisburg, which he was able to acquire from the Jewish owners after they fled to the United States.

Helmut Horten's business steadily expanded through the 1930s as he acquired other department stores owned by Jews thanks to the "Aryanization" policy, which took the wealth and property of Jews and gave them to so-called "Aryan" Germans.

Helmut's business standing benefited from his close relationship with Nazi authorities, including giving him preferential access to otherwise-scarce goods during the Second World War.

The Hortens' ill-gotten wealth survived the war intact, and Helmut continued to expand his business after the war until selling his majority stake in 1972. Helmut married Heidi in 1966 and died in 1987. When Heidi Horten died in 2022, at age 81, Forbes estimated her wealth to be valued at $3 billion.

After Heidi's death, her estate began auctioning off her assets, which according to Christie's will go toward maintaining a Vienna museum of the art she collected, as well as "medical research, child welfare, and other philanthropic activities that she supported for many decades."

Three auctions by Christie's earlier this year brought in some $200 million in sales, even though the auctions were strongly protested by Jewish groups. After Christie's offered to make a large donation to Yad Vashem, the Israeli Holocaust museum in Jerusalem, the museum spurned the offer, which was mirrored by many other Jewish philanthropic groups.

"We are pleased to hear that the global outrage surrounding Christie's sale of the Horten Foundation's ill-gotten assets - derived from the theft of Jewish property during World War II - has affected the auction house and caused them to cancel their planned sale of additional Horten jewelry this fall," David Schaecter, the president of Holocaust Survivor Foundation USA, told US media.

"We are glad that they recognized the great pain additional sales of Horten art and jewelry would cause Holocaust survivors," added Schaecter, who survived deportation to both Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps.

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Jewish groups have opposed the auctioning off of Nazi wealth, including industrialists like Horten who benefited from the Holocaust to trinkets once owned by top Nazi officials, including those belonging to Adolf Hitler.
A huge amount of art pilfered by the Nazis during their conquest of much of Europe, or by locals enabled by the genocide of Jews and other minority groups, remains unaccounted for even today. An estimated 100,000 items have not been returned to their rightful owners.

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US Stocks Rise After New Jobs Report Suggests Fed May Not Hike Interest Rates

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) released its report on August employment trends on Friday, helping to assuage investors' fears that the Federal Reserve might again raise interest rates at its September meeting.
The report showed that the US economy added 187,000 jobs in August - bizarrely, the exact same number it added in July. It was also less than economists had predicted, but not necessarily a "weak" report.
Julia Pollak, chief economist at ZipRecruiter, told US media that the US labor market had returned to its "normal pre-pandemic climate."
"The question going forward is whether this will be the sustainable long-term condition of the labor market or whether we will cross below the pre-pandemic level to something slower and cooler," she added.
However, unemployment ticked up significantly, increasing from 3.5% to 3.8% as another 514,000 people were added to the jobless ranks, for a total unemployed workforce population of 6.4 million.
"Both measures are little different from a year earlier, when the unemployment rate was 3.7% and the number of unemployed persons was 6.0 million," the BLS report noted.
As always, the official unemployment numbers in the BLS report, which are those that get reported in the media and by the administration, include only workers regarded as being part of the workforce. However, as the report also notes, in addition to the 6.4 million officially unemployment people, there are another 5.4 million "not in the labor force who currently want a job," which it explains are referred to separately because they "were not counted as unemployed because they were not actively looking for work during the 4 weeks preceding the survey or were unavailable to take a job."
In other words, the true unemployment rate is almost twice what the headlines say.
The report also noted that hourly wages likely rose faster than inflation, increasing 4.3% in August over the year prior. However, the August consumer price index report, which tracks inflation, has not yet been released.
Inflation is at the heart of investors' concerns about the BLS report, since its meaning will help them in their attempts to augur the Federal Reserve's likely decision at its meeting later this month.

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Last week, Fed Chairman Jerome Powell said the central bank was "prepared to raise rates further if appropriate," which hit their highest point in more than 20 years following the Fed's last meeting in July.

Raising interest rates is the central bank's chief and preferred weapon against inflation since doing so slows down the economy, but it carries a risk of triggering a rise in unemployment and even a recession. Investors have remained wary amid the bank's aggressive moves since the Spring of 2022 to put a stop to record-high inflation in the US, with some trends suggesting they still anticipate a recession in the coming months.

The BLS' report on the consumer price index for July, which was released last month, showed the rate of inflation increased for the first time in more than a year, which many took to mean the Fed was certain to raise rates. However, the Fed's Open Market Committee didn't meet in August, so the bank has yet to react in terms of policy.

The Fed's stated goal is to get inflation below 2% per year; the July report showed it was at 3.2%.

Stocks at the New York Stock Exchange opened higher on Friday, with the Dow Jones quickly gaining 200 points on the news of the jobs report. According to the CME FedWatch Tool, which analyzes the probability of impending fiscal policy changes, the chance the Fed won't raise interest rates in November - which is three meetings away - jumped from 58.9% to 65% on Friday.

It should be noted that investors were also reacting to another BLS report, the ISM manufacturing index, which showed that the US had retained more manufacturing industry than it was expected to over the last month.

"The US manufacturing sector shrank again, but the uptick in the PMI indicates a slower rate of contraction. The August composite index reading reflects companies managing outputs appropriately as order softness continues, but the month-over-month increase is a sign of improvement," Timothy Fiore, chair of the ISM Manufacturing Business Survey Committee, wrote in a note quoted by US media.

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Watch: Amateur Astronomer Films Object Striking Jupiter

The most famous impact on Jupiter, and the first time any collision between two celestial bodies was directly observed by astronomers, came in 1994 when the comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 broke apart in Jupiter's gravity and plummeted into the planet. Since then, at least eight more impacts have been observed.

While the planet Jupiter is regularly struck by objects, for Earth scientists to capture it on film is rather rare; in fact, earlier this week, two amateur astronomers managed to do just that.

According to media reports the impact was first observed by the OASES and PONCOTS astronomical observation projects on the Japanese island of Okinawa in the early morning hours of Tuesday.

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“If you were observing Jupiter around the same time, please check the shooting data again, and if you find a flash, please report it on TL or DM this account!” the project’s social media account posted shortly afterward.

Several hours later, an anonymous space enthusiast account called MASA Planetary Log replied with a grainy video of the impact, which struck on Jupiter’s northern hemisphere and appears as a bright flash.

The account operator told a US-based science outlet they were filming Jupiter as part of a project to continuously monitor its gaseous surface.

"When I woke up in the morning and opened X [Twitter], I saw information that a flash had been observed on the surface of Jupiter. That night, when I checked the video of the corresponding time, I saw a flash,” the user said. “I was very lucky to be photographing this phenomenon when it happened."

However, they weren’t the only person to notice or film the impact event: Liu Qiqi at Zhengzhou University in China did so as well, posting footage on the B Site, a Chinese video-hosting social media site.

The huge gas giant, our solar system’s largest planet, is commonly bombarded by objects thanks to its enormous gravitational pull and location in the middle of the solar system. One study in 2013 found that Jupiter is struck by objects of between 5 and 20 meters across between 12 and 60 times per year, with larger objects of up to 100 meters hitting it every few years. That’s roughly 10,000 times more frequent than Earth is struck by such objects.

The meteor that exploded over the Russian city of Chelyabinsk in 2013 was about 18 meters across and exploded with a power of roughly 500 kilotons of TNT - equivalent to a medium-sized nuclear weapon.

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Wastewater Pipeline Dig Leads to Discovery of Rare Fossil ‘Treasure Trove’ in New Zealand

Officials have indicated that the recent discovery is one of the richest and most diverse fauna of its age ever found in New Zealand, noting that hundreds of thousands of fossils date back to the Late Pliocene age.

Newly surfaced findings have revealed a shocking discovery in which researchers unearthed 266 different fossil species that were found in a New Zealand pipeline, 10 of which are previously unknown.

In 2020, contractors in Auckland, New Zealand, stumbled upon what is being hailed as a “treasure trove” of fossils while excavating for an upgrade to the city’s main raw sewage pipeline. Once the bed was discovered by contractors, they removed what was reportedly heaps of sand to a nearby paddock intended to be examined by paleontologists.

“Detailed identification of the fossils shows that they were deposited between 3 and 3.7 million years ago in a subtidal channel in an early version of the modern Manukau Harbour,” said Bruce Hayward, the lead author of the published findings.

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“At that time, sea level was slightly higher than it is today as the world was also several degrees warmer than now. As a result, the fossils include a number of subtropical species, whose relatives today live in the warmer waters around the Kermadec and Norfolk islands. At least 10 previously unknown species are present and will be described and named in future work.”
The discovery is one of the richest and most diverse fauna of its age ever found in New Zealand. Researchers found over 300,000 fossils dating back to the Late Pliocene age.
Some of these creatures included the world’s oldest known flax snails, an extinct sawshark spine, and great white shark teeth.
"What is surprising is that the fauna contains fossils that lived in many different environments that have been brought together in the ancient marine channel by wave action and strong tidal currents. It includes 10 specimens of the iconic NZ flax snail that must have lived on the adjacent land and been washed down into the sea by storm runoff,” says Hayward.
“These are by far the oldest known flax snails in the world. Most of the fossils lived on the sea floor, some in brackish estuaries, others attached to hard rocky shorelines and still more have been carried in from offshore of the exposed west coast at the time."
"Rare finds have included isolated baleen whale vertebrae, a broken sperm whale tooth, the spine of an extinct sawshark, dental plates of eagle rays and a number of great white shark teeth,” he added.
Media has reported that Watercare, the company that discovered the fossils, helped to fund future research into the discovery. Thousands of the fossils have since been placed into a museum. The find, said Dr. Alan Beau - New Zealand’s leading molluscan fossil expert who died earlier this year, is a reminder of nature’s persistent ability to surprise us.
The findings were outlined in a scientific paper that appeared in the New Zealand Journal of Geology and Geophysics.

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Pentagon's 'One-Stop Shop' for Declassified UFO Info Goes Live After Momentary Blip

The new website by the US Department of Defense allows access to photos and videos about resolved cases regarding unidentified aerial phenomena, as they become declassified.
The US Department of Defense revealed a new website on Thursday that will serve as a "one-stop shop" to declassified information on all things UFOs, or unidentified aerial phenomena (UAPs).
Despite crashing on launch day, the "All-Domain Anomaly Resolution Office" (AARO) page was quickly reestablished by officials, and is now expected to be available for reports from “current or US Government employees, service members, or contractors with direct knowledge of US Government programs or activities related to UAP dating back to 1945.” The reports, according to the website, will then be used to “inform AARO’s congressionally directed Historical Record Report.”

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The reporting feature will be a major step for those wishing to report UAP incidents, as there were neither hotlines, email addresses, nor an official channel available when AARO was first formed in July 2022.

However, the Pentagon has also acknowledged the site will have to ensure that reporting doesn't fall victim to pranksters or become open to non-serious reports.

"[T]hat's a critical aspect of this, is ensuring that information can be received in a way in which it will be properly handled to ensure, again, privacy, both from a statutory and regulatory standpoint, but then also to ensure that that website and the information there is secure," said Pentagon spokesman Brigadier General Pat Ryder.

"So this will be something that we'll continue to keep the public updated on. AARO is focused on the facts, taking in information, reviewing the facts, and then when possible, declassifying that information making it available," he added.

The Pentagon said they will make an announcement when the feature is made available. In April, officials said that they were tracking more than 650 potential cases of UAPs.

While the website remains mostly under construction, it presently allows the public to review items such as UAP reporting trends, which include reported UAP altitudes, typically reported UAP characteristics, reported UAP morphology and reported UAP hotspots. The website also has a section for videos of UAPs, with at least eight on the site as of Friday night. At least four of those videos have been marked as "unresolved cases."

Some of the resolved UAP cases in government reports have been attributed to "balloon or balloon-entities," as well as drones, birds, weather events and plastic bags.

The website comes not long after whistleblower testimony was made before Congress in August and revealed that the Pentagon had a decadeslong program that collected scraps from unidentified foreign objects.

In fact, David Grusch, a former military intelligence officer, told lawmakers during a House Oversight subcommittee hearing that information about UAPs had been intentionally withheld from congressional lawmakers by executive branch agencies.

Grusch claimed during his testimony that witnessed firsthand what he thought was extraterrestrial life. The claim of alien life, however, has been denied by AARO's director, Dr. Sean Kirkpatrick, who stated during an earlier April hearing that there was no "credible evidence thus far of extraterrestrial activity, off-world technology or objects that defy the known laws of physics."

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Astrophysicist Claims Material Found on Ocean Floor Originated From Beyond Our Solar System

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As the materials are heavily enriched in the metals beryllium (Be), lanthanum (La), and uranium (U), it serves as a big clue that they are not made up of the same content one would find in our own solar system.

Fragments found on the ocean floor off the coast of Papua New Guinea and recovered in June are believed to have initially emerged from beyond our solar system, a new yet-to-be peer-reviewed study recently detailed.

According to Harvard University astronomer Avi Loeb, who founded the Galileo Project in 2021, the fragments come from a meteor traced by US government satellites before it fell to the Pacific in 2014. The meteor, classified as IM1, initially attracted attention because of its strange velocity.

Loeb and his team analyzed what were essentially grains of sand, with some measuring 0.05 to 1.3 millimeters in diameter. They studied at least 57 of these tiny bead-like particles using rare-earth magnets. The researchers subsequently determined the particles had variations in isotopes of iron consistent with the meteorite's damaging travels through Earth's atmosphere.

The group then found that the particles were rich in the metals beryllium (Be), lanthanum (La), and uranium (U). This particular ratio of metals is incredibly rare, the study says, which suggests it comes from a location far beyond Earth's solar system.

"This is a historic discovery because it represents the first time that scientists analyze materials from a large object that arrived to Earth from outside the solar system," Loeb wrotein his report.

However, the study has been met with its fair share of criticism from fellow researchers in the field. Loeb, who is considered a controversial figure, does not shy away from the topic of extraterrestrials; in fact, he inflames the curiosity surrounding that debate. In 2018, he published a paper claiming Earth was visited by extraterrestrials in 2017 after the emergence of a mysterious interstellar object named 'Oumuamua.

Critics of Loeb have said he is submitting to sensationalism, rather than actual science.

Despite being hopeful that someday there will be evidence of aliens, Dr. Matthew Genge, from the Imperial College London, is skeptical about the discovery.

"The seafloor is littered with spherules, some natural and some artificial, from satellite debris, rocket exhaust, windblown material from industry, or even nuclear tests. You can find all sorts of odd particles in the deep," he told an online news outlet.

"There are tens of thousands of different alloys and I'd suspect they haven't compared them all, particularly when some, for example in military hardware, are classified," he added.

"Furthermore, these are spherules, thus formed by melting and mixing of materials, making new, odd compositions."

"People are sick of hearing about Avi Loeb's wild claims," added Steve Desch, an astrophysicist at Arizona State University, told a New York journal in July after Loeb first detailed his findings. "It's polluting good science — conflating the good science we do with this ridiculous sensationalism and sucking all the oxygen out of the room."

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Mohamed Al-Fayed, Father of Princess Diana's Late Beau Dodi, Dead at 94

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The successful Egyptian-born tycoon amassed a wealth of an estimated $2 billion by the time of his death. He also never stopped mourning the death of his son, which led him to spiral into conspiracy theories regarding the fatal car crash.

Egyptian-born billionaire Mohamed al-Fayed died on August 30. He was 94 years-old.

“Mrs. Mohamed Al Fayed, her children, and grandchildren wish to confirm that her beloved husband, their father, and their grandfather, Mohamed, has passed away peacefully of old age on Wednesday, August 30, 2023,” the family statement, released Friday by the Fulham Football Club, said. “He enjoyed a long and fulfilling retirement surrounded by his loved ones.″

Globally, people know al-Fayed as the father of Princess Diana’s beau, Egyptian film producer Emad El-Din Mohamed Abdel Mena’em Fayed, or simply: Dodi. Following a raucous split, and subsequent divorce from her husband—who is now England’s King Charles III— Princess Diana and Dodi were killed in a car crash in Paris, France, in 1997 on August 31. Diana was 36 years-old, while Dodi was 42.

But before Fayed became famous for his son’s relationship with Princess Diana, he already had a rather complex life in business. He was born in the town of Alexandria in Egypt to a poor primary school teacher, though his date of birth (and even his name) have been disputed. When he turned 45, he added the prefix “al” to his name, as it sounded more aristocratic.

His first business dealings began when he was a child. His “career” kicked off when he began selling Coca-Cola on the streets, as well as working as a sewing-machine salesman. During a two-year marriage to Samira Khashoggi, Dodi’s mother, he began to work for his brother-in-law, Adnan Khashoggi, a Saudi Arabian arms dealer and businessman.

Khashoggi gave him an import-export role in Saudi Arabia, arranged for introductions for lucrative investments in the United Arab Emirates in the early 1960s, and introduced Fayed to Haitian dictator Francois “Papa Doc” Duvalier. The friendship with Duvalier led to the construction of a Fayed-Duvalier oil refinery in Haiti.

Then, by the mid-1960s, Fayed and his two younger brothers moved to England to oversee their growing conglomerate in oil, construction and shipping; however, Fayed reportedly struggled to fit in. Despite his enormous wealth, he was never granted UK citizenship nor allowed in the upper crust of British society.

In 1979, he purchased the struggling Ritz hotel, directly from the Ritz family. After a $20 million purchase, Fayed renovated the hotel. Later, the hotel would become the last location that Dodi and Diana left alive.

"When I bought the Ritz, I had in mind to refurbish the hotel in César Ritz’s image—to do things here that would excite me and at the same time make Monsieur Ritz proud of his place if he were to see it today. It took us years, but I’m sure we brought a smile to Monsieur Ritz’s face. It was a joyful experience," Fayed told an American magazine in 2012.

Six years later, Fayed made another purchase, this one being more controversial. Fayed and his brother, Ali, purchased the House of Fraser group for close to $775 million. That group owns a department store almost as British as The Union Jack: Harrods.

Following the death of Diana and Dodi, Fayed commissioned two memorials to the couple at the store. Though he was committed to Harrods, and even joked about being buried there one day, he sold Harrods in 2010 to the investment arm of Qatar’s sovereign wealth fund for a reported $2.2 billion. The sale, he said, was due to his annoyance with British bureaucracy and a desire

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to slow his work pace. Though, the billionaire was also plagued by sexual harassment cases by women he had employed at Harrods.
In 1997, Fayed also purchased the West London professional football club Fulham FC for nearly $8 million.
Following the tragic death of his son and Princess Diana, Fayed fanned conspiracy theories that their car crash was not an accident—even going so far as to accuse then-Prince Philip of ordering Princess Diana's death in order to stop her from marrying his son, a Muslim. This conspiracy theory was shared by the Arab world, including political leaders such as Libyan president, Muammar Gaddafi.
After publicly accusing the British royal family, as well as the British intelligence services of killing his son and Princess Diana, in 2008 Fayed abandoned his search for answers. That year a British inquest ruled that Princess Diana and Dodi were unlawfully killed by the gross negligence of their chauffeur and the paparazzi photographers pursuing them.
After explaining he was tired from pursuing his legal battles, Fayed added he would no longer pursue the case for the sake of Princess Diana's sons, William, Prince of Wales and Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex.
"I'm leaving the rest for God to get my revenge, but I'm not doing anything any more," he said at the time.
"I'm a father who lost his son and I have done everything for 10 years. But now with the verdict, I am accepting it but with all the reservations which I have mentioned," he said.
Fayed is survived by his wife, former Finnish model Heini Wathén, 68, whom he married in 1985, as well as their four children.

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Biden Announces Intent to Nominate Jacob Lew as Ambassador to Israel - White House

WASHINGTON, September 5 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden will nominate former Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew to serve as the new US ambassador to Israel, the White House announced in a statement on Tuesday.
"Today, President Joe Biden announced his intent to nominate Jacob J. Lew to serve as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the State of Israel," the statement said.

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Russian Emigres in Occupied China Say Felt 'Relieved' After Japan Surrendered in 1945

WASHINGTON, September 2 (Sputnik) - Japan's surrender in September of 1945 marked the end of World War II and enabled people in China - occupied by Japan since 1937 - and elsewhere to begin their long-awaited return to a normal way of life, Russian emigres who lived

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in China told Sputnik.

Japanese Emperor Hirohito announced his country's capitulation on August 15 and formally signed the act of capitulation on September 2, 1945.

Russian Archpriest George Larin said he was a ten-year-old boy living with his parents in Shanghai when they experienced the overwhelming emotional comfort once the end of the war was announced.

"We all felt relieved. Everything became peaceful, there were no bombings anymore," he said.

Larin pointed out that he particularly remembered when the authorities ended the use of food stamps for rationed products, as a multitude of food products and other goods became available in stores.

"Everything was limited during the war. You could not buy anything with these stamps," he added.

Larin said the Japanese military did not oppress the so-called White Russian emigres in Shanghai because the United States and the Soviet Union were at war with them. However, the Japanese military strictly maintained the curfew they imposed in Shanghai and killed anyone who violated it.

Yet, the Japanese did not do so in the case of Russian Bishop John (Maximovich) - later glorified as St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco - who often visited hospitals and other places at night to help heal the sick.

"The Japanese never touched him," Larin said, adding that they were aware of his activities and that the faithful believed in the Bishop's healing abilities.

Larin said life during the war was very difficult due to the many bombing campaigns that resulted in numerous people being killed and wounded. He recalled a small Russian girl who lived close to him being killed by shrapnel.

"She ran to the yard during the bombing and the shrapnel hit her right in the head," he said.

Larin noted that the US military frequently bombed Shanghai in an attempt to target Japanese military facilities, but the Russian Orthodox cathedral was not hit despite being close to some of them.

In fact, children were brought to the cathedral during the air raids in the belief that the church was a safer place than the available shelters, he said.

"We remained in the cathedral and kept praying," Larin said.

Nicholas Troyan, a son of Russian emigres living in China's Tsingtao province and now a retired US lieutenant colonel, was seven when the war ended.

Troyan said there were almost no Japanese military facilities in Tsingtao and the region did not experience the intense warfare present elsewhere.

"I do not recall we were talking about the war. I probably did not pay attention to that. Certainly, in Tsingtao, we did not suffer," he said.

However, Troyan said he remembers the arrival of the US military in 1947 and how they took over a former German base near his family home.

"Until today, there is a beach there called 'American beach.' Previously, it was a 'German beach,' where I learned to swim," he said.

Troyan said only later he learned of the horrific manner in which the Japanese military treated the Russian diaspora in China.

They abused some of the Russians, accused them of being spies, Troyan said, adding that the

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Japanese occupiers were strict and cruel.

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US, French Defense Chiefs Discuss Niger Security Environment, Engaging Partners - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 2 (Sputnik) - The US and French defense chiefs in a phone call discussed the security situation in Niger, a desire for a diplomatic solution, and the need to engage regional allies, Pentagon Spokesperson Pat Ryder said in a press release.

Niger's rebels this week accused Paris of blatant interference after President Emmanuel Macron reiterated support for ousted leader Mohamed Bazoum. The rebels also annulled all security and military agreements with France, media reported.

"Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III spoke by phone with France's Minister of the Armed Forces Sébastien Lecornu today to discuss the security environment in Niger in light of recent developments in West Africa," Ryder said on Friday.

The two leaders shared their desire for a diplomatic resolution to the situation in Niger and emphasized the need for continued engagement with the Nigeriens and regional partners in Africa, Ryder added.

A coup in Niger took place on July 26. Bazoum was ousted and detained by his own guard, led by Gen. Abdourahamane Tchiani. Most Western countries as well as ECOWAS condemned it. In early August, ECOWAS adopted a plan for a potential military intervention in Niger.

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Pentagon Says Remains Focused on Defeating IS in Syria Despite Incidents With Russia

WASHINGTON, September 2 (Sputnik) - The United States will remain focused on defeating the Islamic State terrorist group (IS, banned in Russia) despite recent incidents with Russian military aircraft, Pentagon Press Secretary Brig. Gen. Patrick Ryder said in a statement.

"We call on the Russian Air Force to cease this reckless activity, but regardless will continue to remain focused on our mission to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS," Ryder said on Friday.

Ryder accused Russian fighter aircraft of engaging in "unsafe and unprofessional" maneuvers against US and Coalition aircraft in Syria, in violation of airspace restrictions previously agreed upon by both nations.

Ryder further said that during August, US F-35 fighter jets and other Coalition aircraft were approached on seven occasions by Russian fighter jets flying "aggressive" maneuvers.

Earlier this week, Russian Defense Ministry's Center for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in Syria said the US-led coalition drones breached deconfliction protocols seven times in Syria within a 24 hour period. In that 24-hour period, at least 16 violations were recorded near the Al-Tanf area in Syria that were made by three pairs of F-35 fighters, three pairs of F-16 fighters,

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a pair of Typhoon fighters and two MQ-1C multipurpose unmanned aerial vehicles of the US-led coalition, according to the Russian Defense Ministry.

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Beijing Dance Academy Performs Folk Dances at Chinese Embassy in Washington

WASHINGTON, September 2 (Sputnik) - The dancers from renown Beijing Dance academy have performed country's folk and ethnic dances at the Chinese Embassy in Washington DC.

The guests, who included representatives of foreign diplomatic missions, international media, among others, were treated to a number of colorful folk dances on Friday evening performed by top dancers of the academy.

Embassy Minister Jing Quan welcomed the guests while the the diplomats from the embassy were available to answer questions about Chinese culture, the ties between the two countries and visiting China.

The event was crowned by a special full buffet dinner of exquisite Chinese delicacies prepared by the embassy's private chefs.

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Court Sentences 'Proud Boy' Nordean to 18 Years for January 6 Riot - US Justice Dept.

(Updates with more details in paras 5-6; changes attribution)

WASHINGTON, September 2 (Sputnik) - A US court sentenced Proud Boys member Ethan Nordean to 18 years in prison for crimes linked to the January 6, 2021, riot at the US Capitol, the US Justice Department said in a statement.

Judge Timothy Kelly of the US District Court for the District of Columbia sentenced Nordean to 18 years for crimes including seditious conspiracy, the statement said on Friday.

The sentence is the second longest handed down in connection with the events at the US Capitol on January 6 - tied with the sentence given to Oath Keepers founder Stewart Rhodes.

On Thursday, the court sentenced two other Proud Boys members, Joseph Biggs and Zach Rehl, to 17 and 15 years in prison, respectively. Earlier on Friday, Proud Boys member Dominic Pezzola was sentenced to ten years in prison.

In May, a jury found five Proud Boy co-defendants guilty of crimes including obstruction of an official proceeding. Prosecutors convicted the group of planning an assault on the US Capitol on January 6.

Kelly applied an enhancement for federal terrorism crimes to their convictions for destruction of government property, the statement said.

Republican US Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene criticized the sentences against the convicted, saying they "need to be pardoned."

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The sentences come amid charges against former President Donald Trump for alleged crimes linked to the January 6 events at the US Capitol.

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Ex-Trump Lawyer Giuliani Pleads Not Guilty to Georgia Election Meddling Charges - Filing

WASHINGTON, September 2 (Sputnik) - Former Trump attorney Rudy Giuliani pleaded not guilty to charges related to his alleged role in attempting to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election in the state of Georgia, a court document revealed.

"Rudolph Giuliani, by and through undersigned counsel, and, waives formal arraignment, pleads not guilty to all pending charges in the above-styled indictment, and reserves the right to demand a trial by jury," the court filing stated on Friday.

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YouTuber Arrested for Abuse After 1 of Her Children Sought Help - Santa Clara-Ivins Police

WASHINGTON, September 2 (Sputnik) - Prominent YouTube member Ruby Franke has been arrested together with her business partner on charges of aggravated child abuse, the Santa Clara-Ivins Public Safety Department said.

"The juvenile was asking for food and water. The condition of the juvenile was so severe that they were seen by Santa Clara-Ivins EMS [emergency medical services] and transported to a local area hospital," the Santa Clara-Ivins Public Safety Department said in a release on Friday.

The authorities pointed out that they received a report on Wednesday regarding an emaciated and malnourished juvenile with open wounds asking for help, the release said.

Franke, 41, gained notoriety through her now-defunct YouTube channel "8 Passengers," where she showcased her parenting methods with her six children.

Franke is also alleged to have used controversial methods of punishing her children such as withholding food from them, according to reports.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, September 2 (Sputnik) -

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

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* Ukraine has lost more than 5,600 soldiers over the past week in various areas of the front, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Friday.
* Russia's aviation and air defense systems have downed four Ukrainian warplanes and one helicopter over the past week, the Russian Defense Ministry said.
* The Russian armed forces carried out five group strikes with long-range air and sea-based high-precision weapons against military targets in Ukraine from August 25 to September 1, the Russian Defense Ministry said.
* Russian air defense systems took down a Ukrainian aircraft-type drone over the Belgorod region, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

POLISH HELICOPTER VIOLATES BELARUS AIRSPACE
* The Belarusian border service said on Friday that a Polish military helicopter violated the state border.
* The Belarusian Foreign Ministry said it summoned the Polish charge d'affaires in Minsk in connection with the violation of the border.
* Warsaw will analyze with caution the information regarding the alleged violation, Polish Deputy Foreign Minister Pawel Jablonski said.

DENMARK-RUSSIA DIPLOMATIC TENSIONS
* The number of Russian embassy staff in Copenhagen should be reduced to the number of Danish embassy personnel in Moscow - five diplomats and 20 staffers, the Danish Foreign Ministry said on Friday.
* Moscow considers Denmark's demand as another manifestation of the country's hostile position, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.

BLACK SEA GRAIN INITIATIVE
* The current suspension of the grain exports agreement, formally known as the Black Sea Initiative, is not Russia’s fault and can be resumed if all obligations made toward Moscow are fulfilled, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said on Friday during a meeting with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan.
* The technical issues related to the system of payments for Russian grain are being worked through and the United Nations with the European Union are participating in the process, chief presidential adviser Akif Cagatay Kilic said.
* Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin will discuss on September 4 the latest in the situation regarding the grain agreement, Kilic said.

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Albania Not to Bring Up Kosovo Issue While Presiding Over UNSC in September - Envoy

WASHINGTON, September 2 (Sputnik) - Albania will not bring up the issue of Kosovo in the UN Security Council because this United Nations body cannot help with the current challenges,

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Albanian Ambassador to the United Nations Ferit Hoxha said.

Albania is presiding over the Security Council during the month of September.

"We will not bring that issue to Security Council because it's not any longer an issue of peace and security for Kosovo," Hoxha said during a press briefing on Friday. "The issue is building institutions, advancing, improving their society and integration in Europe and in NATO and the Security Council cannot help with that."

Hoxha said the issue has been on the Security Council's agenda for years and discussions have been reduced from four to two meetings per year.

Albania has advocated reducing the number of meetings to one per year because nothing major has been happening and the Security Council does not really contribute to the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina.

"As you know, the process of dialogue has been transferred to Brussels and there is a Special Envoy of the European Union who has been working relentlessly, especially in the last six months," Hoxha said, adding that an EU-brokered agreement has been reached.

"If that agreement is put into practice, we will not need to have any longer any meetings of the Security Council, we will not need to spend resources on the UN mission in Kosovo," he said.

Hoxha said the agreement reached between Belgrade and Pristina would provide an alternative for Serbia to "get out of its still unfinished business with the former Yugoslavia."

In addition, the agreement will provide Kosovo with the opportunity to find its place in the so-called "Western Balkans" and to start the integration process with the European Union and NATO, he said.

Regarding Pristina's disappointment that it will have to make concessions, Hoxha said that he can understand the resentment.

"I can understand unhappiness, I can understand everything that is the consequence of the terrible war that happened, it was not a long time ago," he said. "But again, we cannot stay there. We must not forget. But we must move on and the best way to move on is through dialogue."

Serbia considers the province of Kosovo and Metohija to be its own territory that has been taken away from it illegally with the help of NATO and does not recognize the act of independence declared by the Albanians there.

Despite the Albanians conducting ethnic cleansing of Serbs, Macedonians, Roma and others from Kosovo and Metohija, a large ethnic Serbian community still resides in the north of the province and continues to be persecuted amid continued tensions between Belgrade and Pristina.

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'Proud Boys' Member Nordean Sentenced to 18 Years for US Capitol Riot Crimes - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - A US court sentenced Proud Boys organization member Ethan Nordean to 18 years in prison for crimes linked to the January 6, 2021, riot at the US Capitol, NBC News reported on Friday.

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Judge Timothy Kelly of the US District Court for the District of Columbia sentenced Nordean to 18 years for crimes including seditious conspiracy, the report said.

The sentence is the second longest handed down in connection with the January 6 US Capitol riot – tied with the sentence given to Oath Keepers founder Stewart Rhodes, the report said.

On Thursday, the court sentenced two other Proud Boys members, Joseph Biggs and Zach Rehl, to 17 and 15 years in prison, respectively. Earlier on Friday, Proud Boys member Dominic Pezzola was sentenced to 10 years.

Republican US Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene criticized the sentences against those convicted for crimes linked to January 6. The convicts “need to be pardoned,” Greene said on Thursday.

The sentences come amid charges against former US President Donald Trump for alleged crimes linked to the January 6 US Capitol riot.

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Oil Prices Hit 7-Month Highs, Finishing Up 7% on Week as Rally Reignited

NEW YORK, September 1 (Sputnik) - Crude prices hit 7-month highs on Friday, and finished up more than 7% on the week, on growing market conviction that Saudi Arabia will extend in October its voluntary monthly production cut of one million barrels per day introduced in July.

Adding to that conviction was data showing better-than-expected US jobs growth in August despite a rise in unemployment, with the Labor Department reporting 187,000 new non-farm payrolls versus a forecast 170,000 and a jobless rate of 3.8% from July’s 3.5%. The jobs numbers, at the least, “signal interest rates may not rise any further”, something all risk assets seemed to take positively, said Craig Erlam, analyst at online trading platform OANDA.

On the oil production front, the Saudis hinted at the October cut a month ago, saying they could even be deeper than before if warranted — a threat ostensibly aimed at short-sellers who might try to take prices down. While Riyad has yet to make an official announcement on its October production, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak, spoke this week of upcoming oil market “actions” from OPEC+, which Moscow is a part of. The market took that as a sign the Saudi cut will be extended into next month.

Novak’s disclosure came after data on Wednesday showed US crude stockpiles tumbling a third week in a row as refiners ramped up fuel processing to meet demand ahead of Monday’s Labor Day holiday — which marks the last hurrah for summer travel each year.

With two days of back-to-back gains of 2% or more, New York-traded West Texas Intermediate, or WTI, crude settled Friday’s trade at $85.55 per barrel. For the day itself, it gained $1.92, or 2.3%, after Thursday’s 2.5 climb%. Week-to-date, the US crude benchmark finished up 7.2%. That was after a combined 4% drop over two prior weeks as the economy in top importer China sputtered. Prior to that, WTI gained 20% over seven weeks.

London-traded Brent settled at $88.55 per barrel, up $1.72, or 2%. For the week, Brent rose 4.8%. That was after a combined 2.3% drop over two weeks. Prior to that, the global crude benchmark rose for seven weeks in a row, gaining a total of 18%.

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With the oil rally having been reignited, the upside in crude prices could last in the interim with OPEC likely to make more rumblings to try and get Brent to the Saudis' cherished target of $90 or more.

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US to Give Ukraine Depleted Uranium Munitions in Pending Arms Package - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - The United States will provide Ukraine with depleted uranium munitions in a new military aid package set to be announced within the next week, Reuters reported on Friday.

The US will provide Ukraine with the armor-piercing munitions shot from Abrams tanks, the report said, citing a document and two US officials. The United Kingdom has provided Ukraine with depleted uranium munitions, although the package will mark the first US commitment of the arms.

The US is providing the munitions despite controversy over the use of depleted uranium, which critics argue can impact the health of civilians.

The pending military aid package will utilize presidential drawdown authority, allowing the US to pull the munitions directly from its own stockpiles, the report added.

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Blendon Police Release Officer Camera Footage in Fatal Shooting of Pregnant Woman -Reports

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - The Blendon Township Police Department has released officers' body camera footage depicting the fatal shooting of 21-year-old pregnant woman Ta'Kiya Young in a grocery store parking lot on August 24, CNN reported on Friday.

The police department released the video footage in response to calls by the family of Ta'Kiya Young to hold accountable the officers involved in the incident, the report said.

The footage depicts the incident in which one officer informs stands in the driver's side of Young's car, informs her that she has been accused of theft and urges her to exit her vehicle. A second officer is positioned in front of her car, the report said.

During this encounter, Young voices objections, prompting the first officer to reiterate his request. Subsequently, Young turns the steering wheel causing the car to hit the officer in front of the car, the report said.

The front officer then fires through the windshield while her car slowly moves until it collides with the brick wall of the grocery store. Officers are seen running after Young's car and breaking the driver's side window to get Young out of vehicle, the report said.

Earlier on Friday, Blendon Township Police Chief John Belford said the officers called

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paramedics immediately and started treating Young's chest wound. An emergency room doctor, who was in the parking lot at the time, helped police treat her, the report added.

Young's family and legal team said in a statement that they are planning a news conference for after Labor Day to address the footage, according to the report.

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Indian Envoy to Canada Says Trade Agreement Talks Halted at Ottawa's Request – Reports

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) – Ongoing negotiations for an Early Progress Trade Agreement between India and Canada have been halted at the request of Canadian authorities, CTV News reported on Friday.

Trade talks between India and Canada have been stopped after Ottawa requested a pause to allegedly assess further steps and restart negotiations, the report said citing the India's envoy to the country High Commissioner Sanjay Kumar Verma.

"The Canadian side has requested that, let's take a pause; let's see what can be done further, and then we'll restart," Verma said as quoted by the report, adding that although he is unsure about the motivations behind Canada's move, there is no reason for India not to accept what he characterized as an honest request.

Verma explained that negotiations advanced at a fast pace with Delhi and Ottawa holding 10 rounds of talks in thirteen months, the report said, further noting that the progress which was too quick at times might have overwhelmed some of the stakeholders.

The decision to pause negotiations ongoing the trade agreement comes just a week before the tenure of the G20 Summit to be held in Delhi, to which Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is set to assist.

Canada and India began talks on a trade deal in 2010 but discussions were subsequently abandoned in 2017. Both countries relaunched negotiations in March 2022 this time aiming at reaching an agreement that would specifically target certain industries, rather than the entire economy.

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US Approves $1.5Bln Sale to Bulgaria of Stryker Vehicles, Related Equipment - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - The United States approved the potential $1.5 billion sale of 183 Stryker combat vehicles to Bulgaria, the Pentagon said on Friday.

"The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria of Stryker Vehicles and related equipment for an estimated cost of $1.5 billion," the Pentagon said in a press release. "The Government of the Republic of Bulgaria has requested to buy one hundred eighty-three (183) Stryker Family of

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Vehicles."

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FBI Says Has No Comment on Prigozhin Wanted Status Following Plane Crash Death

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - The FBI has no comment on the wanted status of private military company Wagner Group founder Yevgeny Prigozhin following the businessman's death in a plane crash in Russia last month, the FBI National Press Office said in a statement to Sputnik.

"We don't have any comment," the statement said on Thursday. The US State Department and Treasury Department did not respond to requests for comment on the status of sanctions against Prigozhin.

Last month, Prigozhin was listed as a passenger aboard a plane that crashed in Russia's Tver region. The Russian Investigative Committee concluded using genetic testing that Prigozhin and nine other passengers died in the plane crash.

The Pentagon has said that they assess Prigozhin was indeed likely killed in the incident. The United States is trying to "nail down precisely" what happened to Prigozhin, US President Joe Biden said.

The Russian Investigative Committee is considering different potential causes as they analyze the crash, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. Peskov has also refuted claims that the Kremlin was responsible for the crash.

The US issued a federal arrest warrant for Prigozhin in February 2018 on the charge of conspiracy to defraud the United States. The FBI published a wanted poster offering up to $250,000 for information leading to Prigozhin's arrest.

The US has also sanctioned Prigozhin and a number of other people and entities linked to Wagner Group.

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Proud Boy Who Smashed Capitol Window Receives 10-Year Prison Sentence - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - The member of the Proud Boys who used a stolen police riot shield to break a window at the Capitol during the January 6 protest has been sentenced to 10 years in federal prison, CNN reported on Monday.

Prosecutors has sought 20 years in prison for Dominic Pezzola, whose actions allowed the first group of protesters to enter the Capitol during the January 6, 2021 riot.

"The reality is that you were the one who committed the act. You smashed that window, allowing people to enter the Capitol building and endanger the lives of our lawmakers. It's something I never imagined I would witness in our country. In many ways, you were at the

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forefront of these actions," District Judge Timothy Kelly was quoted by CNN as telling Dominic Pezzola during the trial.

In May, Pezzola was found guilty of several charges, including assaulting, resisting or impeding certain officers, and theft of the police shield.

However, Dominic Pezzola was the only one out of five Proud Boy members to not be convicted of seditious conspiracy.

During his trial in April, Pezzola defended himself by claiming that the charges against him were "fake."

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North Korea's Simulated Attack on South Korea Does Not Help Efforts at De-Escalation - UN

UNITED NATIONS, September 1 (Sputnik) - A simulated nuclear attack by North Korea against South Korea does not help de-escalate the situation in the region and contradicts the United Nations' aspirations, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Friday.

"It is not going in the direction we wanted to see, which is de-escalation of the situation on the Korean Peninsula," Dujarric said during a press briefing.

The UN spokesperson called on North Korea to return to the negotiation table and reiterated the United Nations' hope that the Korean Peninsula will be fully denuclearized.

On Wednesday, North Korea announced that it had carried out a tactical nuclear strike exercise in which it simulated strikes at the territory of South Korea.

Pyongyang said it decided to conduct the exercise in response to the US-South Korea drills.

The United States and South Korea were holding the annual exercise dubbed Ulchi Freedom Shield from August 21-31. On Wednesday, Seoul and Washington carried out an aviation exercise involving at least one B-1B strategic bomber.

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UNSC Must Continue Work Until Something Better Emerges - Albanian Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 1 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council is not having its "best moments," but members must stick to it until something different emerges, Albanian Ambassador to the United Nations Ferit Hoxha said on Friday.

"The Security Council is not experiencing its best moments these days," Hoxha said during a press briefing. "But until we have something else, we have to stick to the Council and its ability because when the Council comes together, it saves lives."

The Albanian ambassador emphasized that the Security Council is a platform for solving issues.

Albania is presiding over the Security Council during the month of September after the United

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States presided over the UN entity during the previous month.
September is among the busiest periods for the United Nations, primarily because the high-level week and General Assembly debate are held with the participation of numerous heads of state and government, among other senior representatives.

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UPDATE - BRICS Can Create Viable Currency Options as Dollar Dethroned - US Economist Sachs

(Updates with details in para 4, added 'Yuan' at end of sentence)
WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - The US dollar will eventually be dethroned as the dominant global currency and the BRICS can create viable alternatives, Jeffrey Sachs, a world-renowned economist and President of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, told Sputnik.
"The BRICS can create viable alternatives to the dollar. In this sense, yes, the dollar will be dethroned as the overwhelmingly dominant global currency," Sachs said. "That is inevitable in the long run in any event, given the declining share of US GDP and global trade."
The BRICS will hasten the transition to a multi-currency system, and the US dollar will still have its role, but a much smaller one among many currencies, Sachs added.
Former chief economist of Goldman Sachs Jim O'Neill told Sputnik the US dollar can be dethroned only when China wants "much wider use" of the Yuan.
Last week, the BRICS group of major emerging economies - Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - announced that its membership is more than doubling. Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Saudi Arabia were invited to join the group. Their membership will take effect on January 1, 2024.
According to the group, this year, the BRICS overtook the global GDP contribution of the G7 countries and accounts for nearly one-third of world economic activity.

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Zelenskyy Expected to Attend UNGA, Participate in Ukraine Meeting - Albanian Envoy to UN

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is expected to attend the upcoming UN General Assembly (UNGA) in New York and participate in the meeting on Ukraine, Albanian Ambassador to the United Nations Ferit Hoxha said on Friday.
"The second thing that I can almost confirm, but of course it doesn't depend on me, is that President Zelenskyy will be in New York," Hoxha said during a press briefing.
Hoxha pointed out that this is Zelenskyy's first visit to the United Nations and the UN Security Council.

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"I think he will participate in the [Security] Council," he said, adding that the Ukrainian president also has a confirmed scheduled meeting with the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.
Hoxha also confirmed that Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama will take part in the meeting on Ukraine.
Albania presides over the UN Security Council during the month of September.

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UN Has Not Received Any Russian Reply on Letter Proposing Solutions to Resume Grain Deal

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 1 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has not received yet any reply from Russia to his new proposal presented in a letter on resuming the grain exports agreement, formally known as the Black Sea Initiative, United Nations spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Friday.
"No," Dujarric said in response to a question whether Guterres received any response from Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov regarding the proposal outlined in the letter.
On Thursday, Guterres told journalists he recently sent a letter to Lavrov in which he proposed specific solutions addressing Russia's concerns about the restrictions on the country's food and fertilizer exports to global markets.
On Thursday, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said after meeting with Lavrov that Ankara, in cooperation with the United Nations, has prepared new proposals to resume the Black Sea Initiative.
Guterres explained on Thursday that the specific solutions outlined in the letter to Lavrov concern a more effective access of Russian products to global markets.

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US Air Force, Raytheon Complete Flight Testing of Latest Air-to-Air Missile - Release

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - The US Air Force and Raytheon have successfully completed the first flight test of the AIM-120C-8 – the latest international variant of the Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missile (AMRAAM), Raytheon's parent company RTX announced in a press release on Friday.
"The US Air Force and Raytheon successfully completed the first flight test of the AIM-120C-8," the release said. "The AIM-120C-8 was fired from an F-15C Eagle and downed the aerial target, meeting all primary objectives for the flight test."
The AIM-120C-8's successful flight test follows the completion of flight testing for the AIM-120D-3, Raytheon noted. Flight testing on the AIM-120D-3 was completed in just 11 months after the initial flight test, it said.
Recently, the US Air Force awarded Raytheon a $1.15 billion AMRAAM contract to produce

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AIM-120D-3 and C-8 missiles for 19 countries, the release said.

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Lockheed Successfully Tests Next Generation Multiple Launch Rocket System - Statement

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - Lockheed Martin announced in a press release on Friday that it has successfully demonstrated its next-generation Extended-Range Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System (ER GMLRS) in a flight test at the White Sands missile range in the US state of New Mexico.

"Lockheed Martin successfully demonstrated its next-generation ER GMLRS in a flight test at White Sands missile range, New Mexico, firing the round from the US Army's HIMARS [high mobility artillery rocket system] launcher," the release said.

The ER GMLRS successfully met the extended range and accuracy criteria in its first 90-mile (150-kilometer) test from launch to impact, the release said.

"This test demonstrates nearly double the range, while maintaining the precision GMLRS is known for," Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control Vice President Jay Price said in the release.

Prior to the launch, the rocket pod underwent a stockpile to target sequence testing to simulate the cumulative effects ER GMLRS will meet in the field, according to the release.

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US Congressman Calls Russia-China Alliance Biggest Threat Since World War II

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - The chairman of the US House Foreign Affairs Committee during a visit to Sweden on Friday voiced concerns about the Russia-China alliance, calling it the biggest threat to the United States since World War II.

"We have never seen a threat this large scale to Europe and the Pacific, I would argue, since World War II," Rep. Michael McCaul said during a press conference with Sweden's Foreign Minister Tobias Billstrom.

McCaul added that the alliance between China's President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin posed "a very big challenge" to the United States and its allies.

US officials have in recent months expressed concern over strengthening relations between Russia and China, as Washington regards both countries as "strategic adversaries."

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Canada to Unveil Regulations Proposal for Online News Act – Heritage Ministry

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) – Canada has outlined several regulation proposals to be implemented under the country's media law – the Online News Act – the Ministry of Canadian Heritage said on Friday.

The regulations and its Regulatory Impact Analysis Statement will be unveiled on September 2 in the Canada Gazette, Part 1 for a thirty-day consultation period with the Canadian public, businesses, academics, and civil society.

"The proposed regulations provide clarity on which platforms are subject to the Act and greater certainty on what they need to do to obtain an exemption from the mandatory bargaining process. To obtain an exemption, platforms must enter into agreements supporting the diverse production of Canadian news in communities across Canada. The total value of agreements must meet a certain threshold in order to qualify for an exemption," the ministry's statement said.

The ministry noted that the objective behind said consultations is for the participants to express their views on the regulations and who they may apply to, the proposed formula to grant exemption, and the way in which media platforms will participate in the news diversity.

The final regulations will be published under Part II of the Canada Gazette once the 30-day consultation period concludes, the statement said, adding that the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) will have the comply with the determined regulations.

On August 1, Meta (banned in Russia) announced an end to news availability on Canadian Facebook and Instagram platforms in response to the country's new law that requires tech companies to compensate news outlets for using their content.

In late August, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Meta's decision to ban the sharing of news links on its social media platforms was "unacceptable" notably amid the ongoing wildfires affecting Canadians throughout the country.

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US Debating Whether to Bring Home Extra Troops Deployed to Eastern Europe - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - The Defense Department is debating whether it will bring home or rotate some 4,300 US troops deployed to Eastern Europe in support of NATO deterrence efforts directed at Russia, NBC News reported on Friday.

There is an ongoing debate among defense officials about the future of the US military presence in Eastern Europe, with some arguing that maintaining the 4,300 troops would be useless considering their presence has not deterred Russia; others deem their presence necessary to show support for NATO countries, the report said, citing three defense officials.

Uniformed defense officials have recommended that Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin maintain the force and rotate the troops, while policy officials have advised against the recommendation, the report said.

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The Defense Department has a third option, which calls for partial rotation of the 4,300 troops to reinforce NATO's Eastern Flank, the report added.

Shortly before Russia launched its special military operation in Ukraine in February 2022, the Defense Department began sending hundreds of additional servicemen to Eastern Europe amid concerns among NATO members over a potential Russian intervention. The stated goal was to deter Russia from militarily intervening in Ukraine and to reassure allies concerned over a potential spillover of the conflict in neighboring states.

Soldiers stationed in Eastern Europe are expected to conclude their deployment in early 2024.

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US Praises Jamaica's Haiti Security Mission Pledge – Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin praised his Jamaican counterpart on Friday for his pledge to deploy personnel to Haiti for a potential multinational peacekeeping mission, according to a readout.

"Secretary Austin expressed his appreciation to Prime Minister Holness for Jamaica's leadership in the Caribbean, including the recent pledge by Jamaica to deploy personnel to Haiti for a potential multinational security support mission," the readout stated.

Austin and Holness also affirmed the US and Jamaica's bilateral cooperation on maritime security, cyber security, and climate resilience.

Austin and Holness, who also serves as Jamaica's defense minister, spoke on the phone on Friday.

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White House Says Hard to Conclude Biden Admin. 'Not Interested' in Indo-Pacific Region

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - It is difficult to look at the Biden administration's engagement with the Indo-Pacific and conclude that it is "not interested" in advancing relationships in the region, National Security Council Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said on Friday.

"It's hard to look at what we've done as an administration since the very beginning and come away with the conclusion that we are somehow not interested in the Indo-Pacific or that we are deprioritizing the Southeast Asian nations and those relationships. The record just doesn't bear that out," Kirby said during a press briefing.

Kirby made comment in response to a question whether Biden's decision to skip some planned trips to the Indo-Pacific region means the administration is not as interested in the region.

Kirby listed as examples of the Biden administration's engagement with the region the recent summit held at Camp David with Japan and South Korea, as well as the Association of

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Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

It is impossible to look at the Biden administration's record in the Indo-Pacific and believe that it is walking away from the region, Kirby said.

US Vice President Kamala Harris is set to visit Indonesia later this month to attend the ASEAN and East Asia summits.

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White House Does Not See BRICS as Anti-US Coalition – Kirby

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) – The White House does not view the BRICS alliance as an anti-US coalition, National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Friday.

"We don't see the BRICS as some sort of anti-US coalition or sort of inimical body to the advancement of our own national security interests or our own vast network of alliances and partnerships," Kirby told reporters.

"Many members in the so-called BRICS…we do have bilateral relations with, some very good bilateral relations, so we don't look at it as any kind of a threat," he added.

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UNSC Program of Work Shows Ukraine Meeting on Sept 20 - Draft

UNITED NATIONS, September 1 (Sputnik) - The tentative United Nations Security Council Program of Work showed on Friday that there will be a meeting on Ukraine on September 20.

The program of work is to be finalized on Friday at 11:30 AM EST by the Council members in person at the UN.

Albania will be presiding during September, taking over after the United States.

September is the busiest month for the United Nations because of the high-level week and especially the General Assembly debate, starting on September 19, when all world leaders gather in New York.

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White House Prepares Team Ahead of Expected Biden Impeachment Inquiry – Reports

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WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - The White House has prepared a team of two dozen lawyers, legislative aides, and communications staff in anticipation of a Republican impeachment inquiry into US President Biden, NBC reported on Friday, citing a White House aide.

The White House's efforts already began on the first day of the new Republican-majority House this year. As Speaker Kevin McCarthy has been warning that a formal inquiry could be launched after the August recess, White House aides have spent the past month researching Republican statements and fine-tuning their preparations.

A source said that they have referenced the 1998 impeachment of then-President Bill Clinton as a model for preparing their defense. A White House official said that the team plans to frame the Republican Party as out of touch and Biden as focused on economic issues.

The team includes defense attorney Richard Sauber, former staff director of the House Oversight Committee Russ Anello, communications operative Ian Sams, and former communications director of Building Back Together's Sharon Yang, among other people. White House counsel Ed Siskel will also soon join the team, which is structured to wall off Republican investigations so that other White House officials can focus on governing.

House Republicans have said they would pursue allegations that Biden abused his power while vice president in order to facilitate his son Hunter's foreign business dealings.

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Canada's GDP Contracts in Second Quarter, Remained 'Nearly Unchanged' – StatCan

WASHINGTON, September 1, (Sputnik) – Canada's economy slowed in the second quarter with real gross domestic product (GDP) contracting by 0.2% on an annualized basis, Statistics Canada said on Friday.

"The slowdown was attributable to continued declines in housing investment, smaller inventory accumulation, as well as slower international exports and household spending," the statistics agency's statement said.

Housing investments fell by 2.1% in the second quarter, marking the fifth consecutive quarterly decrease, it said, adding that a significant 8.1% drop in new construction in every province but Nova Scotia was the leading cause.

Moreover, renovation activities fell by 4.3% and were accompanied by increased borrowing costs and lower mortgage funds demand, the statement said, further noting that a slower inventory accumulation and imports having surpassed exports also contributed to the economy's slowdown.

Increased business investment in engineering structures and a higher government spending were some of the few elements that generated growth the statement said.

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US Lumber Duties on Canadian Wood to be Challenged by Ottawa – Global Affairs Canada

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) – Ottawa has decided to go forth and challenge the decision by the US to maintain duties on Canadian softwood lumber products, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) said on Friday.

On August 22, the Canadian government announced it was initiating a review of what they characterized as an "unwarranted" decision by Washington to maintain duties on lumber coming from Canada.

"Canada is launching challenges to the latest U.S. countervailing duty determination under (CUSMA) Chapter 10 and to the latest U.S. anti-dumping duty determination before the U.S. Court of International Trade," Canadian Minister of International Trade Mary Ng said as quoted by GAC.

In the statement, Minister Ng maintained that the United States have been imposing an "unfair, unjust and illegal" 7,99% duty on softwood lumber products imported from Canada, a policy that has hurt the Canadian wood industry and played a role in the rising housing costs in both countries.

GAC noted that Canada is always open to resolving the dispute through negotiations and provide a stable and predictable environment to the wood industry.

The dispute over Canadian softwood lumber dates back to the early 1980s and has been a drag on the two countries' bilateral trading relationship for decades, including mutual complaints through the World Trade Organization.

In 2006, the two sides reached a settlement under which the United States agreed to suspend lumber duties. The deal expired in 2015 and the administration of former US President Donald Trump subsequently imposed new tariffs on Canadian lumber.

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UPDATE - US Adds Forecast-Beating 187,000 Jobs in August But Unemployment Also Up to 18-Month High

(Changes headline and lead; adds details, comments and context, paragraphs 3-7)

WASHINGTON, September 1 (Sputnik) - The US economy beat forecasts by adding 187,000 jobs in August but the unemployment rate also rose to 18-month highs, according to Labor Department data on Friday that showed mixed results to the Federal Reserve's aim of bringing inflation back to pre-pandemic levels.

Economists polled by US media had expected a jobs growth of 170,000 for last month, from a previously published 187,000 for July which the Labor Department now revised down to 157,000. The unemployment rate, instead of staying at last month's 3.5% as forecast, grew to 3.8%.

The changes suggest the Fed would have to ponder more deeply on how to proceed with

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interest rates as it targets for inflation to return to the annual 2% or less level seen before the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020.

Inflation rose as much as 9.1% year-on-year in June 2022, hitting four-decade highs as the government spent trillions of dollars fighting the pandemic. As of last month, inflation had moderated to an annual growth of 3% after the Fed raised interest rates to 5.5% from a base rate of just 0.25% in March 2022. While pandemic-related spending is now over, robust jobs growth and wage growth are keeping the Fed from achieving its 2% target for inflation, the central bank said.

The Fed has three more opportunities to raise rates this year, with its policy-making Federal Open Market Committee having rate decisions scheduled on September 20, November 1 and December 13.

With jobs still growing more than expected each month, the central bank could opt for one or two more hikes this year. Yet, any growth in unemployment as well, as evidenced in August, will complicate the Fed's decision-making process on this. Aside from keeping inflation at or below 2%, the central bank is mandated by the US Congress to provide maximum employment to Americans — a target identified by a jobless rate of 4% or below. Last month's unemployment rate of 3.8% was the highest since February 2021.

The Fed has vowed not to cut rates so long as inflation stays above 2%, setting the central bank up for what could possibly be a protracted battle in achieving its target.

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