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9/8/23 Friday

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What Kinds of Subs Does North Korea's Fleet Have?

DPRK leader Kim Jong-un has laid out a modernization program to bring the country's Cold War-era weaponry up to date for 21st-century operations, as the state postures as ready to defend itself at any time. The country technically remains at war with South Korea and the US in the absence of a peace treaty ending the war that began in 1950.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) unveiled its latest submarine, christened Hero Kim Kun Ok, on Friday.

Described as a "tactical nuclear attack submarine," the vessel is a reconstruction of an existing submarine into one capable of carrying tactical nuclear weapons, according to President Kim Jong-un.

Little else is known about the vessel, including its displacement, total armament, or other details. Some Western observers have suggested it could be based on a Soviet-era Project 633 (NATO reporting name Romeo) submarine, but that has not been confirmed by North Korean officials.

"The nuclear attack submarine, for decades a symbol of aggression against our republic, has now become a symbol of our revolutionary power to strike fear into the hearts of our despicable enemies," Kim said as cited by North Korean media.

The Hero Kim Kun Ok joins a Korean Peoples Navy (KPN) with dozens of other submarines in it from four distinct classes:

Sinpo-Class

Also called the Gorae-class (Whale-class) or Pongdae-class, this is the DPRK's newest and largest submarine in service. Just one exists so far: the 8.24 Yongung (August 24 Hero), and it's unclear if Pyongyang has plans to build more or to use this submarine as an experimental vessel. Some Western reports suggest as many as six boats are presently under construction.

Its size is estimated at about 70 meters long and a weight of nearly 2,000 tons, making it roughly comparable in size to Germany's Type 212 submarines. The 8.24 Yongung is diesel-electric powered with an estimated range of 1,500 nautical miles.

It has been observed firing the Pukguksong-1 submarine-launched ballistic missile and a submarine-launched cruise missile of unknown designation.

Sang-O-Class

The first Sang-O, or "shark-class" submarine was introduced in 1991 as a small diesel-electric attack submarine, although for indigenously-made North Korean subs it is among the largest.

The sub is about 34 meters long with a 370-ton displacement. It has four torpedo tubes and can carry 16 mines, although some are unarmed and used for deploying amphibious commandos.

The KPN has 40 Sang-O submarines in service, some of which are of an elongated variety, extending their length to 40 meters.

Yono-Class

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Another small KPN boat is the Yono-class (Salmon-class), a 29-meter-long, 130-ton submersible introduced in 1965.
The tiny submarine has room for just two crew and is reportedly unable to reload its two torpedo tubes. However, like the Sang-O, it can carry as many as seven commandos for secret deployment.
The KPN may have five Yono-class submersibles still in service, according to Western observers.
Type 033
Known by the NATO designation "Romeo-class," the Type 033 is based on the Soviet Union's Project 633 submarine first introduced in 1957. Aside from the Sinpo-class, the Type 033 is the KPN's largest submarine class, weighing in at 1,800 tons and 76.6 meters in length.
The KPN has some 20 Type 033 boats. Pyongyang obtained seven of the boats from the People's Republic of China between 1973 and 1975 and built the rest from parts purchased from the PRC, keeping the Chinese designation of Type 033. The PRC built its own Project 633/Type 033 submarines after obtaining the plans from the Soviet Union prior to the Sino-Soviet Split in the early 1960s - a split in which Pyongyang carefully avoided taking sides.
In addition to being the largest, the Type 033s are also the DPRK's fastest and furthest-ranging, capable of operating 3,820 nautical miles under diesel power or 260 nautical miles while submerged and running on batteries. They can reach a speed of 15.3 knots on the surface or 13.18 knots submerged.
The Type 033 has six torpedo tubes on the bow and two more on the stern, which can be used to fire traditional torpedoes or horizontally-launched anti-ship missiles. They can also be used to deploy up to 28 naval mines.

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After Retiring From Leadership, Nancy Pelosi Announces 2024 Reelection Campaign

The average age of a US federal lawmaker is 58 years old, and several dozen lawmakers are over the age of 70, with two of them being 89. While the US population as a whole is continuing to age, younger Americans have begun using the term "gerontocracy" to describe their government.
US Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) has announced she will seek another term in office. The 19-term congresswoman retired from Democratic Party leadership last year, but has dismissed questions about leaving political life.
"Now more than ever our City needs us to advance San Francisco values and further our recovery," Pelosi said on social media on Friday. "Our country needs America to show the world that our flag is still there, with liberty and justice for ALL. That is why I am running for reelection - and respectfully ask for your vote."
Pelosi has represented constituents in the San Francisco Bay area in Congress since 1987 and spent much of that time in party leadership on Capitol Hill, including serving as Party Whip, leader of the Democratic caucus in the US House of Representatives, Minority Leader and two

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terms as House Speaker from 2007 to 2011 and again from 2019 until 2023. As Speaker, she was third in the line of presidential succession after the president and vice president.
However, after the Democrats lost control of the House in the November 2022 elections, instead of returning to her role as Minority Leader, the 82-year-old lawmaker decided to step aside, as per a 2019 agreement, and let a younger generation take the reins.
Pelosi was reelected to her House seat, though, and shut down any questions about whether she was about to retire from political office.
"Don't bother me with a question like that," Pelosi snapped at a reporter in December 2022 who asked her if she would finish her term. "Really, really, OK. I said what I'm gonna do. You know, those kinds of questions are such a waste of my time."
However, the Italian-American politician has made clear that one of her daughters, Christine Pelosi, might look to replace her when she does retire. If she dies while in office, California Governor Gavin Newsom, a Democrat, will be tasked with appointing a replacement to serve the rest of her term.
At 83, Pelosi is far from the oldest lawmaker in Congress: nine lawmakers across both chambers are older, although several dozen are age 70 or above.
Her decision comes after a colleague in the Senate, US Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY), who is two years younger than her, had a second freeze-up situation during a press conference. The Kentucky Republican has been cleared for service by the attending physician at Congress, although the pair of public incidents, along with some clueless moments by 89-year-old Rep. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), have helped revive popular interest in the term "gerontocracy," meaning "rule by elders."

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Massive Neptune-Sized Exoplanet Denser Than Steel Believed Result of Planetary Collisions

Astronomers have spotted a new and bizarre exoplanet that they think is the result of a collision between at least two other planets.
The exoplanet designated TOI-1853b is about 542 light-years from Earth and just a little bit smaller than Neptune. However, a team at the University of Bristol in the UK and the University of Rome Tor Vergata in Italy discovered that this seemingly ordinary planet is unusually dense: whereas Neptune is about 17.15 times the mass of the Earth, TOI-1853b has a stunning mass of 73.2 times the mass of the Earth, or four times the mass of Neptune.
In terms of compactness, that means TOI-1853b has a density of 9.7 grams per cubic centimeter, which is not just denser than Neptune (1.64 grams per cubic centimeter) or Earth (5.15 gram per cubic centimeter), it's denser than steel, too, which has a density of about 8.05 grams per cubic centimeter.
Rocky planets bigger than Earth are known to science: dubbed "super-Earths," the largest, Kepler-277c, is estimated to have a mass 64 times that of the Earth and about two-thirds the diameter of Neptune, with a density near that of TOI-1853b.

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Yet, according to prevailing theories about the formation of planets, rocky worlds of that size shouldn't exist, and should be mostly gas, like the giant planets of our own solar system. According to the astronomers' new paper, published last week in Nature, such huge worlds could be agglomerations of other smaller rocky worlds.

"This planet is very surprising! Normally we expect planets forming with this much rock to become gas giants like Jupiter which have densities similar to water," physicist Jingyao Dou of the University of Bristol said in a news release.

"TOI-1853b is the size of Neptune but has a density higher than steel. Our work shows that this can happen if the planet experienced extremely energetic planet-planet collisions during its formation. These collisions stripped away some of the lighter atmosphere and water leaving a substantially rock-enriched, high-density planet."

Phil Carter, a senior research associate at Bristol's School of Physics and co-author of the study, said the team modeled extreme giant impacts capable of removing the lighter atmosphere and water/ice from the planet in order to produce the extreme density seen in TOI-1853b.

"We found that the initial planetary body would likely have needed to be water-rich and suffer an extreme giant impact at a speed of greater than 75 km/s in order to produce TOI-1853b as it is observed," Carter explained.

"We had not previously investigated such extreme giant impacts as they are not something we had expected," said University of Bristol physicist Zoë Leinhardt.

"There is much work to be done to improve the material models that underlie our simulations, and to extend the range of extreme giant impacts modeled."

Planetary collisions may not be unknown in our solar system, either: one theory about the formation of Earth's moon, which is very similar in terms of composition to Earth, holds that the moon formed from material ejected by a collision between Earth and another planet-sized object that was subsequently destroyed during the solar system's formation.

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Singapore Upgrades F-16s With Israeli Python-5 Interceptor Missiles

The Python-5 is among the most advanced air-to-air missiles in the world, having a relatively short range of 20 kilometers but being able to attack targets in any direction and even being ordered to find their target and lock on after being fired. Singapore's neighbors of Vietnam, the Philippines, and India all operate the Python-5 as well.

The Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) has revealed that its US-made F-16 Falcon fighter jets are now carrying the Python-5, an air-to-air missile made by Israel, alongside other advanced new technology upgrades.

The public disclosure came via an information board at Paya Lebar Air Base, where the RSAF is preparing for a major open house event this weekend to commemorate the 55th anniversary of its foundation. However, corners of the internet have speculated about the developmentfor several months after spotting photos that seemed to show Python-5s on RSAF F-16 wings.

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Singapore has 62 F-16C/Ds from the Block 52 cohort, which it bought in several batches between 1998 and 2004. These are of the same model from which Israel's custom-designed F-16I Soufa was derived, likely making arming RSAF jets with the Israeli missile easier. Elsewhere, interoperability has been a problem for the F-16, such as in Ukraine, where the fighter jet is being supplied to Ukrainian forces but won't be able to use the British-made Storm Shadow cruise missile that has also been given to Kiev.

Singapore has had the Python-5 since at least 2018, when it purchased several SPYDER systems from Haifa-based Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, which are a mobile surface-to-air missile platform.

According to US military-oriented media, Singapore's F-16s are likely able to use the advanced Python-5 missile because of recent upgrades to the aircraft obtained from the US Air Force. Those upgrades have also allowed the jet to begin using satellite-guided and laser-guided Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) smart bombs, the AN/APG-83 active electronically scanned array radar, and the Joint Helmet Mounted Cueing System, the lattermost of which is also built by an Israeli company - Elbit - and allows pilots to fire a missile at a target by looking at it.

SIngapore is slated to begin replacing its F-16s over the next decade with F-35B Joint Strike Fighters, a stealthy aircraft that can takeoff and land vertically or on a runway.

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Powerful Quake Rocks Morocco, Kills Over 800 People & Injures Over 600 - Reports

Morocco last witnessed a severe earthquake in 2004, when a magnitude 6.3 event killed upwards of 600 people and left over 900 with injuries after hitting Al Hoceima in the country's northeast.

A powerful 6.9-magnitude earthquake struck Morocco late Friday, sending thousands running outside to avoid possible building collapses. The death toll from the earthquake has risen to 820 more than half of them in Al-Haouz and Taroudant provinces, while another 672 other people have been injured, according to media reports.

Earlier reports said there were 296 fatalities as a result of the natural disaster, which hit Morocco's High Atlas mountains late on Friday.

Preliminary readings issued by the European-Mediterranean Seismological Centre (EMSC) indicated the quake struck at about 11:11 p.m. local time at a depth of 10 kilometers. The epicenter was registered some 77 kilometers from Marrakesh near the town of Al Haouz, where local reports detailed some residents were trapped in downed homes.

Two aftershocks measuring at magnitudes of 4.8 and 3.4 were recorded by officials.

Footage from the scene showed panicked individuals fleeing their homes for the safety of nearby plazas. Many photos have since surfaced showing buildings turned to rubble and nearby cars crushed by falling structures.

Testimonials obtained by EMSC described the quake as "scary and long" even after aftershocks rattled the region. Another individual wrote that "it was really too much in Marrakesh."

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"We felt a very violent tremor, and I realised it was an earthquake," Abdelhak El Amrani, a 33-year-old in Marrakech, told French media by phone.
"I could see buildings moving. We don't necessarily have the reflexes for this type of situation. Then I went outside and there were a lot of people there. People were all in shock and panic. The children were crying and the parents were distraught."
Reports have noted that the quake was felt as far away as coastal cities Rabat, Casablanca and Essaouira, as well as nearby Algeria.
The Friday earthquake is considered the strongest to hit the region in years, with the last quake recorded in 2017 damaging several homes after striking at a magnitude of 5.2.
However, in 2004, Morocco witnessed serious damages after a magnitude 6.3 quake killed at least 628 people and left 926 others with injuries after rattling the Al Hoceima region.
Russian President Vladimir Putin has expressed condolences to King of Morocco Mohammed VI over tragic consequences of the devastating earthquake which hit the country, according to a telegram published on Saturday on the Kremlin's website.
"Your Majesty, please accept my sincere condolences in connection with the tragic consequences of the devastating earthquake in the central regions of your country," Putin said in the telegram.
The president also noted that Russia shares the grief of the friendly people of Morocco.

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The Daunting Physics of 'Bidenomics'

Unemployment is low—lower than at any time since the Vietnam War. Real wages are increasing. Inflation, voters' top concern for the last several years, is slowing.
Democrats are confident enough about how things are going that "Bidenomics" is at the center of their case for another four years in the White House; however, this is a rosy picture few voters can see as Americans consistently give US President Joe Biden low marks for his handling of the economy.
"I've never seen this big of a disconnect between how the economy is actually doing and key polling results about what people think is going on," Heidi Shierholz, president of the Economic Policy Institute, a liberal think tank, told US media.
What gives?
Jason Furman, who served as chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers under the Obama White House, points to a yearslong trend that only ended recently: wages haven't kept up with inflation, leaving the average worker $2,000 worse off than during the final year of the Trump presidency. "The way to think about that is people were in an incredibly deep hole because of inflation and we're still not all the way out of that hole," Furman says.
The problem for Biden is, what people would need to have happen in order to feel that inflation was truly behind them would be horrible for the economy - not to mention his prospects for reelection: deflation.

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During our lifetimes, ideal economic conditions in a healthy economy feature an annual official inflation rate in the single digits, a policy economists call inflation targeting. Prices rise, but if wages go up even faster employees are happy. Low inflation incentivizes consumers to buy sooner rather than later, when prices will be higher. But, as Furman points out, that hasn't been the case lately. Airfares went up 28.5% in 2022. Butter rose 31.4%. Eggs a whopping 59.9%. So we're displeased.

What will it take to convince voters that inflation is no longer a problem? In the short term — i.e., between now and the presidential election—prices would need to fall back to pre-Biden levels. The average US gas price in January 2021 when Biden took office was $2.42 per gallon. Now it's $3.95.

The Federal Reserve's efforts to reduce inflation appear to be working. Prices are rising at a slower rate and that's the problem for Democrats.

Mechanical physics provides a helpful parallel. Many economists and political analysts seem to think of inflation rate as analogous to velocity. In their view, reducing the inflation rate from 8% to 3% is a victory for inflation-targeting fiscal policy. Indeed, if a 3% inflation rate (coupled with wages that rise faster than 3%) remains in effect indefinitely, people will eventually feel good (or less bad) about the economy. As the economist John Maynard Keynes observed a century ago, however, "in the long run, we will all be dead." And the Democrats' calendar is much shorter than that, a mere 14 months.

Before inflation-affected consumers can be persuaded to tap their feet to "Happy Days Are Here Again," they'll have to pass through several stages of recovery. First, they'll feel less bad. Then comes meh. Penultimately, they'll see themselves paying off credit card and other debts they ran up during the inflationary period. Only after those lingering financial hangovers are past will they be able to achieve what feels like the final stage, prosperity: earning enough to pay one's bills while setting a surplus aside in the form of savings.

With Americans' credit card debt hitting the staggering benchmark of $1 trillion and rising, we are currently in the "less bad"/"meh" stage. But it's hard to see what Biden or the Fed or anyone else can do in order to promote a sunnier view of the economy.

A lower inflation rate—even an ideal one in the low single digits—still means higher prices. We will probably not see $2.42 per gallon gas, the price in early 2021, any time soon, if ever. Gas prices will likely continue to increase to $4.00 and $4.05 and $4.10 and on and on and on, adding minor injury to gaping wound.

Inflation is really like acceleration—the rate at which speed increases. If you fall off the roof of a tall building, your speed at the beginning of your plunge will be exponentially lower than when you hit the ground. The ground approaches, not at a steady rate, but faster and faster. As your body rushes toward doom, you'd likely welcome a physical intervention to reduce the rate of acceleration. You'd live a smidge longer but it wouldn't save you. Reducing the acceleration rate to zero might help, assuming your initial rate of descent was low. But what you need in this dire situation is negative acceleration—a force that neutralizes gravity and then some, returning you back up to the roof of the building.

Negative inflation would, in many people's minds, set things straight. If Biden could return prices to pre-2021 levels, that would look and feel like a return to a period of normalcy.

But negative inflation is deflation, the disaster last experienced in this country to a significant extent during the Great Depression, when prices dropped 7% each year between 1930 and

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1933. Knowing that goods and services were becoming cheaper, Americans were incentivized to horde cash. Consumer spending declined, triggering a doom loop in which manufacturers laid off workers and cut salaries, further reducing spending and prices. Given a choice, economists choose inflation over deflation.
From an economics standpoint, Biden's only option is to hope for a quicker trip through the psychological stages of economic recovery than Americans have seen in their lifetimes.

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Archaeologists in Peru Unearth 1,000-Year-Old Mummy With Long Hair, Intact Jaw

The human remains were found inside a ceremonial grave at the monument site of Huaca Pucllana: an adobe and pyramid built from earth that also serves as a burial site for nobility.
Archeologists based in Peru's Lima capital have unearthed a 1,000-year-old mummy at the Huaca Pucllana archaeological site that not only still has a head of well-preserved hair, but also a near-complete intact jaw.
The mummy, whose gender is currently unknown, was found buried alongside two ceramic vessels and textiles.
"I find it quite interesting that right in the heart of Miraflores, in the middle of the city, surrounded by modern buildings and constructions, an important site is still preserved," said lead archaeologist Mirella Ganoza.
Ganoza adds that the mummy was discovered in a "seated" position with bent legs. Photos taken of the mummy show the figure with its knees resting near its head.
It is possible that the mummy lived around 1,000 AD. During that time, the Ychsma people lived in that same region and have been credited with building more than a dozen pyramids that served as residential spaces and ceremonial centers. The Ychsma, or Ichma people, were in full control of the central coast of today's Peru until the rise of the Incan empire at around 1469 AD.
Lima is teeming with sacred sites, as there are about 400 in the country's capital. Studying these preserved bodies can help researchers better understand the ancient histories of Indigenous Pervuians, including their health and culture.
"It is interesting that we still find such things in the middle of the city," Ganoza said, as many on social media hailed the discovery and congratulated Ganoza and her colleagues.
A similar discovery was made in the country's capital in June, when a team of archeologists found a mummy with long black hair whose body had been tied with rope made from vines of vegetable origin.

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FAA Slaps SpaceX With 63 Corrective Action Requirements Over April Explosion

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The restrictions are in response to SpaceX's April 20 flight during which it tested its 394-foot (120-meter) rocket named Starship Super Heavy. The earlier effort saw the rocket ultimately destroyed after it tumbled out of control during the launch.

The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) on Friday forced SpaceX's Starship Super Heavy rocket to stay grounded, and told the company that it would need to make 63 corrections before it could undergo another test flight.

In late April, Elon Musk's SpaceX company test launched what is meant to be the world's largest and most powerful rocket designed to transport crew and cargo in Earth's orbit and space. The rocket is also intended to be fully reusable.

The rocket, however, never made it into Earth's orbit (far from it) and malfunctioned during its stage separation process and exploded, causing widespread damage and destroying the launch pad. The explosion, which occurred in Boca Chica, also left a crater in the earth, flung debris into nearby tanks and other equipment, impacted endangered animals' habitats, and sparked a 4-acre fire on state park land.

Environmental and cultural heritage nonprofits sued the FAA as a result of the damage.

On Tuesday, Musk claimed on his social media site X (formerly Twitter) that "Starship is ready to launch, awaiting FAA license approval."

The FAA is now asking that in order to "prevent mishap reoccurrence" the corrective actions must include: "redesigns of vehicle hardware to prevent leaks and fires, redesign of the launch pad to increase its robustness, incorporation of additional reviews in the design process, additional analysis and testing of safety critical systems and components including the Autonomous Flight Safety System, and the application of additional change control practices."

The company will need to "implement all corrective actions that impact public safety," the FAA said, and apply for and receive a "license modification from the FAA" that will address all of its safety and environmental regulatory requirements.

None of these corrections should come as a surprise to SpaceX, as the company had conducted its own investigation and sent that report to the FAA for a review. The administration agreed with the company's findings, and closed the investigation.

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Tonga Eruption Caused Fastest Ocean Flows Ever Recorded

The eruption first occurred off the Pacific island nation of Tonga in January of 2022, sending rocks, ash and gas skirting across the seafloor at 76 miles per hour.

The violent volcanic eruption off the coast of Tonga in 2022 caused the fastest underwater currents ever recorded, a study published on Thursday has detailed.

The eruption began in a submarine volcano in December of 2021 and reached its climax nearly four weeks later on January 15, 2022. On the Volcanic Explosivity Index scale, the eruption rated at least a VEI-5.

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It is the most powerful volcanic explosion ever recorded with modern-day equipment and triggered a deadly tsunami, released at least 192,000 flashes of lightning and had the force of hundreds of atomic bombs.

The submarine volcano also triggered avalanche-like flows that damaged underwater cables, which caused severe issues for the islands of Vava'u, Kifuka, and Tonatapu as it cut the islands' connection to the outside world for weeks.

A team of researchers led by scientists from Britain's National Oceanography Centre (NOC) used the timings and locations of the cable damage to figure out the speed of the flows, which they determined traveled at 122 kilometers per hour (75 mph) and were up to 50% faster than any other ever recorded.



Beyond Politics

Tonga's 2022 Eruption Sparked Highest Lightning Bolts on Record

24 June, 11:31 GMT

"What's impressive is that Tonga's international cable lies in a seafloor valley south of the volcano, meaning the flow had enough power to go uphill over huge ridges, and then back down again," said Emily Lane, a co-author the paper and a scientist from the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research, Wellington (NIWA).

"Surveys showed that Tonga's domestic cable was buried under 30 meters of material, which we sampled and confirmed as containing deposits formed by a powerful seafloor flow triggered by the eruption."

While the record breaking finding is significant, the scientists have also argued that the damage to Tonga's subsea cables is a sign that more volcanic monitoring is needed in order to protect vital communication links.

"A huge number of the world's volcanoes lie under the ocean, yet only a handful of those are monitored," said Isobel Yeo from the NOC. "As a result, the risk posed to coastal communities and critical infrastructure remains poorly understood, and more monitoring is urgently needed."

"Findings from this important study not only improve our understanding of one of the largest events on our planet, but are already being used by the subsea cable industry to design more resilient communications networks in volcanically active regions," added Mike Clare, an NOC geohazards researcher.

The volcanic eruption resulted in the deaths of at least three people.

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UN Report Warns World Not Moving Fast Enough to Meet Climate Targets

Scientists have been recording the effects of human-caused climate change for decades. The consequences have been disastrous both for the planet, as well as for the health and wellness of humankind.

Despite the 2015 landmark Paris Agreement that was signed by 196 parties, a major UN report released on Friday found that governments are still failing to cut greenhouse gas emissions fast enough to meet the agreement goals by 2025 - not doing so could lead to a climate disaster.

The assessment encourages solutions that will transform and change the worst consequences of climate change including: aggressively scaling up renewable energy, phasing out fossil fuels, ending deforestation, providing significant climate finance to developing nations, as well as alleviating poverty and minimizing environmental injustice - as climate change is known to have affected the poorest populations the worst, despite demographics playing the smallest role.

The report acknowledges “phasing out fossil fuels” will be a difficult truth for oil-producing countries to hear. However, this appears to be the first time the UN has pushed for phasing out fossil fuels, as the language over “phasing out” or “phasing down” has caused controversy at annual UN climate talks.

“We welcome and agree with such language. Already on several occasions the commission and EU ministers have called for a move towards energy systems free of unabated fossil fuels. We see the push for global targets on renewables and energy efficiency measures as part of the path to achieve that,” a spokesperson for the European Commission said.

Despite efforts made since the agreement was first signed eight years ago, emissions are continuing to rise. The goal is to limit temperature rises to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels by 2030. But currently, there is a gap of 20 to 23 gigatonnes of CO_2 between the cuts needed by 2030 to limit the global temperature. Temperatures must also peak by 2025 at the latest, and no more after that year.

“Hope is not lost. We have seen critical actions taken that are making a difference,” said Marcene Mitchel, senior vice president of climate change for the World Wildlife Fund.

“It is clear that we cannot continue business as usual… We must face the reality that it is going to take a lot of challenging work — continued advancements in science and technology, strong political will and actions from individuals, communities, businesses and governments if we expect to address the greatest global crisis of our time," she added.

The 47-page report, which was published in a draft by the UN, does not detail which countries are falling behind. Ani Dasgupta, the head of the World Resources Institute think tank criticized the report for being vague and “glossing over” its vital message.

“The UN’s polite prose glosses over what is a truly damning report card for global climate efforts,” said Dasgupta.

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“Carbon emissions? Still climbing. Rich countries’ finance commitments? Delinquent. Adaptation support? Lagging woefully behind. This report is a wake-up call to the injustice of the climate crisis, and a pivotal opportunity to correct course.”
The report comes on the heels of data released by the European Union Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S). On Wednesday, the report revealed that the summer of 2023 was the hottest-ever recorded, and that it passed previous recorded temperatures by a large margin.
The next UN climate summit is slated for November, and will be held in Dubai.

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5th Circuit Find Biden Administration, and Other Officials Possibly Violated First Amendment

The lawsuit accused the administration of coercing platforms to remove information about election fraud and the COVID-19 pandemic.
A US Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit on Friday ruled that the Biden administration, the FBI and top government health officials most likely violated the First Amendment rights of people posting about COVID-19, as well as about election fraud, on social media after they pressured social media platforms to remove misleading or false content.
The ruling partly upholds a lower court’s preliminary injunction: in early July, a federal judge in Louisiana restricted the Biden administration from communicating with social media platforms about various types of content online. The ruling is also a victory for conservatives who have accused social media sites of taking down content that is mostly right-leaning.
In their 75-page opinion, the judges wrote that the White House and the Office of the Surgeon General had “coerced the platforms to make their moderation decisions by way of intimidating messages and threats of adverse consequences” and “significantly encouraged the platforms’ decisions by commandeering their decision-making processes.”
“It is true that the officials have an interest in engaging with social media companies, including on issues such as misinformation and election interference. But the government is not permitted to advance these interests to the extent that it engages in viewpoint suppression,” the judges wrote.
The Biden administration has just 10 days to seek a Supreme Court review of the ruling.
“DOJ is reviewing the court’s decision and will evaluate its options in this case," the White House said in a statement.
"This administration has promoted responsible actions to protect public health, safety, and security when confronted by challenges like a deadly pandemic and foreign attacks on our elections. Our consistent view remains that social media platforms have a critical responsibility to take account of the effects their platforms are having on the American people, but make independent choices about the information they present," they added.
The lawsuit was first filed by the states of Louisiana and Missouri paired with a conservative website owner and four others who opposed the White House’s COVID-19 policy.

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RCAF Plane to Pick Up Stranded Canadian Delegation, Trudeau From India - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 11 (Sputnik) - A Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) plane is on route to pick up Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his delegation stranded in India after their aircraft encountered a mechanical problem, Global News reported on Monday.

On Sunday, media reported that following the G20 summit in India, Trudeau and the entire Canadian delegation, including journalists, were stranded in New Delhi after a pre-departure inspection of the RCAF CC-150 Polaris found a problem with one of the plane's components.

RCAF has dispatched a CFC002 military plane from Canadian Forces Base Trenton to pick up Trudeau and his delegation from New Delhi and they are expected to depart for Canada on Tuesday, the report said, citing the prime minister's press secretary Mohammad Hussain.

The report added that the latest incident is just one in several that have occurred with the 1980's era aircraft over the years, further noting that replacement planes have been in Canada since August 31, but will only be ready in fall after undergoing modifications.

Trudeau was on an Indo-Pacific tour, which kicked off with an ASEAN summit in Jakarta. Trudeau then left for Singapore to meet with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and business stakeholders. On the final leg, he participated in the G20 summit in New Delhi from September 9-10.

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US, Bahrain to Sign Strategic Security Agreement This Week - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 11 (Sputnik) - The United States and Bahrain intend to sign a strategic security and economic agreement this week, Axios reported on Monday, citing sources familiar with the matter.

The deal will upgrade the US security commitment to the Gulf nation, the report said.

The agreement will be reportedly inked during Crown Prince and Prime Minister Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa's visit to Washington this week. Prince Salman is also expected to meet with Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin and National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan, a source told the news outlet.

The accord will be legally binding and includes a commitment to consult and provide assistance if Bahrain faces an imminent security threat, the sources said.

The agreement, however, does not contain a NATO-style Article 5 commitment, which would have obligated the US to view any attack on Bahrain as an attack on America, according to the report.

The Biden administration intends to use the deal as a framework for similar accords with other

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nations in the region, the sources said.

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Pentagon Official Confirms 'No Decision Made' on Sending ATACMS to Ukraine

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - A Pentagon official told Sputnik no decision has been made to supply Ukraine with long-range Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS) following reports that claimed the weapons were likely to be sent in the coming months.

Earlier in the day, media reported, citing US officials, that the United States is likely to send Ukraine ATACMS, but it could be months before they are delivered.

"While I've seen that report, no decision has been made yet on whether to provide Ukraine with ATACMS," the official said on Friday.

A White House National Security Council spokesperson told Sputnik he cannot confirm that the the United States was likely to approve sending ATACMS to Ukraine soon.

According to reports, the ATACMS are likely to be included in an upcoming security assistance package, but no final decision has been made and plans could change.

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White House Scolded Hillary Clinton for Asking Ukraine for Help With Afghan Exit - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan scolded former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for asking Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to help evacuate Afghan women during the chaotic US withdrawal from Afghanistan, The Hill reported citing the recently published book "The Last Politician."

The report said on Friday, citing the book by Franklin Foer, that Clinton had asked Zelenskyy's aide if she could board several Afghan women on military transport planes headed to Kiev.

Sullivan became aware of Clinton's call and asked her, "What are you doing calling the Ukrainian government."

Clint responded that she would not have to call Ukraine if the Biden administration would have done it in the first place, but she assured Sullivan she would coordinate with US officials, the report said.

However, Clinton had already contacted world leaders in Canada, Qatar, and Albania, amid her efforts to evacuate some 1,000 people out of Afghanistan who were at-risk of being killed by the Taliban, the report said.

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Elon Musk's X Corp Sues California Over Content Moderation Law - Filing

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - Elon Musk's X Corp, formerly known as Twitter, filed a lawsuit challenging the California's Assembly Bill 587 for allegedly infringing upon its First Amendment rights.

"AB 587 violates the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and Article I, Section 2, of the California Constitution because it compels companies like X Corp. to engage in speech against their will," the lawsuit, filed on Friday by X Corp, said.

Assembly Bill 587, signed into law in September of the previous year, mandates that websites and online services collecting personally identifiable information from California users must publicly disclose their privacy policies, according to the document filed with the US District Court, Eastern District of California, Sacramento Division.

Moreover, AB 587 was presented by lawmakers as a measure to combat extremism, hate speech, and misinformation online, the court document revealed.

The lawsuit further contends that the law unjustly burdens social media companies, pressuring them to remove or restrict constitutionally protected content deemed undesirable by the state.

In addition, the lawsuit highlights a contrast between the state's characterization of the law as a mere "transparency measure" and statements from the legislation's authors and supporters, which suggest a different intent.

A California assembly report referenced in the lawsuit indicates that disclosing content moderation practices may pressure social media companies to combat hate speech and disinformation.

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US House Lawmakers Introduce Resolution Urging Task Force on Post-9/11 Hate - Statement

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - A group of US House lawmakers introduced a resolution urging the government to launch a task force to address the targeting of Arabs and other ethnic groups following the September 11 terror attacks, Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal said in a statement.

"As we mark this tragic day, we must also reflect on the lasting damages faced by Arab, Muslim, Middle Eastern, South Asian, and Sikh communities in the aftermath," Jayapal said in the statement on Friday.

Jayapal introduced the resolution alongside US Representatives Ilhan Omar, Rashida Tlaib, Judy Chu and Andre Carson, the statement said.

Muslim, Arab, Sikh and South Asian Americans were viewed with suspicion, harassed and detained based on their background, the statement said. The US government targeted the groups with overreaching surveillance and criminalization policies that resulted in wrongful deportations, interrogations and incarcerations

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The resolution calls for the creation of an interagency task force to review government policies, investigate their consequences and dismantle those that continue to target particular communities, the statement said. The resolution also calls for congressional hearings to explore the task force's findings, the statement said.

In addition, the resolution calls on the US Secretary of Health and Human Services, the National Institute of Health and the National Science Foundation to research the impact of hate, government targeting and profiling on physical and mental health, the statement said.

The resolution is backed by organizations including the Muslim Justice League, Council on American-Islamic Relations and The Sikh Coalition, the statement added.

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White House Says Cannot Confirm Reports US Leaning on Sending ATACMS to Ukraine

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - A White House National Security Council spokesperson told Sputnik he cannot confirm reports claiming that the Biden administration is leaning towards supplying Ukraine with long-range Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS).

"I cannot," the spokesperson said on Friday when asked to confirm reports that the United States is likely to send ATACMS to Ukraine.

US media reported, citing Biden administration officials, that the United States is likely to send Ukraine ATACMS, but it could be months before they are delivered.

One official said the ATACMS "are coming," the reports said.

The ATACMS are likely to be included in an upcoming security assistance package, however, no final decision has been made and plans could change, the reports added.

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US Judge Rejects Meadows' Bid to Move Georgia Election Case to Federal Court - Ruling

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - Judge Steve Jones ruled to reject former White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows' motion to move his Georgia election subversion case to US federal court.

"Because the Court lacks jurisdiction over this matter, the Court directs the Clerk to Terminate all pending motions and close this case," Jones wrote in his ruling on Friday.

Meadows argued his case should be moved to federal court because the allegations in the indictment against him were in connection to his duties as White House chief of staff.

Jones said Meadows' motion did not meet the threshold for removal to federal court because the activities under scrutiny were not conducted as part of his role at the White House.

The ruling could potentially foreshadow future rulings for other defendants who are trying to get their cases moved to federal court.

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Meadows' lawyer George Terwilliger said his client did nothing criminal and only carried out his legal duties as White House chief of staff, it was reported earlier. The supremacy clause of the US Constitution prohibits state interference in a federal official's duties.

Jones said the court finds the color of the Office of the White House Chief of Staff did not include working with or working for the campaign of former President Donald Trump, except for simply coordinating the president's schedule, traveling with the president to campaign events and redirecting communications to the campaign.

"Thus, consistent with his testimony and the federal statutes and regulations, engaging in political activities exceeds the outer limits of the Office of the White House Chief of Staff," Jones added.

Meadows is among 18 co-defendants indicted in the criminal case related to their alleged efforts to overturn the 2020 US presidential election in the state of Georgia.

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Biden Administration Likely to Send ATACMS to Ukraine, Could Arrive in Months - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is likely to approve supplying Ukraine with long-range Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS), but it could be months before they arrive, ABC News reported citing US officials.

A US official said the ATACMS "are coming," the report said on Friday.

The ATACMS are likely to be included in an upcoming security assistance package, however, no final decision has been made and plans may change.

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New York Mayor Adams Unveils 2 September 11 Victims Identifications - Statement

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - New York City Mayor Eric Adams and Chief Medical Examiner Jason Graham revealed the identification of two victims of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, the City of New York announced in a statement on its website.

According to the statement on Friday, the individuals - a man and a woman - whose identities are protected at their families' request, mark the 1,648th and 1,649th person identified by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) through advanced DNA testing.

The statement said the man's identity was established through DNA testing of his remains recovered in 2001, while the woman's identity was established through DNA testing of remains retrieved in 2001, 2006 and 2013.

However, despite these positive developments, 1,104 victims remain unidentified, constituting 40% of those who perished on September 11, 2001.

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In addition to the two recent identifications, the OCME has identified another 60 human remains linked to previously identified individuals.

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US Defense Official Says Short-Term Spending Bills Risk Development on Next Fuel Tanker

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - The US Air Force will experience delays in work to develop the next-generation refueling tank if Congress continues to adopt short-term spending bills instead of a full budget, US Assistant Secretary for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Andrew Hunter said in an interview with Defense News.

The report said on Friday, according to Hunter, that a lengthy short-term spending bill this year and next year could delay work on the next-generation aerial refueling system (NGAS) and create further problems in the future.

The Air Force hopes to field a new aerial refueling tanker by the mid-2030s, but any delays will expand the timeline further, the report said.

US defense officials have repeatedly warned US lawmakers that short-term spending bills delay and impact Defense Department programs.

Boeing and Lockheed Martin are expected to compete for the contract to develop the next air refueling tanker for the Air Force.

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US House May Consider FY2024 Defense Appropriations Bill Next Week - Majority Leader

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives may consider the Defense Department appropriations bill for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 next week, House Majority Leader Steve Scalise said in a weekly schedule.

The House may consider the defense appropriations bill next Wednesday or Thursday pursuant to a rule, the schedule said on Friday.

The House is set to consider the legislation as it also gears up to pass a continuing resolution by the end of the month to temporarily fund the US government and avoid a shutdown. Lawmakers are expected to continue working on appropriations bills during the funding extension.

In June, the House Appropriations Committee passed a draft of the defense appropriations bill, which would provide $826.45 billion in new discretionary spending. The legislation includes a pay raise for US military servicemembers and investments in security cooperation with Taiwan.

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UPDATE - China Never Interfered in Canada's Internal Affairs, Has No Interest to Do So - Embassy

(Updates with background in paras 4, 9)

WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) - The Chinese Embassy in Ottawa said on Friday that China has never meddled in Canada's internal affairs and has no interest in engaging in such activities.

"China has always adhered to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. We have no interest in and have never interfered in Canada's internal affairs and elections. With ulterior political motives, some Canadian politicians and media have been spreading lies and disinformation against China for a long time," the Chinese Embassy said in a statement obtained by Sputnik.

On Thursday, the Canadian government appointed Quebec Court of Appeal Justice Marie-Josee Hogue to lead the country's public inquiry on foreign interference that is expected to focus on alleged meddling by China and Russia - a move the Chinese Embassy said it deplores and opposes.

The decision to appoint Hogue came after months of negotiations between the government and the opposition parties following the resignation of former Governor General David Johnston as Special Rapporteur on Foreign Interference.

The Chinese Embassy pointed out to Canadian-led overt and covert efforts at undermining China's security and stability by supporting separatist activities related to Taiwan, Xinjiang, and Hong Kong, highlighting Ottawa's double standards on foreign interference.

"These [activities] are out-and-out interference in other country's internal affairs," the statement said.

The Chinese Embassy exhorted Canada to relinquish its ideological bias toward China and refrain from encouraging misinformation and disinformation aimed at it.

Moreover, if Canada continues misleading its citizens and undermining bilateral relations, it would have to "bear the consequences," the statement said.

Sino-Canadian relations have considerably worsened in recent years, as China imprisoned two Canadians - Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig - on espionage charges after Canada detained Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou. Canada has viewed the arrest of its two citizens as being politically motivated.

In addition, the Canadian media and political establishments have been increasingly targeting China and its embassy in Ottawa over their alleged meddling in the country's elections of 2019 and 2021. Chinese Ambassador Cong Peiwu has repeatedly denied the allegations.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

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WASHINGTON, September 9 (Sputnik) -

US-INDIA TALKS

* The United States and India on Friday issued a joint statement that they would expand cooperation in exploring outer space and Artificial Intelligence as well as between their defense sectors.
* Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi looks forward to meeting US President Joe Biden at the next Quad leaders' summit that is scheduled to take place in India in 2024, the joint statement said.
* Biden welcome during his meeting with Modi in New Delhi India's request to buy US-made advanced remotely piloted aircraft, the White House said.

G20 SUMMIT

* India expects the decision on the African Union's membership in the G20 group to be made at the upcoming New Delhi summit this weekend, Foreign Secretary of India Vinay Kwatra said on Friday.
* The declaration of the G20 leaders' summit in New Delhi is "almost ready" and will be offered to the leaders for signing, Indian G20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant said
* The G7 countries are putting pressure on India in order to reflect their unilateral stance on the conflict in Ukraine in final documents of the upcoming G20 summit, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

RUSSIAN ECONOMY

* Russia's GDP growth in the second quarter of 2023 amounted to 4.9%, according to the Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat) report published on Friday.
* Russia's inflation in annual terms accelerated to 5.15% in August from 4.3% in July, Rosstat said.
* The Russian budget deficit for January-August amounted to 1.5% of the GDP or 2.361 trillion rubles ($24.1 billion) as per preliminary estimates, the Finance Ministry said.

UKRAINIAN DRONE ATTACKS IN RUSSIA

* Russia's air defense intercepted another Ukrainian aircraft-type drone over Bryansk Region, and the building of the railway station was damaged by debris, Governor Alexander Bogomaz said on Friday.
* An infrastructure facility caught fire in Russia's Bryansk after fall of a drone's debris, Bogomaz said, adding that firefighters are responding to the situation.
* Russian air defense system intercepted three Ukrainian aircraft-type drones over Bryansk, two of which were destroyed in the air, the Russian defense Ministry said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Friday he is "not very hopeful" that the Russia-Ukraine conflict will soon reach a peaceful resolution.
* Ukraine has lost more than 215 soldiers in the Donetsk direction over the past 24 hours, the

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Russian Defense Ministry said.

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Musk Moved to Turn Off Starlink Near Crimea in 2022 After Antonov Talks - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 8 (Sputnik) - Elon Musk made the decision to deactivate his company's Starlink satellites near Crimea last year after a discussion with Russian Ambassador Anatoly Antonov, Politico reported on Friday, citing a new biography about the US tech billionaire.

Walter Isaacson's forthcoming biography, "Elon Musk," sheds light on how Musk reacted to the planned Ukrainian attack, which involved using Starlink satellites to guide six explosive-laden drones toward the Crimean coast, according to the report.

According to the book, Russian Ambassador Anatoly Antonov during his conversation with Musk cautioned that an attack on Crimea could prompt a nuclear response.

Elon Musk afterward ordered his engineers to deactivate Starlink coverage within a 100-kilometer radius of the Crimean coast.

Musk's primary objective, as outlined in the report, was to prevent the situation from escalating into a global conflict.

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China Never Interfered in Canada's Internal Affairs, Has No Interest to Do So - Embassy

WASHINGTON, September 8 (Sputnik) - The Chinese Embassy in Ottawa said on Friday that China has never meddled in Canada's internal affairs and has no interest in engaging in such activities.

"China has always adhered to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. We have no interest in and have never interfered in Canada’s internal affairs and elections. With ulterior political motives, some Canadian politicians and media have been spreading lies and disinformation against China for a long time," the Chinese Embassy said in a statement obtained by Sputnik.

On Thursday, the Canadian government appointed Quebec Court of Appeal Justice Marie-Josee Hogue to lead the country’s public inquiry on foreign interference that is expected to focus on alleged meddling by China and Russia - a move the Chinese Embassy said it deplores and opposes.

The Chinese Embassy pointed out to Canadian-led overt and covert efforts at undermining China’s security and stability by supporting separatist activities related to Taiwan, Xinjiang, and Hong Kong, highlighting Ottawa’s double standards on foreign interference.

"These [activities] are out-and-out interference in other country’s internal affairs," the statement

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Sino-Canadian relations have considerably worsened in recent years, as China imprisoned the two Canadians - Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig - on espionage charges in response to Canada's detention of Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou.

In addition, the Canadian media and political establishments have been increasingly targeting China and its embassy in Ottawa over their alleged meddling in the country's elections of 2019 and 2021. Chinese Ambassador Cong Peiwu has repeatedly denied the allegations.

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Dems Developing Plan to Counter Possible Republican Biden Impeachment Attempt - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 8 (Sputnik) - Democrats in the House of Representatives are developing a strategy to counter a potential attempt by Republicans to impeach President Joe Biden for alleged bribery, the Messenger reported on Friday citing US lawmakers and congressional aides.

Earlier this week, Republican Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene said a majority of House members support investigating Biden in order to move forward with impeachment proceedings.

The report said that Democrats in the House believe it is inevitable that Republicans will move forward with impeachment proceedings unless House Speaker Kevin McCarthy stops those efforts.

White House officials have been in regular contact with congressional Democrats about the Republican-led investigations into Biden and his family, the report said.

House Republicans have been investigating allegations that Biden was involved in a bribery scheme in Ukraine, allegations that he was involved in his son Hunter Biden's overseas business dealing, and and accusations that his Justice Department interfered with the federal tax investigation into Hunter Biden.

House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer said the House could vote to impeach Biden as early as mid-September.

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Oil Rallies Up on Friday for 2nd Week in Row as Supply Scare Rules

NEW YORK, September 8 (Sputnik) - Oil prices rose for a second week in a row as traders hedged against supply insecurities, ramped up by concerns that Saudi Arabia and Russia will

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be removing a combined 1.3 million barrels per day from the market until the end of 2023.

Both New York-traded West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude and its London-based peer Brent reversed Thursday's drop of close to 1% as the weekend approached.

WTI settled at $87.51 per barrel, up 64 cents, or 0.7%, on the day. The US crude benchmark hit a ten-month peak of $88.09 on Wednesday. With a net gain in three days versus two, WTI rose 2.2% on the week, extending the prior week's 7.2% rally.

Brent settled at $90.65, up 73 cents, or 0.8%, on the day, recapturing the $90 handle which it momentarily lost for the first time on Thursday after gaining it on Tuesday. For the week, the global oil benchmark rose 2.4%, extending the prior week's 4.8% gain.

Brent's rise to above $90 came with less than three weeks left for summer, the season Americans like driving the most. With the fall season of lower oil usage set to begin on September 23, crude prices would typically retreat a little and sometimes meaningfully.

But that may not happen this time, not with Saudi Arabia's target of ultimately getting oil to $100 a barrel or beyond. The Saudis, who control much of the world's oil exports, have been trying to bring oil back to triple digit pricing since losing that advantage in August 2022, when Brent crude hovered above $105 per barrel.

Key to this is the 1 million-barrels-per day in additional cuts, on top of other existing production rationing, that the Saudis have been carrying out since July. By extending this till the year-end and widening it with the help of Moscow, which will cut 300,000 barrels per day of Russian production, Saudi Arabia is hoping to create a different sort of market phenomenon for pricing.

Fear of less oil for the market to play with was playing on traders' minds, particularly with the approach of the weekend, which tends to put the market on a hedging overdrive, said analysts.

"Oil prices have consolidated a little as we've moved through the week but the trend remains very positive for crude, backed once again by the decision from Saudi Arabia and Russia to extend supply restrictions to the end of the year," Craig Erlam, analyst at online trading platform OANDA, said.

"A lot more oil [is] off the market at a time when it's clearly quite tight, albeit with a global economic outlook that is highly uncertain. Demand may still wane but traders appear to be working on the assumption of soft landings and mild recessions at worst. China is another unknown with slow and steady growth, by its standards, looking like the path ahead," Erlam said.

Data showed on Thursday overall Chinese exports and imports fell in August, as sagging overseas demand and weak consumer spending squeezed businesses.

However, even in times of lackluster economic activity, China tends to bolster its storage capacity, particularly with the availability of cheap Russian crude. Last month, Chinese crude imports rose nearly 31%.

Meanwhile, questions remain about whether central banks in the United States and Europe will continue their aggressive interest rate hike campaigns to tame persistent inflation.

The Saudis are "acutely aware of the tightrope" which they walk between tight supplies and the limited progress in fighting achieved by central banks, John Evans from the oil broker PVM said.

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

Kroger Reaches Preliminary Settlement in Nationwide Opioid Litigation - Statement

WASHINGTON, September 8 (Sputnik) - The Kroger Co. has entered into a preliminary settlement agreement to resolve a significant portion of opioid-related claims filed by states, subdivisions and Native American tribes accusing the supermarket chain's pharmacies of helping fuel the opioid epidemic in the country, the company said on Friday.

"The Kroger Co. has reached an agreement in principle with plaintiffs to settle the majority of opioid claims that have been or could be brought against the Company," the Kroger Co. said in a press release.

Under the terms of the preliminary agreement, Kroger has committed to paying up to $1.2 billion to states and subdivisions while also allocating $36 million to support Native American tribes in their initiatives to combat the opioid crisis, the statement said.

According to the statement, these payments will be disbursed over 11 years in equal installments.

Furthermore, Kroger has set aside approximately $177 million to cover legal fees and expenses, with these payments to be made over six years, the statement said.

The settlement extends the option to participate to states, subdivisions, and Native American tribes, the statement said.

If all conditions are met, this agreement is expected to provide a comprehensive resolution to claims made on behalf of participating states, subdivisions, and tribes.

The statement from Kroger underscores that this settlement should not be interpreted as an admission of wrongdoing or liability.

The company reiterates its commitment to vigorously defending against any remaining claims and lawsuits related to opioids that fall outside the scope of this final agreement, the statement said.

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Respectful Dialogue, Humility Key to Stable US-India Relations - Senior NSC Official

WASHINGTON, September 8 (Sputnik) - Some key features to maintaining stable relations between the United States and India are respectful dialogue and humility in approaching challenges, Kurt Campbell, coordinator for Indo-Pacific Affairs at the US National Security Council (NSC), said on Friday.

"I think the key here is for us to maintain a respectful dialogue and to approach some of the challenges with a degree of humility given some of the challenges that we face in our own country as well," Campbell told reporters in New Delhi.

Over the last couple of years, the United States has been able to strengthen relations with India after decades of distrust and uncertainty between the two countries, Campbell said.

Earlier on Friday, US President Joe Biden met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi prior

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to the Group of Twenty (G20) summit this weekend in New Delhi.

Modi said in a statement that his meeting with Biden was very productive and they were able to discuss numerous topics, which will further economic and people-to-people linkages between India and the United States.

The two countries released a joint statement following the Biden-Modi meeting, highlighting their agreement to expand cooperation on space exploration, artificial intelligence and defense, among other areas.

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FBI Chief Says Number of Russian Spies in US Remains 'Way Too Big'

WASHINGTON, September 8 (Sputnik) - FBI Director Christopher Wray said the number of Russian intelligence officers operating inside the United States remains too large despite all the efforts of American services to prevent their activities.

"The Russian traditional counterintelligence threat continues to loom large," Wray said during remarks at the Spy Museum in Washington. "The Russian intelligence footprint, and by that I mean intelligence officers, is still way too big in the United States and something we are constantly bumping up against and trying to block and prevent and disrupt in every way we can."

Wray at the same pointed out that in recent years, American counterintelligence managed to identify and expel several dozens of alleged Russian spies.

Wray added that Russia allegedly employs both intelligence officers and so-called "cut-outs" or intermediary figures as in the case of a Mexican national detained by US authorities in 2020 on espionage charges.

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US, India Resolve Longstanding WTO Poultry Dispute - Trade Representative

WASHINGTON, September 8 (Sputnik) - US Trade Representative Katherine Tai announced that the United States and India have reached an agreement to resolve their last remaining dispute at the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Office of the US Trade Representative said in a statement on Friday.

"Resolving this last outstanding WTO dispute represents an important milestone in the US-India trade relationship, while reducing tariffs on certain US products enhances crucial market access for American agricultural producers," remarked United States Trade Representative Katherine Tai in the statement.

As part of the agreement, India has committed to lowering tariffs on specific US products, including frozen turkey, frozen duck, fresh and processed blueberries and cranberries, the

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statement said.
The announcement coincides with US President Joe Biden's meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during Thursday's Group of Twenty (G20) Leaders' Summit in New Delhi.
In June, the United States and India agreed to settle six other outstanding disputes at the WTO, the statement added.

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Guterres Wants to Move Forward With Grain Deal During UN General Assembly, G20 - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, September 8 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will take actions to move forward with reviving the grain exports agreement formally known as the Black Sea Initiative, during the Group of Twenty (G20) Summit in India or during the UN General Assembly in New York, United Nations spokesperson Farhan Haq said on Friday.
"Whether it's the G20 or the UN General Assembly session later this month, the Secretary General does intend as he has been doing all along, to try to move forward with the Black Sea initiative and with efforts in general to enhance the flow of exports from Ukraine and Russia," Haq said during a press briefing.
Russia has still not responded to Guterres' letter in which he proposed ways to provide Russian products to the global markets, Haq added.
On Monday, Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan met in Sochi to discuss the situation concerning the grain exports agreement among other issues. Putin said Russia is ready to return to the agreement as soon as the sanctions on the export of Russian foods and fertilizers are lifted.
The agreement, signed on July 18, 2022, provided for a humanitarian maritime corridor in the Black Sea to allow exports Ukrainian grain as well as Russian grain and fertilizer. Moscow had repeatedly complained that the provisions pertaining to Russia had not been fulfilled and that most of the grain ended up in the European countries while only a small amount in the food-insecure poorer nations globally.

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US Senator Graham on Georgia Indictment Recommendation: Actions ‘Consistent’ With Job

WASHINGTON, September 8 (Sputnik) - US Senator Lindsey Graham said on Friday that his actions related to the 2020 US presidential election were consistent with his duties as a lawmaker, following the release of a special grand jury report from Georgia that recommended indicting Graham.
“At the end of the day, nothing happened. What I did was consistent with my job as being a

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United States Senator, Chairman of the Judiciary Committee," Graham told reporters.

Earlier on Friday, a Georgia court released a special grand jury report that recommended charges against dozens of individuals for alleged efforts to overturn 2020 election results, including former US President Donald Trump and Graham. Trump and 18 others were ultimately indicted, while Graham has avoided criminal charges.

Graham also cautioned against allowing the US legal system to be used as a "political tool."

Trump has also denied the accusations against him and characterized the prosecution as election interference and a weaponization of the justice system.

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US House Oversight Panel Renews Request to Justice Dept. on Biden Victims' Rights - Letter

WASHINGTON, September 8 (Sputnik) - US House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer and Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene on Friday sent a letter to the US Department of Justice (DOJ) to renew their request for information related to the potential failure to uphold the rights of victims who were allegedly sexually exploited by President Joe Biden's son, Hunter.

In July, the panel requested information regarding the Justice Department's handling of victims' rights in the Hunter Biden probe, but the department failed to respond to the request for four weeks, the letter said.

"It is unclear to the [Oversight] Committee as to why you both made the alarming decision to ignore our original request. This conduct is unprofessional and concerning given your leadership roles at DOJ," the letter said.

The lawmakers' letter was addressed to Justice Department National Human Trafficking Coordinator Hilary Axam and Director of the Office for Victims of Crime Kristina Rose.

The lawmakers allege that Hunter Biden may have concealed illegal payments to prostitutes by claiming business expenses through one of his companies. The panel has previously expressed concerns that the Justice Department may be limiting the relief available to the victims by ignoring more severe criminal charges against Biden.

The panel has "great skepticism" about the Justice Department adequately communicating with crime victims despite receiving millions of dollars in its annual budget for that purpose, the letter said.

"Considering DOJ's public campaign purporting its commitment to prosecuting human trafficking and other sexual exploitation crimes, DOJ should respond to Congressional requests related to this issue in a timely and thorough manner," the letter added.

The letter requests that the Justice Department provide information on their engagement with victims linked to the Biden probe and any communications related to their lack of a response to the panel's initial request for information.

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

Former US House Speaker Pelosi Announces Run for Re-Election - Statement

WASHINGTON, September 8 (Sputnik) - Former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Friday announced that she will run for reelection in 2024.

"Now more than ever our City needs us to advance San Francisco values and further our recovery," Pelosi said in a statement. "Our country needs America to show the world that our flag is still there, with liberty and justice for all. That is why I am running for reelection - and respectfully ask for your vote."

Pelosi represents a district in California that includes the city of San Francisco.

After Republicans took control of the House this year, Pelosi announced she would not run for the leadership post among her Democratic colleagues.

Pelosi's career as US lawmaker spans 35 years, during which time she became the first woman elected to serve as the House speaker in 2007 - a position she would retake in 2019.

During her time as leader of House Democrats, she spearheaded the passage of the Affordable Care Act, impeached then-President Donald Trump twice and visited Taiwan in 2022 despite protests from the Chinese government.

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Biden Welcomes India's Request for MQ-9B Remotely Piloted Aircraft - Joint Statement

WASHINGTON, September 8 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden during a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi welcomed India's request to buy US-made advanced remotely piloted aircraft, according to a joint statement published by the White House on Friday.

"Biden welcomed the issuance of a Letter of Request from the Ministry of Defence of India to procure 31 General Atomics MQ-9B (16 Sky Guardian and 15 Sea Guardian) remotely piloted aircraft and their associated equipment, which will enhance the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities of India’s armed forces across all domains," the statement said.

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Biden Says $50Mln Renovation of White House Situation Room Completed

WASHINGTON, September 8 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden on Thursday announced that the 15-year-long renovation of the White House Situation Room has been completed.

"Folks, the newly renovated White House Situation Room is up and running. My thanks to everyone who worked on this incredible facility," Biden said via social media.

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The White House Situation Room underwent extensive changes during the renovation project, which has been overseen by the Situation Room Director Marc Gustafson. The project slightly exceeded the initial $50 million budget secured for the renovation.

The White House has said that the Situation Room is a pivotal hub for the US government, enabling the monitoring and response to national security crises, including natural disasters, terrorist threats and military operations.

Given the historical significance of the Situation Room in key events such as the capture of Osama bin Laden and the Cuban missile crisis, the renovation underscores the commitment to maintaining the security and functionality of the facility, according to the White House.

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US, India Agree to Expand Cooperation in Exploring Space, AI - Joint Statement

WASHINGTON, September 8 (Sputnik) - The United States and India on Friday issued a joint statement that they would expand cooperation in the efforts to explore outer space.

"The leaders welcomed efforts towards establishment of a working group for commercial space collaboration under the existing India-US Civil Space Joint Working Group," the statement said.

The Indian Space Research Organization and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration NASA have commenced discussions on the modalities, capacity building and training for a joint effort to the International Space Station (ISS) in 2024, the statement said.

The two space agencies are continuing efforts to finalize a strategic framework for human space flight cooperation by the end of 2023, the statement added.

Moreover, the two countries also agreed to expand cooperation between their defense industries and in the field of artificial intelligence (AI), according to the statement.

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Modi Looks Forward to Welcoming Biden to 2024 Quad Summit in India - Joint Statement

WASHINGTON, September 8 (Sputnik) – Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi looks forward to meeting US President Joe Biden at the next Quad leaders' summit that is scheduled to take place in India in 2024, according to a joint statement published by the White House on Friday.

"Prime Minister Modi and President Biden reaffirmed the importance of the Quad in supporting a free, open, inclusive, and resilient Indo-Pacific. Prime Minister Modi looked forward to welcoming President Biden to the next Quad Leaders' Summit to be hosted by India in 2024," the joint statement said.

Earlier in the day, Biden arrived in India to participate in a G20 summit and met with Modi ahead of the summit to discuss a range of issues, including China.

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Viktor Bout Says Empathizes With Brittney Griner as 'Pawn' in US-Russia Prisoner Swap

WASHINGTON, September 8 (Sputnik) - Russian businessman and former US prisoner Viktor Bout said on Friday that he empathizes with US basketball player and former Russian prisoner Brittney Griner being used as a pawn in a prisoner swap between the United States and Russia last year.

"Of course, I feel, you know, bad or sorry for any person who's going to be used as a pawn, despite whether they committed [a crime] or not," Bout said in an interview with ESPN.

Bout said that people like him and Griner pay the price of politicians playing geopolitical chess.

Bout and Griner crossed paths on the tarmac during the prisoner swap in December 2022. Bout said he wished Griner good luck before leaving for their respective planes, noting that Griner was "way taller" than him.

Bout said he agreed to speak to US media because he thinks that Americans and Russians have "common ground" for normal ties between the two countries.

Bout also addressed outrage about how his own 25-year sentence in the US on felony charges stemming from an arms deal sting compared to Griner's nine-year sentence for bringing cannabis oil into Russia.

"Well, think of this, that the same outrage was in Russia when I was sentenced to 25 years," Bout said. "There is not even a proper translation to Russian of the crime of conspiracy."

Following the prisoner swap, former US district judge Shira Scheindlin, who presided over Bout's trial, told Sputnik that there was no equivalence between Bout and Griner's convictions and that the deal was not a "fair trade." Bout maintains that he never intended to sell weapons as alleged.

Bout is running for a seat in the legislative assembly of Russia's Ulyanovsk region. Elections for the assembly are set for Sunday.

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Arlington National Cemetery Says Emergency Services Responding to Bomb Threat

WASHINGTON, September 8 (Sputnik) – Arlington National Cemetery said on Friday that emergency services and local officials are investigating a bomb threat while the cemetery is closed for visits and funerals.

"Arlington National Cemetery officials and Joint Base Myer Henderson-Hall emergency services are currently responding to a bomb threat. The cemetery is closed to the general public and funeral services have been delayed until further notice," the cemetery's administration wrote on social media. "The public is requested to avoid the area and wait for updates posted to our social media platforms."

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The cemetery is the burial place of approximately 400,000 US military personnel and is located in close proximity to Washington DC.

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US Aviation Authority Says Closed Investigation Into SpaceX's April Starship Test Launch

(Updates with more details in paras 5, 6)

WASHINGTON, September 8 (Sputnik) - The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) announced on Friday that it has closed its investigation into the April 20 explosion of a Starship rocket and ordered 63 corrective actions Elon Musk's company must take to prevent future incidents.

"The FAA has closed the SpaceX Starship Super Heavy mishap investigation. The final report cites multiple root causes of the April 20, 2023, mishap and 63 corrective actions SpaceX must take to prevent mishap reoccurrence," FAA said in a press release.

FAA clarified that the closure of the investigation does not signal an immediate resumption of Starship launches at Boca Chica.

On April 20, the world's biggest rocket exploded just minutes into taking off for the first time. As a result of the explosion, the launch pad was destroyed, sending debris and ash over a large area, including adjacent lands that provide habitat for endangered species.

SpaceX also released a statement on Friday that it had implemented a number of upgrades and improvements following the first test failure, including making significant reinforcements to the pad foundation, mitigating leaks and expanding the rocket's fire suppression system, among others.

In addition, the company said it has implemented a suite of unrelated to the April incident system performance upgrades like building and testing a new hot-stage separation system that will allow pushing the ship away from the booster during the ignition of the second-stage engines, the statement said.

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US May Cut Military Presence in Niger by Nearly Half Amid Coup - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 8 (Sputnik) - The United States is preparing to possibly reduce its military presence in Niger by nearly a half amid the ongoing coup, Politico reported on Friday citing two US defense officials familiar with the matter.

The report said the number of US troops in Niger could be reduced to 500, but no final decision has been made.

The US currently has some 1,100 military personnel in Niger, according to the Pentagon.

The US, the report said, wants to have enough American forces remain in Niger to be able to conduct counterterrorism operations.

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On Thursday, Pentagon spokesperson Sabrina Singh said US troops have been moving from an airbase in Niamey to another airbase in Agadez, although a small troop presence will remain in the capital of Niger.

Singh emphasized that there was currently no threat to US personnel in Niger and that the repositioning of troops was simply a precaution.

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UNSC Should Prioritize Restoring Peace Between Russia, Ukraine - Chinese Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, September 8 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council (UNSC) should prioritize achieving a ceasefire and restoring peace in Ukraine "at an early date," Chinese Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations Geng Shuang said on Friday.

"The Security Council should work with a greater sense of responsibility and urgency to find ways to achieve a ceasefire and restore peace at an early date. Priority should be given to making good use of remediation tools granted by the charter, to promote the implementation of various peace initiatives, and to leverage the court row of the International collective security mechanism," Geng said during a UN Security Council meeting on the maintenance of peace and stability in Ukraine.

Geng also said that the Ukrainian crisis has complex origins and there will be no easy fix, adding that efforts from all parties are required to achieve peace.

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US Urges States Not to Lend Credibility to Russian Elections in Ex-Ukrainian Areas - Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, September 8 (Sputnik) - United Nations member states should refrain from "lending credibility" to elections organized by Russia in former Ukrainian territories, US Ambassador and Alternative Representative for Special Political Affairs to the United Nations Robert Wood said on Friday.

"We urge all UN member states to refrain from actions that serve to lend credibility to Russia's sham elections on Ukraine sovereign territory. We must all call out Russia's egregious violations of international law for what they are; a stain on our collective history as a body founded on maintaining world peace, and an assault on a rule based international order," Wood said during a UN Security Council on the maintenance of peace and stability in Ukraine.

The ambassador emphasized that the United States would never recognize the election results as well as Russia’s claims to the Luhansk and Donetsk People’s Republics or the Zaporozhzhia and Kherson region.

Wood also said that Russia holding elections in the newly integrated regions would by no means represent the will of Ukrainians and would be a "complete fraud."

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Russia's alleged occupation of these territories would continue to be condemned by the United States, adding that Washington and its allies and partners would work on pursuing the provision of additional military assistance to Ukraine..

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US Air Force Warns Chinese Military Targeting, Recruiting US Service Personnel - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 8 (Sputnik) - US Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Charles Brown Jr. warned that China is "targeting and recruiting" current and former US service personnel in order to advance its own military capabilities, The Washington Post reported Friday, citing a copy of his memo.

In the memo, which was distributed to Air Force personnel on Friday, Brown said the Chinese military was "targeting and recruiting US and NATO-trained military talent across specialties and career fields."

"Many of those who accept contracts with these foreign companies are eroding our national security, putting the very safety of their fellow servicemembers and the country at risk," he warned.

Such companies hire American service personnel to teach advanced military skills, the Post reported, citing unnamed officials. They are contracted by the Chinese government and are either privately-owned or backed by the Chinese government.

China's military also targets Americans through job ads or directly approaching them at defense industry events, the Post reported, citing a special agent with the Air Force Office of Special Investigation. The agent said that pilots are routinely targeted, as well as those with specialized Air Force knowledge, such as aerospace ground equipment maintainers and landing-signals officers.

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Georgia Grand Jury Urged Charges Against US Senator Graham, Flynn in Trump Probe - Filing

(Updates with more details, background in paras 5-7)

WASHINGTON, September 8 (Sputnik) - A special purpose grand jury in the US state of Georgia recommended criminal charges against US Senator Lindsey Graham, former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn and others yet to be indicted in connection with a probe into alleged efforts by former President Donald Trump and his allies to overturn 2020 US presidential election results, according to a grand jury report filed on Friday.

The special grand jury recommended that prosecutors seek indictments against Graham, Flynn, Trump and dozens of other individuals "with respect to the national effort to overturn the 2020 presidential election results" in several US states, the filing said.

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Fulton County Superior Court Judge Robert McBurney authorized the release of the special grand jury report. The grand jury was impaneled pursuant to a January 24, 2022 order and heard evidence from or involving 75 witnesses from June to December 2022.

The special grand jury's report informed prosecutors' decision to seek to indict Trump on criminal charges, which the former president has denied, characterizing the prosecution as election interference and weaponization of the US justice system against political opponents.

Last month, prosecutors secured indictments against Trump and 18 others for their alleged role in efforts to overturn 2020 presidential election results. The special grand jury report urged indictments against nearly 40 people.

A majority of the special grand jury also believed that one or more witnesses may have committed perjury during their testimony to the panel, the filing said. The panel recommended that prosecutors seek appropriate charges where evidence is compelling, the filing said.

The Georgia case against Trump comes alongside other state and federal cases involving the former president, including for alleged mishandling of classified documents and actions linked to the January 6, 2021 US Capitol riot. Trump is battling the accusations while attempting to secure the Republican Party nomination for the 2024 US presidential election.

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US FAA Says Closed Investigation Into SpaceX's April Starship Test Launch

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UN Concerned About Russia Holding Elections in 'Occupied Areas of Ukraine' - Official

UNITED NATIONS, September 8 (Sputnik) - The United Nations is concerned that Russia wants to organize elections in what it called were "occupied areas of Ukraine" and holding elections

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there would be devoid of "legal grounds," UN Assistant Secretary-General Miroslav Jenca said on Friday.

"In this regard, we are concerned over reports of the Russian Federation holding so-called elections in areas of Ukraine currently under Russian military control. These so-called elections in the occupied areas of Ukraine have no legal grounds," Jenca said during a UN Security Council meeting on Ukraine.

The Assistant Undersecretary-General also said that Russia has to respect Ukraine's laws.

On Thursday, the Russian Embassy in the United States characterized similar statements made by the US government about holding elections in Russia's new territories to be an interference in the country's internal affairs.

In August, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he would like Ukraine to hold presidential and parliamentary elections in 2024. However, Zelenskyy made the statement on the condition that the Ukrainian parliament makes legislative changes to allow holding elections under martial law and the United States and the European Union finance the elections.

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Guterres Says UN's Global Family 'Dysfunctional,' Requires Reform

UNITED NATIONS, September 8 (Sputnik) - If the United Nations can be called a global family, it is a "rather dysfunctional" one, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Friday.

"If we are, indeed, one global family, we today resemble a rather dysfunctional one," Guterres told reporters.

The global financial architecture is also outdated, dysfunctional, and unfair, he continued.

"It requires deep structural reform, and the same can be said about the UN Security Council," the UN chief stated.

Guterres stressed the need for effective international institutions rooted in the 21st-century realities and based on the UN Charter and international law.

The secretary-general pointed out that global divisions, tensions, and distrust are growing, leading to fragmentation. He also noted that the world is experiencing a difficult moment of transition. Guterres expressed confidence that its future should be multipolar.

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US Seizes Nearly 1Mln Barrels of Iranian Crude Oil - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 8 (Sputnik) - The US Justice Department said on Friday that it had seized over 980,000 barrels of contraband crude oil from Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, as part of the resolution of a criminal case involving the shipping company Empire Navigation, according to a release.

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"The Justice Department announced today the successful disruption of a multimillion-dollar shipment of crude oil by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), a designated foreign terrorist organization, that was bound for another country," the release stated. "This is the first-ever criminal resolution involving a company that violated sanctions by facilitating the illicit sale and transport of Iranian oil and comes in concert with a successful seizure of over 980,000 barrels of contraband crude oil."

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Georgia Grand Jury Urged Charges Against US Senator Graham, Flynn in Trump Probe - Filing

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The grand jury recommended that prosecutors seek indictments against Graham, Flynn, Trump and dozens of other individuals "with respect to the national effort to overturn the 2020 presidential election results" in several US states, the filing said.

Fulton County Superior Court Judge Robert McBurney authorized the release of the grand jury report. The grand jury was impaneled pursuant to a January 24, 2022 order and heard evidence from or involving 75 witnesses from June to December 2022.

The special grand jury's report informed prosecutors' decision to indict Trump on criminal charges, which the former president has denied, characterizing the prosecution as election interference and weaponization of the US justice system against political opponents.

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Yellen Discusses IMF Quota Increase, Poverty Reduction With Spanish Counterpart - Treasury

WASHINGTON, September 8 (Sputnik) - Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen met with her Spanish counterpart, Nadia Calvino, on Friday to reaffirm the US's support for an increase in International Monetary Fund quota resources, the Treasury said.

Both economy chiefs met on the sidelines of the G20 summit in India. In addition to her economic portfolio, Calvino also serves as Spain's First Deputy Prime Minister and chairs the International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC).

The IMFC advises and reports to the IMF Board of Governors on the supervision of the international monetary and financial system, including responses to unfolding events that may pose risks to the system.

"Secretary Yellen emphasized the U.S. support for an equiproportional quota increase at the

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IMF to return the IMF to a quota-based institution and secure its financing over the medium-term," the statement said.

Yellen also discussed the importance of increasing the voice of emerging and developing economies at the IMF as well as the need to secure the sustainability of the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust.

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Guterres on Ukraine Conflict: UN Not to Blame for Member States' Actions

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 8 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Friday that the United Nations does not bear responsibility for what is happening in Ukraine.

"It's easy to blame the UN for what the member states do. But it was not the UN that invaded Ukraine. It was not the one that created the conditions for this conflict. So let's make things clear. The responsibilities of member states must be assumed by member states," Guterres told reporters in New Delhi.

Gutteres spoke at a press conference ahead of the G20 summit in India.

The secretary-general was responding to a question about the UN's "dysfunctional" role in efforts to resolve the Ukraine conflict.

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Biden Arrives in New Delhi for G20 Summit

WASHINGTON, September 8 (Sputnik) – US President Biden arrived to a red carpet welcome in New Delhi on Friday to attend the G20 summit.

During the two-day summit, Biden and his G20 counterparts are expected to focus on issues including the Russia-Ukraine conflict, climate change, technology and economic growth in developing countries.

Biden is expected to have a pre-summit meeting Friday with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to discuss economic cooperation and multilateral investment opportunities among G20 countries.

Notably, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping will skip the summit, with Russia represented by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and China by Premier Li Qiang.

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