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NASA Fields Request for 'Space Tug' Designs for Deorbiting ISS in 2030

After discussing a variety of alternative plans, the US space agency NASA has settled on a controlled deorbit of the International Space Station (ISS), a multi-country project that has yielded the largest-ever man-made satellite of the Earth.

NASA's Johnson Space Flight Center has put out a request for designs for a US Deorbit Vehicle (USDV), previously referred to as a "space tug," to trigger and control the ISS' final spiral into Earth's atmosphere when the space station is decommissioned in 2030.

"The USDV shall rendezvous and dock with the ISS as well as perform ISS attitude control, ISS translational maneuvers, and the final ISS orbit shaping and reentry burns," NASA explained in the notice.

The space flight agency will hold a Virtual Pre-Proposal Conference about the request on October 3 and proposals are due by November 17, the notice also said. The space vehicle is expected to take years to test and certify.

According to a plan put forward last year, the spacecraft would be launched just days before the ISS was to plunge into the sea, as its orbit decays below 140 miles altitude. NASA noted in a September 20 blog post that Russia's Progress cargo vehicles, which are sometimes used to give the ISS' orbit a boost upward, would not be up to the task of bringing the whole station down in a controlled way, which had been a previous deorbiting plan.

Uncontrolled reentry of space debris can result in dangers to the Earthlings below, if it fails to completely burn up in the atmosphere. Thus, it is common for a more controlled descent to be used, to direct the debris toward the South Pacific, the planet's largest stretch of uninhabited surface area.

This past spring, NASA requested $180 million in its fiscal year 2024 budget for the USDV contract, but budget feuds on Capitol Hill resulted in major cuts to the space agency's funds for FY2024, which begins on Sunday. The vehicle is not mentioned in NASA's 2024 budget estimatesreleased last month, although plans for deorbiting the ISS are.

The ISS is the largest space structure ever built by humans and is maintained by a consortium of five space agencies from the US, Russia, European Union, Japan, and Canada. All but the lattermost have contributed modules to the station over the past 24 years, which have been used for science experiments, space observation, living quarters, and storage, among other things.

All but Russia's Roscosmos have agreed to keep the space station going until 2030, although Roscosmos is committed until 2028.

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Scientists Find Home of Collector Favorite ‘Electric Blue’ Tarantula in Thailand’s Mangroves

Scientists have found the natural home of the so-called 'Electric Blue Tarantula.' The species has long been beloved by collectors of exotic species, but its natural environment was not previously known to science and it had never been properly described by naturalists.

The species has now been given a Latin scientific name, Chilobrachys natanicharum, placing it in the genus of other tarantulas from southern and eastern Asia.

The name was chosen after an auction campaign, with all proceeds from the auction donated to support the education of children in Thailand’s Lahu communities and to poor cancer patients.

According to media reports, the species name natanicharum is a combination of the names of two wealthy patrons from the firm that placed the winning bet.

Electric Blue makes its home in the watery mangrove forests of Thailand, the first tarantula ever found to live in that environment. The scientists, based out of Khon Kaen University in northeastern Thailand, said they knew where to look for the tarantula’s home after a similar species was found last year among Thailand’s bamboo forests - also a first for the genus.

"The first specimen we found was on a tree in the mangrove forest," explained arachnologist Narin Chomphuphuang, the study’s lead author, in a news release.

"These tarantulas inhabit hollow trees, and the difficulty of catching an electric-blue tarantula lies in the need to climb a tree and lure it out of a complex of hollows amid humid and slippery conditions. During our expedition, we walked in the evening and at night during low tide, managing to collect only two of them."

Mangrove forests are an important feature of ecology in the riverine country, which celebrates National Mangrove Forests Day on May 10 of each year. Their dense network of roots creates rich biodiversity and the plants are highly effective sequesterers of carbon dioxide, the gas that is pumped out by human civilization in quantities large enough to trigger changes in the planet’s climate.

There’s much the scientists still don’t know about the Electric Blue, such as why it has such a striking appearance. Blue is among the rarest colors found in nature, especially a shimmering metallic hue like on this tarantula, which could easily fall prey to big hunters like birds. However, it could play social roles in communication or courtship with other tarantulas of the same species.

"The Electric Blue Tarantula demonstrates remarkable adaptability,” Chomphuphuang said. “These tarantulas can thrive in arboreal as well as terrestrial burrows in evergreen forests. However, when it comes to mangrove forests, their habitat is restricted to residing inside tree hollows due to the influence of tides," he added.

"It's essential for the general public to understand the significance of taxonomy as a fundamental aspect of research. Taxonomy serves a vital role, ranging from the basic, such as when people inquire on social media about the name of a spider, to conducting crucial research aimed at preserving these species from extinction."

A paper describing the scientists’ discovery was published in ZooKeys.

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Storm Agnes to Hit British Isles With 75-Mile-Per-Hour Winds

Residents of Ireland and the United Kingdom were bracing on Tuesday for the arrival of Storm Agnes, the region's first named storm of the season, which is expected to bring 75-mile-per-hour wind gusts and 50-foot-high seas and cause widespread damage.

The UK's Meteorological Office issued a yellow wind weather warning from midday Wednesday through Thursday morning across a wide swath of Ireland and northwestern Great Britain, including Scotland and northern England, as well as Wales and parts of the Midlands.

The warning says gusts of up to 75 mph are expected along the western coast, with Ireland getting the worst of it, but even inland areas of the UK could experience 50-mile-per-hour winds.

"The storm center itself remains over the Atlantic and will continue approaching and cross the UK through Wednesday afternoon and will move away Wednesday night into Thursday," Oli Claydon, a spokesperson for the Met Office, told British media on Tuesday.

"In terms of most impacted areas, we're looking at the Irish Sea coasts, so south-eastern parts of Northern Ireland, west and north-western coasts of Wales, and the north-western coast of England," he added.

Authorities are warning for the likelihood of downed trees and power lines, as well flooding. Along the coast and at sea, waves as high as 50 feet could be encountered.

"It will be wet and very windy with outbreaks of heavy rain extending nationwide with the likelihood of some spot flooding," Met Eireann, Ireland's meteorological service, warned on Tuesday, "becoming extremely windy or stormy for a time in the east and south with the potential for severe and damaging gusts."

Ireland and Scotland could also experience high amounts of rainfall, with the Met issuing a warning for as much as 60 millimeters (2.3 inches) of rain. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency has warned this could cause localized flooding, particularly along the western coasts.

Wat its "fuel" comes from the meeting of different-temperature air masses along a front. A tropical storm, by contrast, is powered by a central column of rising warm, moist air in the storm's eye, which can only be found over water.

Oftentimes, hurricanes can transition from being tropical to post-tropical as they move further north and lose contact with the warm seawater in which they formed. Tropical Storm Ophelia, which lashed the Mid-Atlantic US over the weekend, is one such cyclone to go from tropical storm to post-tropical low - a phenomenon known locally as a "Nor'easter."

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Clinton Foundation's Ukraine Project Latest Public Fleecing Effort by 'Crooked Charity World'

A former charity fraud investigator told Sputnik that the Clinton Foundation's latest project to solicit donations that are ostensibly for rebuilding Ukraine was just the latest part of a massive effort to fleece well-meaning members of the public.

Last week, the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI), a project of the Clinton Foundation, launched a new Ukraine Action Network (UAN) it says will "provide continued humanitarian aid to

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Ukrainians." The network is reportedly an extension of a effort that began last year by former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Ukrainian First Lady Olena Zelenskaya to bring together other nonprofits funneling money into the Eastern European country.

The CGI was revived last year after a five-year hiatus brought about by dire financial straits following Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential election loss to Donald Trump, when donations dried up. Dozens of new projects were unveiled last year, including a $1 billion effort by water.org, a charity co-founded by actor Matt Damon, with the stated goal of helping 100 million people in Africa, Asia and Latin America get water and sanitation access.

The Clinton Foundation was formed as a nonprofit 501(c)3 in 2001 after former US President Bill Clinton left office, and has faced numerous allegations over the years of corruption, bribery, and other schemes, although no charges have ever been brought against them by federal legal probes.

Former investor and charity fraud expert Charles Ortel told Radio Sputnik's The Backstory that the basis of the Clinton Foundation was itself fraudulent, although it is just one of many such "fake" do-good schemes in the "crooked charity world."

"We need to understand that the Clinton Foundation itself, in my own view and the lawyers I talked to, doesn't technically exist as a truly tax-exempt public charity, which needs to be organized with articles of incorporation and bylaws, and it needs to be registered in every jurisdiction in which it solicits donations and or conducts business," Ortel told Sputnik.

"It didn't bother to register in New York, for example, until 2009 - that is to say, the Clinton Global Initiative didn't until 2009. Yet they held meetings starting in 2005 and issued many press releases where Bill and others bragged about how much money was, in theory, raised. But there's been no formal accounting of that. The required audits, which are really on the books - there are strict requirements, particularly if you operate in New York, to produce a real audit, the kind that I'm accustomed to seeing. And I can tell you the audits that are out on the Clinton Foundation and its many satellites are fake audits. They're fake. They just do not qualify," he explained.

"So no, I think the Clintons - they're inside New York City and New York State, and with the IRS [Internal Revenue Service] and the Biden Justice Department protecting them - that nobody's ever going to go, they think, down a serious track of holding the Clintons, the trustees of the Clinton Foundation, to the strict requirements that others have been held for."

Ortel explained that the level of destruction in Ukraine caused by the 18-month-long conflict with Russia meant that any kind of effort to solicit private investment in the country would encounter serious problems.

"When it comes to trying to rebuild Ukraine, we may want to wait and see what's left of Ukraine," he said. "I mean, this has been a disaster for the people of Ukraine, and I sincerely doubt that any sane investor looking to make a return on his or her money will put private capital into the country."

He said that the CGI has gotten away with so much of this because celebrities, journalists, and politicians alike had suffered from a "mass delusion" in endorsing the Initiative, including everyone from former Democratic US President Barack Obama to former Republican US First Lady Laura Bush to Australian conservative media mogul Rupert Murdoch.

"Heads of state, former heads of state, multinational CEOs - have all either attended the meeting, even given money to support the meeting, and nobody seems to have done the

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essential diligence to say, 'now, wait a minute, this charity, the Clinton Global Initiative, was not organized properly. Its control was, in theory, controlled by a parent company that's not organized properly, and there's no actual statement of the true revenues, the true expenses, the balance sheets, the cash flow of this Clinton Global Initiative, let alone there's you know, there's press releases that have come out of there,'" Ortel noted.

"In 2006, Bill Clinton recognized an Italian kid named Rafael Follieri, and said 'this is an example of why I'm hopeful about the future.' Here's a guy who is barely 30 years old, he set up his own foundation, they honored him for his philanthropic good works - and at the end of the meeting, he was arrested. He was running a Ponzi scheme. And there are many other examples like that," Ortel explained.

Turning to the CGI's new project in Ukraine, the Ukraine Action Network, the former fraud investigator said that it should land the Clintons in jail for breaking numerous laws.

"If you were to do something like this in the private sector - which is what I was trained in - if you were to make an offering where you failed to explain that the Clinton family illegally is in control of a public charity. There's a difference between a private foundation and a public charity. Private foundations like the Gates Foundation can be controlled by a family, but a public charity stands in the shoes of the government and must be controlled by a representative body, whether it's board of directors or board of trustees. The Clintons, sneakily, beginning in 2013, tried to amend the bylaws to vest control in this operation into Bill, Hillary and Chelsea, personally, for their lives. It's strictly forbidden. And they then tried to hide that by not reporting the paperwork properly in New York and other places. I found it.," he said.

"This is a fake charity, faker than this story that Hillary is still selling that [Russian President] Vladimir Putin is going to - again, she claims - interfere in the 2024 election. Every aspect of this woman is a fake. And people who have this kind of a track record should not and are not allowed to solicit funds over state lines using the Internet the way these people are doing this. This is strictly forbidden. She should be in jail," he said.

When asked what he thought the CGI would actually do with the money donated to them for rebuilding Ukraine, Ortel replied: "stealing it."

"I think the way it's likely going to work is they will say, 'all right, we will let you virtue signal, Mr. Controversial figure, we will let you say you gave us $10 million. All you have to do is give us $1,000,000. You can then deduct the $10 million and get money back on your tax returns, even though all you parted with was a million. We'll give you a slip of paper that says you gave us $10 million and you won't ask too much about what happened to your million.' That's the kind of deal I think - you know, I don't know for a fact that that would happen, but that's the kind of deal that I believe does go on in the crooked charity world," Ortel explained.

"There are so many vulnerable people around the world and there are so many good people in many countries who see tragedy and reach into their pockets and send the money to operations they think are legitimate. Typically, these involve celebrities and politicians. The correct thing to do when you see a charity with celebrities and politicians is to run away from it, because these people are not of a mind to check things carefully. There's a lot of damage - and it's not just with politicians, the Red Cross has had problems, the American Cancer Society, all these sweet sounding great ideas are havens for people who will go in - because they know the donors aren't doing their due diligence and they know the politicians, the celebrities, won't check things the way they should, and know the accounting firm firms are likely not going to travel to Ukraine

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and make sure that money that they say went to Ukraine ended up in some rural backwater on the border with Russia somewhere. I mean, nobody's going to check that, and the fraudsters understand that."

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US Judge Finds Trump Committed Fraud by Inflating Wealth, Assets in New York Civil Case

The New York attorney general's investigation into the former president's business practices came underway in March 2019, with an official lawsuit being filed in September 2022. It's alleged the property values may have in some cases been overinflated in the ballpark of some $2.2 billion.

A New York state judge on Tuesday found former US President Donald Trump liable for fraud in a civil lawsuit that accuses the one-time commander of intentionally inflating his wealth and asset value.

The 35-page ruling, brought forward by the New York Attorney General's Office, determined Trump and company submitted multiple misleading valuations for real estate assets in official statements to insurers and other financial institutions in order to secure favorable loans and lower insurance premiums throughout the years.

Properties listed in the suit included Trump's Mar-a-Lago Florida resort, his golf course in Scotland, Trump Park Avenue, and his Seven Springs property in New York's Westchester County, among other sites.

"In defendants' world, rent-regulated apartments are worth the same as unregulated apartments; restricted land is worth the same as unrestricted land; restrictions can evaporate into thin air," Judge Arthur Engoron wrote in the decision. "That is a fantasy world, not the real world."

In granting a partial summary judgement to NY Attorney General Letitia James, Engoron outlined that such business maneuvers violated the law and as such canceled the business certificates of Trump and listed defendants, including those of his sons Donald Trump Jr. and Eric Trump. Also named were Allen Weisselberg, who served as the chief financial officer of the Trump Organization, and company executive Jeff McConney.

Additionally, Engoron ordered individual sanctions of $7,500 against lawyers who represented the listed Trump defendants and required that within 10 days' time each defendant submit three independent receivers to manage the dissolution for the business certificates.

The Trump camp has argued claims laid out in the civil filing are barred due to the statute of limitations, with lawyer noting banks involved in the Trump-affiliated deals were far from victims as the same entities turned profits. The former president has also rejected committing any wrongdoing, instead claiming James' suit is a politically-driven attack.

The Tuesday ruling, which denied a request by Trump to end the civil fraud lawsuit, did not settle six other claims at the center of James' lawsuit. In fact, a non-jury trial set to start on October 2 will address the remaining key points.

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The New York attorney general is seeking about $250 million in damages and is looking to enforce a ban on Trump doing any business in the Empire State.

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SCOTUS Rejects Alabama Effort to Block Congressional Map With Two Majority-Black Districts

The Republican controlled state earlier attempted to create a new map without the inclusion of a second Black-majority district, despite a court order instructing them to do so.
The US Supreme Court rejected an attempt on Tuesday by Alabama to block a new congressional map required to include two majority-Black districts, setting the stage for implementing fresh redistricting lines ahead of the 2024 election cycle.
Alabama had issued an emergency bid to block the new congressional map ordered by a lower court and upheld by the Supreme Court with a 5-4 ruling in June. There were no noted dissenters in denying Alabama's emergency bid and the court did not explain its reasoning.
In the 5-4 ruling, Justices John Roberts and Brett Kavanaugh joined the three liberal justices in ruling against Alabama's request to freeze the lower court's order.
The ruling will affect the coming 2024 election. Alabama has seven seats in the House of Representatives. The six white majority districts are represented by Republicans and the one Black-majority district under the old map is represented by a Democrat.
With two majority-Black districts in the states, Democrats will have high hopes for gaining another seat in the 2024 election.
Alabama drew up a new congressional map but did not include a second majority-Black district, arguing its new map was legal even without the second majority-Black district; however, two lower courts rejected that map as well.
In shooting down that map, the three-judge panel said officials were "disturbed" by Alabama's actions and ordered a special master to draw up a new map. It also refused to make their order pending an appeal, prompting Alabama to plead its case to the Supreme Court, which affirmed the lower court's ruling.
The state had requested the Supreme Court take action by October 1 so that preparations for the election could begin.
Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall earlier argued that the new map kept communities together, unifying what has been described as the "Black Belt of the state."
"The 2023 plan departed from existing district lines to unify the Black Belt, it split the minimum number of county lines necessary to equalize population among districts and it made the map significantly more compact through changes to each district," Marshall argued.
Meanwhile, lawyers for the NAACP and the American Civil Liberties Union argued that concentrating Black voters in one district dilutes the power of Black voters in the state. In their challenge, which also included individual voters, they said the map violated Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act.
Nearly 27% of Alabama residents are Black, according to the 2020 census.

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"Alabama's open defiance of the Voting Rights Act stops today," said Abha Khanna, a lawyer for the Elias Law Group that worked on the case.

Marshall said after the ruling that the new map drawn by lawmakers was in support of “the radical pursuit of racial quotas,” and that it was made with a view of Alabama that is “stuck in 1963.”

The three-judge panel will now move forward and pick one of the three maps drawn up by the special master, which were submitted to the panel on Monday.

According to local media, one of the maps is based largely on the Plaintiff’s Remedial map, which was submitted during a special legislative session. Of the three, it is the only plan that includes two districts with a majority of Black residents of voting age, District 7 which is currently the only Black-majority district and District 2. However, District 2 would still have voted for the “Black-preferred candidate” in the vast majority contests, according to internal studies.

The three-judge panel asked for two Black-majority districts or “something quite close to it.”

District 2 is currently represented by Republican Barry Moore. An associate professor of political science at Auburn University told a local media outlet that Moore is “the pretty clear loser in the process” and predicts he is likely to lose his seat to a Democratic candidate in the 2024 election.

He added the Republicans in the state overplayed their hand and put themselves in a worse position by submitting a map they should have known would never get through the courts.

“If the Republicans in the legislature had been particularly clever, they might have drawn a map that at bare minimum could have at least had more of a chance of getting through the courts and could have still made someone like Barry Moore more competitive in District 2. They didn't do that and threw it over to the special master. Now, they are a loser. They lost and it's because they played a really bad hand.”

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New Day, Another Lawsuit: Hunter Biden Sues Rudy Giuliani for Spreading Contents From Laptop

The lawsuit, which relies on the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, was filed in the Central District of California. Neither Rudy Giuliani nor Hunter Biden live in that district and the alleged crimes took place in Delaware. Whistleblower Bradley Birkenfeld told Sputnik the choice was the result of "venue shopping."

Embattled first son Hunter Biden is continuing to file lawsuits against individuals he blames for the release of the contents of a laptop he reportedly abandoned at a Delaware computer repair store.

The lawsuit is against former New York City mayor and Donald Trump lawyer, Rudy Giuliani.

The suit, filed in the Central District of California, accuses the former mayor of “looking for, hacking into, tampering with, manipulating, copying, [and] disseminating … data that was taken or stolen,” thereby violating the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act.

It is the latest string of lawsuits brought by Hunter Biden against individuals surrounding his laptop. He also sued the owner of the non-profit Marco Polo, which has been publishing the

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contents of the laptop, the owner of the computer repair shop where Biden reportedly abandoned the laptop and the FBI for allegedly violating his privacy when two FBI agents told Congress and the media they were concerned the agency was slow-walking the investigation.
The laptop in question first made headlines in October 2020, shortly before the 2020 presidential election. Reportedly, the computer repair shop owner had given the laptop to the FBI months before, but after not hearing anything about it on the news, contacted Giuliani's lawyer at the time Bob Costello and provided him a copy of the computer's hard drive. Costello is also a defendant in Biden's latest lawsuit.
Contents of the laptop were published by the New York Post, showing the future first son smoking what appears to be crack cocaine, fornicating with suspected prostitutes and other salacious details.
Further reporting on the laptop revealed emails related to Hunter Biden's foreign business deals and financial records showing the Biden family received millions of dollars from foreign businesses, including those in Ukraine, Kazakhstan, China and Russia.
Some of the email and text messages found on the iPhone backup implied that current US President Joe Biden may have joined in on some business calls with his son and references to payments made to "the big guy" have been pointed to by critics as proof the elder Biden was more involved in his son's business deals than the president claimed.
As recently as August, the US president has reiterated he "never talked business" with his son.
The laptop was originally called "Russian disinformation" by multiple media outlets in the United States, and more than 50 former senior intelligence officers signed a letter saying it had "all the classic earmarks of a Russian information operation."
One by one, the various outlets who discredited the laptop as disinformation quietly admitted it was legitimate and a former CIA official testified to the House Judiciary Committee that former Biden campaign adviser and now-Secretary of State Antony Blinken "played a role in the inception."
Giuliani's spokesman Ted Goodman pointed to the changing story of the laptop's detractors when responding to the lawsuit.
"Hunter Biden previously refused to admit ownership of the laptop. I'm not surprised he's now falsely claiming his laptop hard drive was manipulated by Mayor Giuliani, considering the sordid material and potential evidence of crimes on that thing," Goodman said.

The growing number of lawsuits filed by Hunter Biden follows the collapse of a plea deal he had struck with prosecutors. That deal would have allowed the younger Biden to plead to a few misdemeanors while avoiding a felony gun charge if he completed the terms of the deal.
The deal collapsed when the defense team and prosecutors could not agree on how much immunity it granted Hunter Biden against potential prosecution stemming from the contents of the laptop. A short time later, Biden was indicted on gun charges; additional charges for alleged tax crimes are expected to come in the future.
Famed whistleblower Bradley Birkenfeld told Sputnik's Political Misfits on Tuesday that he believes the lawsuit is "just a harassment suit," and that Hunter Biden is trying to deflect blame from himself.
"You go after someone who is actively reporting from what we've been told are facts that Hunter Biden committed these acts. How do you go after someone to sue them for something you did

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to yourself? You're in fact trying to blame someone else because they are telling people about what you did."
Birkenfeld added the Biden family may not want to see the suit move forward, noting that Joe Biden may be deposed in the case. "He said he never talked to his son about his business, he never got involved, he never invested, he never did anything, but in fact the laptop contradicts that."
Instead, he believes the suit is made to punish those who revealed the laptop in a personal "vendetta."
"He is using every little kind of trick in the book here to say 'oh it's not me, everyone else has ganged up on me.' Quite frankly, you made your bed, now it's time to sleep in it."

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FBI 'Red Cell' Report Warned of 'Domestic Violent Extremists' Before January 6 Riot

Red cell reports are part of a program developed after intelligence failures that preceded the September 11th terrorist attacks. They are designed to offer alternative viewpoints that challenge conventional wisdom in the intelligence community.
Before January 6, 2021, an FBI "red cell" report warned that "domestic violent extremists" were "very willing to take action" in response to a disputed 2020 presidential election, but said that widespread violence was not likely.
Titled "Alternative Analysis: Potential Scenarios for Reactions of Domestic Violent Extremists to a Disputed 2020 US Presidential Election," the report saw the FBI warn that conservative groups likely had a "high willingness to take action" but a "low capability" to do so because of law enforcement preemption and disorganization among the groups.
It also laid out two "less likely" scenarios: the groups would have both a high willingness and high capability to take action, and that the group would have low willingness and high capability.

The "least likely" scenario presented by the report said that they would "have a low willingness to take action … and those interested lack that capacity to carry out" a significant attack.
The report was received by US media in a redacted form through a Freedom of Information Act request.
The House committee to investigate the January 6 riot prepared a critique of the red cell report, but it was never published. A reporter who viewed it said the FBI "missed the forest for the trees" due to an inbuilt "lone offender bias." The report also said the FBI failed to consider an unorganized mob could be a threat.
Law enforcement agencies, including the US Capitol Police and the FBI, have been criticized for their lack of preparedness for the riot. In March, then-Fox News host Tucker Carlson released previously unseen footage of Capitol Police officers seemingly leading rioters through the US Senate halls and even unlocking doors for them.

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The January 6 committee largely took the blame off of law enforcement and put it squarely on former US President Donald Trump, arguing that his “will be wild” tweet on December 19, 2020, was a call to action.
While the US media report and the reported January 6 Committee critique seem to paint the red cell report as another failure of law enforcement, it is worth noting there was no “widespread violence” perpetrated by the rioters during the raid on the Capitol.
US media and a Senate report attributed seven deaths to the riot.However, one of those was a rioter who was shot by police. Three more were rioters who died from unrelated causes: a heart attack, a stroke and a drug overdose, according to an autopsy. Three police officer deaths were also attributed to the attack, but one died from a stroke the day after the incident and two others committed suicide in the weeks after.
Several members of the Proud Boys, a right-wing group that Trump infamously told to “stand back and stand by” during a presidential debate with US President Joe Biden, have been convicted for seditious conspiracy for their actions on January 6 and the weeks leading up to it. The group’s chairman, Enrique Tarrio received 22 years in federal prison, the longest sentence related to the riot so far.

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Fast Times at The UAW Picket Line - Cartoon

US President Joe Biden on Tuesday joined auto workers striking in Detroit, Michigan, taking a bullhorn to say in a short speech that workers “[deserve] what you’ve earned, and you’ve earned a hell of a lot more than you’re getting paid now.”
The photo-op was described as historic by The White House and multiple Western media outlets, which said it was the first time a sitting US president “joined” a picket line.
The president spent less than half an hour at the strike, according to media reports, and did not offer any concrete policy declarations that would help the workers in their struggle. Still, United Auto Workers (UAW) President Shawn Fain thanked Biden for visiting the strike, which he called “our generation-defining moment.”
Biden announced he would visit the striking autoworkers after his likely opponent in the upcoming presidential election, former President Donald Trump, announced he planned to visit Detroit. The White House has insisted the timing had nothing to do with Biden’s plan, noting Fain had requested Biden visit the striking workers.
The Biden administration has repeatedly tried to paint itself as “the most pro-union” administration in US history. While he did vocally support unionization efforts at Amazon warehouses and issued an executive order authorizing the creation of a labor task force to protect unionization efforts, he also infamously forced rail worker unions to take a deal with rail companies they voted against.
Furthermore, Biden’s electric vehicle mandate, requiring that all new car sales be electric by 2035, has angered auto workers who fear it puts their jobs at risk as electric vehicles require

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fewer workers to manufacture. Biden did not mention electric vehicles when speaking to the auto workers in Detroit.

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US to Waive Visa Requirement for Israeli Citizens - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - The United States has added Israel to its Visa Waiver Program, enabling Israeli citizens to travel visa-free to the US for tourism or business for up to 90 days, the State Department said on Wednesday.

"By November 30, 2023, the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) will be updated to allow citizens and nationals of Israel to apply to travel to the United States for tourism or business purposes for up to 90 days without first obtaining a US visa, a step which further strengthens the security, economic and people-to-people ties between the United States and Israel," the State Department said in a press release.

Israel has extended reciprocal privileges to US citizens, who will be able to enter Israel for up to 90 days for business, tourism, or transit without obtaining a visa.

Requirements for a country to be included in the Visa Waiver Program include issuing secure travel documents, extending visa-free privileges to all US citizens without regard to national origin, religion, or ethnicity, working closely with US law enforcement and counterterrorism authorities, and for initial designation, having a rate of nonimmigrant visitor visa refusals below 3% during the previous full fiscal year.

The release noted that Palestinian Americans who live in the West Bank or in the US will be able to enter Israel without a visa and fly in and out of Israel's Ben Gurion airport.

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Menendez Arrives to Manhattan Federal Court to Face Bribery Arraignment – TV Broadcast

NEW YORK, September 27 (Sputnik) – US Senator Robert Menendez has arrived at the Manhattan Federal Court to face an arraignment on bribery charges, TV broadcasts showed on Wednesday.

Menendez made no comment to reporters as he and his wife walked into the US District Court for the Southern District of New York.

Last week, the Justice Department unsealed an indictment charging Menendez, his wife, and three other individuals with crimes including conspiracy to commit bribery, fraud, and extortion under color of official right.

Menendez allegedly exchanged his influence as a lawmaker to enrich himself and the other co-defendants, as well as to benefit the Egyptian government. The bribes allegedly included cash, gold bars and a luxury vehicle.

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The senator defended his policy record on Egypt, pointing to his work on promoting human rights in the country, and said he withdrew thousands of dollars in cash from his own personal bank accounts as an emergency measure.

The allegations have prompted some fellow New Jersey politicians, including Governor Phil Murphy and Congresswoman Mikie Sherill, to call on Menendez to resign from his Senate seat. Menendez has agreed to temporarily step down as Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman until the case is resolved.

Menendez said on Monday that he believes he will be cleared of bribery allegations and will continue to serve in Congress after the facts of the case against him emerge.

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North Korea to Deport US Soldier Who Fled Over Border – State News Agency

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - North Korea has decided to expel Travis King, the US soldier stationed in South Korea who fled into the country in July, state news agency KCNA reported on Wednesday.

An investigation found that King confessed he had "illegally intruded" into North Korea because of "ill feeling against inhuman maltreatment and racial discrimination within the US Army and was disillusioned about the unequal US society," the report said.

It is unclear when King will be deported.

On July 18, King was scheduled to board a flight to return to the US to face further disciplinary action after being jailed for assault in South Korea. Instead, he managed to leave Seoul's airport and join a tour to the border village of Panmunjom, where he fled over the border to North Korea.

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PREVIEW - US Sen. Robert Menendez to Face Arraignment in Federal Bribery Case

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - US Sen. Robert Menendez is set to appear in court on Wednesday for arraignment on bribery, fraud and extortion charges brought against the lawmaker by federal prosecutors.

Menendez is scheduled for arraignment in the US District Court for the Southern District of New York on charges including conspiracy to commit bribery, conspiracy to commit honest services fraud and conspiracy to commit extortion under color of official right.

The indictment alleges that Menendez exchanged his influence as a lawmaker to enrich himself and other co-defendants, as well as to benefit the Egyptian government. The bribes allegedly included cash, gold bars and a luxury vehicle.

The indictment also charges Menendez's wife and three other individuals with crimes linked to

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the alleged corruption. The investigation remains ongoing, US Attorney Damian Williams said.

However, Menendez has expressed confidence that he will be cleared of the charges. Menendez said that the facts of the case will exonerate him, noting that the court of public opinion is no substitute for a formal legal process.

Prosecutors framed the charges against the lawmaker as salaciously as possible, Menendez said. Menendez has characterized the charges as an "active smear campaign" against him.

Nevertheless, the allegations have prompted several colleagues to call on Menendez to resign from his seat in the US Senate. Officials including New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy, Sen. Cory Booker and Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill have urged Menendez to resign.

Stepping down would not be an admission of guilt, but an acknowledgement that serving the public requires personal sacrifice, Booker said in a statement. The allegations have "shaken to the core" the trust of New Jerseyans, the statement said.

Menendez said that he will remain New Jersey's senior senator, although he agreed to temporarily step down as chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The lawmaker will continue to serve his constituents and perform his duties in Congress, Menendez said.

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White House Urges House Lawmakers to Work Together Like Senate on Short-Term Spending Bill

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre in a press release urged the US House of Representatives to work in bipartisan fashion like the Senate to advance a short-term spending bill to avert a government shutdown.

"The Senate's bipartisan continuing resolution will keep the government open, make a down payment on disaster relief, and is an important show of support for Ukraine," Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday. "House Republicans should join the Senate in doing their job, stop playing political games with peoples' lives, and abide by the bipartisan deal two-thirds of them voted for in May."

Earlier in the day, the Senate agreed to advance a bill that would temporarily fund the federal government ahead of a potential government shutdown at the end of the month. The legislation would fund the federal government through November 17 to give lawmakers more time to pass full spending bills. It also includes more than $6 billion in military and economic assistance for Ukraine.

Some Republican lawmakers in the House of Representatives have expressed opposition to including Ukraine aid in a government funding measure as well as to passing a short-term funding bill altogether, setting up a potential showdown between the two chambers of Congress.

A shutdown would suspend "nonessential" government operations until Congress passes a measure to restore funding. This would mean millions of federal workers going without a paycheck including over 1.3 million active duty troops, according to the White House. The most recent government shutdown lasted 34-36 days, a record, from late 2018 to early 2019.

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Canadian Government Must Apologize to All Russians for Honoring Nazi - Ambassador Stepanov

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - Canada's parliament and government owe an apology to all Russians for honoring a Ukrainian Nazi tied to a division involved in war crimes, Moscow's Ambassador to Ottawa Oleg Stepanov said in a statement.

On Friday. Yaroslav Hunka, a 98-year-old Ukrainian Nazi veteran who fought in the ranks of the 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the Nazi SS during the Second World War, was given a standing ovation by the entire Canadian legislature. Hunka's recognition happened as the Speaker of the House of Commons, Anthony Rota, was giving introductory remarks prior to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's address to the Canadian parliament.

"I believe that in a multicultural society of Canada, the Parliament and the Government of this country owe a formal and unequivocal apology to all Russians and the Russian Canadian community," Stepanov said on Tuesday.

Stepanov said "it is a proven fact" that the 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS "Galicia" committed multiple war crimes, including mass murder against the Russian people.

"An intention to ignore and to exclude from the memory the genocide against Russians committed by the Waffen SS, including the 'Galicia' division, is unacceptable. Therefore, I am waiting for the reaction of the Canadian authorities," Stepanov said.

Earlier, Stepanov told Sputnik Russia sent a protest note complete with letters to the Canadian leadership for inviting and honoring Hunka in parliament, however, it has not yet received a response.

Rota on Tuesday announced that he would be resigning from his position over the scandal and said he accepts "full responsibility" for his actions. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said the incident is "deeply embarrassing" for Canada and the House of Commons.

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Writers Guild of America to End Strike on Wednesday - Statement

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - The Writers Guild of America (WGA) said it will end its strike on Wednesday after its board voted in favor of a three-year deal with movie and TV producers.

"The WGAW Board and WGAE Council also voted to lift the restraining order and end the strike as of 12:01 am PT/3:01 am ET on Wednesday, September 27th. This allows writers to return to work during the ratification process, but does not affect the membership's right to make a final determination on contract approval," the release said on Tuesday.

The WGA said it reached a tentative agreement with the Alliance of Motion Picture and

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Television Producers on a new three-year deal. The Negotiating Committee, the WGAW Board and WGAE Council all voted unanimously to recommend the agreement, which will now go to guild memberships for a ratification vote.

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Biden Officials Warn US Must Reset Relations With Africa, 'Catch Up With Reality'

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is finally grasping the strategic value of Africa and must reset relationships with countries across the continent, senior State Department and White House officials told a conference at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

"Africa... is strategic and the US is finally catching up with that reality," Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Molly Phee said on Tuesday.

Special Assistant to the President and National Security Council Senior Director for African Affairs Judd Devermont underscored that Africa is important in a number of key areas from climate change to emerging technologies.

The US, he added, needs to adapt policies to the dynamic region which is growing younger and more urban. The continent "has to be at the table," Devermont added on all key issues.

"We have to reset our relationships to a degree with the continent," Devermont said.

Special presidential representative for US-Africa Leaders Summit implementation Ambassador Johnnie Carson said he recommended inviting African government leaders to Washington for a regional summit meeting with the US president and other senior officials every three years rather than an eight year year delay between such gatherings as was the case between 2014 and 2022.

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Hunter Biden Payments From China List Father's Home as Beneficiary Address - House Panel

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - Hunter Biden in 2019 received two payments wired from China totaling $260,000 with President Joe Biden's Delaware home listed as the beneficiary address, the House Oversight Committee said citing records it obtained through a subpoena.

"A few months after Joe Biden announced his candidacy in 2019, information available to the Committee shows Hunter Biden received two wires from China for $250,000 and $10,000, including from Jonathan Li," the Committee said in a statement on Tuesday.

More alarming, the Committee said, is that the wires have Joe Biden’s home in Wilmington, Delaware listed as the beneficiary address.

Hunter Biden, via his lawyer, claimed he only served with BHR Partners, a Beijing-backed

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private equity firm controlled by Bank of China Limited, as a member of its board of directors, which was purportedly an unpaid position, the Committee said regarding Hunter Biden's links to China.

The Committee also underscored that Joe Biden previously claimed during a presidential debate in October2020 that Hunter Biden has not made money in China.

House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, in light of these new findings, said the Republican impeachment inquiry against President Joe Biden will uncover the whole truth. The impeachment inquiry against Joe Biden will kickoff Thursday morning on Capitol Hill.

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US Senate Advances Temporary Gov't Funding, Ukraine Aid Measure Ahead of Shutdown

(Updates with vote count in para 2, background in para 5)

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - The US Senate agreed to advance to consideration of a bill that would temporarily fund the federal government and provide billions of dollars in aid to Ukraine ahead of a potential government shutdown at the end of the month.

The senators agreed to invoke cloture on a motion to proceed to the legislation in a 77-19 vote on Tuesday.

The legislation, dubbed the Continuing Appropriations Act, would fund the federal government through November 17 to give lawmakers more time to pass full spending bills. The legislation also includes more than $6 billion in military and economic assistance for Ukraine.

Some Republican lawmakers in the House of Representatives have expressed opposition to including Ukraine aid in a government funding measure as well as to passing a short-term funding bill altogether, setting up a potential showdown between the two chambers of Congress.

A shutdown would suspend "nonessential" government operations until Congress passes a measure to restore funding. This would mean millions of federal workers going without a paycheck including over 1.3 million active duty troops, according to the White House. The most recent government shutdown lasted 34-36 days, a record, from late 2018 to early 2019.

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US, Chile Strengthen Ties at Political-Military Dialogue - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - US and Chilean officials at a political-military dialogue deepened bilateral ties between the two countries on maritime security, peacekeeping and other critical areas, the State Department said in a press release.

"The dialogue reaffirmed our commitment to the close bilateral political-military relationship with Chile, identified security areas of mutual interest, and further deepened our partnership in the areas of maritime security, peacekeeping operations, defense and strategic trade, and

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information-sharing," the release said after the talks at the State Department on Tuesday.
Key representatives in attendance at the dialogue included Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs Jessica Lewis, among other State and Defense Department officials, and Chilean government officials such as Ministry of Foreign Affairs Secretary General Alex Wetzig and the Director of International and Human Security Affairs, Ignacio Llanos, the statement added.
This year's dialogue took place after a November announcement last year in which the US State Department and Chile's Foreign Affairs Ministry declared their intentions to restart the Political-Military Dialogue in 2023 and hold a subsequent Space Security Dialogue to address defense and security challenges.

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Researchers Expect 'Breathtaking' Discoveries From Solar Eclipse - NASA Scientist

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - The coming total solar eclipse next week covering parts of the western United States offers an a "breathtaking" opportunity to probe the continuing mysteries of the interior of our star and the impact solar radiation has on Earth's atmosphere, NASA heliophysics program scientist Madhulika Guhathakurta said.
"[The eclipse is an opportunity] absolutely breathtaking for science," Guhathakurta told a media teleconference on Tuesday.
The observations that are going to be made by earth observatories, high flying balloons and rockets launched into the stratosphere are "absolutely unobtainable from any other sources or platforms," Guhathakurta said.
The "ring of fire" eclipse on October 14 will be visible only in the narrow path of annularity that stretches from the state of Oregon to Texas, as well as parts of Mexico, Central America and South America, Guhathakurta said.
Rockets fired into space will carry instruments to measure the electric and magnetic fields of the Earth's particle distribution during the eclipse, Guhathakurta added.
Outside the path of annularity of the full eclipse, people across the contiguous United States, Puerto Rico, and parts of Alaska and Hawaii will still have the chance to see a partial solar eclipse, when the Moon covers part of the Sun without creating the "ring of fire" effect, according to NASA.

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US Senate Advances Temporary Government Funding, Ukraine Aid Measure Ahead of Shutdown

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The senators agreed to invoke cloture on a motion to proceed to the legislation in a vote on Tuesday.

The legislation, dubbed the Continuing Appropriations Act, would fund the federal government through November 17 to give lawmakers more time to pass full spending bills. The legislation also includes more than $6 billion in military and economic assistance for Ukraine.

Some Republican lawmakers in the House of Representatives have expressed opposition to including Ukraine aid in a government funding measure as well as to passing a short-term funding bill altogether, setting up a potential showdown between the two chambers of Congress.

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Target Closing 9 Stores Over Safety Concerns Amid Theft, Retail Crime - Statement

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - The Target Corporation issued a statement saying that it has decided to close nine of its stores in four US states due to the escalating threat of theft and organized retail crime.

"At Target, we take the decision to close stores very seriously, and only do so after taking meaningful steps to invest in the guest experience and improve business performance. With that said, we have made the difficult decision to close nine Target stores across four states effective Oct. 21," the statement said on Tuesday.

The four states Target will close stores in are New York, Washington, California and Oregon, the statement said.

Target said the growing threat of theft and organized retail crime has posed risks to the safety of team members and guests as well as adversely affected business performance, the statement said.

Despite extensive investments in anti-theft measures, including bolstering security personnel and enlisting third-party guard services, the company faced ongoing challenges operating these stores securely and profitably, the statement added.

Target will make all efforts to assist eligible employees in transitioning to other store locations, according to the statement.

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Battlefield Success of Ukrainians to ‘Absolutely’ Be Affected by Possible Shutdown - Kirby

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - Ukraine’s battlefield success will “absolutely” be affected by a looming US government shutdown, Coordinator for Strategic Communications at

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the National Security Council in the White House John Kirby said in an interview for MSNBC.

"[T]he United States is the largest contributor to Ukraine's battlefield success and if we just walk away from this their success could absolutely be affected," Kirby said on Tuesday.

Punchbowl News reported that a US Senate's continuing resolution to temporarily fund the work of the federal government will include more than $6 billion in new aid for Ukraine, $4.5 billion in military aid for Ukraine, and $1.65 billion in economic assistance.

The US Congress is working to pass government funding legislation before the end of the month, after which point the government could shut down. However, lawmakers are battling over whether to include additional measures such as further Ukraine aid or border security funding in a spending bill.

According to Kirby, the United States has funds to assist Ukraine for a couple more weeks, although the US' ability to support Ukraine could lapse if lawmakers do not pass a supplemental aid request for Ukraine.

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China Calls for Objective Nord Stream Attack Probe, Cooperation With Russia - UN Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, September 27 (Sputnik) - Beijing is calling for an impartial investigation into the Nord Stream pipeline incident and is concerned about the lack of a definitive and authoritative resolution on the matter, Chinese Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Geng Shuang said at a Security Council meeting.

"China has repeatedly called for an objective, impartial and professional investigation to find out the truth as soon as possible. Regretfully, to date there is still no clear and authoritative conclusion on this matter," the ambassador said on Tuesday. "We call on countries concerned to actively communicate and cooperate with Russia, rather than simply rejecting it."

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Honoring Nazi Veteran at Canadian Parliament Is Sad Sight - Bishop

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - Honoring a Nazi veteran in the Canadian parliament represents a sad sight in which the Justin Trudeau government is ready to do anything to please Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Archbishop of Canada Gabriel (Chemodakov) from the Russian Church Abroad told Sputnik.

"It is a sad sight in which the Canadian government is participating and showing it is ready for everything to please the Nazi and terrorist Zelenskyy," Archbishop Gabriel said.

On Friday. Yaroslav Hunka, a 98-year-old Ukrainian Nazi veteran who fought in the ranks of the 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the Nazi SS during the Second World War, was given a standing ovation by the entire Canadian legislature. Hunka's recognition happened as the

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Speaker of the House of Commons, Anthony Rota, was giving introductory remarks prior to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's address to the Canadian parliament.

Archbishop Gabriel pointed out that many Jewish organizations worldwide, including in Canada, "reared up to protest against the incident which he called a disgrace.

“Now, some in the West will understand perhaps why Russia had to launch its special military operation, namely to fight the Nazis in Zelenskyy's gang," he added.

Earlier, Rota apologized for his decision to invite Hunka. Trudeau's office said, in turn, that neither the Canadian prime minister nor Zelenskyy's delegation were notified in advance of the invitation of Hunka.

Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly called Rota to resign after the scandal.

Russian Ambassador in Ottawa Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik on Tuesday that Russia has sent a protest note complete with letters to the Canadian leadership for inviting and honoring Hunka in parliament, however, it has not yet received a response.

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Newsom Signs California Legislation Doubling Taxes on Firearms, Ammunition - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - California Governor Gavin Newsom signed legislation into law that effectively doubles the tax on the purchase of guns and ammunition in the state.

These new measure will make California communities and families safer, Newsom was reported as saying on Tuesday.

Senate Bill 2 (SB 2) introduces substantial enhancements to California's concealed gun permit law, adding a 10% or 11% excise tax on the purchase of firearms and ammunition in addition to the existing federal excise tax of 11%, the report said.

The governor pointed out that the tax increase is a very modest investment in gun violence prevention and that he believes it will ultimately help to reduce the costs, the report said.

The tax does not apply to police officers or to businesses that sell less than $5,000 worth of firearms or ammunition over a three-month period, the report added.

The tax is projected to generate $159 million per year, with the money going to the California Violence Intervention and Prevention Grant Program and the state’s Education Department, according to the report.

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US Senate Government Funding Bill Includes More Than $6Bln in Ukraine Aid - Bill Text

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - The US Senate’s continuing resolution to temporarily fund the work of the federal government will include more than $6 billion in new aid for Ukraine,

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according to a copy of the bill text published by Punchbowl News.

The Senate's short-term funding bill includes $4.499 billion in military aid for Ukraine and $1.65 billion in economic assistance, despite opposition from some Republicans in the House of Representatives to the inclusion of Ukraine aid in a government funding measure.

Congress must pass government funding legislation before the end of the month, lest they risk a government shutdown. The Senate measure would temporarily fund the federal government through November 17.

Last month, President Joe Biden requested $13 billion in security assistance and $7.3 billion in economic and humanitarian aid for Ukraine. The aggrandized Senate proposal comes following meetings between US lawmakers and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy last week.

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India Asked Canada to Show Evidence Allegedly Linking It to Sikh Murder - Foreign Minister

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - India requested that Canada share any information it has that allegedly ties the government to the killing of a Sikh separatist leader in British Columbia, Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said.

Last week, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that Canada was examining credible allegations potentially linking Indian officials to the June 18 killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar by two masked gunmen in Surrey. The prominent separatist leader had campaigned for the creation of an independent Sikh state in India called Khalistan.

"We told the Canadians saying that if you have something specific, If you have something relevant, let us know, we are open to looking at it," Jaishankar said during a discussion with the Council on Foreign Relations on Tuesday.

India's top diplomat said Canada was notified that it is not India's policy to carry out killings abroad.

Jaishankar pointed out that Canada has seen much organized crime over the last few years and India has submitted a large number of extradition requests to the Canadian government.

"We have been talking about specifics and information we have actually been badgering the Canadians, we've given them loads of information about organized crime leadership, which operates out of Canada," Jaishankar said. "There are terrorist leaders who have been identified. So, do understand that there is an environmental out there."

The White House previously said it is coordinating and consulting with Canada closely on Ottawa's accusation about Nijjar's killing.

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UN Chief Concerned Over Displacement of People in Nagorno-Karabakh Region - Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, September 27 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres is concerned over displaced people following resumption of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said at a briefing.
"The Secretary General's very concerned about the displacement of people, we are seeing, to Armenia as a result of the recent events in the region," Dujarric said on Tuesday.
The displaced people should be protected, he added.
As of Tuesday, as many as 20,270 people have fled Nagorno-Karabakh for Armenia after Azerbaijan launched what it called "local-level anti-terrorist activities" in the breakaway region early last week.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) -

PUTIN-RAISI TALKS
* Russian President Vladimir Putin and Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi discussed the steps necessary to ensure Iran's smooth entry into all full-fledged BRICS activities, the Kremlin said on Tuesday.
* Putin and Raisi had a detailed exchange of views on the situation in and around Nagorno-Karabakh and the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the Kremlin said.

NAZI VETERAN SCANDAL IN CANADA
* House of Commons Speaker Anthony Rota announced on Tuesday that he would resign from his position following the scandal concerning inviting and honoring Ukrainian Nazi veteran Yaroslav Hunka.
* The United States considers it to be an appropriate move by the Canadian authorities to express regret over the House of Commons honoring the Ukrainian Nazi veteran, US State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said.
* Russia has sent a protest note complete with letters to the Canadian leadership for inviting and honoring the Ukrainian Nazi veteran, however, has it has not yet received a response, Russian Ambassador in Ottawa Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.

NAGORNO-KARABAKH
* US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke with Azerbaijan President Aliyev and underscored the urgency of no further hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Tuesday.

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* Any monitoring mission in Nagorno-Karabakh can only be present there with the consent of Baku, but the US initiative lacks details, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.
* The European Union has allocated 5 million euros ($5.3 million) to provide humanitarian relief to people forced to leave or remain in Nagorno-Karabakh following the recent crisis, the European Commission said.

UKRAINIAN ATTACKS AGAINST RUSSIA
* The Russian air defense destroyed a Ukrainian fixed-wing drone over the Bryansk and Belgorod regions on Tuesday, the Russian Defense Ministry said.
* The Russian air defense has managed to better neutralize and minimize the consequences of Ukrainian drone attacks against civilian infrastructure, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE
* The Russian military destroyed an Ukraine military depot with more than 3,000 tonnes of ammunition, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Tuesday.
* Russia repelled six attacks and Ukraine lost about 380 soldiers in the Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia directions in the past 24 hours, the Russian Defense Ministry said.
* The US Abrams main battle tanks supplied to Ukraine are serious weapons but they will also burn, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

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US Judge Rejects Trump's Bid to End New York Civil Fraud Lawsuit - Filing

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - A New York state judge denied a request by former US President Donald Trump to end a civil fraud lawsuit, according to a court order filed Tuesday.
"Ordered that defendants' motion for summary judgment is denied," the order, signed by New York Supreme Court First Judicial District Judge Arthur Engoron, said.
The order also ruled Trump and other co-defendants liable for fraud in a partial summary judgment.
New York Attorney General Letitia James filed the lawsuit against Trump, alleging that the Trump Organization undervalued its assets.

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India's Top Diplomat Predicts Russia Will Boost Relations in Asia After Fallout With West

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishanka said on Tuesday that he predicts Russia will focus on strengthening its relations with partners in Asia following the fallout with Western countries over its special military operation in Ukraine.

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"I would actually predict that Russia would make very strenuous efforts to build alternative relationships, a lot of which will be in Asia," Jaishanka said during a discussion with the Council on Foreign Relations. "This would reflect itself in economics and trade, possibly in other domains as well."

Jaishanka added that India has maintained steady relations with Russia regardless of current events.

However, the Indian foreign minister highlighted that over the last 70 years, relations between the United States and Russia, Russia and China, and Europe and Russia have been through periods of good and bad times.

Jaishanka mentioned that he believes the United States is adjusting to a multipolar world and will soon no longer be restricted to only working with its allies.

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US House Panel Demands Answers from Pentagon About Official's Proximity to Iranian Regime

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - The US House Armed Services Committee is demanding that Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin make public any information about a Defense Department official's close relationship with the Iranian government, Chairman Mike Rogers and Congressman Jack Bergman said in a letter published on Tuesday.

The letter, published by the committee, follows reports of an alleged close relationship between the Chief of Staff for the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, Ariane Tabatabai, and the Iranian regime.

"I write to you to express my deep concern with the Department's hiring of Ariane Tabatabai as the Chief of Staff for Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD/SOLIC). Ms. Tabatabai's past employment history and close ties to the Iranian regime are alarming and should be disqualifying for anyone seeking such a sensitive position of trust within the United States Department of Defense," said the letter, which was signed by both congressmen.

Rogers and Bergman added that they sought answers from Secretary Austin about how Tabatabai managed to secure employment at the Department of Defense, let alone a security clearance, given her alleged connections to the Iranian government.

The letter follows earlier reports exposing Tabatabai's alleged participation in an Iranian scheme to plant influential academics and officials in the US and Europe as part of a larger plan to elevate Iran's position on global security matters. As originally reported by the journals Semafor and Iran International, the plan was called the Iranian Experts Initiative and was particularly interested in strengthening Iran's nuclear program.

Rogers and Bergman are also interested in whether or not the US Government is aware of any ongoing contact between Tabatabai and Iranian officials, and if the US was aware of her communications with the regime before her employment at the Department of Defense.

"The office of ASD SO/LIC oversees many of the Department's most sensitive operations and programs, to include those to counter Iran's malign activities throughout the world. It is the

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adamant position of the House Armed Services Committee that no person who aligns themselves with an adversary such as Iran, or who acts as a foreign agent of influence, wittingly or unwittingly, should wield any such influence over United States policy, or have access to such sensitive information," the letter added.

Austin has been asked to respond to these questions no later than October 3, 2023.

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Russia Will Insist On Bringing Responsible for Nord Stream Sabotage to Justice – Nebenzia

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) – Russia will insist on bringing to justice those responsible for the Nord Stream pipeline sabotage, Russian envoy to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said on Tuesday.

"[Russia] will insist on bringing those who ordered and executed this act of sabotage to justice," Nebenzia said the UN Security Council meeting.

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UN Says 'Disappointing' Biden Was Only UNSC Leader to Attend UNGA

UNITED NATIONS, September 26 (Sputnik) - The fact that US President Joe Biden was the only leader of a UN Security Council permanent member to attend the UN General Assembly's high-level week is a disappointment, UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed said on Tuesday.

"Having only one [leader] out of the five was disappointing," Mohammed told reporters.

Participation of leaders of the other permanent members would allow the UN to get more commitments related to many Sustainable Development Goals and the general agenda that was discussed during the assembly, she said.

At the same time, Mohammed added, 88 heads of state and government attended the high-level week, allowing the UNGA to make significant commitments related to different matters

World leaders gathered at the UN General Assembly during a high-level week from September 19-26. They discussed global challenges and solutions allowing the advancement of peace, security and stability.

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Russia to Submit Draft UNSC Presidential Statement on Nord Stream Sabotage - Nebenzia

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - Russia will introduce in the coming days a draft UN Security Council presidential statement on the Nord Stream pipeline attacks, Russian envoy to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said on Tuesday.

"Our country intends to submit a draft presidential statement on this issue for the consideration of the [UN Security] Council. We will present a text in the coming days," Nebenzia said.

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US National Security Council Says Saddened by Deadly Fuel Depot Blast in Nagorno-Karabakh

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - National Security Council Spokesperson Adrienne Watson said on Tuesday that the Biden administration is saddened by reports of a fuel depot explosion that killed at least 68 people in the contested Nagorno-Karabakh region between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

“We are saddened by the news that at least 68 people have been killed and hundreds injured in an explosion at a fuel depot in Nagorno-Karabakh and express deep sympathy to the residents of Nagorno-Karabakh and to all of those suffering,” Watson said in a statement.

The United States will continue to support people impacted by a recent increase in tensions in the region, the statement said. Approximately 28,000 people have crossed into Armenia from Nagorno-Karabakh after Azerbaijan began military operations in the region, the statement said.

Earlier on Tuesday, the US Agency for International Development announced $11.5 million in emergency assistance for the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, including food and psychosocial support.

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US to Provide $11.5Mln in Emergency Assistance for People in Nagorno-Karabakh - USAID

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration will provide the people of Nagorno-Karabakh with $11.5 million in emergency assistance following an escalation in the region, USAID chief Samantha Power said on Tuesday.

"Today, I am announcing that the United States will provide $11.5 million in humanitarian assistance. This assistance will be used to provide everything from food to psychosocial support," Power told reporters during her trip to the region.

Power also called on the leadership of Azerbaijan to facilitate the evacuation of injured civilians in Nagorno-Karabakh as well as to provide access to independent human rights monitors and humanitarian organizations.

As of Tuesday evening, as many as 28,120 people have fled Nagorno-Karabakh for Armenia

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after Azerbaijan launched a military operation in the breakaway region early last week.
On September 19, Azerbaijan began what it called "local-level anti-terrorist activities" in Nagorno-Karabakh to "restore constitutional order." Armenian state media reported multiple civilian casualties in the region as a result of Azerbaijan's shelling. Later, Azerbaijan and representatives of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh agreed to cease hostilities through the mediation of Russian peacekeepers.

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Total Migrant Encounters on US Southern Border Hit New Record in 2023 - CBP Source

EL PASO, September 26 (Sputnik) - The total number of immigrants unlawfully crossing into the United States on the US southern border with Mexico has hit a new record for Fiscal Year 2023, reaching nearly 2.4 million, a US Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) source told Sputnik.
This is the third consecutive year the Biden administration has seen a record number of illegal immigrants crossing the US southern border - 1.7 million in 2021 and 2.3 million in 2022.
"The numbers are fluid, but as of the last updates that I have seen, the report appears correct," the source said regarding reports a new record was hit this fiscal year.
Fox News reported last week that some 2.3 million migrants have come over the US-Mexico border in Fiscal Year 2023, which caps in October.
There is currently a daily average of 9,000 immigrants coming over the US southern border with less than a week left in Fiscal Year 2023, media reported.
The surge of immigrants arriving at the US southern border is believed to be driven by the Biden administration's extremely lax approach to border security and the rescinding of Trump-era policies that mitigated the problem, according to experts.

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State Dept. Declines to Confirm Reports About Pakistan Sending Weapons to Ukraine

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) – The United States is not going to confirm media reports that Pakistan is sending weapons to Ukraine and will let Islamabad speak on the issue, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said on Tuesday.
"We always let other countries speak to the nature of their assistance to Ukraine. We never confirm it on their behalf before they do. I think that should be for obvious reasons that countries speak to their own matters, and I will abide by that policy here," Miller said during a press briefing.
A journalist asked Miller to confirm media reports that Pakistan is secretly supplying Ukraine with artillery munitions.
Pakistan was able to secure a $3 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund in June

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mainly thanks to a secret deal on arms sales with the United States that is intended to ensure necessary weapon supplies to Ukraine, The Intercept reported earlier this month, citing anonymous sources and leaked documents.

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US, Allies Release Joint Guidance on Countering Russian Sanctions Evasion - Commerce Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - The United States, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom released joint guidance on countering evasion of sanctions on Russia, the US Commerce Department's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) said on Tuesday.

"As a follow-up to the establishment of the 'Export Enforcement Five' or 'E5' partnership to coordinate on export control enforcement issues in June 2023, the governments… today issued joint guidance to industry and academia identifying high priority items critical to Russian weapons systems and urging specific actions to prevent diversion of these items to Russia through third countries," BIS said in a statement.

Industry and academia play a key role in defending US values and act as a force multiplier to degrade Russia's military capabilities, the statement said. The private sector is the "first line of defense" in preventing the illicit acquisition of controlled items, the statement said.

The guidance includes a list of 45 prioritized Harmonized System codes containing items Russia could use in weapons systems, of which nine are considered the highest priority, the statement said.

The guidance also identifies anomalous patterns associated with importers in countries outside of the Global Export Control Coalition that may raise diversion concerns, the statement said.

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Canada House Speaker Rota Resigns Over Recognition of Ukrainian Nazi Veteran Hunka

(Adds details in para 5-6, background in paras 2-3, 7-9)

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - Canada's Speaker of the House of Commons, Anthony Rota announced on Tuesday that he would be resigning from his position following the scandal around the invitation and recognition of Ukrainian Nazi veteran Yaroslav Hunka.

On Friday, Hunka, a 98-year-old Ukrainian Nazi veteran who fought in the ranks of the 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the Nazi SS during the Second World War, was given a standing ovation by the entire Canadian legislature. Hunka's recognition happened as the Speaker of the House of Commons, Anthony Rota, was giving introductory remarks prior to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's address to the Canadian parliament.

On Sunday, Rota apologized for his decision to invite Hunka. Trudeau's office said, in turn, that

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neither the Canadian prime minister nor Zelenskyy's delegation were notified in advance of the invitation of Hunka.

"It's with a heavy heart that I rise to inform members of my resignation as Speaker of the House of Commons. It has been my greatest honor as a parliamentarian to have been elected by you, my peers to serve as the Speaker of the House of Commons for the 43rd and 44th parliament," Rota told the House of Commons.

The Speaker reiterated his regret over the invitation and recognition of Hunka, a decision that caused pain to Jewish communities, and survivors of Nazi atrocities in Poland, among other countries.

"I accept full responsibility for my actions," he added.

Rota said that his resignation would be effective as of Wednesday September 27, to give time for the election of a new Parliament Speaker, noting that in the meantime Deputy Speakers would be assuming his functions.

Over the morning, Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Melanie Joly, Leader of the Conservative party Pierre Poilievre, and Leader of the New Democratic Party (NDP) Jagmeet Singh called for the resignation of Rota.

Poilievre however noted that Rota's resignation would not excuse Trudeau's failure for the shame brought to Canada.

Singh went further and asked that Trudeau apologizes to Ukraine and presents a roadmap for remedying the damage it caused to Kiev.

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"It's with a heavy heart that I rise to inform members of my resignation as Speaker of the House of Commons. It has been my greatest honor as a parliamentarian to have been elected by you, my peers to serve as the Speaker of the House of Commons for the 43rd and 44th parliament," Rota told the House of Commons.

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Fort Ross Hopes Russian Diaspora in US Will Continue Supporting Conservancy - Director

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - The new leadership of Fort Ross Conservancy (FRC), which stewards the site of the former Russian American Company's settlement in California, hopes that the Russian diaspora in the United States will continue supporting the

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park, FRC Director of External Relations Igor Polishchuk told Sputnik.

"The Russian community has been active and has done a lot to preserve Fort Ross. They continue to do a lot, and, hopefully, we will have their support," Polishchuk said.

The original owner of Fort Ross, the Russian American Company (RAC), sold it in 1841, but Russians continued to play a vital role in preserving its heritage for nearly two centuries, donating their time and fundraising efforts to keep the memory of the once commercial outpost alive.

Polishchuk said several Russian families continued to stay in the area after the settlement was sold, and a little more than a decade later, Russia opened a consulate in San Francisco in the 1850s. "So, at least from the 1850s, the Russian community has been involved [in Fort Ross]," he said.

Polishchuk also said the park would likely require additional support from the Russian diaspora and other friends of the park to continue one of its major projects - restoring the first Russian Orthodox chapel in the continental United States built by the settlers almost two centuries ago.

"Work continues, but we probably require a lot more community involvement to raise enough funds to restore the chapel back to its original design, how it was built and decorated by the Russians in 1824," Polishchuk added.

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Fort Ross Conservancy Expands Programs to All Nations That Lived There - Director

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - Fort Ross, the site of a former settlement of the Russian American Company in California in the 19th century, is expanding its programs and focusing its efforts on research, education and cultural programs to offer a more inclusive history of the unique state historical park, Fort Ross Conservancy Executive Director Jane Murphy told Sputnik.

Representatives of the Russian diaspora in the United States expressed concern that under the new leadership, which took office a year ago, Fort Ross is switching its priorities to projects related to indigenous history rather than programs about the Russian heritage of the site. However, Murphy noted that the changes should not be a reason for concern.

"We just want to make sure that we are now telling deeper stories about all of the different groups that have touched here - the Russians, the Alaska Natives, the Kashia. So, to us, I think, it is the deeper and more interesting stories on how these cultures interacted," Murphy said.

Murphy noted that Fort Ross is one of the many places across California where different cultures intertwine, including the Native Americans.

"Their stories are being expanded," Murphy said, adding that she is confident this represents a positive development for all.

Murphy emphasized that many projects that Fort Ross Conservancy will work on in the next several years will be focused on building out more depth to those histories.

"Our goal is to continue to expand education programs, expand the access to not only to more students but also to expand the access to more people that are coming up from other parts of

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California," she said.

Murphy said the projects the conservancy seeks to develop include improving the local library and working on environmental stewardship.

"We are now working with a marine ecologist who is on staff to really expand a lot of programs. It is everything to really make sure that Fort Ross is continuing to grow and that we continue to expand our educational focus, which is really what we are," she said.

Fort Ross Director of External Relations Igor Polishchuk said the organization continues to maintain contacts with Russian scientists, working on a number of research topics that are relevant to history and culture.

"We are examining the early trade routes of Native American cultures with the European cultures across the Bering Strait in the 18th century. A lot of archives are located in Russia, so we work with scholars to get that information," Polishchuk said.

In addition, the organization is trying to determine how a very rare horse breed from Central Asia crossed the Bering Strait into North America, and DNA specialists, anthropologists and historians from Russia and the United States are working on this issue, Polishchuk said.

Fort Ross State Historic Park was a major commercial trading outpost just north of San Francisco, established by the Russian American Company (RAC) in the early 19th century to serve as the trading outpost and the agricultural base for the Russian colonies in Alaska. The settlement was sold in the 1841 to Captain John Sutter, the founder of the California capital Sacramento.

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Fort Ross Dialogue Says Will Focus on People-to-People Diplomacy, Not Politics

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - The organizers of the Fort Ross Dialogue acknowledge that maintaining communication between the United States and Russia is very important, but they plan to focus on people-to-people diplomacy without inviting officials from the two countries, Fort Ross Conservancy Director of External Relations Igor Polishchuk told Sputnik.

"I think it is important to keep the dialogue alive and ongoing because both, Russians and Americans, would only benefit by speaking with each other," Polishchuk said.

Polishchuk emphasized that the organizers of the dialogue will not invite this year officials from the United States and Russia in order to avoid politicizing the discussions.

"We do not want to bring politics into the people-to-people discussions," Polishchuk said.

The organizers expect up to 2,000 experts to listen to the panel discussions, which will be available online for each registered person, Polishchuk said.

"We are organizing five-six round table discussions concerning cultural, scientific and academic exchanges," Polishchuk said.

The conference will provide an opportunity for people from around the world, particularly from the United States and Russia, to exchange views on the most pressing issues and to build bridges between their countries, Polishchuk added.

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The Fort Ross Dialogue has been a platform for the exchange of ideas, building bridges and strengthening ties between Russians, Americans and the broader Russian-American community. The conference was launched in 2012 to coincide with the 200-year anniversary of the founding of the historic Russian American Company's trading outpost in California and to highlight and strengthen the cooperative Pacific dimension of US-Russian relations dating back to the 19th century. Over the years, this platform has grown to be a high-profile international event, which aims to maintain open communication between the two nations.

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US Federal Trade Commission Sues Amazon for Wielding 'Monopoly Power' - Statement

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - Amazon is being sued under US federal and state law for wielding monopoly power that shuts out competitors and deprives consumers of better quality and prices, the Federal Trade Commission and attorney generals of 17 US states said in a joint lawsuit against the global online retail giant.

"Our complaint lays out how Amazon has used a set of punitive and coercive tactics to unlawfully maintain its monopolies," Federal Trade Commission Chair Lina Khan said in a statement on the lawsuit. "Today's lawsuit seeks to hold Amazon to account for these monopolistic practices and restore the lost promise of free and fair competition."

The plaintiffs argue Amazon's "interlocking anticompetitive and unfair strategies" prevent rivals and sellers from lowering prices while degrading quality for shoppers as well as enable the company to overcharge sellers and stifle innovation, the statement said.

"Amazon violates the law not because it is big, but because it engages in a course of exclusionary conduct that prevents current competitors from growing and new competitors from emerging," the statement said.

By stifling competition on price, product selection, quality and by preventing its current or future rivals from attracting a critical mass of shoppers and sellers, Amazon ensures that no current or future rival can threaten its dominance, the statement said.

"Amazon's far-reaching schemes impact hundreds of billions of dollars in retail sales every year, touch hundreds of thousands of products sold by businesses big and small and affect over a hundred million shoppers," the statement said.

Amazon's anti-competitive conduct occurs in two markets - the online superstore market that serves shoppers and the market for online marketplace services purchased by sellers, the statement said.

"These tactics include anti-discounting measures that punish sellers and deter other online retailers from offering prices lower than Amazon, keeping prices higher for products across the internet," it said. "For example, if Amazon discovers that a seller is offering lower-priced goods elsewhere, Amazon can bury discounting sellers so far down in Amazon's search results that they become effectively invisible."

Conditioning sellers' ability to obtain "Prime" eligibility for their products - a virtual necessity for doing business on Amazon - has made it substantially more expensive for sellers, the complaint

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said, adding that "sellers [have] to pay close to 50% of their total revenues to Amazon," the statement said.

Amazon's actions also result in "degrading the customer experience by replacing relevant, organic search results with paid advertisements - and deliberately increasing junk ads that worsen search quality and frustrate both shoppers seeking products and sellers who are promised a return on their advertising purchase," the statement added.

The Federal Trade Commission said that the plaintiffs seek a permanent injunction in federal court that would prohibit Amazon from engaging in its unlawful conduct and pry loose Amazon's monopolistic control to restore competition.

The Federal Trade Commission is joined in filing the lawsuit by the states of Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Nevada, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Wisconsin.

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Biden Joins UAW Union Protest in Support of Call for Increased Wages, Benefits

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden on Tuesday joined dozens of members of the United Auto Workers (UAW) union during a protest in Michigan in support of their calls for increased wages and benefits.

Nearly 19,000 US auto workers are on strike at dozens of plants belonging to Ford, General Motors, and Stellantis. The actions of the UAW were prompted by failed negotiations to secure wage increases for workers. The UAW demands included a 46% pay increase and a reduced work week of 32 hours, among other provisions.

"Wall Street didn't build the country, the middle class built the country, and unions built the middle class," Biden told UAW protesters in Wayne County, Michigan. "You deserve what you earn and you deserve a hell of a lot more than you get paid now."

Biden emphasized that if US auto companies are making "incredible" profits, then their auto workers should also be doing "incredibly well" too.

According to White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre, Biden's presence at protest marks the first time a sitting US president has visited a picket line in modern times.

Biden made very brief remarks at the picket line and departed after just a few minutes.

Trump Campaign Advisor Jason Miller said last week that Biden's trip to Michigan is a "cheap photo op" that came about after former President Donald Trump announced two weeks ago that he will meet with auto workers in Detroit on Wednesday.

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US Lawmakers Introduce Bill to Block Federal Research Funding to China, Russia - Statement

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - US Congressmen Bill Posey and Brandon Williams introduced legislation to block federal research funding from going to adversaries such as China and Russia, the lawmakers said on Tuesday.

"Scientific research and development are the bedrock of American innovation and economic growth. It is crucial for our nation's security and future that we prevent foreign infiltration of American science and technology from adversaries like China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea," Williams said in a statement.

Last year, a US Government Accountability Office report found that millions of dollars in federal research funds went directly to Chinese entities, as well as an undetermined amount of indirect funding, the statement said.

The current system has several "loopholes" that enable adversarial countries to participate in taxpayer-funded research initiatives and then later use the findings against US interests, the statement added.

The legislation, dubbed the Stop Funding Our Adversaries' Research Act, requires that US government agency heads seek approval from Congress before funding or conducting research in coordination with China or other countries of concern, according to the statement.

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US State Dept. Says Canada Expressing Regret for Honoring Nazi 'Appropriate'

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - The United States considers it to be an appropriate move by the Canadian authorities to express regret over the House of Commons celebrating a Ukrainian Nazi veteran, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said on Tuesday.

"I saw that today, the Canadian government said they were not aware of that individual's past and expressed regret for it and that seems like an appropriate step," Miller said at a briefing.

Earlier in the day, Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly said House of Commons Speaker Anthony Rota should step down for inviting Ukrainian Nazi veteran Yaroslav Hunka to parliament.

On Friday, Hunka was given a standing ovation by the entire Canadian legislature. Hunka's recognition happened as Rota gave introductory remarks prior to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's address. On Sunday, Rota apologized and Trudeau's office said neither the Canadian prime minister nor Zelenskyy's delegation were notified in advance of Hunka's invite.

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Pentagon Acquisition Chief Says US Government Shutdown Could Impact Ukraine Aid Testing

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WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - A US government shutdown could impact tests of aid to Ukraine unless the Pentagon is provided a waiver, US Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment William LaPlante said on Tuesday.

"I have some testing we want to do next week on an item for Ukraine, and unless we can get some type of a waiver – which we're going to get – it's not going to happen," LaPlante said during an interview with the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The US Congress is working to pass government funding legislation before the end of the month, after which point the government could shut down. However, lawmakers are battling over whether to include additional measures such as further Ukraine aid or border security funding to a spending bill.

The United States has funds to assist Ukraine for a couple more weeks, although the US' ability to support Ukraine could lapse if lawmakers do not pass a supplemental aid request for Ukraine, White House Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said earlier on Tuesday.

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CORRECTION - US Must Maintain Lines of Communication With China for Safety - Pentagon Acquisition Chief

(Corrects headline, lede and earlier version published at 16:51:41 GMT to read "lines of communications with China," not Russia)

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - The United States should open up lines of communication with China in order to bolster mutual safety and understanding, US Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment William LaPlante said on Tuesday.

"We have to open up lines of communication between our countries: mil-to-mil, policy-to-policy, diplomatic and more," LaPlante said during an interview with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, when asked about avoiding conflict with China. "It's only safer when we're talking to each other, and I think that that's something that's in the interest of both countries, to make sure that those lines of communication stay open so that we understand each other."

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Canada's NDP Leader Singh Says Trudeau Should Apologize for Hunka Scandal

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) – Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau should also apologize for the standing ovation to Ukrainian Nazi veteran Yaroslav Hunka and present a roadmap for remedying the damage it caused to Ukraine, the leader of the New Democratic Party (NDP) Jagmeet Singh said on Tuesday.

On Friday, Hunka, a 98-year-old Ukrainian Nazi veteran who fought in the ranks of the 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the Nazi SS during the Second World War, was given a standing

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ovation by the entire Canadian legislature. Hunka's recognition happened as the Speaker of the House of Commons, Anthony Rota, was giving introductory remarks prior to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's address to the Canadian parliament.

On Sunday, Rota apologized for his decision to invite Hunka. Trudeau's office said, in turn, that neither the Canadian prime minister nor Zelenskyy's delegation were notified in advance of the invitation of Hunka.

"I reiterate our call that came out yesterday, that the Speaker should resign. I also want to acknowledge that the Prime Minister invited President Zelensky, and the purpose of the invitation was to give President Zelensky, an opportunity, a very important opportunity to shore up support for the efforts in Ukraine for the war in Ukraine. But because of the incidents on Friday, it has had the opposite effects. It has harmed the efforts of President Zelensky, and Ukraine. For that reason, the Prime Minister now must show a plan to remedy this negative impact, show some leadership," Singh said during a press conference from Parliament Hill.

In addition to Rota's presenting his resignation, and of Trudeau presenting a plan to correct the "mistake", the Prime Minister should also absolutely include an apology, Singh said.

Earlier today, Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly said Rota should listen to lawmakers and resign from his role as Speaker of the House of Common, stressing that there was no alternative and was the right thing to do.

Joly's calls were shortly followed by Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre who in a change of stance from Monday - when lawmakers Michelle Rempel Garner and Chris Warkentin said they wouldn't accept collective responsibility and advised the Speaker not to accept responsibility for the government mishap – said Rota should resign.

Poilievre however noted that Rota's resignation would not excuse Trudeau's failure for the shame brought to Canada.

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Blinken Spoke With Aliyev, Underscored Urgency of No Further Hostilities- State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke with Azerbaijani President Aliyev and underscored the urgency of no further hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said on Tuesday.

"I will say that the Secretary spoke again to President Aliyev today and underscored the urgency of no further hostilities," said Miller during a press briefing.

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White House Says Republicans Can Avoid Government Shutdown

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WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - The looming US government shutdown is something that does not have to happen and that Republicans can avoid, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday.

"When it comes to a potential shutdown, which does not have to happen, it would be a Republican shutdown," Jean-Pierre said at a press briefing. "This is something that they can avoid."

The looming deadline of October 1 places the responsibility on the US Congress to come to a budget agreement and prevent an impending government shutdown as the current fiscal year comes to a close.

A shutdown would suspend "nonessential" government operations until Congress passes a measure to restore funding. This would mean millions of federal workers going without a paycheck including over 1.3 million active duty troops, according to the White House. The most recent government shutdown lasted 34-36 days, a record, from late 2018 to early 2019.

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US Open to Diplomacy But Wants to See Iran Take De-Escalatory Steps First - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - When asked about reports of Iranian leader Ali Hosseini Khamenei approving US-Iran nuclear talks, the State Department said on Tuesday that the US is open to diplomacy but wants to see Iran take de-escalatory steps first.

"We would prefer to continue to pursue diplomacy but as I said, there are a number of de-escalatory steps that we want Iran to take," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said at a briefing.

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US Home Sales Down 9% in August as Rising Lending Rates Keep Buyers Away

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - US home sales fell 8.7% month-on-month in August, the departments of Commerce and Housing and Urban Development said in a joint statement on Tuesday, suggesting higher mortgage rates have inhibited buyers.

"Sales of new single-family houses in August 2023 were at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 675,000," the statement said.

Wall Street analysts polled by US media had forecast a sale of 698,000 units.

The 8.7% drop is below the revised July rate of 739,000, but it is still 5.8% above the level of 638,000 a year ago, the statement said.

The Federal Reserve left US interest rates unchanged in September but said it will raise them when necessary, including before the year-end, to try and bring inflation back to its desired target of 2% per year.

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US headline inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) hit 40-year highs of more than 9% in June 2021 before falling to as low as 3% by June last year. Since then, it has been on the rise, adding a rounded-up 0.7% over the past two months.

Separately, the Conference Board, a group that measures US consumer activity, said in a statement on Tuesday that consumer confidence tumbled for a second month in a row in September, nearing recession levels amid rising inflation.

"Plans to buy homes - more in line with rising interest rates - continued to trend downward," the statement said.

Housing and real estate play important roles in the US economy, with roughly 65% of occupied housing units being owner-occupied. That makes homes a substantial source of household wealth and home construction a key provider of employment.

In the 2008-2009 financial crisis, a crash of the housing market precipitated what later came to be known as the era of the Great Recession. Since then, the US property market has rapidly recovered on the back of economic recovery as well as demand from buyers.

However, the supply of existing and new homes has been way below demand during the past two years while rising interest rates and record home prices have lately kept buyers away.

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US Must Open Up Lines of Communication With Russia for Safety - Pentagon Acquisition Chief

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - The United States and Russia should open up lines of communication in order to bolster mutual safety and understanding, US Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment William LaPlante said on Tuesday.

"We have to open up lines of communication between our countries: mil-to-mil, policy-to-policy, diplomatic and more," LaPlante said during an interview with the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "It's only safer when we're talking to each other, and I think that that's something that's in the interest of both countries to make sure that those lines of communication stay open so that we understand each other."

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UPDATE - Year 2023 Brought Korean Peninsula to Brink of Nuclear War – DPRK Envoy to UN

(Adds details in paras 3-7)

UNITED NATIONS, September 26 (Sputnik) – The year 2023 was "extremely dangerous" as it brought the Korean Peninsula closer to the brink of nuclear war, the Permanent Representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the UN Kim Song said on Tuesday.

"Owing to the reckless and continued hysteria of nuclear showdown on the part of the United States and its foreign forces, the year 2023 has been recorded as an extremely dangerous year,

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that the military security situation in and around the Korean peninsula was driven closer to the brink of nuclear war," Song told the UN General Assembly.

Song added that since the beginning of the year, Washington and Seoul have been making "hysterical remarks" which he characterized as confrontational as they called for ending the North Korean regime and its occupation of Pyongyang, in violation of the UN Charter.

The North Korean envoy said the US is further pushing for a nuclear war ever since it created the so-called Nuclear Consultative Group and began dispatching nuclear submarines and strategic bombers capable of carrying nuclear weapons, in and around the Peninsula.

Song stressed that the dangerousness of the situation in the Korean Peninsula is due to the US ambitions to maintain its hegemony at all costs, while also noting the role of the South Korean government plays in it.

"Ever since the current puppet government came to power, the whole area of the ROK [Republic of Korea] turned literally into a military colony of the United States," Song continued.

Song said that it was because of the current circumstances that North Korea was forced to accelerate its self-defense capabilities, and that it would continue to do so for as long as threats to its sovereignty were intensified.

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Sony Probing Ransomware Group's Claim of Breaching Company Systems - Statement

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - Sony Group Corporation said on Tuesday that it is investigating the claims made by the ransomware group Ransomed.vc that it had infiltrated the company's systems and threatened to sell the acquired data.

"We are currently investigating the situation and we have no further comment at this time," Sony said in a statement to video game website IGN.

Earlier this week, Ransomed.vc claimed responsibility for a cyberattack against Sony, saying their intent was to sell the stolen data should Sony decline to pay a ransom.

However, the data Ransomed.vc supplied, which includes screenshots of an internal login page, a PowerPoint presentation and numerous Java and HTML files, consists of fewer than 6,000 files, raising doubts about the validity of the ransomware group's claim.

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Year 2023 Brought Korean Peninsula to Brink of Nuclear War – DPRK Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, September 26 (Sputnik) – The year 2023 was "extremely dangerous" and brought the Korean Peninsula closer to the brink of nuclear war, the Permanent Representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the UN Kim Song said on Tuesday.

"Owing to the reckless and continued hysteria of nuclear showdown on the part of the United

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States and its foreign forces, the year 2023 has been recorded as an extremely dangerous year, that the military security situation in and around the Korean peninsula was driven closer to the brink of nuclear war," Song told the UN General Assembly.

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CIA Developing AI Tool to Process Public Information - Senior Official

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - The CIA is developing an artificial intelligence (AI) tool to help US intelligence agencies sift through high volumes of public information, Bloomberg reported on Tuesday in an interview with an agency official.

"We have to find the needles in the needle field," Randy Nixon, director of the CIA's Open-Source Enterprise Division that is developing the tool, said.

Nixon explained that the Chat-GPT-like tool would allow analysts to view the original source of information, ask further questions and help them sort and summarize information.

The tool is part of a broader government push to harness AI and compete with China, Nixon said.

The CIA plans to soon make the tool available for use among the 18 US intelligence agencies, including the NSA, FBI as well as military agencies, Nixon also said.

Policymakers and the public will not have access to the tool, Nixon added.

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US Consumer Confidence Down Again in Sept, Nears 'Recession Threshold' - Conference Board

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - US consumer confidence tumbled for a second month in a row in September, nearing recession levels, as Americans continued to cut spending amid rising inflation, the Conference Board, a group that measures consumer activity, said Tuesday.

The board's headline Consumer Confidence Index was at 103 this month, approaching the 1985 level of 100, and down from the August reading of 108.7. More importantly, the Expectations Index — based on consumers' short-term outlook for income, business, and labor market conditions — declined to 73.7, after falling to 83.3 in August. An expectation level below 80 "historically signals a recession within the next year", the board said.

"Consumer fears of an impending recession also ticked back up, consistent with the short and shallow economic contraction we anticipate for the first half of 2024," the board said in a statement.

The proportion of consumers saying recession is 'somewhat' or 'very likely' rose in September

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after dropping in August, the board said.

"The fluctuations likely reflect ongoing uncertainty given mixed buying plans," the board added. "On a six-month moving average basis, plans to purchase autos were flat but remained at an elevated level, while plans to purchase appliances continued to trend upward. Plans to buy homes — more in line with rising interest rates — continued to trend downward."

Separately, data from the Commerce Department on Tuesday showed sales of new U.S. single-family homes fell more than expected in August as the rate on the popular 30-year fixed mortgage jumped above 7%, driving potential buyers to the sidelines.

"Write-in responses showed that consumers continued to be preoccupied with rising prices in general, and for groceries and gasoline in particular," Dana Peterson, chief economist at the board, added in the statement. "Consumers also expressed concerns about the political situation and higher interest rates. The decline in consumer confidence was evident across all age groups, and notably among consumers with household incomes of $50,000 or more."

Peterson said assessments of the present situation were little changed overall, due to divergent views on the state of business conditions and job availability.

"Fewer consumers said that business conditions were good, but fewer also said they were bad," she said. "Regarding the employment situation, slightly more consumers said that jobs were 'plentiful,' but also slightly more said that jobs were "hard to get."

Peterson said consumers may be hearing more bad news about corporate earnings, while job openings are narrowing, and interest rates continue to rise—making big-ticket items more expensive.

"The proportion of consumers saying recession is 'somewhat' or 'very likely' rose in September after dropping in August. The fluctuating soundings likely reflect ongoing uncertainty given mixed buying plans. On a six-month moving average basis, plans to purchase autos were flat but remained at an elevated level, while plans to purchase appliances continued to trend upward. But plans to buy homes—more in line with rising interest rates—continued to trend downward."

US consumer prices rose a second month in a row in August as high fuel prices triggered a year-on-year price growth of 3.7%, according to Labor Department data on Wednesday that placed renewed pressure on inflation fighters at the Federal Reserve.

US headline inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, or CPI, hit 40-year highs of more than 9% in June 2022 before falling to as low as 3.0% by June last year. Since then, it has been on the rise, adding a rounded-up 0.7% over the past two months, as high global oil prices bumped up fuel costs at home.

The Fed on Wednesday left US interest rates unchanged for September but said it will raise them when necessary, including before the year-end, to try and bring inflation back to its desired target of 2% per annum

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White House Says Menendez Did 'Right Thing' to Step Down From US Senate Panel Chairmanship

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - US Senator Robert Menendez did the "right thing" by down from his position chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee after being indicted on bribery charges, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday.

"We think the senator did the right thing by stepping down from his chairmanship. As it relates to resigning, it is up to him and the leadership at the Senate," Jean-Pierre said during a press briefing.

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Syria Backs UN Probe Into Nord Stream Attacks - Deputy Foreign Minister to Sputnik

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - Syria is calling for an independent United Nations investigation into the attacks on the Nord Stream gas pipelines, Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Bassam al-Sabbagh told Sputnik on Tuesday.

When asked whether there should be an independent United Nations investigation on the pipelines sabotage, al-Sabbagh said, "Of course."

"It goes without saying. There has to be [one]. "Usually, when countries request such an investigation, the United Nations should respond to it."

The Nord Stream pipelines, built to deliver gas under the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany, were hit by explosions in September 2022. The pipelines' operator, Nord Stream AG, said that the damage was unprecedented and it was impossible to estimate the timeframe for repairing them.

Denmark, Germany and Norway have left Russia out of their investigations into the attacks, prompting Moscow to launch its own investigation. Russian officials have characterized the attacks as international terrorism.

No official results of the investigations have yet been announced, but Pulitzer Prize-winning US investigative journalist Seymour Hersh published a report in February 2023 saying the explosions were organized by the US government with the support of the authorities in Norway. Washington has denied any involvement in the attack.

In mid-July, media reported that Dutch military intelligence had informed the CIA of Ukraine's plans to sabotage the Nord Stream pipelines - months before the attacks happened.

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Congressman Gaetz Requests US House Withhold His Pay in Event of Govt. Shutdown - Letter

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WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - US Congressman Matt Gaetz on Tuesday requested that the House of Representatives withhold his pay in the event that Congress fails to avert a government shutdown before the end of the month.

"It is my understanding that pursuant to the Constitution, members of Congress will continue to receive their pay during a lapse in appropriations. Therefore, I am requesting that in the case of a lapse of appropriations… my pay be withheld until legislation has taken effect to end such lapse in appropriations in its entirety," Gaetz said in a letter to US House Chief Administrative Officer Catherine Szpindor.

Lawmakers are attempting to pass funding legislation before the end of the month after which point the US government risks a shutdown.

The leadership in both chambers of Congress have floated the idea of a short-term funding bill, although there are discrepancies between the House of Representatives and the Senate on what additional measures to include.

Gaetz and some other Republicans in the House of Representatives have expressed opposition to a short-term funding bill, as well as the inclusion of aid for Ukraine in any spending legislation, which Senate leadership has proposed.

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US Investigates Suspected Juvenile Hacker Attacks on Casino Giants - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - The United States is investigating the recent hacker attacks on casino giants MGM and Caesars that were reportedly carried out by young individuals, Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco said on Tuesday.

"We are investigating these hacks. I will not get into the specifics of those," Monaco said during a live conversation with The Washington Post.

Earlier in September, a group believed to consist of young individuals and teenagers hacked casinos owned by MGM and Caesars Entertainment. The attacks disrupted the work of resorts and casinos across the country, according to media reports.

"What we are seeing is a phenomenon where quite literally juveniles and others here and abroad have limitless access to an online for-profit and criminal ecosystem," Monaco said.

Monaco pointed out that the situation is not new. She recalled that a group that breached Uber, Microsoft, and some other companies several years ago also included young people. She also stressed the need to improve partnerships between the federal government and local authorities to find ways to "redirect" individuals to go down a different path and choose honest methods to make money.

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UN Obligated to Hold US Accountable for Stealing Syria's Oil – Syrian Foreign Ministry

UNITED NATIONS, September 26 (Sputnik) – The United Nations have an obligation to hold the United States accountable for plundering Syria's oil resources which amount to losses of $115 billion for Damascus, Syrian Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Bassam Sabbah said on Tuesday.

"Our latest statistics show that the total value of direct and indirect losses to the oil sector in Syria have exceeded 115 billion US dollars. We believe that the United Nations is obligated to hold the United States accountable and ask it to return this looted money to the Syrians," Bassam said as he addressed the UN General Assembly.

Bassam's remarks came when addressing US and Turkish illegal military presence on Syrian soil in violation of its national sovereignty and territorial integrity, which is also used to support an array of separatist militias and terrorist groups.

The Syrian official also condemned the "infiltration" by several western political and military officials among others, to occupied areas of the country, in disregard to Syria's sovereignty. – "This is considered a flagrant interference in its internal affairs," Bassam said.

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US Sanctions 10 Mexico Sinaloa Cartel Leaders For Fentanyl Trade Activities - Treasury

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - The US government has imposed sanctions on 10 leaders and key associates of the Mexico-based Sinaloa drug cartel for their roles in trafficking fentanyl and other lethal drugs including cocaine from Colombia into the United States, the Department of the Treasury announced in a press release on Tuesday.

"Today, the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned 10 individuals, including several Sinaloa Cartel affiliates and fugitives, pursuant to Executive Order (EO) 14059," the release said.

The sanctioned individuals operate in the Los Chapitos faction of Mexico's Sinaloa Cartel, the release explained.

"Responsible for a significant portion of the illicit fentanyl and other deadly drugs trafficked into the United States, the Sinaloa Cartel is one of the world's most damaging transnational criminal organizations," the Treasury Department said.

Those sanctioned included Jorge Humberto Figueroa Benitez, Leobardo Garcia Corrales, Martin Garcia Corrales, Liborio Nunez Aguirre, Samuel Leon Alvarado, Carlos Mario Limon Vazquez, Mario Alberto Jimenez Castro, Julio Cesar Dominguez Hernandez and Jesus Miguel Vibanco Garcia and Colombian national Jobanis de Jesus Avila Villadiego, also known as Chiquito Malo, the current leader of the Clan del Golfo, which supplies cocaine to major drug trafficking organizations, including the Sinaloa Cartel, the Treasury Department said.

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

US Voters Give Republicans Biggest Lead in History Over Democrats on Economy - Poll

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - Voters in the United States have given Republicans the widest lead in history over Democrats on handling the economy and also prefer them by wide margins to fight crime, control immigration and handle border security, a new NBC News poll revealed on Tuesday.

The poll gives the Republicans a 21% lead over President Joe Biden and his Democratic Party on economic policy, with 49% of registered voters preferring them and only 28% favoring the Democrats, a release on the poll said.

This is the widest margin between the two parties since NBC News polling started asking the question in 1991, the release said.

Voters still preferred Democrats to Republicans on health care, abortion, education and on responding to COVID-19, the release added.

The public was evenly divided on which party was better for protecting democracy and the interests of the middle class, according to the release.

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Joly Calls on Canada House of Commons Speaker to Step Down Over Inviting Nazi Veteran

(Adds background in para 2-3, 8, Poilievre remarks in para 6-7)

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - House of Commons Speaker Anthony Rota should step down for inviting Ukrainian Nazi veteran Yaroslav Hunka to parliament, Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly said on Tuesday.

On Friday, Hunka, a 98-year-old Ukrainian Nazi veteran who fought in the ranks of the 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the Nazi SS during the Second World War, was given a standing ovation by the entire Canadian legislature. Hunka's recognition happened as the Speaker of the House of Commons, Anthony Rota, was giving introductory remarks prior to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's address to the Canadian parliament.

On Sunday, Rota apologized for his decision to invite Hunka. Trudeau's office said, in turn, that neither the Canadian prime minister nor Zelenskyy's delegation were notified in advance of the invitation of Hunka.

"So, what happened on Friday is completely unacceptable. It was an embarrassment to the House and to Canadians, and I think the Speaker should listen to members of the House [of Commons] and step down," Joly said.

Joly added there would be no other alternative to Rota resigning from his position and would be the right thing to do.

In an apparent change of stance, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre said that Rota would have to resign but noted that his resignation would not in any way excuse Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for his failure.

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"Trudeau (and his Liberal Speaker) have brought shame on Canada. The Liberal Speaker will have to resign. But that does not excuse Justin Trudeau's failure to have his massive diplomatic and intelligence apparatus vet and prevent honouring a Nazi," Poilievre said via X.

On Monday, Conservative lawmaker Michelle Rempel Garner and her colleague Chris Warkentin said the party would not take collective responsibility for the consequences of Hunka's standing ovation. Warkenting further called on Rota not to take responsibility for what he said was the governments mistake.

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US Drug Enforcement Chief Says on Track to Seize More Fentanyl in 2023 Than Ever Before

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) chief Anne Milgram said on Tuesday that law enforcement is on track to seize more fentanyl in the United States in 2023 than in any previous year.

"We are on pace to seize more [fentanyl] this year than we have ever seized before. You heard me say that last year too, and the year before that was also true," Milgram said during remarks at the DEA Second Annual Family Summit on Fentanyl.

Two organized crime groups, the Sinaloa and the Jalisco cartels, are responsible for the fentanyl crisis in the United States, Milgram said.

More than 110,000 Americans died in 2022 as a result of using fentanyl, Milgram said.

US law enforcement is targeting the entire fentanyl supply chain, from precursor chemical suppliers in China to the cartels in Mexico, Milgram said.

The US government has also increased the number of investigations and prosecutions into fentanyl poisonings, Milgram also said.

The DEA has more than 600 active death-resulting investigations, Milgram added.

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Russia Files Protest to Canada for Honoring Ukraine Nazi Veteran in Parliament - Envoy

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - Russia has sent a protest note complete with letters to the Canadian leadership for inviting and honoring in parliament a Ukrainian Nazi veteran, however, has it has not yet received a response, Russian Ambassador in Ottawa Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik on Tuesday.

"The note was sent on Monday. I sent it with my personal letters addressed to the prime minister, the foreign minister and the speaker of the House of Commons," Stepanov said. "No answer yet."

Earlier on Tuesday, Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly said House of Commons Speaker Anthony Rota should step down for inviting Ukrainian Nazi veteran Yaroslav Hunka to

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parliament. Joly added there would be no other alternative to Rota resigning from his position and would be the right thing to do.

Stepanov said the Canadian society and media are "buzzing" over the scandal, but Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has not apologized despite his reputation and that of his cabinet having suffered a serious blow.

"They are trying to quell the scandal by making the House of Commons Speaker Anthony Rota a scapegoat and dismissing him," Stepanov added.

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US House China Panel Says Encouraged by Ford Reconsidering Ties to Chinese Battery Firm

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - US Congressman Mike Gallagher, chairman of the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, said on Tuesday that the panel is encouraged by US automobile manufacturer Ford's decision to reconsider ties to a Chinese electric vehicle (EV) battery firm.

"After months of investigation by the Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, we're encouraged to see Ford take a crucial first step to reevaluate its deal with Chinese Communist Party-aligned EV battery firm, CATL," Gallagher said in a statement.

On Monday, a Ford spokesperson told Sputnik that the company paused construction of a $3.5 billion plant in Michigan in order to review its ability to competitively operate the facility. Ford has been criticized by lawmakers for its plans to use Chinese technology to manufacture EV batteries at the plant.

Ford is considering a number of factors prior to a final decision about the future of the plant, the spokesperson said.

CATL's alleged ties to forced labor in China have no place in the US market, Gallagher's statement said.

Such ties make Ford unfit to receive US taxpayer money and the company ought to call off the deal for good, the statement added.

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Two More Democratic Senators Call on Menendez to Resign Following Indictment

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - Two more democratic US senators, Tammy Baldwin and Jon Tester, issued statements on Tuesday calling on their fellow party member Robert Menendez to resign after he was indicted on bribery charges earlier in the month.

"I've read the detailed charges against Senator Menendez and find them deeply disturbing. While he deserves a fair trial like every other American, I believe Senator Menendez should resign for the sake of the public's faith in the U.S. Senate," Tester said in a statement.

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Senator Baldwin called the charges against Menendez "troubling allegations" and also urged him to step down as it would be best for his constituents and the national security of the United States.

The senators became the fourth and fifth in a row of Menendez's fellow party members, who believe that he should resign due to the charges brought against him. Following the indictment, democratic senators Sherrod Brown, Peter Welch, and John Fetterman called on Menendez to resign.

Among those who urged the New Jersey senator to step down are New Jersey governor Phil Murphy and Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi.

Last week, the Justice Department unsealed an indictment charging Menendez, his wife, and three other individuals with crimes including conspiracy to commit bribery, fraud, and extortion under color of official right.

Menendez said on Monday that he believes he will be cleared of bribery allegations and will continue to serve in Congress after the facts of the case against him emerge.

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UN Chief Says Nuclear-Weapon States Should Lead Way, Meet Disarmament Obligations

UNITED NATIONS, September 26 (Sputnik) - Nuclear-weapon countries should lead as an example and fulfill their disarmament obligations, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Tuesday.

“Nuclear-weapon States must lead the way. I call on them to meet their disarmament obligations, and commit to never use nuclear weapons under any circumstances,” Guterres said during a United Nations meeting commemorating the international day for the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

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Guterres Says New Arms Race ‘Brewing,’ Number of Nuclear Arms Could Rise

UNITED NATIONS, September 26 (Sputnik) - A new arms race is about to unfold with the number of nuclear weapons likely to increase, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned on Tuesday.

"A worrisome new arms race is brewing. The number of nuclear weapons could rise for the first time in decades," Guterres said during a United Nations meeting commemorating the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

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

Joly Calls on Canada House of Commons Speaker to Step Down Over Inviting Nazi Veteran

WASHINGTON, September 26 (Sputnik) - House of Commons Speaker Anthony Rota should step down for inviting Ukrainian Nazi veteran Yaroslav Hunka to parliament, Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly said on Tuesday.

"So, what happened on Friday is completely unacceptable. It was an embarrassment to the House and to Canadians, and I think the Speaker should listen to members of the House [of Commons] and step down," Joly said.

Joly added there would be no other alternative to Rota resigning from his position and would be the right thing to do.

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