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'He's Toast': 'Strong Case' Against Senator Menendez Just Tip of Corruption Iceberg - Experts

While US Senator Bob Menendez is far from the only corrupt politician in Washington, DC, the case against him is exceptionally strong, experts told Sputnik, noting it was likely only the tip of the iceberg of a larger network of corruption that might ultimately prove to be anchored on his wife.

After being indicted last week on corruption charges that include bribery, US Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ) has faced increasing calls to resign, including from within his own party. The senator has already stepped down as chair of the powerful Armed Services Committee.

Menendez and his wife, Nadine Arslanian, who was also implicated in the scandal, have denied the charges against them. The senator has claimed that money found in their home was a family practice learned during persecution by the US-backed Batista regime in Cuba in the 1950s.

"This may seem old-fashioned, but these were monies drawn from my personal account based on the income I have lawfully derived over those 30 years," the senator told reporters about the more than $400,000 in cash found in their home.

He provided no explanation for the gold bars or other items they are accused of accepting as bribes, which includes a Mercedes c300 convertible and more than $100,000 in gold bars. Following their arraignment on Wednesday, the two were released on bail and their passports were confiscated.

Menendez is widely known as a foreign policy hawk who has supported US sanctions policies against Cuba and other states, as well as armed US interventions in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and other nations.

Economist, radio show host, and author Jack Rasmus told Sputnik on Tuesday that there was no hope Menendez's political career would survive the case against him.

"He's toast politically, you know? The question is: how far will the media and the Democrats ramp up the pressure on him? I mean, if he's corrupt - and I mean, he is - the next step is going to be some legal action, and a lot of dirt, further dirt, will come out. So he's got to face that, will he agree to go quietly into the sunset? Or will he be facing a lot of legal action to get him out [of office]? It doesn't matter what he says. He's going to leave, I believe."

Asked about the situation by the hosts of Radio Sputnik's Fault Lines on Tuesday, retired US Navy Captain and political strategist Armen Kurdiancoyly replied: "Is this really a big deal? I mean, doesn't everybody in public office do this?"

"You just don't see that anymore," he said of the photos in the indictment. "You don't see bundles of cash in envelopes, you don't see those gold bars - it's absolutely fascinating. Here's a little bit about the senator: he's basically a middle-of-the-pack Democrat when it comes to his voting record, he's got a daughter on MSNBC and his son is now in Congress in New Jersey,

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which I guess makes them the second father-son combo where somebody is having some kind of corruption going on."

"And the total of this, of what I think the prosecutors are saying - $480,000 over several years, something like that - the guy gets $174,000 salary, so can you really blame him for trying to go out and get some outside income?"

"I mean, really, is that worth, you know, putting your career and everything that you worked for in jeopardy? I mean, you know, it sounds like a lot of money to a lot of Americans - and it is - but for somebody in that position, it really isn't."

Kurdian clarified, though: "I do have some amount of faith in public officials that I do believe that most of them are not corrupt like this. I'm sure a lot of them push it to the edge and 'do what's necessary.' But I think there's also a lot of just 'I don't want to get caught doing something stupid. I need to be careful, and these rules are throughout government.'"

This is the second time charges have been brought against Menendez. A 2017 trial on charges of conspiracy, bribery, and honest services fraud resulted in a hung jury, which in the American system of common law means the jury failed to deliver a decision because its members could not unanimously agree on whether he was guilty or not, so the judge declared a mistrial. Prosecutors later failed to launch a new trial on the charges.

Kurdian noted that not long after that debacle was when Menendez met his now-wife, Nadine Arslanian, a Lebanese Armenian who Kurdian noted had "all these connections."

"The big difference here is in 2015 he was single, and then 2018 is when he met his wife. They started dating and very shortly thereafter, all the stuff - because she has all these connections, and you wonder: did he bring her in because he needed help being more corrupt, or did she bring him in because she had all these connections and he was a way to help her get a lot more rich? You know, her connections with the Egyptian government for arms sales, he's trying to grease [the wheels], he's basically acting like a foreign lobbyist. You're not even allowed to do that - you can have discussions - but you're actually doing lobbying on behalf of a foreign government as a sitting US senator and that's not okay, especially when you're getting paid for it."

"It originated with her," he noted. "She was in action. She had a lot of intention, she knew a lot of these people, he knew a lot of these people, and she introduced her husband to some of these folks. And you wonder whether he was like, did he fall into a honey trap of his own making?"

Kurdian said the prosecutors have "a very strong case" this time around.

"I mean, it's cash payments. There's no record of it being like, say, earned income on a W-2 or something that you could earn for performing services. You know, someone else making car payments on your behalf, and then once the investigation starts, 'oh, stop making these car payments, Egyptian company, I'll start making it on my own.' I mean, there is a ton of evidence here. There's this gold bar. I mean, really."

Asked about what happens when Menendez resigns or is removed from office, Kurdian explained that New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy would appoint someone to serve the rest of Menendez's term, which ends in 2024.

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Israeli Archaeologists Find Possible First Known Grave of Ancient Greek Courtesan

Archaeologists believe they may have found the grave of a Hetaira, a type of upper-class courtesan from Ancient Greece, for the first time along the old road from Jerusalem to Hebron. The Israeli Antiquities Authority (IAA) announced the find on Wednesday, estimating the woman lived some 2,300 years ago, around the time of Alexander the Great, a Macedonian Greek king who conquered the region from the Persian Empire.

Hetairae were part of the elite circles of Greek society, and although they were prostitutes, they were allowed to be educated and amass wealth and power. Thus, why no identifiable grave of a hetaira has ever been found until this point has been something of a mystery to archaeologists and historians.

Guy Stiebel of Tel Aviv University told Israeli media that while there's no certainty the grave site found in Jerusalem's Talpiot neighborhood belonged to a hetaira, it seems the most likely interpretation of the evidence.

"There are times the stars align and the anomalies ultimately converge to one scenario," he said. "There are rare cases where you have to say: that's what it is."

Stiebel, along with Liat Oz of the Israel Antiquities Authority, jointly authored a paper on the find, which is set to be published in Hebrew in the peer-reviewed journal New Studies on Jerusalem.

The tomb was found in 2019, carved into the limestone bedrock on a hillside near the road from Jerusalem south to Hebron and includes an entrance room and interior burial chamber, both of which were coated in plaster.

The woman's remains were first cremated, and her bones were buried with a number of items, including a bronze mirror inside a case and some nails, which were held to have magical properties by many in the ancient world. The whole thing was then sealed with a massive stone and bitumen gathered from the nearby Dead Sea.

According to the archaeologists, this was not at all typical for burial customs of the time in Greece or Judea, adding to the mystery of the site. It was dated to the Hellenistic period by the mirror found inside, which matches statues from that time portraying women holding mirrors.

"The mirror was a gender-specific artifact, identified in the ancient period only with women," Stiebel explained. "Not that men didn't preen, but there is no ancient depiction of them reflecting their glories in a mirror. A mirror was a woman's property, part of the female kit. Since this one contained 600 grams of metal, it was a very precious item."

Once they had determined it was most likely a powerful woman, the archaeologists said the most logical conclusion was that she was likely a hetaira, since the wives of military officers and aristocrats rarely traveled when their husbands did and would have been at home.

"We know from historic records that this was happening and we know that some [hetairae] joined generals or rulers on their campaigns – famously, the hetaira Thais joined Alexander on the road and he didn't like her to be far," Stiebel said. "When they conquered Persepolis, Thais was the one who some say stood behind the decision to burn the city to the ground."

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With ‘Leaning Tower of Pisa-Type of Experiment’ Physicists Find Antimatter Affected by Gravity, Too

It was long assumed that antimatter, the opposite of the normal matter making up the tangible universe around us, wasn’t subject to the gravity that pulls normal matter downwards, but a group of physicists in Europe have proven for the first time that it is.

The discovery was made by scientists at the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), who tested elusive atoms of antihydrogen to see if they fell downward, indicating they were pulled by gravity, or upward, as if pulled by a hypothetical antigravity that would only affect antimatter.

Antihydrogen is just like regular hydrogen except that it’s opposite. Hydrogen is made up of a proton and a neutron, and antihydogen is made up of an antiproton and an antineutron.

However, matter and antimatter can’t coexist together: if the one touches the other, they’ll annihilate each other, so it can only exist in a special vacuum chamber created by scientists.

Jonathan Wurtele, a theoretical physicist at the University of California, Berkeley, compared the experiment to those performed in 17th century Italy by Galileo Galilei, who dropped different objects off the Leaning Tower of Pisa to see if gravity pulled some of them faster than others.

“Broadly speaking, we’re making antimatter and we’re doing a Leaning Tower of Pisa kind of experiment,” Wurtele quipped. “We’re letting the antimatter go, and we’re seeing if it goes up or down.”

Interestingly, physicists don’t quite know how normal gravity works, either. A hypothetical massless “graviton” particle is assumed to be the mechanism by which matter pulls on other matter, but it has never been observed.

The challenge was that of the four known elementary forces of nature, gravity is by far the weakest (the others are electromagnetism and the strong and weak nuclear forces), meaning the antimatter had to be protected from regular matter for a longer period of time before the effect could be observed.

The scientists managed to confine about 100 antihydrogen atoms in a 25-centimeter-long magnetic bottle that was open at both ends. They measured which direction the antimatter traveled by watching for the telltale flashes when they collided with atoms of regular matter and annihilated each other, finding far more flashes below the bottom of the bottle than above its top.

“Until you measure it, you just don’t know. That’s science,” said Jeffrey Hangst, a particle physicist at Aarhus University, Denmark, and spokesperson of the Antihydrogen Laser Physics Apparatus (Alpha) collaboration at CERN.

Hangst’s team was also the first, in 2010, to successfully capture antihydrogen for an extended period of time. Antimatter can be produced by certain types of nuclear reactions in nature, especially inside of stars, but it almost instantly disappears. In 2016, they were also able to measure how antiatoms absorb light.

“This is by far the most difficult thing that we’ve done,” Hangst said.

A paper describing their discovery was published on Wednesday in the journal Nature.

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‘Sweeping Surveillance, Censorship’: Site Hosting Russell Brand Has Uncertain Future in UK

Observers are speculating whether the video sharing platform Rumble could become unavailable in the United Kingdom amidst regulations governing online content there. The new provisions are set to become law as British comedian and podcaster Russell Brand is under fire for alleged sexual assault.

Rumble, an online video hosting platform featuring content from Russell Brand and other prominent commentators, may be blocked or forced to cease operations in the United Kingdom. That’s according to analysts responding to recent tensions between the Canadian company and the country’s Conservative-led government.

The comments were published Monday in British newspaper The Times, and come amidst requests to various social media companies to demonetize Brand’s content by Dame Caroline Dineage, the chair of the UK government’s culture, media and sport committee. A new bill set to become law soon would also give the government’s television regulator Ofcom substantial new powers to control online content there.

“They [Rumble] don’t get a free pass,” said Lord Richard Allan, a former Facebook* executive who advised the government in writing the regulations. “When they get a letter from Ofcom saying, ‘Here are all the things you’re going to have to do,’ it seems to me the most likely reaction is going to be they’re going to say, ‘Well, we won’t operate in the UK any more.’”

The Canadian-headquartered social media platform had previously voiced their opposition to requests to prevent Brand from receiving income from the site, calling them “extremely disturbing.”

“We regard it as deeply inappropriate and dangerous that the UK parliament would attempt to control who is allowed to speak on our platform or to earn a living,” said Rumble’s chief executive Chris Pavlovski in a statement on X.

Rumble is already unavailable in neighboring France after the company refused to agree to the country’s demands to remove accounts for Russian state media, including Sputnik. French internet service providers have blocked the site there since November 2022.

The United Kingdom’s new Online Safety Bill, recently passed by its parliament, is set to become law after receiving royal assent, a usually perfunctory process under which legislation must receive official approval from the country’s monarchy.

In order to continue operating in the UK, the law would compel platforms like Rumble to remove content deemed illegal in the country, including material that incites violence or race hatred under the country’s laws.

The bill also stipulates regulation of a new category of material that, while legal, is considered “harmful,” a concept recently dubbed by X platform CEO Linda Yaccarino as moderation of “lawful but awful” content. Finally, the law would force platforms to make efforts to prevent minors from viewing certain material.

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The law enforces criminal liability for senior managers of large online platforms, meaning executives of Rumble or other companies could be arrested for noncompliance if they visit the United Kingdom.

Comedian-turned-podcaster Russell Brand is currently under scrutiny after a joint investigation by UK media publicized claims from four anonymous women alleging sexual misconduct by the British comedian between 2006 and 2013.

Among the claims was an accusation of rape by one of the women, corroborated by medical records discovered from a rape crisis center. An additional woman came forward to police shortly after the report with an allegation of assault in 2003.

Brand has denied the claims and has yet to be charged with any criminal offenses. A critic of mainstream media and the UK government, he's also condemned the new Online Safety Bill as "a piece of UK legislation that grants sweeping surveillance and censorship powers."

The comedian formerly identified himself as a "socialist" and supporter of former UK Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, although he's interviewed figures from across the political spectrum as part of his online podcasts. Controversy surrounding the media figure prompted the late English political and cultural theorist Mark Fisher to write an influential essayabout online political culture in 2013.

Rumble, a video sharing website known for promoting "free speech," is sometimes criticized for controversial content although its terms and conditions forbid racism and antisemitism. The company also owns the Locals crowdfunding platform and the podcasting site CallIn.

Online content regulation and the phenomenon of "fake news" have been prominent concerns in Western politics since the election of former US President Donald Trump and the UK's vote to leave the European Union in 2016. Polling shows only 34% of Americans have trust in the country's mass media institutions.

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Get Rich and Spy Tryin': FBI Investigating Intelligence Role in Menendez Bribery Case

FBI officials are examining whether Egypt was using the powerful US senator as an unwitting intelligence asset, and potentially opening him up to the threat of blackmail.

The charges of alleged bribery against New Jersey Senator Bob Menendez made for sensational headlines, with accusations of gold bars and wads of cash being discovered at the politician's home. Now, speculation he was being manipulated by Egyptian intelligence threatens to further disgrace the senator.

The story was reported Wednesday by US media outlets which spoke with various figures from the CIA and FBI.

"Reading the indictment, it certainly appears like the Egyptian government was using a classic source-recruitment pattern to get Menendez and his wife to spy for them," said former CIA analyst Michael van Landingham.

Among the intel shared by Menendez that would've been most attractive to Egyptian intelligence officials were details about staff working at the US embassy in Cairo. Though such information

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is not officially classified, it's generally unknown to the public. Gathering such information is one way foreign operatives gauge whether a figure is open to working with them.
From there, requests for information may increase in scale, with cash and other gifts exchanging hands.
"Senator Menendez's chairmanship of foreign relations puts him in a bull's eye position for foreign intelligence services that are looking to have him make decisions in their favor, including military equipment and materiel decisions on funding," said former FBI Counterintelligence Chief Frank Figliuzzi.
Currently, the senator is only being prosecuted on bribery charges. The potential connections to Egyptian intelligence suggest the country's government may have a greater interest in spying within the United States than previously known.
Menendez and his wife were indicted last week on charges relating to alleged acceptance of bribes from three New Jersey businessmen.
The New Jersey lawmaker is alleged to have used his position as head of the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations to influence the channeling of aid directed towards Egypt. He has denied the charges.
Menendez entered a not guilty plea on Wednesday as he appeared before a federal court in New York City's lower Manhattan.
"For years, forces behind the scenes have repeatedly attempted to silence my voice and dig my political grave," Menendez earlier said in a Friday statement. "Since this investigation was leaked nearly a year ago, there has been an active smear campaign of anonymous sources and innuendos to create an air of impropriety where none exists."
"The excesses of these prosecutors is apparent. They have misrepresented the normal work of a Congressional office. On top of that, not content with making false claims against me, they have attacked my wife for the longstanding friendships she had before she and I even met."
The senator was previously indicted on federal corruption charges in 2015, making similar claims of a vast conspiracy against him. The allegations were eventually dropped. The son of Cuban immigrants, he's known for his hard line against Cuba's communist-led government.

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Leaked US Report Reveals Burnout, Racist Remarks Plague Alaska Troops

An army Cohesion Assistance Team (CAT) review documented sexism, racist jokes and drinking as among the problems experienced by the newly-christened 11th Airborne Division. Resource shortages and a heavy workload were also cited.
In recognition of the prestige of the fighting forces, the US Army recently renamed Alaskan troops the 11th Airborne Division, but a report leaked to Reddit's Army forum has revealed multiple problems facing service members in the northern state.

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Sexist and racist behavior were among the issues cited in the report, which was informed by interviews and surveys with soldiers. Some 5% of interviewed service members said they'd experienced catcalling within the previous two weeks while 6% said they'd experienced unwanted touching. Meanwhile, 16% said they'd heard racist remarks directed towards other soldiers or themselves.

Heavy drinking was another problem noted by the report, perhaps exacerbated by low temperatures, short days and remote locations in Alaska.

"The boys and girls in the barracks, what else is there to do on a Friday night other than hunker down and get wasted," remarked one anonymous junior officer.

An army Cohesion Assistance Team (CAT) review documented sexism, racist jokes and drinking as among the problems experienced by the newly-christened 11th Airborne Division.

Resource shortages and a heavy workload were also cited.

Also cited in the report were outdated facilities and equipment, which were sometimes in short supply. Additionally, the pace of operations for the soldiers was deemed to be a major concern as US troops throughout the military have been under an increased workload since the start of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine.

An increase in resources, dubbed Mission 100, was recently granted to tackle the issue of suicides among soldiers, but there were concerns about whether improvements spurred by the effort could be maintained.

Still, the 11th Airborne was commended for its initiative and performance in the unforgiving Alaskan terrain.

"[It's] critically important, I think, to our Army and to our nation to have troops who can go out and operate in [an environment like this]," said General Randy George in a recent visit to Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson. "You have to survive in this, first and foremost, and be able to thrive in this environment and they train for that year-round."

The leaked report comes on the heels of a startling assessment by the US Government Accountability Office that found poor conditions in barracks for troops throughout the armed forces, despite the US being known for devoting more money to military expenditures than the next ten countries combined.

Plumbing issues, mold and disrepair were found to negatively impact soldiers' health and "undermine quality of life and readiness."

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Long-Lost Artemisia Gentileschi Painting Rediscovered Over 100 Years Later

The once-lost painting was unearthed in an inventory of art owned by King Charles I - the king of England, Scotland, and Ireland from March 1625 until his execution in 1649.

A painting that has been hiding in storage for more than 100 years has been rediscovered and brought back to life, officials have revealed.

The painting was created by the Italian Baroque artist Artemisia Gentileschi, the daughter of artist Orazio Gentileschi who was a follower of Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio. The painting

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dates from the late 1630s, and is just one of several compositions the young painter made of the subject.

The painting is based on the biblical tale of "Susanna and the Elders," a story in chapter 13 of the Book of Daniel in which two elderly men spied on a bathing women named Susanna and then demanded sexual favors from her. The pair threatened to accuse her of adultery should she refuse, but their plan failed.

Anna Reynolds, the deputy surveyor of The King's Pictures, says that within the painting viewers are able to see the discomfort felt by Susanna as the two men leer at her while she bathes.

"We are so excited to announce the rediscovery of this important work by Artemisia Gentileschi," said Reynolds when the Royal Collection Trustunveiled the restored painting at Windsor Castle.

"Artemisia was a strong, dynamic and exceptionally talented artist whose female subjects — including Susanna — look at you from their canvases with the same determination to make their voices heard that Artemisia showed in the male-dominated art world of the 17th century."

The painting is being reattributed to Artemisa, after it was misinterpreted as being made by a French artist and was stored for more than 100 years at Hampton Court Palace. It is now being put on public display at Windsor Castle. The letters CR—for Carolus Rex—were also found branded on the back of the canvas, as proof that it was a part of King Charles I's collection.

Using x-radiography analysis and infrared reflectography, conservationists were able to see Artemisia's work process, including elements she had altered in the painting. The nearly 400-year-old painting's original details and colors, which were smothered by thick varnish, were also restored and repaired.

"When it came into the studio, Susanna was the most heavily overpainted canvas I had ever seen, its surface almost completely obscured," conservator Adelaide Izat said. "It has been incredible to be involved in returning the painting to its rightful place in the Royal Collection, allowing viewers to appreciate Artemisia's artistry again for the first time in centuries."

Other well known works by Artemisia include "Judith Slaying Holofernes" and "Judith and Her Maidservant," with much of her work focusing on women from myths, allegories and biblical stories. Her professional career, which began when she was 15-years-old, has often been overshadowed by the story of her being raped by her father's friend Agostino Tassi in 1611, when she was 18.

Over the course of a seven-month trial, other crimes against Tassi were discovered, such as Tassi having planned to steal Orazio's paintings, and possibly raping or committing adultery with his sister-in-law, as well as murdering his wife. Artemisia was tortured to give evidence during the trial in order to ensure that her accusation of rape was not false. Tassi was sentenced to be exiled from Rome, but the sentence was not carried out.

In 1616, Artemisia became the first woman to join Florence's Academy of Drawing, and despite what was seen as a damaged reputation for its time following the rape trial, she married one month after the trial before moving to Florence, where she became a court painter under the patronage of the House of Medici. By 1638, Artemisia had King Charles I personally invite her to London to work for him, where she painted her most original and important work.

Her collection of work is thought to be self-evidently autobiographical - a rare feat for Renaissance and baroque female artists.

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"One of the most exciting parts of this painting's story is that it appears to have been commissioned by Queen Henrietta Maria while her apartments were being redecorated for a royal birth," art historian Niko Munz said of the rediscovered painting.
The piece hung at Whitehall Palace in the “Queen’s Withdrawing Chamber” according to a 1639 royal inventory before being moved to storage at Hampton Court Palace. "It was very much the Queen's painting."

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Footage Captures Moment Unmanned Plane Rolls Across Airport's Main Runway

The aircraft was reportedly scheduled to fly out to Benghazi, Libya; however, the flight was promptly canceled by authorities.
Airport workers in Malta were left momentarily stunned on Wednesday after a runaway aircraft rolled onto the main runway, an incident that could have resulted in serious consequences.
The incident occurred at the Malta International Airport, and although the airport was unable to confirm the specificity of the incident, a spokesperson did confirm there was an incident involving an aircraft that took place at 8 a.m. local time.
Media reported the airport notified the Bureau of Air Accident Investigation and Transport Malta-Civil Aviation Directorate in the aftermath of the incident.
Footage shared online showed a Dash 8 turboprop rolling away from a Medavia taxiway at the Safi Aviation Park onto the main airport runway. Airport employees are seen unable to stop the moving airplane, but luckily it stopped on the grass alongside the runway.
Reports indicated the airplane was about to be towed but its handlers removed its chocks before a tow bar was attached to it.
An investigation into the incident remains ongoing.

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Certain Areas of New York Are Sinking Faster Than Others, Study Finds

According to the study, at least three major systems of transportation across New York are sinking more than 2 millimeters a year.
New York City is sinking, but some parts of it are sinking faster than others and are causing flooding risks as sea levels continue to rise, say researchers who published their study on Wednesday.
“If you’re an average citizen in a coastal city, I think it’s important that you understand what the vertical land motion component does and how it can change the susceptibility to flooding, even

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from one neighborhood to the next," said Brett Buzzanga, lead author of the study and a coastal scientist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

The researchers - who hail from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Southern California and Rutgers University in New Jersey - made their discovery using space-based radar technology. Officials analyzed upward and downward vertical land motion across the metropolitan area from 2016 to 2023 using the interferometric synthetic aperture radar (InSAR).

"We highlight with really unprecedented detail the differences throughout the region and that some spots can be sinking faster than others and that can cause more flooding in some spots," said Buzzanga. "This is going to be the same in any city."

The study found that a runway at LaGuardia Airport, Arthur Ashe Stadium, Interstate 78, and Highway 440 are sinking at more than 2 millimeters a year. But on average, the entire city sinks at 1.6 millimeters per year.

But the study found shocking numbers in other US locations as well, including parts of Lousisiana's New Orleans, which has experienced 40 millimeters of sinking per year. The study also found some instances of rising land, including Brooklyn, where East Williamsburg's Newton Creek rose about 2 millimeters every year.

It's suggested that a large-scale project in which they are treating and recovering polluted groundwater from the creek's aquifer could be what is causing the land to rise.

While there are a few different reasons as to why land would sink, according to the researchers, these sites all have one thing in common: they used to be landfills in the past. And therefore, are more likely to compress at a faster speed than "something built on more solid ground", says Buzzanga.

Meanwhile, some of the motion can also be attributed to natural processes that date back thousands of years to the most recent ice age. According to NASA, about 24,000 years ago a large ice sheet spread across most of New England while a mile-high wall of ice sat on top of what is now known as Albany, New York. The ice caused Earth's crust to stretch and sag, but lifted New York upward. Since then, New York City had been readjusting to sink back down after the ice age.

But either way, land in New York City is sinking, and with rising sea levels, damage caused by flooding and other extreme weather will have adverse effects. One study estimated that about $8 billion in damages were caused by sea level rise during Superstorm Sandy in 2012.

"There's more damage that can be done with higher sea levels and lower land together," said Buzzanga. "It's kind of adding to the background state on which these storms act. There's more water to slosh around."

He adds that he and his team are planning to create an updated version of their algorithm, which will be shared publicly so information about sinking and rising land can be used to help communities prepare for the future.

The team's findings were published in the journal Science Advances.

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Ancient Mayan Grave Uncovered During Rail Project Construction in Mexico

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The grave, which could be more than 1,000 years old, was unearthed alongside the construction of the multibillion-dollar Maya Train project in southern Mexico.
Mexican archeologists recently discovered richly adorned skeletal remains in a grave thought to be over 1,000 years old, said the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH).
The discovery was made in combination with the Maya Train project planned for southern Mexico that will include new hotels along its route.
The grave was discovered in Mexico's Palenque, home to one of the ancient Maya civilizations largest and most sophisticated urban centers, and features towering temples as well as a vast palace compound. The city was most active between 300 and 900 AD.
The remains were found in a stone box sealed with limestone slabs, which also held three ceramic vessels, ear flares and a pair of greenstone beads. The decorated remains are thought to belong to an elite member of the city.
According to INAH director Diego Prieto Hernández, the individual was buried face up with their head facing north. A team will conduct further tests in order to assess when the individual died as well as other possible characteristics.
The Maya Train Project is being designed in part to help tourists access the ancient Mayan sites as well as beach resorts like Cancun and Tulum. It is one of Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's biggest economic priorities, and archeologists and conservationists are toiling to complete their excavations so construction on the project will not be delayed.
The train's route will be about 965 miles (1,554 kilometers) long and will run through the states of Tabasco, Chiapas, Campeche, Yucatán and Quintana Roo. It will include six new hotels including one in Palenque, Chiapas. The railway, which is reported to be around $27.7 billion (480 billion pesos) is set to open in December.

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US Air Force Confirms Gave SpaceX its First Contract for Military Satellite Communication

WASHINGTON, September 28 (Sputnik) - The US Space Force issued SpaceX its first contract to provide satellite communications to the US military through the company's new Starshield program, US Air Force spokesperson Ann Stefanek told Sputnik on Thursday.
"SpaceX's one-year contract for Starshield was awarded September 1. The contract has a $70 million ceiling," Stefanek said in a statement.
The SpaceX contract provides for Starshield service through the Starlink constellation, user terminals, ancillary equipment, network management, and other related services, Stefanek said.
According to Stefanek, by September 30, $15 million will be obligated to SpaceX with funding that supports 54 "mission partners" across the Army, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard.
The Pentagon's Space Systems Command's Commercial SATCOM Office has Proliferated Low Earth Orbit contracts with 19 companies, which includes SpaceX, Stefanek noted.
Earlier this month, SpaceX CEO Elon Musk said during remarks at the All-In Summit that the Starshield program would give the US military more control over what it does with the Starlink

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services.

Musk also criticized the US government for excluding compensation to SpaceX in some $100 billion worth of assistance provided to Ukraine since the start of Russia's military operation, considering the company provides vital services to Kiev and risks having its Starlink constellation destroyed by Russia. Regardless of compensation issues,Musk added that SpaceX will continue to provide its services to Ukraine.

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City of Ottawa Denies Permit for Protest Outside Russian Embassy - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 28 (Sputnik) - Canada's capital of Ottawa has refused to grant a request to stage a protest outside the Russian Embassy with the use of light projectors, Radio-Canada reported on Thursday.

The city of Ottawa made the decision based on recommendations from local law enforcement agencies, the report said.

The protest was due to take place on September 30, and US activist Benjamin Wittes was set to attend and project pro-Ukrainian messages of support on the facade of the Russian diplomatic mission.

Wittes, a member of Washington's Brookings Institute has been projecting pictures on Russian embassies throughout the world, notably in the United States, Finland, Sweden, Norway as well as Canada last October, ever since Russia began its special military operation.

However, the Ottawa Police Service recommended that the protest be not allowed due to the possibility of engaging in a criminal violation by using laser and light projectors during the event, the report said.

Wittes said he had no intention of violating local legislation and that he would respect the decision to not authorize the protest, the report added. The activist said he would not contest the decision and would postpone the event.

The Russian Embassy in Ottawa has reportedly sent letters to Global Affairs Canada and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's diplomatic security division, expressing its concern over the harm light projections could cause to the vision of its diplomatic staff.

The embassy said it expected Canadian authorities to take necessary measures in accordance with articles 22 and 29 of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, the report said.

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RPT: PREVIEW - US House Oversight Committee Holds First Hearing Thursday in Biden Impeachment Inquiry

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WASHINGTON, September 28 (Sputnik) - The House Oversight Committee will hold the first hearing of the impeachment inquiry against President Joe Biden on Thursday to begin further examining alleged criminal activity involving Hunter Biden and his foreign business dealings.

The hearing will begin at 10:00 a.m. EST on Capitol Hill and feature three witnesses, including former US Assistant Attorney General for the US Justice Department Tax Division Eileen O'Connor, George Washington University Law School Professor Jonathan Turley, and forensic accountant Bruce Dubinsky.

The impeachment inquiry, announced on September 12 by House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, will build on previous House committee investigations into the Biden family.

The House Oversight Committee has been investigating alleged foreign bribery and influence peddling involving the Biden family and entities in countries including Ukraine and China. Biden denies ever having discussed foreign business affairs with his son.

On Tuesday, the House Oversight Committee, citing bank records, revealed that 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.

McCarthy, in light of the new findings, said the Republican impeachment inquiry against Biden will uncover the whole truth.

The impeachment inquiry is being led by House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer, House Judiciary Chairman Jim Jordan, and House Ways and Means Chairman Jason Smith.

The committee has requested unredacted emails from the National Archives in which Biden allegedly used a pseudonym. The panel also hopes to get additional bank account records from the Biden family.

US lawmakers also seek to interview witnesses who may have knowledge of alleged corrupt business deals involving the Biden family.

IMPEACHMENT UNLIKELY DESPITE EVIDENCE

Earlier this month, former US Justice Department officials told Sputnik that House Republicans are unlikely to have enough evidence to impeach Joe Biden but it will be important for the US public to better understand concerns over his alleged role in Hunter Biden's foreign business dealings.

"I think at this point actual impeachment is unlikely but it is important for the public to understand what was going on through payments to his son by foreign entities," former US Justice Department prosecutor Ronald Sievert told Sputnik. "Finding that a politician's specific decision was solely because of money going to relative or campaign is always difficult regardless of logical suspicions."

Sievert explained that there is plenty of evidence to open an impeachment inquiry to examine why millions of dollars were sent to his family and concealed with shell corporations.

Sievert added that the impeachment inquiry may also allow for an examination into how much money may have allegedly been funneled to Joe Biden by his son.

Former US Justice Department official and Stanford law professor Pamela Karlan also told Sputnik there is not enough evidence at the moment to impeach the US president.

Republican Congressman Andy Biggs in an interview with Fox News said they have "already discovered gold" in their investigations into the Biden family. He also hopes Hunter Biden will eventually be subpoenaed during the impeachment inquiry.

Biggs said he believes Republicans can show that Joe Biden was heavily involved in Hunter

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Biden's business dealings. However, he accused the Justice Department, including the FBI, of obstructing the congressional investigations into the Biden family.

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US Sets Visa Restriction Policy Over Liberia Electoral Misconduct Ahead of Vote - Blinken

WASHINGTON, September 28 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced a new visa limitations policy for those involved in election interference in Liberia ahead of next month's vote.

"The United States is committed to supporting and advancing democracy in Liberia and around the world. Today, I am announcing a new visa restriction policy under Section 212(a)(3)C) of the Immigration and Nationality Act for those undermining democracy in Liberia. This policy will take effect in advance of the upcoming election," Blinken said in a statement on Wednesday.

The new visa policy targets those believed to be involved in manipulative acts, including election rigging, violence against peaceful assemblies, suppressing political views, or any behavior aimed at swaying election outcomes, Blinken added.

This policy aims to support Liberians' aspirations for transparent elections that truly represent their will, further strengthening democratic values and the rule of law, the US top diplomat said.

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House Rejects Series of Measures to Ban US Assistance to Ukraine in Defense Bill

WASHINGTON, September 28 (Sputnik) - The House of Representatives rejected a series of measures to ban additional US assistance to Ukraine in the defense appropriations bill.

The House on Wednesday shot down Republican Congressman Matt Gaetz’s amendment to bar any security assistance to Ukraine in a 93-339 vote.

The House also just rejected an amendment from Republican Congressman Andy Biggs to strip out $300 million for the Pentagon to arm Ukraine.

Although there's a big bipartisan showing for Ukraine funding, nearly half of Republicans favor cutting assistance.

Moreover, the House in a 160-269 vote rejected a bipartisan amendment to the defense bill to bar the transfer of cluster munitions.

Congress must pass a short-term spending bill by the end of the month to avert a government shutdown.

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

US Awards $83Mln Contract to Maintain Abrams Tank Transmissions - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 28 (Sputnik) - Allison Transmission won more than $83 million for production support of the Abrams Main Battle Tank's transmissions, the Department of Defense announced in a press release.

"Allison Transmission [of] Indianapolis, Indiana was awarded an $83,355,215... contract for production support of Abrams transmissions and system technical support services," the release stated on Wednesday.

Work on the contract will be performed in Indianapolis in the US state of Indiana over the next 15 months with an estimated completion date of December 31, 2024, the Defense Department said.

The US Army Contracting Command in Detroit Arsenal in the US state of Michigan will serve as the contracting activity to oversee work on the project, the Defense Department said.

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BAE Systems Wins $288Mln Contract Boost to Build More Bradley Vehicles - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 28 (Sputnik) - BAE Systems Land and Armaments has received a more than $288 million US Army modification contract to construct M2A4 and M7A4 Bradley fighting vehicles from the remains of older vehicles, the Defense Department announced.

"BAE Systems Land and Armaments [of] York, Pennsylvania was awarded a $288,246,807 modification ... contract for production of M2A4 and M7A4 vehicles from legacy source variants," the Defense Department said in a press release on Wednesday.

Work on the contract is estimated to take two years and four months with an estimated completion date of January 31, 2026, the release said.

The US Army Contracting Command in the Detroit Arsenal in the US state of Michigan is the contracting entity that will oversee the project, the release added.

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US Awards $974Mln for 155mm Mobile Assault Gun Load-Assemble-Pack Requirements - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, September 28 (Sputnik) - The US awarded more than $974 million for 155 mm ammunition M1128 mobile assault gun load, assemble and pack requirements, the Defense Department said in a press release.

"American Ordnance [of] Middletown, Iowa and General Dynamics OTS [of] Niceville, Florida

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will compete for each order of the $974,359,955... contract for 155 mm M1128 load, assemble and pack requirements," the release said on Wednesday.

Work on the contract will take five years with an estimated completion date of September 26, 2028, the Defense Department said.

The M1128 Mobile Gun System (MGS) is an eight-wheeled assault gun of the Stryker family.

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Trudeau 'Apology' Not Enough, Canada Must Apologize Directly to Russian People - Stepanov

WASHINGTON, September 28 (Sputnik) - The so-called apology by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for honoring Ukrainian Nazi veteran Yaroslav Hunka at the House of Commons is not a real one, is not enough and Ottawa should find the courage to apologize directly to the Russian people, Russian Ambassador to Canada Oleg Stepanov said.

"The Prime Minister's 'apology,' which we heard today in the House of Commons, is not an apology. And it is not enough," Stepanov said on Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, Trudeau apologized on behalf of the House of Commons to Volodymyr Zelenskyy and his delegation for the position they were put in by giving a standing ovation to Nazi veteran Yaroslav Hunka at the Canadian parliament. The apology came in response to a question by Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre on whether Trudeau would take personal responsibility and apologize on his behalf for the global shame brought upon Canada.

"I strongly believe that despite deep disagreements between Moscow and Ottawa on the current geopolitical situation, the government and the Parliament of Canada must find courage to apologize directly to all Russians and the Russian-Canadian community for the disgraceful incident the whole world was watching on September 22," Stepanov said.

The ambassador emphasized that Russia was the main force in defeating Nazi Germany during World War II and experienced devastating losses to achieve victory.

"Eleven million military personnel fell on the battlefields and 16 million civilians died due to the ethnic purges under the Nazi occupation at the hands of the SS, including the notorious 14th Division of the SS 'Galicia,' the death squads (Einsatzgruppen) and Nazi collaborators," Stepanov said. "Imagine - this is the combined current population of Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia provinces!"

Stepanov also noted that there are more than 200,000 Canadians of Russian descent.

"All of them are legal citizens, loyal voters and taxpayers," he said. "Every Russian family, including Russian Canadians, lost at least one relative in combating Nazism."

Trudeau also said on Wednesday that honoring the Ukrainian Nazi veteran was deeply embarrassing for the Canadian parliament and the country, but the scandal will not affect Ottawa's ongoing support for Kiev.

Last 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 then-Speaker of the House of Commons, Anthony Rota, was giving introductory remarks prior to Ukrainian

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President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's address to the Canadian parliament.

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Congressional Panel Releases Emails Showing US Attorney Blocked FARA Probe Into Joe Biden

WASHINGTON, September 28 (Sputnik) - The House of Representatives Oversight Committee released redacted emails it claims show that Delaware Assistant US Attorney Lesley Wolf blocked federal agents from conducting a FARA (Foreign Agents Registration Act) investigation into then-Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden in August 2020.

"Newly released emails and documents show that Delaware Assistant US Attorney Lesley Wolf did not allow agents to investigate Joe Biden as part of a FARA probe," the Oversight Committee said via X (formerly Twitter) on Wednesday.

In the email, dated August 7, 2020, it appears Lesley told federal investigators they made a mistake in their search warrant request by including Biden. Lesley purportedly claims Biden falls outside of the scope of their FARA investigation.

The House Oversight Committee will hold the first hearing of the impeachment inquiry against President Joe Biden on Thursday to begin further examining alleged criminal activity involving Hunter Biden and his foreign business dealings.

The committee has been investigating alleged foreign bribery and influence peddling involving the Biden family and entities in countries including Ukraine and China. Biden denies ever having discussed foreign business affairs with his son.

On Tuesday, the committee, citing bank records, revealed that 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.

McCarthy, in light of the new findings, said the Republican impeachment inquiry against Biden will uncover the whole truth.

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US Judge Chutkan Rejects Trump's Bid to Recuse Herself From Capitol Riot Case - Filing

WASHINGTON, September 28 (Sputnik) - US Judge Tanya Chutkan rejected a bid from former President Donald Trump to recuse herself from the Capitol riot case in Washington, court documents revealed.

"Before the court is Defendant's Motion for Recusal of District Judge... For the reasons set forth below, recusal is not warranted in this case and the court will DENY the Motion," Chutkan said in the court document on Wednesday.

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Biden Announces Funding for Antibiotics Against Resistant Bacteria

SAN FRANCISCO, September 28 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden unveiled healthcare investments targeting antibiotic development and drug-resistant bacteria during a meeting with the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) in San Francisco.

"Today I'm announcing major investments in patient safety, from ARPA-H [Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health] to develop antibiotics and to fight deadly drug resistant bacteria and save lives," Biden said.

Initiated last year by Biden and Congress, ARPA-H promotes high-impact biomedical research aiming to provide transformative health solutions for all. According to reports, this agency will oversee the newly announced research initiatives.

Highlighting the severity of the issue and the broad applicability of the proposed remedies, Biden mentioned that the new antibiotics could "deal with anything."

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US House Speaker Must Come to His Senses, Defy Extremists to Avoid Govt. Shutdown-Schumer

WASHINGTON, September 28 (Sputnik) - House Speaker Kevin McCarthy must "come to his senses" and defy the Republican Party's extremist wing of 30 MAGA [Make America Great Again] members in the lower chamber of Congress and seek bipartisan cooperation with the Democrats there in order to maintain continuous funding for the US government and avoid a ruinous shutdown, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said.

"We hope he will come to his senses... We are waiting for a bipartisan approach from Speaker McCarthy to avoid a shutdown," Schumer said during a press conference on Wednesday. "If MAGA Republicans get their way, the dangers for this country will be great. Extremism will predominate."

Schumer said the proposed continuing resolution created by the US House Republican majority was only a narrowly partisan proposal that had no chance of being accepted by Democrats and being passed into law. Only compromise and cooperation between both parties could end the deadlock and avoid an expensive and potentially ruinous shutdown, he said.

"This is not an impossible problem to solve. The solution remains clear. Speaker McCarthy simply needs to stop letting the MAGA Republicans drive the agenda and do the sensible thing [and] follow the Senate's lead. ...[McCarthy should] do the obvious and sensible thing and pass a bipartisan continuing resolution to prevent this reckless shutdown," Schumer said.

Senator Patty Murray told the press conference that the Senate had passed 12 appropriations bills with overwhelming bipartisan support and that a government shutdown, even temporarily,

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would do enormous economic damage and harm US national security.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, September 28 (Sputnik) -

US-CHINA TALKS
* US Secretary of State Antony Blinken discussed potentially holding a summit between the presidents of the United States and China when he met with Chinese Vice President Han Zheng at the UN General Assembly, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said on Wednesday.
* The United States has seen an uptick in the conversations with China since Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit this June and remains hopeful that meetings between the leaders of both countries are possible in the future, Miller said.

US-NORTH KOREA RELATIONS
* Travis King, the US soldier stationed in South Korea who fled into North Korea in July, is now in US custody after Pyongyang expelled him, senior Biden administration officials said on Wednesday.
* China helped facilitate the transfer of King into US custody after North Korea decided to expel him, the senior officials said.

NAGORNO-KARABAKH
* The United States along with its allies and partners will work out the details of an international monitoring mission to Nagorno-Karabakh and welcomes Azerbaijan's readiness to admit the mission, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Wednesday.
* Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and his Azerbaijan counterpart Jeyhun Bayramov discussed the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and safety of its Armenian population during a phone conversation on Wednesday, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.
* Former State Minister of Nagorno-Karabakh Ruben Vardanyan has been detained when trying to leave the region in the direction of Armenia, the Azerbaijan State Border Service said.
* The Armenian Foreign Ministry will request consular access to Vardanyan and will protect his rights, a diplomatic source in Yerevan told Sputnik

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE
* US Ambassador to NATO Julianne Smith said on Wednesday that next year's NATO Leaders Summit in Washington will certainly include deliverables for Ukraine.
* The Russian forces have improved their positions in the direction of Avdiivka in the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR), including in the western part of Marinka, DPR head Denis Pushilin said.
* Ukraine has lost up to 390 military both killed and injured in the Donetsk direction over the

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past 24 hours, the Russian Defense Ministry said.
* - Bulgaria's plans to transfer S-300 missiles to Ukraine is another attempt of Sofia to violate its international obligations and will lead to new victims, Russia's Federal Service of Military-Technical Cooperation said.

CANADA NAZI SCANDAL
* Russia may launch a criminal case against Ukrainian Nazi veteran Yaroslav Hunka and seek his extradition from Canada, Russian Ambassador in Ottawa Oleg Stepanov said on Wednesday.
* Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said the celebration of a Ukrainian Nazi veteran was an embarrassment for the Canadian parliament and entire country, but the scandal will not affect its ongoing support for Kiev.
* Trudeau apologized on behalf of the House of Commons (HoC) to Volodymyr Zelenskyy and his delegation over the "position they were put in" by giving a standing ovation to Hunka at the Canadian parliament.

RUSSIAN ENERGY
* Russia's production of liquefied natural gas (LNG) has decreased by 5.3% in January-August when compared to the same period of last year and reached 20.9 million tonnes, the Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat) said on Wednesday.
* Russia's gas production has decreased by 12.7% in January-August year-on-year and amounted 341 billion cubic meters, the Rosstat said.
* The coal production in Russia in August has decreased by 1.3% year-on-year and reached 34.1 million tonnes, the Rosstat said.
* Fuel should be supplied to the domestic market first, and only then profit should be gained through exports, Putin said.

EGYPT-RUSSIA RELATIONS
* Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Sisi and Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev have discussed security and economic cooperation between the countries during the latter's visit to Egypt, the Russian Security Council said on Wednesday.
* Sisi said Cairo deeply appreciates bilateral cooperation with Moscow, especially joint projects such as the construction of the El-Dabaa nuclear power plant and the Russian Industrial Zone in the Suez Canal area, the Office of the Egyptian President said.

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PREVIEW - US House Oversight Committee Holds First Hearing Thursday in Biden Impeachment Inquiry

WASHINGTON, September 28 (Sputnik) - The House Oversight Committee will hold the first hearing of the impeachment inquiry against President Joe Biden on Thursday to begin further

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examining alleged criminal activity involving Hunter Biden and his foreign business dealings.

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Earlier this month, former US Justice Department officials told Sputnik that House Republicans are unlikely to have enough evidence to impeach Joe Biden but it will be important for the US public to better understand concerns over his alleged role in Hunter Biden's foreign business dealings.

"I think at this point actual impeachment is unlikely but it is important for the public to understand what was going on through payments to his son by foreign entities," former US Justice Department prosecutor Ronald Sievert told Sputnik. "Finding that a politician's specific decision was solely because of money going to relative or campaign is always difficult regardless of logical suspicions."

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obstructing the congressional investigations into the Biden family.

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US Senator Cardin to Take Menendez's Place as Chair of Foreign Relations Cmte - Statement

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - US Democratic Senator from Maryland Ben Cardin, 79, will be the next chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee after his predecessor Robert Menendez stepped down from the position last week following his indictment on federal bribery charges, Cardin's office announced on Wednesday.

"[I]t is with great humility and appreciation to Majority Leader [Chuck] Schumer and my colleagues that I accept this role as Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at this time," Cardin's press office quoted him as saying. "I look forward to working with Ranking Member Jim Risch and all our members as the committee tackles the most important challenges facing our nation and the world."

On Friday, Schumer said that Menendez "has rightly decided to step down temporarily" from his position as the committee chairman until his criminal case is resolved.

Earlier in the day, Menendez and his wife Nadine Arslanian pleaded not guilty to federal bribery charges during their arraignment in a Manhattan federal court and were released on bail. The next hearing in the case has been scheduled for October 2.

Cardin announced in May that he will not seek re-election in 2024 after the completion of his third term in the Senate.

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Biden Says Will Take Executive Action For America 'To Lead' in Responsible AI Innovation

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden revealed plans to take executive action promoting responsible AI innovation during a meeting with the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) in San Francisco on Wednesday.

"This fall. I'm going to take executive action, and my administration is going to continue to work with bipartisan legislation, so America leads the way toward responsible AI innovation," Biden said.

Earlier, the Biden Administration emphasized the need for swift action to harness the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) while also mitigating its risks and safeguarding the rights and safety of Americans. Moreover, the administration called on the AI industry to maintain high standards, and numerous companies promptly highlighted safety, security, and trust as the foundational principles for the future of AI.

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Oil Prices Hit 10-Month Highs Amid Non-Stop Drain in US Crude Storage

NEW YORK, September 27 (Sputnik) - Oil prices settled up more than 3% on Wednesday, with US crude hitting a ten-month high of above $94 per barrel, as the market responded to another weekly drop in crude stockpiles in the United States.

The New York-traded West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude for delivery in November closed official trading for the day at $93.68 per barrel, up $3.29, or 3.7. The session peak was $94.14, the highest the US crude benchmark had gotten to since November.

London-traded Brent for December delivery settled at $94.36 a barrel, up $1.93, or 2.1% on the day. Brent's session peak was $94.78 - the highest for the global crude benchmark since it hit $95.96 on September 19.

Oil prices have risen more than 30% over the past three months in response to production cuts by Saudi Arabia and Russia.

The rally hit a bump last week on economic and demand concerns but was reignited after the US government reported on Wednesday that domestic crude stockpiles fell a second week in a row.

The US crude inventory balance fell by 2.169 million barrels during the week ended September 22, according to the Weekly Petroleum Status Report of the US Energy Information Administration (EIA). Analysts polled by US media had expected a crude draw of 900,000 barrels instead for last week to add to the 2.135 million drop in the prior week to September 15.

Aside from the headline drop in crude stockpiles, the EIA cited a drop of 943,000 barrels last week at the Cushing, Oklahoma, hub that serves as a central delivery and storage point for US crude. In the prior week, the API reported a Cushing deficit of 2.064 million barrels.

"It's all about Cushing now, and not without reason, as it's something that's making the market very uncomfortable despite the seasonal drop in fuel consumption," John Kilduff, partner at New York energy hedge fund Again Capital, said in a text message to Sputnik.

Cushing inventories, already at their lowest since July 2022, are nearing a record bottom after refiners processed more than typical volumes of oil during the just-ended summer. Huge weekly exports of US crude, particularly for a new grade called WTI Midland - which is comparable to the viscosity of the heavier Arab and Russian oils - have deepened the drawdowns at Cushing. US oil exports have been making inroads into markets underserved by Saudi and Russian production cuts.

As Cushing inventories continue to fall, oil traders are growing concerned about the quality of the remaining oil at the hub and its potential to fall below minimum operating levels, analysts said.

The falling inventories at Cushing juxtapose the picture of fuel demand in the United States, which has also been on the decline since the summer season made way for the autumn on Sept. 23.

The EIA reported a gasoline inventory gain of 1.027 million barrels for last week. Analysts polled by US media had forecast a gasoline draw of 500,000 barrels that would have added to the prior week's decline of 831,000.

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With distillate stockpiles, there was a rise of 398,000 barrels versus the expected draw of 1.0 million and the prior week's drop of 2.867 million. Distillates are refined into heating oil, diesel for trucks, buses, trains and ships and fuel for jets.

As both WTI and Brent close in on Saudi Arabia's target for $100 a barrel, some analysts say economic ructions are likely to show up as energy-driven inflation weighs heavily on global finances.

Eurozone data showed a record drop in the amount of money circulating on the bloc as banks refrained from lending and depositors kept money in savings.

Over in the United States, orders for long-lasting or durable goods rose a stronger-than-expected 0.2% in August, though much of the increase came from higher defense spending as Washington sought to replenish politically-sensitive military hardware sent to Ukraine. In a more positive sign, the so-called core orders of durable goods rose 0.9%. That figure omits defense and transportation and is a proxy for broader business investment.

Consumer spending could witness a sharper slowing in the final three months of the year as labor market and wage growth cool as well, Fitch Ratings said in an economic outlook published Wednesday. It forecast real spending to slow to an annualized rate of 1.2% in the fourth quarter and contract by 0.8% in the first quarter of next year and 3% in second quarter, Fitch said.

Fitch's outlook was published a day after the Conference Board, a group that measures US consumer trends, said consumer confidence tumbled for a second month in a row in September, nearing recession levels.

The Dollar Index got to highs not visited since November 2022. A stronger dollar typically discourages those holding other currencies from buying dollar-denominated commodities, including oil and gold.

Treasury yields, benchmarked to the US ten-year note, shot to fresh 16-year highs on Tuesday, reaching peaks not seen since July 2007. The two alternatives to gold surged since the Federal Reserve last week projected another quarter-percentage point rate increase by the year-end, despite leaving rates unchanged for September at a policy meeting on Wednesday.

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Syria Sanctions to Remain Until Minimum of Political Solution Achieved - US Envoy to UN

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - The US sanctions imposed on Syria will remain in place until at least some progress is made toward a political solution in the conflict-torn country, US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield said on Wednesday.

"The US sanctions will remain in place until at minimum there is concrete measurable progress toward a political solution ," Thomas-Greenfield said during a meeting of the UN Security Council.

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

US Urges Syria to Hold Meeting of Constitutional Committee - Envoy to UN

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - The United States is calling on Syrian government to participate in another meeting of the Syrian Constitutional Committee, US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield said during a UN Security Council meeting on Wednesday.

"We urge the Syrian regime to engage meaningfully in the political process called for in Resolution 2254 by returning to the Constitutional Committee, which has not met in over a year," Thomas-Greenfield said.

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UPDATE - Trudeau Apologizes on Behalf of Canada's House for Inviting Ukrainian Nazi Veteran Hunka

(Adds details in lede and para 5, background in paras 2, 6-7)

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) – Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Wednesday apologized on behalf of the House of Commons (HoC) to Volodymyr Zelenskyy and his delegation over the "position they were put in" by giving a standing ovation to Nazi veteran Yaroslav Hunka at the Canadian parliament.

Last 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 Volodymyr Zelenskyy's address to the Canadian parliament.

“Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all of us in this House I would like to present unreserved apologies for what took place on Friday, and to President Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian delegation for the position they were put in. For all of us who were present to have unknowingly recognized this individual was a terrible mistake and a violation of the memory of those who suffered grievously at the hands of the Nazi regime,” Trudeau said at the HoC daily debate.

The Prime Minister’s apologies came in response to a question by Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre on whether Trudeau would take personal responsibility and apologize on behalf of himself, for the global shame brought upon Canada.

However, despite numerous calls from members of the official opposition parties, Trudeau did not apologize on his behalf.

Earlier today, the leader of the opposition Conservative Party, Pierre Poilievre, called on Trudeau to apologize to Jews, Poles, Ukrainians, and all Canadians over what he characterized as Canada’s biggest diplomatic embarrassment.

On Tuesday, the leader of the New Democratic Party (NDP) Jagmeet Singh urged Trudeau to not only apologize but to present a roadmap for remedying the damage it caused to the

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Ukrainian government.

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Nurses Union in Arizona Stands With Striking United Auto Workers - Statement

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - The Arizona chapter of the National Nurses United union on Wednesday issued a statement voicing support for the striking United Auto Workers (UAW).

"Nurses in Arizona support the striking UAW auto workers because we know: Their fight is our fight! Our communities are healthier when unions use their power to fight for workers," the statement said.

The nurses, who have been on strike themselves since 2021, emphasized the importance of union strength in their decision to provide public support the UAW strikers.

Almost 19,000 auto workers at various Ford, General Motors and Stellantis facilities in the United States are striking due to unsuccessful attempts to negotiate a 46% increase in wages and a 32-hour work week, among other terms.

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Russia May Open Probe Against Ukraine SS Veteran, Seek Extradition From Canada – Stepanov

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - Russia may launch a criminal case against Ukrainian Nazi veteran Yaroslav Hunka and seek his extradition from Canada, Ambassador to Ottawa Oleg Stepanov said on Wednesday.

“Russia is reviewing the Hunka story. May open criminal case and subsequent extradition request,” the embassy quoted Stepanov as saying.

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

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White Supremacist Leader Admits to Threatening Journalist - US Attorneys Office

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WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - The leader of an international neo-Nazi group pleaded guilty in a US federal court to to making death threats against a journalist based in Brooklyn, the US Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York said in a statement on Wednesday.

"Earlier today in federal court in Brooklyn, Nicholas Welker, also known as 'King ov Wrath,' pleaded guilty to conspiring to make interstate threats," the statement said.

As part of his plea, Welker admitted to posting the online threats against the journalist to repress reporting on his organization, the extremist group Feuerkrieg Division (FKD).

One of the threatening posts, which included a photograph of the journalist with a gun aimed at their head, was subsequently amplified by two FKD members, who posted the image to the reporter's account to ensure it was noticed, the statement said.

Welker was arrested in San Jose, California, in March and faces up to five years in prison.

The guilty plea was announced by United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York Breon Peace, alongside James Smith, the FBI's assistant director-in-charge of the New York Field Office (FBI), the statement said.

FKD members, both domestically and internationally, are unified in their pursuit to defy laws and societal standards through violence, endorsing attacks on racial minorities, Jewish communities, LGBTQ+ individuals, the US government, and critical infrastructure, the statement added.

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Senator Says US Migration Crisis Will Destroy New York City, Create Financial Tsunami

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - The surge of undocumented migrants arriving in New York City will destroy the city and create a financial crisis, Republican Senator Lindsey Graham said on Wednesday.

"New York City will experience a financial tsunami, the migrant crisis will destroy New York City," Graham said during a press conference.

To date, Texas Governor Greg Abbott has transported some 50,000 migrants to Democratic-led so-called sanctuary cities throughout the United States, including 15,300 to New York City and 12,000 to Washington, DC. Other cities include Chicago, Philadelphia, Denver, and Los Angeles.

Graham added that he supports Abbott's decision to bus migrants to sanctuary cities as a means to pressure Democrats to take action to address the crisis on the US southern border.

A US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) source confirmed to Sputnik this week that the total number of migrants unlawfully crossing into the United States on the US-Mexico border already hit a new record for Fiscal Year 2023, reaching nearly 2.4 million.

This is the third consecutive year the Biden administration has seen a record number of illegal migrants crossing the US southern border - 1.7 million in 2021 and 2.3 million in 2022.

Fox News reported last week that some 2.3 million migrants have come over the US-Mexico

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border in Fiscal Year 2023, which ends in October.

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US Senator Says Border Crisis Must Be Addressed Before Passing Long-Term Spending Bill

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - Republican Senator Lindsey Graham said on Wednesday that lawmakers must take action to address the migration crisis on the US southern border before adopting a long-term spending budget to keep the federal government open through next year.

"We're going to secure our border as part of any effort to keep the government open," Graham said during a press conference. "This is a problem that we're going to address before we pass any permanent funding for the government."

Graham expects lawmakers will take action to provide "substantial fixes" to deal with the border crisis by the time it is time to pass a long-term spending budget on November 17, which is when the short-term spending budget is expected to expire. However, the Senate and House are still in the process of passing any sort of shot-term funding bills.

Graham highlighted that more than six million illegal migrants have come over the US southern border since President Joe Biden took office.

Graham said the surge of migrants at the US southern border is a result of the Biden administrations decision to rescind Trump-era policies that mitigated the flow of illegal immigration.

"The Biden administration took every Trump policy that worked and replaced it with magnets for illegal immigration," Graham said. "We're going to shut those magnets down."

Moreover, Biden's request for $40 billion in supplemental funding, which includes $24 billion for Ukraine, will make the border crisis worse instead of better, Graham added.

A US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) source confirmed to Sputnik this week that the total number of migrants unlawfully crossing into the United States on the US-Mexico border already hit a new record for Fiscal Year 2023, reaching nearly 2.4 million.

This is the third consecutive year the Biden administration has seen a record number of illegal migrants crossing the US southern border - 1.7 million in 2021 and 2.3 million in 2022.

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.

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Trudeau Says Celebration of Nazi Veteran 'Deeply Embarrassing,' Ukraine Aid Unaffected

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Wednesday that the celebration of a Ukrainian Nazi veteran was an embarrassment for the Canadian

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parliament and entire country, but the scandal will not affect its ongoing support for Kiev.
Addressing the parliament, Trudeau said the Canadian recognition of the Ukrainian Nazi veteran is "deeply embarrassing" not just to all parliamentarians but to Canada.
"Here in Canada, we will continue to firmly defend Ukraine and the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty," Trudeau reiterated.

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Trudeau Apologizes on Behalf of Canada's House for Inviting Ukrainian Nazi Veteran Hunka

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) – Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau apologized on behalf of the House of Commons (HoC) to Volodymyr Zelenskyy and his delegation over the "position they were put in" by giving a standing ovation to Nazi veteran Yaroslav Hunka at the Canadian parliament.
"Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all of us in this House I would like to present unreserved apologies for what took place on Friday, and to President Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian delegation for the position they were put in. For all of us who were present to have unknowingly recognized this individual was a terrible mistake and a violation of the memory of those who suffered grievously at the hands of the Nazi regime," Trudeau said at the HoC daily debate.
The apologies came in response to a question by Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre on whether Trudeau would take personal responsibility and apologize on behalf of himself for the global shame brought upon Canada.

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Senate Minority Leader Says ‘Comfortable’ With Ukraine Aid in US Government Funding Bill

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - US Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said on Wednesday that he is comfortable with the inclusion of billions of dollars in aid for Ukraine in a Senate bill to temporarily fund the federal government.
"I’m comfortable with the way we’ve put together the Senate bill… and that’s what I intend to support," McConnell said during a press conference, when asked whether he would be willing to remove Ukraine aid from the bill in an effort to gain support in the House of Representatives.
The US Congress is attempting to pass a funding measure before the end of the month to avoid a government shutdown. The Senate and House of Representatives have both proposed short-term measures, although there are discrepancies between the two pieces of legislation.
The Senate proposal includes more than $6 billion in aid for Ukraine, which some Republican lawmakers have opposed. The House proposal includes border security measures, which the Democrat-majority Senate is unlikely to approve.
McConnell said that he will not tell House Speaker Kevin McCarthy how to run the lower

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chamber of Congress. The Senate will focus on passing its measure and avoiding a government shutdown, McConnell said.

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Trudeau Says to Apologize for Honoring Ukrainian Nazi Veteran at Parliament

(Adds details in lede, paras 4-6)
WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said he will extend his apologies on behalf of the Parliament on Wednesday for honoring Ukrainian Nazi veteran Yaroslav Hunka at the House of Commons.
Last 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 Volodymyr Zelenskyy's address to the Canadian parliament.
"In a few moments, I will address the House in front of all Canadians, in front of Jewish people here and around the world and Ukrainians, to offer Parliament's unreserved apologies for what happened on Friday," Trudeau said from Parliament Hill.
Rota was solely responsible for the mistake for which he already resigned, Trudeau said, adding that the ovation given to Hunka was a “horrendous violation” to the memory of those perished during the Holocaust.
Trudeau added he was troubled to see Russia and its supporters politicizing the “egregious error” for propaganda purposes aimed at falsifying the truth about what Ukraine is fighting for.
Earlier today, the leader of the opposition Conservative Party, Pierre Poilievre, called on Trudeau to apologize to Jews, Poles, Ukrainians, and all Canadians over what he characterized as Canada’s biggest diplomatic embarrassment.
On Tuesday, the leader of the New Democratic Party (NDP) Jagmeet Singh urged Trudeau to not only apologize but to present a roadmap for remedying the damage it caused to the Ukrainian government.

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OpenAI Says ChatGPT Can Now Access, Provide Information From Internet

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - Artificial intelligence (AI) company OpenAI said on Wednesday that its ChatGPT system can now access and provide users with information from the internet.
"ChatGPT can now browse the internet to provide you with current and authoritative information, complete with direct links to sources," OpenAI said in a statement via social media

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platform X.

The AI model is no longer limited to data before September 2021, the statement said. Internet accessibility enables ChatGPT to help with tasks that require up-to-date information, such as technical research or vacation planning, the statement said.

Internet browsing for ChatGPT is now available to Plus and Enterprise users, the statement said. OpenAI plans to expand internet accessibility to all ChatGPT users soon, the statement added.

Earlier on Wednesday, US media reported that OpenAI could reach a $90 billion valuation amid talks with investors about selling part of the company's shares. ChatGPT helped popularize the use of AI technology upon its launch in November 2022, attracting a million users in less than a week.

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US Not Trying to Shut Down Food, Medicine Commercial Activity in Russia - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - The United States is not seeking to persuade businesses to shut down all commercial activity in Russia and exempts them from sanctions when it comes to such sectors as food and medicine, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said on Wednesday.

"We have always emphasized that there are certain types of commercial activity that we are not trying to shut down with respect to Russia. All of our sanctions have had exemptions for food, for medicine, for other humanitarian purposes because we do not see the United States in conflict with the Russian people," Miller said during a press briefing.

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US to Admit Up To 50,000 Refugees From Latin America, Caribbean in FY 2024 - Reports

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration intends to admit up to 50,000 refugees from countries in Latin America and the Caribbean in the fiscal year 2024, CBS News reported on Wednesday, citing internal government memos.

The United States will resettle between 35,000 and 50,000 refugees fleeing violence in Latin America and the Caribbean, the report said.

In total, the Biden administration plans to admit 125,000 refugees during the next fiscal year, which begins on October 1, keeping the figure in line with the two previous years, the report said.

At the same time, big changes will occur in how the spots will be allocated across different regions, with the biggest decline in the number of spots reserved for European refugees, as only between 2,000 and 3,000 slots will be available for them, a drop from 15,000 in the fiscal year

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2023, according to the report.

The allocation plan also envisions between 30,000 and 45,000 spots for the Near East and South Asia, between 10,000 and 20,000 for East Asia, and between 30,000 and 50,000 spots for refugees from Africa, the report said.

The plan is expected to be sent for consideration to Congress later on Wednesday and will be implemented once it is formally approved by the president after it is endorsed by the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department, the report added.

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Trudeau Says to Apologize for Honoring Ukrainian Nazi Veteran at Parliament

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) – Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said he will extend his apologies on Wednesday for honoring Ukrainian Nazi veteran Yaroslav Hunka at the House of Commons.

Last 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 Volodymyr Zelenskyy's address to the Canadian parliament.

"In a few moments, I will address the house in front of all Canadians, in front of Jewish people here and around the world, and Ukrainians to offer Parliament's unreserved apologies for what happened on Friday," Trudeau said from Parliament Hill.

Earlier today, the leader of the opposition Conservative Party, Pierre Poilievre, called on Trudeau to apologize to Jews, Poles, Ukrainians, and all Canadians over what he characterized as Canada's biggest diplomatic embarrassment.

On Tuesday, the leader of the New Democratic Party (NDP) Jagmeet Singh urged Trudeau to not only apologize but to present a roadmap for remedying the damage it caused to the Ukrainian government.

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US to Work Out Details of Int'l Mission to Nagorno-Karabakh in Coming Days - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - The United States along with its allies and partners will work out the details of an international monitoring mission to Nagorno-Karabakh and welcomes Baku's readiness to admit the mission, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Wednesday.

"We did welcome the comments by the government of Azerbaijan just a little while ago that they would welcome such an international monitoring mission," Miller said during a press briefing.

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"We will work with our allies and partners in the coming days to flesh out exactly what that mission will look like."

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Blinken Discussed Biden-Xi Meeting With China's Vice President at UNGA - State Dept

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken discussed a potential summit between presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping when he met China's Vice President Han Zheng at the United Nations General Assembly, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said on Wednesday.

"The potential for a meeting between the two leaders is something that Secretary Blinken discussed with the Chinese Vice President last week at UNGA in New York. We believe it would be important to have that meeting and we hope it will take place but we don't have anything to announce yet," Miller said during a press briefing.

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US Sees Surge in Tempo of Conversations With China Since Blinken's Visit- State Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - The United States has seen an uptick in the conversations with China since Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit this June and remains hopeful that meetings between the leaders of both countries are possible in the future, state department spokesman Matthew Miller said on Wednesday.

"I would say that we have seen an increase in the tempo of our conversations with the Chinese government across a number of fronts since the Secretary traveled to Beijing in June," said Miller during a press briefing.

Miller added that the potential for a meeting between the two leaders is something that the Secretary discussed with the Chinese Vice President last week at UNGA in New York and that the United States believes it would be important to have that meeting but doesn't yet have anything to announce.

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US Actions on Palestinian-Israeli Relations Exclude Valid Peace Initiatives - Nebenzia

UNITED NATIONS, September 27 (Sputnik) - The United States' actions to normalize Arab-Israeli relations continue to sidestep the logic of the Arab Peace Initiative that calls for

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resolving the Palestinian issue and then improving relations with the other Arab states, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said on Wednesday.

"The United States continues to promote an Arab-Israeli normalization that circumvents the logic of the Arab Peace Initiative put forward by Saudi Arabia in 2002, predicated on first resolving the Palestinian question and only then restoring their relations with Israel," Nebenzia said during a UN Security Council meeting on the Palestinian issue.

The Arab Peace Initiative was adopted by the Arab League in 2002 based on ideas put forth by Saudi Arabia. The Initiative provides a general framework for normalizing Arab-Israeli relations based on Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories; a just settlement of the Palestinian refugee issue based on UN Resolution 194; and the establishment of a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Nebenzia said that the actions undertaken by the United States stymie any possibilities for any direct dialogue between Israel and Palestine.

On Wednesday, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud said that his country is getting closer every day to normalizing relations with Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said two days later that Israel is on the verge of a historic peace agreement with Saudi Arabia that will change the face of the Middle East.

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Trudeau Must Apologize for Canada's Biggest Diplomatic Embarrassment – Conservative Leader

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) – Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau should apologize for the major embarrassment Canada is going through following the invitation and recognition in the House of Commons (HoC) of Ukrainian Nazi veteran Yaroslav Hunka last Friday, the leader of the Conservative Party Pierre Poilievre said on Wednesday.

Last 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.

After issuing an initial apology on Sunday where he took responsibility, noting that Trudeau and Zelenskyy were unaware of the invitation, Rota announced his resignation as Speaker of the HoC on Tuesday following calls from the Parliaments opposition parties, including lawmakers from his own liberal party to step down.

"The Prime Minister [Trudeau] is now responsible for the biggest single diplomatic embarrassment in Canadian history ... Responsibility and power go together. If he wants the power, he has to take the responsibility and come to the floor of the House of Commons today, and apologize to Jews, Poles, Ukrainians, and all Canadians," Poilievre said in a video shared via X.

Poilievre said Trudeau was responsible for inviting Zelenskyy and organizing the event, just as

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officials at Global Affairs, the Intelligence service, and the Prime Minister protocol Office fall under his responsibility. “Every single person ought to have been vetted,” he said.

On Tuesday, the leader of the New Democratic Party (NDP) Jagmeet Singh called on Trudeau to not only apologize but to present a roadmap for remedying the damage it caused to the Ukrainian government.

The Prime Minister is set to make his first appearance at the Parliaments debate session since the scandal erupted.

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US House Advances Measure to Slash Defense Secretary Austin’s Salary

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives on Wednesday advanced a measure to cut Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin’s salary to no more than $1, attaching the measure as an amendment to the lower chamber’s Defense Department appropriations bill.

House lawmakers agreed to the amendment by voice vote. The amendment was brought by US Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene.

"Secretary Austin has not fulfilled his job duties. As a matter of fact, he’s destroying our military," Greene said during remarks in support of the amendment.

Greene pointed toward a decline in military recruitment, the withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Pentagon’s approach to the Ukraine conflict as reasons to slash Austin’s salary.

Lawmakers are attempting to pass government funding legislation before the end of the month to avoid a shutdown. The White House has warned that US national security and military servicemembers could be negatively impacted by a shutdown.

Both the Senate and House of Representatives are considering short-term funding bills to give Congress more time to pass standard appropriations bills, although there are discrepancies between the two chambers’ proposals.

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UAW President Says Sees ‘No Point’ in Meeting With Trump in Detroit – Reports

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) – United Auto Workers (UAW) president Shawn Fain said on Wednesday that he sees “no point” in a meeting with former US President Donald Trump during his visit to Detroit, Michigan later in the day as the union continues their strike.

“I see no point in meeting with him because I don't think the man [Trump] has any bit of care about what our workers stand for, what the working class stands for,” Fain said in an interview for CNN.

According to Fain, Trump serves a “billionaire class” and that’s what is wrong with the United

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States, but clarified that he does not endorse anyone making this statement about the former US President.

"I find the pathetic irony that the former president is gonna hold a rally for union members at a non-union business," Fain also said. "In 2008 during the Great Recession, he blamed UAW members. He blamed our contracts for everything that was wrong with these companies. That's a complete lie."

Nearly 19,000 US auto workers are on strike at dozens of plants belonging to Ford, General Motors, and Stellantis since September 15. 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.

On Tuesday, September 26, 2023 US President Joe Biden on Tuesday joined dozens of members of the United Auto Workers union during a protest in Michigan in support of their calls for increased wages and benefits. He made very brief remarks at the picket line and departed after just a few minutes.

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One-Fourth of Americans Say They Expect Female President in Their Lifetime - Poll

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - A quarter of Americans say they are hopeful that a female president of the United States will be elected in their lifetime, a new Pew Research Center poll revealed on Wednesday.

"Only one-in-four US adults say it's extremely or very likely that the United States will elect a woman president in their lifetime," a release on the poll said.

About half (49%) say electing a female president is somewhat likely and 26% say it is not too likely or not at all likely, the release said.

The majority of Americans do not perceive a female president as either superior or inferior to a male counterpart in terms of leadership qualities or policy handling, the release said.

However, many respondents expressed concern over the corporate media's alleged unequal treatment of female candidates, particularly regarding emotional expression, familial responsibilities and other personal attributes, the release added.

This data originates from two surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel, a nationally representative online group of more than 10,000 randomly selected adults in the United States.

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US Consumer Spending to See 'Marked Slowdown' Amid Labor Market Cooling - Fitch Ratings

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WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - US consumer spending could witness a sharper slowing in the fourth quarter of 2023 (4Q23) as labor market and wage growth cool as well, Fitch Ratings said in an economic outlook on Wednesday.

"US consumer spending has been remarkably resilient, underpinned by robust job and income gains, a very strong consumer balance sheet, moderating inflation and improving consumer sentiments," Fitch said in a summary of its economic outlook. "However, we expect a marked slowdown in spending from 4Q23 as the labor market cools, wage growth slows, the boost to consumption from excess savings wanes and the lagged effect of the Fed's aggressive tightening cycle bites even more."

Fitch's outlook was published a day after the Conference Board, a group that measures US consumer trends, said consumer confidence tumbled for a second month in a row in September, nearing recession levels. Consumer spending accounts for 70-80% of US economic activity.

Fitch said they expect real spending to slow to an annualized rate of 1.2% in the fourth quarter of this year and contract by 0.8% in the first quarter of 2024 and 3% in the following quarter.

Wage income looked set to slow as employment and wage growth weaken, Fitch said, adding that consumers have continued to draw down large savings buffers built through the coronavirus pandemic.

"Fitch estimates 80% of excess savings accumulated during the pandemic has been expended to support spending between August 2021 and July 2023," Fitch said. "At the current pace of relying on excess savings, the spending support from accumulated pandemic-related excess savings will continue to wane and will largely diminish by 4Q23."

The Conference Board's headline Consumer Confidence Index was at 103 in September, approaching the 1985 level of 100, and down from the August reading of 108.7. 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.

"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 Conference Board said in a statement.

The proportion of consumers saying recession is 'somewhat' or 'very likely' rose in September after dropping in August, the the statement said.

"The fluctuations likely reflect ongoing uncertainty given mixed buying plans," the statement said. "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."

Consumers also continued to be preoccupied with rising prices in general, and for groceries and gasoline in particular, the board added.

Separately, data from the Commerce Department on Tuesday showed sales of new US 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.

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'No Doubt' 2024 NATO Summit in Washington Will Have Deliverables For Ukraine - US Envoy

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - US Ambassador to NATO Julianne Smith said on Wednesday that next year's NATO Leaders Summit in Washington will certainly include deliverables for Ukraine.
"No doubt Ukraine will likely be part of the deliverables in Washington," Smith said during a discussion hosted by the CEPA think tank.

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US House Passes Amendment Banning Pentagon From Using Funds to Send Troops to Ukraine

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives on Wednesday included a measure in its Defense Department appropriations legislation to restrict any funds from being used to deploy US troops to Ukraine.
House lawmakers passed the amendment, brought by Congressman Eli Crane, to the bill by voice vote.
Congress is attempting to pass government funding legislation before the end of the month to avoid a federal government shutdown. The Senate and the House of Representatives have both proposed short-term funding measures to allow lawmakers to pass standard appropriations bills.
However, the two chambers of Congress are clashing over the inclusion of Ukraine aid and border security funds in their measures. Some House Republicans have also expressed opposition to a short-term funding deal altogether.
The White House has warned that US national security could be undermined by a shutdown. More than a million active-duty servicemembers and hundreds of thousands of defense contractors would be impacted by a shutdown as well, the White House said.

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UPDATE: US Soldier in American Custody After Expelled from North Korea – US Officials

(Update: updates para 1, adds paras 3-10)
WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) – Travis King, the US soldier who fled into North Korea in July, is now in US custody after being expelled from the country, senior US administration officials said on Wednesday.
"I can immediately confirm that Private Travis King is in US custody," an official told reporters.
"The PRC played a role in facilitating that transfer, but did not play another mediating role in

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these events," an official added, noting that the US had primarily worked with Sweden, which had helped transfer King to China where he was released into US custody.

The official added that no concessions were given to North Korea in exchange for King.

In a statement, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan thanked "the government of Sweden for its diplomatic role serving as the protecting power for the United States in the DPRK and the government of the People's Republic of China for its assistance in facilitating the transit of Private King."

King is currently en route to a US military base, where officials said any medical and emotional concerns will be addressed as part of a "reintegration" process before he is reunited with his family. They said he "appears to be in good health and good spirits" and was "very happy to be on his way home."

Issues of his administrative status will be addressed after his reintegration, officials added.

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, where he had been stationed. 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.

State news agency KCNA reported on Wednesday that North Korea had decided to expel King after an investigation found that he 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."

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Alberta Premier Sets Up Panel to Review Food Safety Practices After E. Coli Outbreak

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - Canada's province of Alberta will establish an external review panel to assess government policy and food safety practices following a major E. Coli outbreak, premier Danielle Smith said on Wednesday.

On September 4, the Alberta Health Services declared an E. Coli outbreak in the area of Calgary after several children began to arrive at the city's hospital emergency departments with gastrointestinal complaints.

The outbreak has been linked to a kitchen shared by 11 daycares in the city, which upon the latest inspection received three critical infractions related to food handling, sanitation, and pest infestation.

"Today I'm announcing the creation of an external review panel led by former Calgary police chief Rick Hanson to conduct a comprehensive review of government policy and food safety practices to keep our children safe," Smith said during an outbreak update conference.

Smith said Hanson would be joined by parents, childcare and food service operators, as well as food safety and public health experts.

The panel will also look into Alberta's existing food safety legislation and regulations, particularly those related to inspection processes and consequences to be faced by food operators for repeated safety violations, Smith said. Training requirements and barriers to

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proper instruction will also be assessed, she added.

Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health Mark Joffe said that as of today there have been 351 lab-confirmed cases, and 37 secondary ones, and four children remain hospitalized.

Joffe added that after analyzing 44 different food samples and interviewing hundreds of individuals from daycare to kitchen staff, parents and food delivery drivers, there is plausible evidence pointing to meatloaf and vegan loaf meals being behind the outbreak.

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US Senator Menendez Pleads Not Guilty to Federal Bribery Charges - Sputnik Correspondent

NEW YORK, September 27 (Sputnik) – US Senator Robert Menendez and his wife pleaded not guilty to federal bribery charges during their arraignment in a Manhattan federal court, a Sputnik correspondent reported from a courthouse on Wednesday.

Both Menendez and his wife were released on bail, though they will face restrictions on their movement and must surrender their official passports. Bail for Menendez was set at $100,000 while his wife and co-defendant Nadine Arslanian is being released on $250,000 bond, the correspondent reported.

The next hearing in the case has been scheduled for October 2.

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US Government Shutdown Would Harm National Security, Impact Military Pay - White House

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - A shutdown of the US federal government would undermine national security and impact the pay of military servicemembers, the White House said on Wednesday.

Congress is working to pass government funding legislation before the end of the month, lest the government shut down. However, there are discrepancies between the funding measures proposed by the Senate and the House of Representatives on matters including border security funding and Ukraine aid.

House Republicans will bear responsibility for any government shutdown, the White House said in a statement.

"With less than one week before the end of the fiscal year, extreme House Republicans are playing partisan games with peoples' lives and marching our country toward a government shutdown that would have damaging impacts across the country - including undermining our national security and forcing servicemembers across the country and around the world to work without pay," the statement said.

Approximately 1.3 million active-duty US soldiers would continue working during a shutdown, but would not receive their pay until after the government is funded, the statement said.

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Hundreds of thousands of civilian defense contractors would also be furloughed, the statement said.

Earlier on Wednesday, US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy called on President Joe Biden to work with Congress to negotiate a funding deal. The Senate's proposal does not have the necessary support in the House, McCarthy said.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer has likewise expressed opposition to the House proposal, although Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell has said he supports the short-term funding measure.

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House Republican Whip Scalise Responding Well to Cancer Chemotherapy - Comments

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - Representative Steve Scalise is back on the job and has been responding well to "aggressive" chemotherapy treatment for his myeloma blood cancer, the House Republican Whip told reporters at a Capitol Hill press conference on Wednesday.

"A month ago I was diagnosed with an aggressive myeloma," Scalise, 57, said. "Luckily they had a plan ... I am a month into the treatments. ....The cancer has dropped dramatically beca use of the success of the chemotherapy attacking the cancer."

Scalise's cancer was diagnosed in late August and he immediately began treatments on an initial four to six month course of chemotherapy. On September 14 he returned to work in the House of Representatives.

In 2017 Scalise was shot and seriously injured while practicing for a congressional baseball game by a gunman fiercely hostile to Republicans and then-President Donald Trump.

US media reports describe him as a key ally of House Speaker Kevin McCarthy in trying to get key appropriations or funding bills passed in the face of opposition from hardline Republican House members.

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US Remains 'Very Open' to Possibility of Diplomacy With North Korea - Official

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - The United States stands ready to have possible further diplomatic engagements with North Korea after Pyongyang transferred US soldier Travis King to the custody of the US authorities, senior Biden administration officials said on Wednesday.

"The United States government remains very open to the possibility of diplomacy with the DPRK [North Korea]," the officials said. "This incident to our minds demonstrate that keeping lines of communication open, even when ties are strained, is a really important thing to do and

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can deliver results. We, again, stand by ready for any further diplomacy that might be possible."

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China Facilitated North Korea's Release of US Soldier into American Custody - US Officials

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) – China helped facilitate the transfer of US soldier Travis King into US custody after North Korea decided to expel him, senior US administration officials said on Wednesday.

"The PRC played a role in facilitating that transfer, but did not play another mediating role in these events," an official said, noting that Sweden had helped transfer King to China, where he was released into US custody.

The official added that no concessions were given to North Korea in exchange for King.

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US Announces New Iran-Related Sanctions - Treasury Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) – The United States has imposed a new package of sanctions targeting Iran's drone program, the Treasury Department said in a press release on Wednesday.

"Today, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned five entities and two individuals based in Iran, the People's Republic of China (PRC), Hong Kong, Türkiye, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) involved in the procurement of sensitive parts for Iran's one-way attack unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) program," the release said.

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McCarthy Says US Government Could Shut Down if Biden Fails to Negotiate Deal With Congress

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden needs to intervene in negotiations between the House of Representatives and the Senate in order to secure a deal to fund the federal government and avoid a shutdown, US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy said on Wednesday.

"So, why I'm asking the president to sit down: because the Senate has not done their job, the Senate has not taken up the House work. The president should step in and do something about

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it, otherwise the government will shut down," McCarthy said during a press conference.
The Senate has proposed a short-term government funding bill that includes billions of dollars in aid for Ukraine, while the House has proposed a separate short-term funding bill that includes border security measures.
McCarthy said that he "does not see" support for the Senate's funding measure in the House of Representatives. McCarthy also said that he would welcome a meeting with Biden to discuss border security issues.

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US Deepening Cooperation With Angola on Military Modernization, Training - Austin

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) - The United States is deepening cooperation with Angola on military modernization and training, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said on Wednesday, capping his first official tour of Africa.
"We're deepening our cooperation with your government on military modernization, training, maritime security, and medical readiness," Austin said during his visit to Angola.
He also expressed commitment to closer cooperation with Angola on peacekeeping, climate, intelligence, space cooperation, and other matters.
Austin described Angola as a highly valued and highly capable partner for the United States. He also called it a "rising leader" in the region.
"I'm here in Angola to strengthen that robust and equal partnership," he added.
Angola was the last leg of Austin's trip to Africa. The US delegation had "great meetings" with partners in Djibouti and Kenya, the Pentagon chief said.

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US Renews Export Restrictions On Aeroflot, UTair, Azur Air– Commerce Dept.

WASHINGTON, September 27 (Sputnik) – The United States has renewed export restrictions related to Aeroflot, UTair and Azur, the Department of Commerce said on Wednesday.
"Pursuant to section 766.24 of the Export Administration Regulations, 15 CFR parts 730- 774 ("EAR" or "the Regulations"), I hereby grant the request of the Office of Export Enforcement ("OEE") to renew the temporary denial order ("TDO") issued in this matter on March 29, 2023. I find that renewal of this order is necessary in the public interest to prevent an imminent violation of the Regulations and that renewal for an extended period is appropriate because PJSC Aeroflot ("Aeroflot") has engaged in a pattern of repeated, ongoing and/or continuous apparent violations of the EAR," Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Export Enforcement Matthew Axelrod said in a notice.
Similar notices have been issued with regard to Azur Air and UTair.

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All of the orders are effective immediately and will remain in effect for one year, according to the documents.

The United States issued orders denying export privileges for all three air carriers in April 2022, and renewed them several times since that time.

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