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10/10/23 Tuesday

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‘Society is United’: ‘Shocking Nature’ of Hamas Attack Bridged Deep Israeli Divisions

Earlier this year, Israel saw its largest-ever protests against judicial reforms that critics called an authoritarian move, which were proposed by a right-wing government that has divided Israeli society and the Jewish diaspora. However, Hamas’ bloody attack over the weekend has erased those divisions overnight, a former Israeli official said.

On Saturday, Hamas, a Palestinian militant group based in the Gaza Strip, launched a daring assault across the Gaza-Israel border and attacked numerous Israeli towns and military installations on the far side, killing hundreds of soldiers and civilians and taking dozens back to Gaza as captives. Concurrent with the operation was a massive rocket bombardment targeting half a dozen Israeli cities that overwhelmed Israel’s air defense systems, including the vaunted Iron Dome.

As of Tuesday evening, the death toll on the Israeli side had reached more than 1,000. A massive air assault on Gaza, aimed at destroying Hamas for good, had killed at least 830 people, according to Palestinian authorities, and Israel had severed all electricity, water, and gas connections to the territory with a population of 1.9 million.

Eylon Levy, the former international spokesperson for former Israeli President Isaac Herzog, told Radio Sputnik’s Fault Lines on Tuesday that the shocking nature of Hamas’ attack had managed to accomplish what seemed impossible just a week ago: to unite all of Israeli society behind the Netanyahu government.

“The scale of this is quite inconceivable and difficult to get one's head around. I mean, just by way of comparison, everyone will remember, for example, the attack in Mumbai back in 2008. The death toll at the moment is at five-and-a-half, six Mumbais, and we haven't even finished finding all the dead, let alone counting them.

“We're talking about an attack that is simply by the death toll of the people we’ve found seven times worse than the 2015 attacks in Paris, 41 times the death toll of the attack at the Manchester Arena in the UK. And as I say, we haven't found the dead yet. The scale of this is simply incomprehensible. There are still bodies that haven't been collected, much less identified or even buried.”

“The question of how Hamas was able to get away with this is one that has left people scratching their heads,” Levy said. “And I'm sure that when the war ends, there will be a commission of inquiry that will ask how it was possible that the country was caught by surprise. It appears that Hamas had been very successful in trying to convince Israel that it had an interest in governing the Gaza Strip, that it wanted economic improvements in the Gaza Strip. And Israel believed that if it allowed more Palestinian workers into Israel, then Hamas, as the government - the elected government I should add - of the Gaza Strip would be interested in improving the situation in the Gaza Strip.”

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“Instead, what Israel found is, that was a ruse. It was a deception. Hamas had no interest in improving the humanitarian conditions in the economy for the poor people of the Gaza Strip. It simply wanted to distract Israel while it could plan what is not only one of the worst terror attacks in world history, but for your listeners, it's important to understand the single worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. Now Hamas is going to rain destruction on the Gaza Strip because Israel has decided the gloves are off, Israel is going to take all the action that it needs to eradicate Hamas.”

Levy compared Hamas to Daesh*, saying that Israel “is going to destroy Hamas in exactly the same way” as the international coalition that joined forces against the self-proclaimed Islamic State in Iraq and Syria in 2015 through 2018. He said the impending destruction in the Gaza Strip was “entirely the fault of the jihadist organization that decided to use it as a base to commit crimes against humanity and atrocities.”

Israel has previously carried out several large military operations in Gaza targeting Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) in 2008-2009, 2012, 2014, and most recently in 2021, each of which resulted in hundreds or thousands of Palestinian deaths.

Much of the last year, following the election of a right-wing coalition government led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has seen political divisions widen inside of Israeli society. Mass demonstrations against judicial reforms that critics said would weaken the government’s checks-and-balances system rocked Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and other Israeli cities, and a criminal case against Netanyahu for alleged corruption has continued to slowly proceed.

However, Levy told Sputnik that following the Hamas attacks over the weekend, “at the moment, Israel is not in a civil war at all - Israeli society is united.”

“We've seen an astonishing turnaround from the division inside Israeli society only last week, incredible mobilization on the home front,” he said. "Let me be clear. Since slightly after 2005, when Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip - people forget that in 2005, Israel pulled its soldiers out of the Gaza Strip. It pulled 8,000 settlers out of the Gaza Strip. And Israel said, ‘the Palestinians say they want a state, well, let's see how they run the Gaza Strip for starts.’ And it ended up becoming a terror nest filled with ISIS*-style terror just an hour's drive away from Tel Aviv."

“Israel's goal is that by the end of this war, Hamas will exist no longer as a military organization capable of posing any threat to Israel,” Levy added.

“Israel is very grateful for the huge American aircraft carrier that is on its way to Israel right now to send a very clear message to Hezbollah, to Iran, to all of their supporters that nobody messes with Israel. And it's been very reassuring that so much of the enlightened world has clearly recognized that and come to Israel's defense. We've seen the houses of parliament in the UK, the Eiffel Tower in France, the White House, the Empire State Building, Sydney Opera House, all lit up in the colors of the Israeli flag,” he said, noting that on Monday, there had been “a very important joint statement from the UK, the US, Italy, Germany and France committing themselves to supporting Israel's acts of self-defense.”

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What is Israel's Merkava IV Tank That Ukraine Wanted and Hamas Destroyed?

The Merkava tank is intended to be used in a small, desert country. As such, Israel's main battle tank is designed extremely well. However, those advantages don't necessarily translate to other theaters of battle, such as the Pontic Steppe of Ukraine, where Kiev once hoped to deploy them, an expert said.

In its recent counteroffensive launched over the weekend, the Gaza-based Palestinian militant group Hamas caught Israeli forces by surprise, destroying numerous military outposts and temporarily seizing control of a territory twice the size of the Gaza Strip.

Amid the attack, the group reportdely managed to destroy some six Merkava IV ("Chariot" in Hebrew) tanks using drones. They captured another 14.

The main combat tank was recently in the news after Ukraine attempted to procure some for use against Russian forces, alongside armor obtained from NATO countries. Ultimately, Tel Aviv refused the request, as it has refused to sell or donate to Kiev any type of weaponry, including the Iron Dome air defense system.

Sputnik spoke with Sergey Suvorov, a retired Russian Army colonel and expert on tanks, to learn about the strengths of the Merkava IV that Kiev wanted to wield, and the weaknesses that made Hamas able to destroy them so easily.

"This is not the first one to burn," he noted, pointing out that Palestinians had managed to destroy some not long after they entered service.

The Merkava IV, the latest version of the tank, was first introduced in 2003, towards the end of the Second Palestinian Intifada, a massive uprising against Israeli rule that begun in 2000. It weighs 65 tons and has a 120-millimeter main gun. Today, Israel has some 600 Merkava IVs.

"The vehicle is good. At one time, Israeli tank crews asked my opinion about this tank. I honestly told them that for a country where there are no swamps, where there are no rivers, and which one can cross using only one gas station, it is impossible to come up with a better tank," Suvorov said.

"For that area, for that region, the vehicle is excellent, well protected," Suvorov noted. "Modern fire control system - everything is as it should be for a modern tank."

However, the expert noted that if the tank were instead being used in wide, riparian Ukraine, "in five minutes we would start pulling them out from somewhere."

In Israel, he noted, "there is no swamp, there is no mud, there are no rivers with bridges through which this colossus weighing more than 60 tons must travel."

While Ukraine wasn't able to secure any Merkavas from Israel, it did manage to get armor from several other Western nations, including German Leopard tanks, British Challenger tanks, and American Abrams tanks.

Survivability is Supreme

In comparing them to the Merkava, Suvorov noted that the Israelis designed their own armor in the 1970s because of their unique priorities. At the time, Israel was engaging in regular wars with its Arab neighbors, including Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt, which together severely outnumbered the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF).

"When they were developing the first Merkava, General Tal, the main ideologist for the development of this tank, prioritized increasing the survivability of the crew in a combat situation and the survivability of the vehicle itself," Suvorov explained.

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“They said ‘thank you’ to the British, who did not want to supply them with any more tanks, so they made their own. They [the Merkavas] have a front-mounted engine and an exit in the back, which somewhat facilitates the evacuation of the crew in the event of, say, its destruction or damage. Moreover, if it is under fire, you can jump back.”
“There's a good gun there, they modified it - it’s a German cannon, Rheinmetall’s - but with Israeli modifications, changes were made to the design in order to install it in this turret. There are a lot of different features to protect ammunition from fire, and a good fire control system,” he said.
“As the Israeli tank crews themselves told me, including those who participated in the development of this tank, they used a lot of interesting solutions specifically to increase survivability. That is, if something somewhere could explode, then the design was made in such a way that the explosion was directed somewhere, but not towards the crew, for example,” Suvorov told Sputnik.
“Ammunition is stored in separate special containers made of fiberglass or some kind of plastic. I don’t know exactly what material, but they are closed - that is, even if there is some kind of open flame getting inside, then due to the fact that they are closed, they will not ignite.”
“Nonetheless, if a cumulative jet from a grenade launcher, ATGM [anti-tank guided missile] or the core of an armor-piercing projectile flies into this box, it still won’t save you. But in any case, this increases the security of the machine. They have two or three shells there, they are in special plastic containers inside the vehicle. True, this somewhat reduces the combat rate of fire, but for those conditions in which the Israel Defense Forces are fighting various wars, this is quite acceptable,” he explained.
When it comes to disadvantages, Suvorov noted that “the mass is large,” but added that “for the area where it is used, this is not the biggest disadvantage.”

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Special Counsel Interviews POTUS Biden in Classified Documents Probe

US President Joe Biden became the latest American head of state to be interviewed by a Justice Department investigator probing possible criminal activity. Then-Presidents George W. Bush and Bill Clinton have also been interviewed, and Donald Trump refused an interview but opted to answer written questions instead.
The White House revealed on Monday that US President Joe Biden has complied with a request for an interview by the special counsel investigating the discovery of classified documents in Biden’s home and offices.
“As we have said from the beginning, the president and the White House are cooperating with this investigation, and as it has been appropriate, we have provided relevant updates publicly, being as transparent as we can consistent with protecting and preserving the integrity of the investigation,” a White House spokesperson said, noting the interview was conducted on Sunday and Monday and was voluntary.

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Special Counsel Robert Hur was appointed by Attorney General Merrick Garland in January to head the investigation into several discoveries of classified documents at Biden's Delaware home and some offices that he used while teaching at the University of Pennsylvania. The documents date to the time when Biden was vice resident from 2009 to 2017.
Upon their discovery, the US National Archives was notified and given the documents in November 2022, according to the White House.
Hur has also interviewed several members of Biden's staff in connection with the case, from both his vice-presidential days and his current administration. Those figures have included: former White House counsel Dana Remus; former White House chief of staff, Ron Klain; national security adviser Jake Sullivan; and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. The latter two also served as advisors to Biden when he was Vice President.
News of the incidents came several months after the FBI raided the Florida estate of former US President Donald Trump to seize several hundred classified files that were suspected of being kept there, after months of back-and-forth with the National Archives and Department of Justice had failed to secure them.
In the time since, Trump has been charged in a federal criminal case connected to the alleged mishandling of the documents, which the former president claims he declassified before leaving office in early 2021. Biden has not yet faced charges in his own classified documents probe.
Biden is also the subject of an impeachment inquiry by the US House of Representatives, which is probing potential criminal behavior in the president's relationship with his businessman son, Hunter. No charges have been brought in that probe, either, which spans the elder Biden's vice-presidential and presidential terms.

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Tree Ring Analysis Tells Tale of Largest-Ever Solar Storm 14,000 Years Ago

Scientists have found evidence of the largest known solar storm to ever strike the Earth in an unlikely place: the rings of ancient trees in the process of fossilization.
As trees grow outward year by year, they preserve a great deal of information in their inner rings, which scientists have used to study a variety of phenomena in the distant past. The latest purpose of tree ring analysis, along the banks of the Drouzet River in the French Alps, is an extremely powerful solar storm that hit the Earth 14,300 years ago.
Radiocarbon analysis yielded the find, which showed a dramatic spike in carbon-14, a radioactive isotope of carbon used to date objects from the past, in tree rings that corresponded to that time period. The isotope exists naturally in small numbers, but can be created by sudden bursts of electromagnetic rays from the sun, such as those flung at the Earth by the sun when it releases large solar flares.
The trees studied were not alive, of course, but weren't fossilized, either. They existed in a state of semi-fossilization, with their organic molecules partially replaced by stone.

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A paper describing the discovery by a group of French and British scientists was published on Monday in The Royal Society's Philosophical Transactions A: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences.

"Radiocarbon is constantly being produced in the upper atmosphere through a chain of reactions initiated by cosmic rays," said Edouard Bard, professor of Climate and Ocean Evolution at the Collège de France and CEREGE, and lead author of the study, in a statement.

"Recently, scientists have found that extreme solar events including solar flares and coronal mass ejections can also create short-term bursts of energetic particles which are preserved as huge spikes in radiocarbon production occurring over the course of just a single year."

The storm 14,300 years ago is the largest known to have occurred over the last 15,000 years. Previously, nine other storms of similar size - known as Miyake Events - were known about, with the largest happening in 993 CE and 774 CE. However, this newly identified storm was at least twice as powerful as them.

The study of such events helps scientists understand solar activity before the 18th century, when sun spots - the producers of solar flares - first began being observed by human scientists. It is also important because in our modern, electricity-driven society, large solar storms have the potential to wreak havoc by disabling electrical systems and computers.

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Polls show Keir Starmer, the leader of the United Kingdom's center-left Labour Party, is on track to win the next general election, although he is viewed with suspicion by some party activists.

Keir Starmer was confronted with a theatrical form of protest Tuesday as a pro-democracy protester covered the UK Labour Party leader in glitter.

The act occurred as Starmer prepared to speak before party members at their annual conference in Liverpool, England. Shortly after Starmer arrived at the lectern a protester, now identified as 28-year-old Yaz Ashmawi, rushed the stage and tossed glitter on the party leader.

"True democracy is citizen led! Politics needs an update!" shouted Ashmawi as security grabbed the protester and dragged him from the stage. "We demand a peoples' house! We demand a peoples' house! We are in crisis! We are in crisis!"

Local police later issued a statement saying Ashmawi had been arrested on suspicion of assault, breach of the peace and causing public nuisance for his act of political protest.

At the time, Starmer shrugged off the act of protest before continuing his speech. "If he thinks that bothers me, he doesn't know me," said the politician.

"Protest or power. That's why we changed our party conference. That's why we changed our party." The politician continued by delineating some of his party's recent proposals, which include increased funding for police and additional resources for the UK's public National Health Service.

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The UK activist group People Demand Democracy claimed responsibility for the disruption, stating "the Labour Party has been captured, donors and lobbyists have more control over Keir Starmer than his members."

The group advocates for electoral reform in the United Kingdom, supporting a proportional representation system for the House of Commons endorsed by members at the Labour Party's 2022 conference.

They also demand the abolition of the nation's House of Lords legislative body and its replacement with a "House of Citizens" with members randomly selected from the UK's population via sortition.

"We need a democratic alternative that gives the people of the UK a voice to deal with the major challenges of our time: rampant inequality, an escalating climate crisis, political corruption and on," read the online statement from People Demand Democracy. "But what do we have instead? A Labour Party offering very little in terms of real change."

"A House of Citizens will realign power in society, it will empower people to set the agenda, guide policies and keep politicians in check. We all need a chance for a seat at the table, we all deserve a voice in the room. A People's House brings people together like a jury, and provides the time to hear from experts and scientists to decide what policy is best for everyone."

"Today Starmer's speech was disrupted, and the disruption is planned to continue, targeting both Labour and the Conservative parties," the release concluded.

The incident demonstrated the strained relationship between Starmer and some Labour Party activists, many of whom supported the party's former leader Jeremy Corbyn. Starmer initially demonstrated a collegial tone towards Corbyn, but has since ejected the populist leader from the party.

Currently, the Labour Party is engaged in legal action against former Corbyn loyalists within the party after a report was leaked that provided damning evidence of internal bias against the former party leader.

Starmer has been criticized for alleged links to the UK's secretive MI5 intelligence service. Investigative reporting website The Grayzone has documented how intelligence-linked operatives in the UK worked to undermine and discredit Jeremy Corbyn.

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Acting US House Speaker Hints Chamber May Approve Israeli Aid Before Resolving Leadership Crisis

The United States' lower legislative chamber is still without a permanent leader, but a statement from its interim figurehead demonstrates the depth of the country's commitment to its Middle Eastern ally.

The US House of Representatives remains engulfed in an unprecedented leadership crisis, but acting Speaker Patrick McHenry (R-NC) said Tuesday the legislative body would still approve aid to Israel if they feel it is necessary.

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"If we need to act as a government, we will," said McHenry when questioned by US media about the timetable for such assistance.

The announcement appeared to contradict previous statements from members of the body's majority party, as well as varying interpretations of McHenry's lawful power.

The chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Michael McCaul said Monday that a vote on Israel aid could come after the resolution of the leadership question. He noted billions of dollars in foreign military aid already available to US President Joe Biden, who announced a shipment of munitions to the country Monday.

At the time, McCaul also raised the prospect of eventual omnibus legislation combining assistance to Israel with funding for border security, as well as aid to Ukraine and Taiwan.

Democrats on the chamber's rules committee have insisted McHenry has "no authority other than taking steps necessary and appropriate to further the election of a new speaker."

Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA), who has implied he would be willing to accept the speakership once again, said Monday "the House can do nothing without a speaker."

McCarthy's willingness to accept the role is a reversal from his previous stance. "I believe I can continue to fight, maybe in a different manner. I will not run for speaker again," he said immediately after being ousted last week.

The novel circumstances of McHenry's position could allow the North Carolina congressman to test the limits of his role.

Meanwhile, the House Foreign Affairs Committee unveiled a symbolic resolution in support of Israel on Tuesday that was co-signed by 390 members of the House from both major parties.

Republican House members have expressed skepticism towards McCaul's proposal to link Israel aid to other issues, suggesting they wish to set aside the funds as quickly as possible.

Progressive Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN) insisted aid to Israel should be provided with conditions, advocating for "negotiated peace" in the conflict.

The lower congressional chamber has been without a leader since last Tuesday, when Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-FL) led an unprecedented effort against McCarthy from within his own party. Some Republicans had long criticized McCarthy for making deals with Democratic representatives and his lack of perceived commitment to some conservative objectives. Seven Republican representatives joined Gaetz and all Democrats in the House in voting to vacate the chair, removing McCarthy from his position.

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Report: US, Venezuela in Talks to Ease Oil Sanctions

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Amid high gas prices, the Biden administration is offering sanctions relief to spur oil production in the South American country in exchange for electoral reforms.

The US is achieving progress in talks that may result in the easing of some sanctions on the Venezuelan oil and banking sectors, according to reports in US media. The information emerged Monday from multiple sources with knowledge of the negotiations.

Mediation has taken place on two fronts. Most recently, representatives from the US and Venezuela have met in Doha, Qatar, where the US has urged Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro to provide guarantees regarding upcoming presidential elections.

On-again, off-again talks have also taken place between the Maduro government and Venezuela's political opposition over the last several years. The US wants Maduro to agree to resume those talks in Mexico, in exchange for the US permitting a foreign oil company to accept Venezuelan crude oil.

The reports come amidst rising oil prices in the wake of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, which saw the Biden administration take significant economic measures against Russia. Prices are up from around $22 per barrel in April 2020 to $85 per barrel as of this month, creating significant upward pressure on fuel prices for American consumers.

With oil from other traditional providers now off the table, the Biden administration is hoping to resume greater processing from Venezuela's significant reserves, although it will take time for the country's heavy crude to be extracted, processed, and brought to market. With US presidential elections about a year away, Biden is operating on a limited timetable.

The Maduro government, for their part, hopes to eventually double crude output as the country achieves tentative economic growth after years of crisis. Foreign firms hope to settle long standing debt with the country through renewed acceptance of Venezuelan oil.

Relations between the US and Venezuela have been strained since the 1999 inauguration of Hugo Chávez, who came to power in Venezuela touting his Bolivarian Revolution which promised to redistribute wealth and power to the country's poor.

The leftist president emulated programs in revolutionary Cuba and Sandinista Nicaragua with the establishment of social missions that achieved significant progress in addressing illiteracy, homelessness and lack of medical care.

Chávez frequently attacked the United States for their long history of interference in the region. His rhetoric provoked the ire of the George W. Bush administration, which helped organize a coup that briefly removed Chávez from power before he was restored 48 hours later.

Relations worsened in 2015 when, alleging deteriorating democratic conditions, the Obama administration placed economic sanctions on Venezuela, declaring the country an "unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States."

Those sanctions were dramatically expanded by US President Donald Trump in 2018 as Washington criticized the reelection of Maduro, a Chávez ally, citing use of state resources for his electoral campaign among other concerns. Sanctions, along with a decline in oil prices, have battered Venezuela's economy in the years since; a UN report alleged tens of thousands of excess deaths in the country caused by sanctions that enforce "collective punishment of the civilian population."

A political crisis has persisted alongside the economic one. Opposition figures allege unfair electoral conditions, although opposition parties have also remained intensely divided over the question of whether to support the US sanctions. Maduro has criticized the sanctions as a form

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of electoral interference, stating recently, “We want elections free from sanctions, blockades, aggression, [and] economic warfare.”
Recently, some Democratic Party politicians in the US have also called for the lifting of sanctions against Venezuela. Millions of Venezuelans have fled amidst the political and economic turmoil, although the country’s socialist government continues to invest significant resources into social programs, including a public housing mission that’s constructed more than 4.5 million homes for poor Venezuelans.

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Explorers Find Well-Preserved Roman Tomb With Frescoes Depicting Hounds of Hell

Researchers discovered a 2,000-year-old tomb featuring images of the Labors of Hercules, a series of superhuman tasks undertaken by the legendary hero of ancient myth.
Archaeologists recently recalled their “incredible emotion” upon the discovery of an ornate Roman burial chamber containing well-preserved ancient frescoes depicting the Labors of Hercules.
The stunning discovery came about while the group of archaeologists were digging underground along the town of Giugliano near Naples in Italy. Officials on the scene struck gold after uncovering the wall of a large chamber tomb reserved for the burial of elite Romans. Rolling back a stone slab, the team stepped inward, becoming the first humans to enter the room in over two millennia.
Inside, researchers discovered walls and ceilings covered with painted frescoes in a remarkable state of preservation. One wall featured Cerberus, the three-headed dog who served as the guardian of Hades. Another depicted Ichthyocentaurs, centaur-like figures with tails like fish.
“The tomb has frescoed ceilings and walls in perfect condition, with mythological scenes that go all around the room,” the team said in a statement announcing their find.
“The emotions caused by a discovery like this are incredible,” said Mariano Nuzzo, a member of the excavation team.
The researchers said the tomb would’ve been used over the course of several centuries, from some time during the Republican age beginning in 509 BC through the Imperial age lasting through 476 AD.
Additional excavations are expected at the site, with officials looking to conduct further analysis at surrounding portions of the necropolis.

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'Extremely Dangerous' Hurricane Lidia Makes Landfall in Mexico as Category 4 Cyclone

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Forecasters bumped the storm grade to a Category 4 level late Tuesday after the cyclone managed to record a sustained wind speed in excess of 130 miles per hour. Per the US National Hurricane Center, such a hurricane grade is expected to cause "catastrophic damage."
Hurricane Lidia intensified into a Category 4 cyclone late Tuesday as it made landfall in Mexico, bringing with it strong winds and heavy rains forecasted to possibly trigger mudslides and severe flooding.
An updated advisory issued by the US National Hurricane Center (NHC) detailed that Lidia had strengthened into "an extremely dangerous Category 4 hurricane" just hours before it was due to make landfall.
"Recent satellite data indicate that Lidia has continued to rapidly strengthen and has estimated maximum winds near 140 mph (220 km/h)," an earlier alert revealed, warning additional strengthening is possible.
Lidia made landfall with 140 mph winds some 35 miles southwest of the coastal resort of Mexico's Puerto Vallarta, a beach town located in the state of Jalisco, on the Bahia de Banderas. Authorities in the area earlier canceled classes due to the forecasted weather.
At present, the NHC listed Lidia as moving at a pace of 17 mph and with downgraded wind speeds of 105 mph.
The center has issued a hurricane warning alert for Las Islas Marias, and the areas located from Manzanillo to El Roblito, whereas a tropical storm warning was implemented to site from El Roblito to Mazatlan, and Punta San Telmo to Manzanillo.
“Additional strengthening is forecast and Lidia will likely be at or near major hurricane strength when it reaches the coast. Rapid weakening is expected after Lidia moves Inland,” the Hurricane Center wrote in an earlier statement.
According to the center, a hurricane warning “means that hurricane conditions are expected somewhere within the warning area, in this case within the next 6 to 12 hours” and therefore, “preparations to protect life and property should be rushed to completion.”
Lidia is also expected to bring totals of 4 to 8 inches of rain across western Mexico in the states of: Nayarit, the southern region of Sinaloa, and some coastal parts of Jalisco. The NHC warns rains will likely produce flash and urban flooding, as well as possible mudslides in areas with higher terrain near the coast.
The hurricane will also cause storm surges along the coastline, with large, dangerous waves and coastal flooding as well as surf swells that may cause life-threatening surf and rip current conditions. These swells will affect the west coast of Mexico as well as the Baja California peninsula over the next few days.
Hurricane Roslyn, a Category 4 storm, made landfall in Nayarit in late October of last year. Roslyn caused the direct deaths of at least three people in that state.
“That was a much more significant system,” meteorolgist Alex DaSilva remarked earlier. “While we don’t expect it to be of that strength, we are always concerned about the flooding downpours.”
Earlier this year, the US State Department urged American travelers to “reconsider” visiting the beach and tourist hub of Puerto Vallarta due to “violent crime and gang activity” that saw a spike in reportings.

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Scientists Use CRISPR Gene Editing Tech on Chickens to Fight Bird Flu

According to a New York journal, the deadliest bird flu outbreak occurred between February 2022 and February 2023, killing 58 million farm-raised birds in the US, and leading to record high turkey prices.

After three decades of research, Helen Sang, a geneticist at the University of Edinburgh's Roslin Institute, reached her first success in gene editing by creating chickens that demonstrate a resistance to the avian flu.

Sang and her colleagues wrote in their findings that in chickens, the influenza A virus (IAV) relies on host protein ANP32A. In their study they a particular approach to genome editing known as CRISPR-Cas9 (clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats) to generate "homozygous gene edited chickens containing two ANP32A amino acid substitutions that prevent viral polymerase interaction."

The team put the avian influenza virus into the nostrils of 20 two-week-old chicks, half of which were subject to the modified gene. After the IAV challenge, the researchers wrote, at least nine out of 10 chicks (nearly the entire half) "remain uninfected."

However, this system will not be put to the test anytime soon, as the gene-edited chickens still became sick when they were exposed to larger amounts of the flu virus, even though the infections did develop more slowly, reaching lower viral levels,

"What this showed is a proof of concept," says Wendy Barclay, a virologist at Imperial College London who worked on the new study. "But we're not there yet."

In addition, the researchers say that if a mutated virus does arise to confront the gene-edited chickens, it would have a "high probability" of better infecting mammals - including humans.

"A water-tight system where no more replication takes place in chickens is necessary," Sander Herfst, a virologist from Erasmus University Medical Center, said. To accomplish their goal, the scientists will have to continue to use the genome editing approach (CRISPR-Cas9) in their tests.

Additionally, per Barclay, test tube experiments showed that even high levels of the influenza virus could not infect chicken cells if that virus lacked all three ANP32 genes.

However, the researchers will have to find a way to keep the chickens healthy too, as removing all three genes could have a negative effect on the chicken's health. The goal then, would be to find a way to alter the ANP32 gene so that it could ward off the virus, but still be able to function as a protein.

Still, the discovery is one step further in scientists' efforts to prevent virus outbreaks.

"This strategy could be used not just for H5N1 (bird flu virus) but for any of the strains because it's fundamental to the way the virus works," said Barclay.

Richard Webby, a bird flu expert at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, said the scientific community would "absolutely" reach the point where researchers will be able to "manipulate the host genome to make them less susceptible to flu. That'll be a win for public health."

The findings were published Tuesday in the journal Nature Communications.

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Mummified US Man Finally Given Burial After Spending 128 Years on Display

"He weighs nothing," said the funeral home director. "He's that petrified."

Stoneman Willie, a mummified petty thief whose body had undergone an experimental embalming process, will finally be put to rest after being on display in an open coffin in Reading, Pennsylvania, for the last 128 years.

Willie's body will also be buried alongside its original name: James Murphy, a New Yorker who was of Irish descent.

In 1895, Murphy, who is believed to have been 37-years-old at the time, had been arrested once for public drunkenness and then a week later for burglarizing a boarding house. He then died in jail from kidney failure just a month after his arrest. When no one had claimed his body he was taken to the Theo C. Auman Funeral Home.

"Fast-forward 128 years and he's still here," Theo C. Auman Funeral Home director Kyle Blankenbiller said ahead of the burial.

Shortly after his death in 1895, his body was embalmed by a mortician who was experimenting with a new technique he had found in a German medical journal on how to preserve meat. Testing showed the mortician used high levels of formalin, cyanide and arsenic. After appealing to state authorities, the funeral home was allowed to keep his body in order to monitor any rates of decomposition.

Following the embalming process, Murphy's body "became hard as wood," Blankenbiller said of the mummy who wound up dressed in a tuxedo from the 1890s.

"He weighs nothing," he added. "He's that petrified."

Murphy's burial had been put on hold after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. But before the funeral home could bury him, they also had to do some detective work in order to figure out his true identity, which had sat behind the mask of a macabre roadside attraction in Reading for 128 years.

"He's been gawked at enough," said Blankenbiller. "We don't refer to him as a mummy. We refer to him as our friend Willie. He has just become such an icon, such a storied part of not only Reading's past but certainly its present."

"As much as we're sad about it, we really feel we honored him in the way that he deserved after all of this time."

Strangely enough, some residents of Reading do view Murphy as a symbol of their town and its history, despite the fact the corpse belonged to a New Yorker.

"It sounds silly but it's something you can share with your parents and grandparents, and it's something they shared with their grandparents and parents," said Alexa Freyman, 32. "It's morbid, but it was something that brought us together and gave us some sort of reference historically to who we were and what happened here then."

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Murphy was finally laid to rest in his tuxedo, as well as a bow tie and red sash. He was buried beneath a tombstone engraved with both of his names: the one given to him when he was alive, and the one given to him in death.

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Canada Will Donate $18.4Mln Worth of Winter Gear, Ammunition to Ukraine - National Defense

WASHINGTON, October 11 (Sputnik) - Canada will send winter gear and several types of ammunition rounds as part of its new C$25 million ($18.4 million) military assistance package for Ukraine, National Defense said on Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, Canadian Minister of National Defense Bill Blair attended the 16th Ukraine Defense Contact Group (UDCG) meeting in Brussels, hosted by Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin.

"At the meeting [UDCG], Minister Blair announced that Canada will donate $25 million worth of winter clothing and equipment to Ukraine. This includes boots, thermal layers, and winter sleeping bags. This also includes patterned military uniforms for 2000 female Armed Forces of Ukraine soldiers, which will be manufactured in Canada. This donation is funded by the $500 million tranche in funding for military assistance to Ukraine announced by Prime Minister Trudeau in June 2023," the ministry said in a statement.

The package also includes 2,000 rounds of 155mm ammunition, smoke ammunition, 277 1,000-pound aircraft bombs and associated fuse assemblies, and various types of 76mm naval ammunition, as well as 2260 gas masks.

National Defense also reported that it delivered last week 8,000 rounds of 155mm ammunition, 10,000 rounds of 105mm artillery rounds, and nearly 2 million rounds of 7.62mm small arms ammunition to Ukraine.

Since January 2022, the Canadian government has provided over C$9 billion in financial, humanitarian, development, immigration and other assistance to Kiev, including C$2.4 billion in military support.

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UNRWA Says 9 Staffers Killed in Airstrikes in Gaza Strip Since Saturday

UNITED NATIONS, October 11 (Sputnik) - The UN Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) said on Wednesday that nine of its staffers have been killed in airstrikes in Gaza Strip since Saturday amid the escalating war between Hamas and Israel.

"9 of our @UN staffers have been killed in airstrikes in#GazaStrip since Saturday," UNRWA wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter.

The agency stressed that the protection of civilians is paramount, including in times of conflict,

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and should be protected in accordance with the laws of war.

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US Close to Agreement on Providing Venezuela Partial Sanctions Relief - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 11 (Sputnik) - The United States and Venezuela are close to an agreement that would give Caracas limited sanctions relief in exchange for fair elections next year, Bloomberg reported citing people familiar with the matter.

The report said on Tuesday that under the agreement the United States would lift some sanctions on Venezuela's oil and banking sectors if Caracas announces it will hold fair elections next year.

Some US sanctions would also be lifted on Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's entourage, the report said.

The deal could also include the release of dozens of political prisoners by Venezuela, according to the report.

Last November, the US Treasury Department provided a new license that allows Chevron to extract oil in Venezuela for six months through its joint venture partner PDVSA. However, this license did not expand operations or allow new US investment in Venezuela's oil sector.

The United States granted the new license after the Venezuelan government and the opposition resumed talks in Mexico City and came to an agreement on addressing the humanitarian crisis in the country, including an agreement on the continuation of talks focused on elections to be held in 2024.

US and Venezuelan officials have held regular talks recently about a partial lifting of sanctions should Caracas hold free and fair elections in late October's primary vote that will determine who will run against Maduro, the report said.

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Ukraine Public Debt to Rise Over 88% of GDP in 2023, Exceed 100% in 2025 - IMF

WASHINGTON, October 11 (Sputnik) - Ukraine’s public debt is expected to rise to more than 88% of GDP this year and exceed 100% of GDP in 2025, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Wednesday.

The IMF expects Ukraine’s public debt to reach 88.1% in 2023 and further increase to 100.7% of GDP in two years, the IMF said in its Fiscal Monitor report.

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

IMF Projects Russia's Debt to Fall to 18.2% of GDP by 2028 - Report

WASHINGTON, October 11 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) projects Russia's debt to fall to 18.2% of GDP by 2028, according to the Fiscal Monitor report released on Wednesday.

The IMF expects Russia's debt to rise to 21.2% of GDP in 2023 from 18.9% in the previous year.

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IMF Projects US Debt to Exceed 137% of GDP by 2028 - Report

WASHINGTON, October 11 (Sputnik) - The US debt may exceed 137% of the country's GDP by 2028, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Wednesday.

The US debt may reach 137.5% of GDP in five years, a figure more than 14% greater than the debt level in 2023, the IMF said in its Fiscal Monitor report.

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World Debt Projected to Rise by 1 Percentage Point of GDP Per Year in Medium Term - IMF

WASHINGTON, October 11 (Sputnik) - The global debt is projected to rise by 1 percentage point of the GDP annually over the medium term and will approach 100% of GDP by the end of the decade, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Wednesday.

"World debt is projected to increase by about 1 percentage point of GDP per year over the medium term," the IMF said in its Fiscal Monitor report.

If the world economy remains at the projected pace of growth, the global public debt ratio will be approaching 100 percent of GDP by the end of the decade, the report said.

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Austin Pledges to Israel Counterpart US Will Expedite Air Defenses - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, October 11 (Sputnik) - US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke over the telephone with Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and reaffirmed the United States commitment to accelerate the delivery of air defense capabilities and munitions amid the conflict

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with Hamas, Defense Department spokesperson Pat Ryder said in a press release.
"The secretary reaffirmed the US commitment to expedite air defense capabilities and munitions requested by Israel in support of their efforts to defend the Israeli people," the press release said on Tuesday.
Austin spoke with Gallant to reiterate the unwavering US support for Israel in the wake of Hamas' attacks and to receive updates on Israel's operations to restore security, the release said.
Earlier on Tuesday, President Joe Biden said that the United States is surging additional military systems to Israel, including ammunition and interceptors to replenish Israel's Iron Dome air defense system.
The United States will announce additional assistance for Israel in the coming days, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Monday.

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Austin Directs US Special Forces to Support Israel With Intelligence, Planning - Official

WASHINGTON, October 11 (Sputnik) - US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has directed US special operations forces to provide planning and intelligence support to Israel, a US military official told Sputnik.
"The secretary offered hostage rescue support to Minister [Yoav] Gallant on the phone this weekend and directed his JSOC [Joint Special Operations Command] team to lean forward with planning and intel support to IDF [Israel Defense Forces]," the official said on Tuesday.
Israel will take the lead on any operations that may involve assistance from US forces, but it does not mean US troops will be on the ground, the official said.
Earlier on Tuesday, media reported that US special operations forces have been placed on alert in a European country close to Israel.
On Saturday, the Palestinian group Hamas launched a surprise large-scale attack on Israel, prompting Israel to declare a state of war the following day. On Monday, Israel put the Gaza Strip under full blockade, cutting off food, gas and electricity supplies.
Israeli and Palestinian authorities have reported that hundreds of people have died and thousands have been injured as a result of the escalation in fighting.

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US Indicts Congressman Santos on 23 Campaign Finance, Fraud Charges - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 11 (Sputnik) - US Congressman George Santos faces 23 criminal charges for allegedly stealing campaign donor information to make fraudulent payments, the US Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York said in a statement.
A 23-count superseding indictment charges Santos with crimes including conspiracy to commit

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offenses against the United States, wire fraud, making false statements to the Federal Election Commission (FEC) and falsifying FEC records, the statement said on Tuesday.

"As alleged, Santos is charged with stealing people's identities and making charges on his own donors' credit cards without their authorization, lying to the FEC and, by extension, the public about the financial state of his campaign. Santos falsely inflated the campaign's reported receipts with non-existent loans and contributions that were either fabricated or stolen," US Attorney Breon Peace said in the statement.

Santos is scheduled to appear in federal court on October 27. Santos pleaded not guilty to 13 criminal charges on which he was initially indicted earlier this year.

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American Airlines Suspends Operations to And From Tel Aviv Through December 4 - Statement

WASHINGTON, October 11 (Sputnik) - American Airlines (AA) has temporarily suspended its operations to and from Tel Aviv through December 4 amid the prevailing conflict between Israel and Hamas, the airline said in a statement to Sputnik.

"As a result of the current operating environment, American Airlines has temporarily suspended operations to and from Tel Aviv, Israel (TLV) through Dec. 4 and extended our travel alert providing additional flexibility to customers whose travel plans are impacted by this adjustment," the statement said.

Moreover, AA will maintain close collaborations with its partner airlines to facilitate aid for individuals intending to depart from Tel Aviv, upholding safety and security as paramount concerns, the statement said.

On Saturday, Hamas launched a surprise large-scale attack on Israel, which claimed the lives of hundreds of people from both sides of the conflict prompting Israel to declare a state of war. Earlier this week, Israel announced a complete water, electricity and food blockade of Gaza Strip.

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No ATACMS Expected in Upcoming Ukraine Aid Package - US Officials

WASHINGTON, October 11 (Sputnik) - The long-range Army Tactical Missiles Systems (ATACMS) are not expected to be included in an upcoming Ukraine aid package, US official told Sputnik.

The United States is expected to announce another security assistance package for Ukraine as soon as Wednesday that will include HIMARS munitions, 155mm artillery shells, TOW missiles, among other weapons, media reported.

"We have no new announcements regarding ATACMS for Ukraine," a US Defense Department

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spokesperson told Sputnik on Tuesday.

In addition, a National Security Council spokesperson told Sputnik he could not confirm the United States approved sending ATACMS to Ukraine.

In September, US President Joe Biden informed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that the United States will send a small number of ATACMS missiles to Ukraine, however, a delivery timeline remains unknown, according to media reports.

The New Yorker reported on Monday that some White House officials reportedly proposed using the threat of sending ATACMS to Ukraine as leverage with Russia. However, after the United Kingdom and France started supplying Kiev with their own long-range rockets, the only remaining concern was the relatively small stock of ATACMS missiles in US military warehouses, the report added.

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Blinken to Leave for Israel Wednesday Amid Escalation With Hamas - US State Dept.

(Updates with more details in paras 5-7)

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will visit Israel for talks with the country's leadership amid the ongoing war with Hamas, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said.

"Our expectation is that he will leave tomorrow and arrive in Israel on Thursday," Miller said during a press conference on Tuesday.

Blinken will discuss with the Israeli leaders the situation on the ground and how the United States can support them, Miller said.

"The secretary looks forward to meeting with the senior leaders in the Israeli government," Miller added.

Miller said in a statement that the trip will take place October 11-13 and will include a visit to Jordan.

"The secretary will reiterate his condolences for the victims of the terrorist attacks against Israel and condemn those attacks in the strongest terms," Miller said.

Blinken will reaffirm the United States' solidarity with and support for Israel, Miller added.

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EU Commissioner Says Musk's X Used to Spread Lies About Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

WASHINGTON, October 11 (Sputnik) - European Commissioner for Internal Market Thierry Breton sent a letter to Elon Musk requesting that he reply within 24 hours to allegations that his social network X, formerly known as Twitter, is spreading illegal content and disinformation about the recent Hamas attacks on Israel.

"Following the terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas against Israel, we have indications that

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your platform is being used to disseminate illegal content and disinformation in the EU," the letter published on X said on Tuesday. "I urge you to ensure a prompt, accurate and complete response to this request within the next 24 hours."

Breton informed Musk that if an investigation is launched into the presence of prohibited materials on X, penalties may be imposed, the letter said.

As examples of such alleged violations, Breton cited the posting of materials such as repurposed old images of unrelated armed conflicts or military footage that actually originated from video games, the letter added.

Musk replied on X by asking Breton to provide a list of violations to let the public see them and underscored that the social media platform is an open source and is transparent.

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US Might Not Need More Hike Rates as Markets Could Cap Inflation - Fed Policy Makers

WASHINGTON, October 11 (Sputnik) — The Federal Reserve might not have to raise US interest rates any further to cap inflation as a bond market selloff could temper rising prices despite strong labor and wage growth, policy makers at the central bank suggested on Tuesday.

“It's certainly possible that higher long-term yields may do some of the work for us in terms of bringing inflation back down," Neel Kashkari, president of the Minneapolis Fed, one of the 12 regional wings that make up the fuller central bank.

Long-term yields are returns on bonds dated between 10 and 30 years. These yields have been climbing for months, reaching highs not seen since 2007, on the back of a bond market selloff by investors fearing an economic slowdown.

Kashkari’s suggestion was that the surge in yields itself could help contain price growth and put the Fed on the path to bringing inflation down to its annual target of 2%, from a current 3.7%.

But the Minneapolis Fed chief also conceded that if yields were surging on expectations that the central bank would indeed follow through with more rate hikes, then it must have to do just that.

“If those higher long-term yields are higher because their expectations about what we're going to do has changed, then we might actually need to follow through in their expectations in order to maintain those yields," he said at a live-streamed town hall event.

Kashkari’s colleague Raphael Bostic, who is Atlanta Fed president, meanwhile, said he thought no more rate hikes were necessary.

Bostic, speaking at a bankers conference, said Fed monetary policy was sufficiently restrictive and he did not see a recession ahead, regardless of the central bank’s actions. He also said the outburst of violence in Israel and Gaza would not greatly alter Fed policy.

“We don't need to increase rates any more,” the Atlanta Fed chief said. “If things come in differently from my outlook, we might have to increase rates. But that's not my current outlook.”

The Fed hiked interest rates 11 times between March 2022 and July 2023, adding 5.25 percentage points to a prior base rate of just 0.25%, to contend with inflation which reached 40-year highs of above 9% in June 2022. It has an option of doing another quarter point in either

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November or December.

The central bank has repeatedly pointed to an overheated labor market and wage growth, aside from soaring energy prices, as reasons for inflation remaining well above 3% per annum versus its target for 2%.

US average hourly earnings have virtually grown without stop since they began creeping up in July 2020 right after the labor market began springing back from the loss of some 20 million jobs right after the initial outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

Oil prices hit one-year highs of above $97 a barrel for global crude benchmark Brent, before retreating sharply last week as Treasury yields spiked.

The runaway jobs market is a complicated issue for the Fed, which is tasked with ensuring both "maximum employment" and "manageable inflation" for Americans.

While policy-makers the world over typically celebrate on seeing good jobs numbers, the Fed is in a different predicament. The central bank wishes to see an easing of conditions that are a little "too good" now for the economy's own good — in this case, unemployment at more than 50-year lows and monthly wages that have grown at annual rates of 4% to 5% since July 2021.

Such job security and earnings have cushioned many Americans from the worst price pressures since the 1980s and encouraged them to continue spending, further feeding inflation.

The Fed's mandate for maximum employment means an unemployment rate below 4%. That has been achieved since January 2022, with last month's rate remaining at 3.8%. Its goal for inflation remains elusive though. Before the COVID-19 breakout, US prices expanded at less than 2% a year. The pandemic and trillions of dollars of relief spending by the government had, however, triggered runaway inflation since mid-2021.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, October 11 (Sputnik) -

ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

* The Palestinian Foreign Ministry accused the Israeli armed forces of using ammunition with white phosphorus which are prohibited by international conventions.

* Hamas political bureau head Ismail Haniyeh called on the Arab countries on Tuesday to provide funding to support the Gaza Strip.

* Almost all EU foreign ministers support continuing the bloc's cooperation with the Palestinian Authority as well as providing them with financial support, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said.

* Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov discussed the aggravated situation in Israel with Israeli Ambassador Alexander Ben Zvi in Moscow, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

* Four Russians have been killed and six more are missing in Israel after the recent escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Russian Embassy in Israel told Sputnik.

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WESTERN MILITARY SUPPORT TO UKRAINE

* The German Defense Ministry announced on Tuesday the shipment of ten additional Leopard1 A5 tanks to Ukraine in the coming weeks.
* US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan rejected the notion that the United States cannot simultaneously support Ukraine and Israel.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* Ukraine has lost more than 350 soldiers, killed and injured, in the Donetsk and South Donetsk directions over the past 24 hours, the Russian Defense Ministry said.
* A Ukrainian shelling of the Popovka village in Russia's Belgorod Region on Tuesday killed an elderly man and critically injured his wife, Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said.

ARMS CONTROL

* The United States will be responsible for a new arms race if it resumes nuclear tests, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said on Tuesday.
* Russia has no other choice but to revoke the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) to stay in line with the position of the United States, Ryabkov said.
* Russia will not stop transmitting data from monitoring stations on its territory and receive data from the international monitoring system even if it revokes ratification of the CTBT, Ryabkov said.
* Russia maintains close contacts with the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) to ensure that Moscow's position on the CTBT is conveyed, Russian Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov told RIA Novosti.

RUSSIA-IRAQ TALKS

* Trade between Russia and Iraq increased by 43% in 2022, but decreased this year, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Tuesday.
* Putin said that he will participate in the Russian Energy Week forum in Moscow on Wednesday together with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Al Sudani.
* Russia and Iraq are successfully coordinating work within the framework of the OPEC+ alliance to stabilize the situation on global energy markets, Putin said.

ARMENIA-AZERBAIJAN RELATIONS

* Armenia and Azerbaijan have preliminary agreed to hold a meeting in Brussels, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said on Tuesday.
* The conditions are now ripe for the exchange of captives between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.

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PREVIEW - US House Lawmakers Prepare for Speaker Showdown After Ousting McCarthy

WASHINGTON, October 11 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives is preparing to begin the process of electing a new speaker on Wednesday, after the lower chamber of Congress ousted Congressman Kevin McCarthy from the leadership role.

Last week, eight House Republicans joined Democrats to pass a motion to vacate McCarthy as speaker. The motion to vacate was headed by US Congressman Matt Gaetz, who opposed McCarthy's handling of government spending negotiations.

Gaetz opposed a short-term government funding deal backed by McCarthy, instead advocating for the passage of separate appropriations bills. Gaetz also alleged that McCarthy included a secret deal on Ukraine aid as part of negotiations with the White House, although McCarthy denied the allegations.

The House of Representatives is unable to conduct normal legislative business, such as passing government funding bills, until it elects a new speaker.

House Republicans scheduled a forum for speaker candidates on Tuesday evening, where the conference will consider the bids of congressmen Steve Scalise and Jim Jordan. Republicans hold a 221-212 majority in the House of Representatives; lawmakers can elect a speaker with a simple majority.

McCarthy has ruled out a comeback, and has requested that fellow House Republicans not nominate him to serve as speaker, Punchbowl news reported.

McCarthy was the first speaker in history to be removed from the role via motion to vacate. US Congressman Patrick McHenry is serving as speaker pro tempore until House lawmakers elect a new speaker.

Several lawmakers have also pitched the idea of nominating former US President Donald Trump as speaker, given that membership in the US Congress is not required to serve in the role. Trump told US media that he would be willing to temporarily serve as speaker to unify Republicans, but that his focus is on retaking the presidency.

However, Trump has also expressed support for Jordan as a speaker candidate. House Republican conference rules may also disqualify Trump from serving in the leadership role due to pending felony charges against him.

The House of Representatives is expected to begin votes on electing a new speaker on Wednesday. The US Congress has until November 17 to pass government funding measures, lest the federal government again risk a shutdown.

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US Carrier Strike Group Arrives in Eastern Mediterranean Amid Clashes in Israel - CENTCOM

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) - A US carrier strike group arrived in the eastern Mediterranean Sea in an effort to deter the escalation of the conflict between Israel and Hamas, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said on Tuesday.

"The USS Gerald R. Ford carrier strike group arrives in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea in order

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to deter any actor seeking to escalate the situation or widen this war," CENTCOM said in a statement.

In addition to the aircraft carrier, the strike group includes a guided missile cruiser and several guided missile destroyers, the statement said.

The United States continues to bolster its posture through the rapid movement of fighter jets to the area, the statement added.

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Almost 4,000 People in US Sign Petition Urging Biden to Stop Sending Arms to Israel

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) -Almost 4,000 people in the United States have signed the petition, launched by the peace group CODEPINK, calling on the US administration to stop sending arms to Israel.

"To save lives, to end a disgrace of your power you must stop sending weapons, funds and military support and instead support the needed conversation that brings justice and peace to the region," the petition addressed to US President Biden and Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin said. "We, the undersigned, call on you to withdraw all support for Israel and block any additional aid to the apartheid state. We oppose the plan laid out by General Austin to send troops to the Eastern Mediterranean including U.S. Navy aircraft carriers and defense munitions.

As of Tuesday afternoon, 3,794 people have signed the petition, according to the website.

Biden said on Tuesday that The United States is surging additional military systems to Israel, including ammunition and interceptors to replenish its Iron Dome air defense system, and stressed that Washington will ensure that Israel has everything it needs in its response to the attacks by Hamas.

"Your normalization of Israeli oppression is the narrative responsible for the perpetuation of the occupation of Palestine for the last 75 years. Backing the apartheid state of Israel will only lead to more violence and resistance," the petition said. "We call on you to respect and recognize the rights of Palestinians, and immediately withdraw all US support for Israel, and block any additional aid to the occupying forces. You must call for justice for Palestine that will lead to the much-needed peace in the region."

The United States is considering deploying a second aircraft carrier strike group near Israel amid escalating tensions with the Palestinian Hamas movement, a Defense Department spokesperson told Sputnik on Tuesday.

On Saturday, the Palestinian group Hamas launched a surprise large-scale attack on Israel, prompting Israel to declare a state of war the following day. On Monday, Israel put the Gaza Strip under full blockade, with no food, gas or electricity supplies. Both Israel and Palestine have so far reported hundreds of dead and thousands of injured as a result of the escalation.

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

Thunderstorms Could Delay Psyche Asteroid Mission Launch on Thursday - NASA Engineer

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) - A high chance of thunderstorms could force NASA to postpone the launch of its nearly six year, 2.2 billion mile unmanned mission to study the Psyche asteroid out between Mars and Jupiter, NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory Psyche Mission Chief Engineer for Operations David Oh said on Tuesday.

"[Weather conditions] look challenging for Thursday," Oh said. "I think we were showing a maybe 80% chance of rain and thunderstorms."

Oh cautioned that conditions look more hopeful for a launch over the weekend but are still not certain for then.

"Things do look better over the weekend but I think we were still 50-50 according to the weather forecast," he said.

In addition, Oh pointed out that there are a limited number of opportunities to do the launch.

"So, I think we may be pretty aggressive in our attempt to get off the ground here. But the weather will need to cooperate with us to do it," Oh said.

Psyche is scheduled to lift off on a SpaceX Falcon Heavy rocket at 10:34 a.m. EDT on Thursday from Launch Complex 39A at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

NASA has said it is sending the spacecraft to Psyche to learn how Earth and other rocky planets formed. It will be the first mission to an asteroid with substantial amounts of metal, NASA said.

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US Considering Deploying Second Carrier Strike Group Near Israel - Pentagon

(Updates with changes throughout)

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) - The United States is considering deploying a second aircraft carrier strike group near Israel amid escalating tensions with the Palestinian Hamas movement, a Defense Department spokesperson told Sputnik on Tuesday.

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced on Sunday that the United States is deploying the USS Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group to the Eastern Mediterranean to bolster US regional deterrence efforts in response to the Hamas attack on Israel.

"The Dwight D. Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group will depart from Norfolk, VA in the coming week in line with its standard deployment schedule...The Secretary will continue to review both the Eisenhower and Ford's deployment plans as he considers the appropriate balance of maritime capability across theaters in support of national security priorities," the spokesperson said regarding US naval support for Israel.

The USS Dwight D. Eisenhower Carrier Strike group has long been scheduled to conduct exercises in the US European Command area of responsibility in support of "enhanced vigilance activities" with NATO allies and partners, the spokesperson said.

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According to media reports, the Eisenhower aircraft carrier could arrive in the Middle East region in about two weeks.

The USS Gerald R. Ford carrier and its accompanying ships, some of which have nuclear capability, are expected to arrive to the Middle East region today.

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UN Chief Alarmed Over Reports of Civilian Deaths in Myanmar's Kachin State - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, October 10 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is alarmed about the reports of dozens of civilians killed as a result of bombings in Myanmar's Kachin State, United Nations spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Tuesday.

"The Secretary-General is alarmed by reports of the killing of dozens of civilians – including internally displaced persons, many of them women and children - in a bombing in Myanmar's Kachin state on October 9. Those responsible must be held to account," Dujarric said in a statement.

Guterres also urges the states neighboring Myanmar to exercise leverage in peace making, the statement added.

Earlier on Tuesday, China urged avoiding an escalation and called for settling differences through negotiations and consultations after an attack took place on a camp for displaced people near the Myanmar-China border.

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White House Says Believes Israel Will Not Pursue Total Siege of Gaza

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) - The United States believes that Israel will not pursue the total siege of Gaza and will distinguish between terrorists and Innocent civilians, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Tuesday.

"I've seen those reports. But my understanding is that it is not. The concept of siege is not something that in fact is going to be pursued by the Israeli government. But we are consulting with the Israeli government about their actions in this regard. And like I said before, to a previous question, President Biden and Prime Minister Netanyahu had the opportunity to talk through the difference between going full bore against Hamas terrorists, and how we distinguish between terrorists and innocent civilians," Sullivan told a press briefing, when asked about the US position on a potential total Israeli siege of Gaza.

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US Doesn't Know Number of Americans Held Hostage By Hamas, Their Conditions - White House

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) - The United States does not know the number of Americans being held hostage by Hamas or their physical conditions, White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Tuesday.

"We do not know about their condition and we cannot confirm a precise number of American citizens [held hostage]," Sullivan said during a press briefing.

The United States believes that there are 20 or more Americans who at this point are missing after the Hamas attacks on Israel, but that does not mean necessarily that they are hostages, Sullivan added.

Earlier in the day, President Joe Biden said the death toll of Americans killed in the Hamas attacks is 14 to date.

On Saturday, the Palestinian group Hamas launched a surprise large-scale attack on Israel, prompting Israel to declare a state of war the following day. On Monday, Israel put the Gaza Strip under full blockade, with no food, gas or electricity supplies. Both Israel and Palestine have so far reported hundreds of dead and thousands of injured as a result of the escalation.

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Israel Has Right to Respond to Hamas Attack – State Dept..

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) – Israel has the right to defend itself and respond to the Hamas attack, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Tuesday, when asked to comment on Israel's decision to cut off water, food and other supplies to the Gaza Strip.

"Israel has the right to defend itself, it has the right to take the action against the terrorists who launched this brutal attack and kill Israeli civilians, killed American civilians, killed mothers, and children, and babies, and kidnapped children," Miller told reporters.

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White House Defends Commitment to Simultaneously Support Ukraine, Israel

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) - National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Tuesday rejected the notion that the United States cannot simultaneously support both Ukraine and Israel.

"And we firmly reject the notion that the United States of America cannot at once support the freedom ... and people of Ukraine and support the State of Israel," Sullivan said during press

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briefing.

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US in Contact With Carriers to Urge Them to Weigh Resuming Travel to Israel - State Dept

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) - The United States has been in contact with numerous air carriers to encourage them to consider resuming travel to Israel amid the escalating war between the country and Hamas, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said on Tuesday.

"We have also been in conversation with various carriers to encourage them to consider resuming travel in and out of Israel and we'll continue to do that," Miller said during a press briefing.

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Blinken to Leave for Israel Tomorrow Amid Escalation With Hamas - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will leave for Israel on October 11 for talks with the country's leadership amid the ongoing escalation with Hamas, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said.

"Our expectation is that he will leave tomorrow and arrive in Israel on Thursday," Miller told reporters.

Blinken will engage with Israeli partners about the situation on the ground and how the US can support them, he added.

"Secretary looks forward to seeing with senior leaders in the Israeli government," Miller said.

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McCarthy Asks US House Republicans Not to Nominate Him as Speaker - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) - US Congressman Kevin McCarthy requested that fellow House Republicans not nominate him to serve as speaker, after he was ousted from the position last week, Punchbowl News reported on Tuesday.

McCarthy told House Republicans not to put his name forward as a candidate for speaker during a party meeting on Wednesday, the report said.

Some moderate Republican lawmakers intended to nominate McCarthy as speaker, despite the House of Representatives having vacated him from the leadership role last week in a historic

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first.
House lawmakers are unable to conduct normal legislative business, such as passing government funding bills, until they elect a new speaker.
House Republicans are holding a candidate forum later on Tuesday, during which the party will consider the bids of congressmen Steve Scalise and Jim Jordan.

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Sullivan Says US Moved Carrier to Deter Other State Actors That Want to 'Widen This War'

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) - The US moved the carrier to send a clear message of deterrence to other state actors that might seek to widen this war, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Tuesday.
"Let me be clear, we did not move the carrier for Hamas. We moved the carrier to send a clear message of deterrence to other states and non-state actors that might seek to widen this war," Sullivan said during a press briefing.

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US Didn't See Anything in Advance That Would Suggest Hamas Attack on Israel - Sullivan

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) - The United States did not see anything in advance suggesting Hamas was about to carry out attacks on Israel over the weekend, White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Tuesday.
"We did not see anything that suggested an attack of this type was going to unfold any more than the Israelis did," Sullivan said during a press briefing.

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Biden Orders Deployment of Experts to Advise Israel on Hamas Hostage Recovery Efforts

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) - "President Joe Biden said on Tuesday that the United States will deploy additional experts to help Israel secure the release of hostages held by Hamas, among whom are US citizens.
We now know that American citizens are among those being held by Hamas, I'm directing my team to share intelligence and deploy additional experts from across the United States government to consult with and advise Israeli counterparts on hostage recovery efforts," Biden

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said during a press briefing.

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Canada to Continue Assisting Palestine, Prevent Hamas from Diverting Aid – Reports

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) – Canada will continue its provision of humanitarian and development assistance to Palestine but will work on preventing it from landing in the hands of Hamas, CBC News reported on Tuesday.

Humanitarian support for Palestinian civilians will not cease, but Canada will make sure that the sent assistance does not end up in the hands of Hamas, the report said citing the Office of the Minister of International Development Ahmed Hussen.

The Director of Communications of Hussen's Office, Alex Tetreault said that Ottawa has no policy of contact with Hamas, further noting that Canadian assistance does not directly go to the Palestinian Authority, the report added.

Tetreault said that the C$55 million ($40.5 million) allocated by the Canadian government to Palestine's West Bank is instead given to "experienced and trusted" international aid organizations such as the World Food Programme, the Red Cross and Red Crescent, the report continued.

The Communications Director condemned Hamas' attack on Israel and expressed concern over the quickly deteriorating humanitarian situation, the report said, nonetheless stressing Canada's position on Tel-Aviv's right to self defence in line with so-called international law.

On Saturday, the Palestinian group Hamas launched a surprise large-scale attack on Israel, prompting Israel to declare a state of war the following day. On Monday, Israel put the Gaza Strip under full blockade, with no food, water, gas or electricity supplies. Both Israel and Palestine have so far reported hundreds of dead and thousands of injured as a result of the escalation.

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US Stands Ready to Move Additional Assets to Region Amid Israel-Hamas War - Biden

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) - The United States stands ready to deploy more assets to the Middle East amid the Israeli-Hamas conflict, President Joe Biden said on Tuesday.

"The United States has also enhanced our military force posture in the region to strengthen our deterrence and the Department of Defense has moved USS Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group to the the eastern Mediterranean and bolstered our fighter aircraft presence, and we stand ready to move in additional assets as needed," Biden said.

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Russian Envoy to UN Says 'Precise Dialogue' Will Ensure Smooth Elections in Iraq

UNITED NATIONS, October 10 (Sputnik) - Precise dialogue between the Iraqi federal government and the regional authorities will ensure the elections in the country run smoothly, Russian Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy said on Tuesday.

"We are convinced that precise dialogue will ensure the smooth running of the elections that will be held in the Iraqi provinces and also the parliamentary elections in the Kurdish autonomous region," Polyanskiy said during a meeting of the UN Security Council.

Russia highly commends the ongoing substantive dialogue between Baghdad and Erbil to address existing disagreements between the two sides, Polyanskiy said.

In August, Iraqi Kurdistan Region's leader Nechirvan Barzani issued a decree ordering the sixth parliamentary elections in the region would be held on February 25, 2024.

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Biden Says US Surging Munitions to Israel, Interceptors to Replenish Iron Dome

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) - The United States is surging additional military systems to Israel, including ammunition and interceptors to replenish its Iron Dome air defense system, US President Joe Biden said on Tuesday.

"We're surging additional military systems including ammunition and interceptors to replenish Iron Dome...We're gonna make sure that Israel does not run out of these critical assets," Biden said during a press conference.

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Biden Says US 'Will Make Sure' Israel Has Everything it Needs to Respond to Hamas Attacks

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) - The United States will ensure that Israel has everything it needs in its response to the attacks by Hamas, US President Joe Biden said on Tuesday.

"We stand with Israel. We will make sure it has everything it needs to respond to this attack," Biden said at the White House.

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Biden Says at Least 14 US Citizens Killed in Hamas Attacks in Israel

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden said on Tuesday that at least 14 Americans have been killed in the Hamas attacks in Israel over the weekend.
"Among them [the victims], at least 14 American citizens killed," Biden said during a press conference.

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US Put Unprecedented Pressure Against Russia in UN Human Rights Council Election - Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, October 10 (Sputnik) - The United States acted in an unprecedented manner by exerting tremendous pressure on nations to favor Albania over Russia during the recent elections for the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), Russian Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations Maria Zabolotskaya said on Tuesday.
"The United States campaigned for Albania. Such a campaign was directly against [Russia] and is an unprecedented story. Never before has anyone campaigned in the Security Council," Zabolotskaya said.
Zabolotskaya made the comment after 15 members states were elected to the UN Human Rights Council for the 2024-2026 term earlier in the day. Russia was not elected.
Within the group of Eastern European states, Albania and Bulgaria were elected with 123 and 160 votes, respectively, overshadowing Russia's 83 votes.
Zabolotskaya highlighted the anomalous - and hostile - nature of this direct interference by campaigning against Russia and categorized the US actions as unprecedented.

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Biden, Harris Hold Call With Netanyahu to Discuss US Support for Israel - White House

(Updates with more details in paras 3-5)
WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris spoke over the telephone with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and discussed US support for Israel amid the escalation of fighting with the Hamas movement, the White House said on Tuesday.
"President Biden and Vice President Harris just concluded a call with Prime Minister Netanyahu to discuss our support for Israel," the White House said in a statement.
On Monday, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said the United States will announce additional assistance for Israel in the coming days.

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Biden said that he discussed with Netanyahu coordination of US support to Israel, deterring hostile actors in the region and protecting innocent people.

The White House said in another statement that Biden and Harris have received updates from his the national security teams about the situation on the ground in Israel and will direct the next steps of the US response.

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US Lawmakers Introduce Bill to Provide $2Bln for Israel's Air Defense - Congresswoman

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) - A group of US lawmakers introduced a bipartisan bill to provide $2 billion in security aid for Israel to help the country replenish its Iron Dome air defense system amid the escalation in fighting with the Hamas movement, Congresswoman Claudia Tenney's office said in a release on Tuesday.

"Congresswoman Claudia Tenney today introduced the 'Operation Swords of Iron' Iron Dome Supplemental Appropriations Act alongside Representatives Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ), Max Miller (R-OH), and Brad Schneider (D-IL) to appropriate $2 billion for Israel's Iron Dome defense system," the release said.

Additional 15 members of Congress from both major political parties have become the co-sponsors of the bill, the release added.

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Two UNRWA Staff Members, 5 Students Killed in Gaza Since October 7 - UN Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, October 10 (Sputnik) - Two persons who worked for the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and five UNRWA students have been killed in the Gaza Strip since the new escalation of fighting in the region that began on October 7, United Nations spokesperson Farhan Haq said on Tuesday.

"Two of our staff members and five UNWRA students have been killed since October 7," Haq told reporters.

The spokesperson pointed out that a building housing the UNRWA headquarters in Gaza City sustained significant damage last night as a result of Israeli airstrikes nearby.

"UNWRA did not report any casualties among its staff during this incident," Haq said.

The UNWRA staff is currently sheltering in the neighboring building at the same compound, Haq added.

On Saturday, the Palestinian group Hamas launched a surprise large-scale attack on Israel, prompting Israel to declare a state of war the following day. On Monday, Israel put the Gaza Strip under full blockade, cutting off food, gas and electricity supplies. Israeli and Palestinian

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officials have reported that hundreds of people have been killed and thousands injured as a result of the escalation in fighting.

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US May Deploy 2nd Aircraft Carrier Near Israel - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) - The United States may deploy a second aircraft carrier near Israel, the Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday, citing US Defense Department officials.

According to the report, the United States is weighing whether to deploy the aircraft carrier Dwight D. Eisenhower in the region.

If deployed, the Eisenhower is expected to arrive in the Middle East in two weeks to join the Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier strike group, which is expected to arrive in the region on Thursday, the report said.

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Biden, Harris Hold Call With Netanyahu to Discuss Support for Israel - White House

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris in a telephone call with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu discussed US support for Israel amid the escalation with the Palestinian Hamas movement, the White House said on Tuesday.

"President Biden and Vice President Harris just concluded a call with Prime Minister Netanyahu to discuss our support for Israel," the White House said in a statement.

On Monday, White House National Security Council spokesperson said the United States will announce further assistance for Israel in the coming days.

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Nearly 400 US House Lawmakers Introduce Bill in Support of Israel Amid Hamas Attacks

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) - A group of 390 US House lawmakers introduced a resolution expressing support for Israel amid attacks launched by the Palestinian Hamas organization over the weekend, House Foreign Affairs Committee leadership said on Tuesday.

Chairman Michael McCaul and Ranking Member Gregory Meeks led 390 members of Congress in introducing the resolution, the committee said in a statement.

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"Now is the time to show the world the United States firmly stands with our friend and ally Israel in our condemnation of this heinous attack by Iran-backed terrorists," McCaul said in the statement.

The resolution is expected to be one of the first pieces of legislation considered by the House of Representatives once it elects a new speaker, McCaul added.

The bipartisan resolution demonstrates that House lawmakers are united in their support for Israel, Meeks said.

Hamas launched a surprise attack on Israel over the weekend, prompting the country to declare a state of war, which has left hundreds dead and thousands wounded.

The resolution expresses that the House of Representatives stands with Israel, reaffirms Israel's right to self-defense, condemns Hamas' attack and calls on other countries to condemn it as well, according to the bill text.

The resolution also reaffirms the US's commitment to Israel's security through security assistance and condemns Iran's support for Hamas and other "terrorist groups" and proxies.

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Number of Displaced People in Gaza Increases to 200,000 in Past 24 Hours- UN Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, October 10 (Sputnik) - Mass displacement of people as a result of the conflict in Gaza has been increasing, rising to at least 200,000, the UN Spokesperson Farhan Haq said on Tuesday.

"The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees reports that mass displacement rapidly increased in the past 24 hours across the Gaza Strip," Haq told a briefing. "OCHA has reported that in Gaza at least 200,000 of the 2.2 million residents have been displaced after fleeing for fear of their lives or their houses were destroyed by airstrikes."

In addition, about 137,500 internally displaced people are sheltering in 83 UNRWA schools in all areas of the Gaza Strip, he added.

On Saturday, the Palestinian group Hamas launched a surprise large-scale attack on Israel, prompting Israel to declare a state of war the following day. On Monday, Israel put the Gaza Strip under full blockade, with no food, water, gas or electricity supplies. Both Israel and Palestine have so far reported hundreds of dead and thousands of injured as a result of the escalation.

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Middle East Conflict Can Only Be Solved if Palestinian Interests Addressed - Polyanskiy

UNITED NATIONS, October 10 (Sputnik) - The Middle East conflict can be solved only in compliance with UN Security Council resolutions and by addressing the interests of the

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Palestinian people, Russian Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy said on Tuesday.

"This can be overcome solely through addressing the deep-rooted interests of the Palestinian people and in compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions," Polyanskiy said during a meeting of the UN Security Council.

The diplomat pointed out that Russian President Vladimir Putin and Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Al Sudani discussed this matter, along with other pressing regional issues, during their meeting in Moscow earlier on Tuesday.

On Saturday, the Palestinian group Hamas launched a surprise large-scale attack on Israel, prompting Israel to declare a state of war the following day. On Monday, Israel put the Gaza Strip under full blockade, cutting off food, gas and electricity supplies. Israeli and Palestinian officials have reported that hundreds of people have been killed and thousands injured as a result of the escalation in fighting.

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Lawmaker Confirms Canadian National Killed by Hamas at Southern Israel Music Festival

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) – Canadian Lawmaker for British Columbia's Vancouver Taleeb Noormohamed confirmed on Tuesday that a student from his riding was among the victims of Hamas attack on an electronic music festival in Southern Israel.

Following Saturday's attack by Hamas on the open-air Tribe of Nova music festival attended by nearly 3500 partygoers, media reported that the bodies of 260 victims were discovered, while the number of abducted was still to be determined.

"Heartbreaking news: A wonderful young man from my riding of #VanGran - Ben Mizrachi - was found amongst those murdered by Hamas terrorists. My heartfelt condolences and prayers are with his family, his friends, loved ones & the community. May his memory be a blessing," Noormohamed said via the X social media platform.

The King David High School which the student attended also confirmed the passing of 24-years old Mizrachi during Saturday's raid by Hamas at the festival.

This is the second confirmed death of a Canadian national since Hamas launched its surprise attack on Israel, the first being Montrealer Alexander Look, 33, whose death also happened at the music festival.

On Saturday, the Palestinian group Hamas launched a surprise large-scale attack on Israel, prompting Israel to declare a state of war the following day. On Monday, Israel put the Gaza Strip under full blockade, with no food, water, gas or electricity supplies. Both Israel and Palestine have so far reported hundreds of dead and thousands of injured as a result of the escalation.

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

UN Says to Continue Seeking Unimpeded Food Exports From Ukraine, Russia

UNITED NATIONS, October 10 (Sputnik) - The United Nations will continue working to ensure Ukrainian and Russian food products and fertilizers have unimpeded access to the world's markets, UN spokesperson Farhan Haq said on Tuesday.

"The UN reiterated its determination to continue its efforts to facilitate unimpeded exports of food and fertilizer from Ukraine and the Russian Federation to global markets," Haq told a briefing.

On Monday, Secretary General of the UN Conference on Trade and Development Rebeca Grynspan and Undersecretary General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths held consultations via a video link with a Russian delegation led by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Vershinin.

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State Dept. Determines Niger Military Takeover Was Coup, Suspends Aid to Government

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) – The US State Department has determined that a military takeover in Niger in July was a coup and suspended most foreign assistance programs to the Nigerien government, spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a statement on Tuesday.

"The United States has concluded that a military coup d'etat has taken place in Niger. Pursuant to section 7008 of the Department of State's annual appropriations act, the United States is suspending most U.S. assistance to the government of Niger," the statement said.

It took the State Department more than two and a half months to issue a formal determination regarding the events in Niger.

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Russia Fails in Bid to Get Elected to UN Human Rights Council for 2024-2026

UNITED NATIONS, October 10 (Sputnik) - Russia has failed in its bid to get elected to the UN Human Rights Council for 2024-2026, a Sputnik correspondent reported on Tuesday.

Albania and Bulgaria won the two seats intended for Eastern Europeans countries, having gained 123 and 160 votes, respectively. Russia secured 83 votes.

In April 2022, Russia was suspended from the council in a US-led campaign in connection with the Ukraine conflict. The country was ousted in a 93-24 vote, with 58 countries abstaining.

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Canada, Netherlands Request ICC to Oblige Syria to Halt 'Systematic Torture' - Statement

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) - Canada and the Netherlands have requested that the International Criminal Court (ICC) oblige Syria to halt its alleged practice of "systematic torture" and other forms of mistreatment, according to a joint statement by the two countries on Tuesday.

"Today, Canada and the Netherlands asked the International Court of Justice to order Syria to immediately cease its systematic practice of torture and other forms of ill-treatment," the joint statement said.

The two countries expressed disappointment with Syria's decision not to appear at the proceedings after a three-month postponement was given to facilitate Syria's participation, the statement said.

Canada and the Netherlands are hopeful that the ICC would grant the requested measures, the statement added.

In early June, Canada and the Netherlands began legal proceedings at the ICC to hold the Syrian authorities accountable for their alleged use of torture, as well as several other "inhuman and degrading" treatments, to punish Syrians.

The decision to take Syria to the ICC was made after two attempts made in 2020 and 2021, when Canada and the Netherlands called on the Syrian government to act responsibly under international law and the UN Convention Against Torture and the attempts to reach a negotiated or arbitrated solution failed.

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US to Quadruple Number of Spy Satellites Over Next Decade – NRO Deputy Director

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) – The US National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) is planning to quadruple the number of intelligence satellites operating in orbit and as a result increase the number of images by more than ten times, deputy director Maj. Gen. Christopher Povak said on Tuesday.

"Within the next decade NRO expects to quadruple the number of satellites we currently have on orbit, different sizes, different orbits, or commercial and national these satellites will deliver over 10 times as many signals and images that were collected today," Povak said during a discussion hosted by the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies.

As part of US attempts to protect its vital systems in space, in September NRO launched the Silent Barker system that will provide warnings and enable to figure out the intents of competitors, mainly Russia and China, as well as to defend NRO assets in space and deter possible aggressions, Povak added.

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According to reports by US defense and space media, the Silent Barker mission, also known as NROL-107, cost the nation about $115.6 million and will become operational by 2026.

Silent Barker was designed as a replacement for the older Space-Based Space Surveillance System satellites. The space force is mostly equipped with ground-based observation sensors, which only allow the operators to follow basketball-sized or larger objects' movements, Defense News reported. Orbit-based sensors are expected to provide better visibility.

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Trump Leads Biden in 2024 US Presidential Race With Backing of Independents - Poll

WASHINGTON, October 10 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump leads current President Joe Biden in a 2024 rematch with more support from independent voters, a new poll by The Messenger revealed on Tuesday.

Trump leads Biden 45% to 41%, while 14% of voters are unsure, the poll said.

Forty-two percent of independent voters back Trump and 36% back Biden, the poll said.

Both Trump and Biden maintain the support of the majority of their parties' voters, receiving 86% and 81% support, respectively, the poll said.

However, a majority of voters believe that neither man should run for president, the poll said. More than two-thirds of voters, 69%, think that Biden should not run for reelection, and 59% feel the same way about Trump.

Trump also leads the pack of Republican presidential hopefuls, garnering 58% support, the poll added.

Trump is followed by Florida Governor Ron DeSantis at 14% and businessman Vivek Ramaswamy at 7%, according to the poll.

The poll surveyed 2,982 voters between October 4-7 and has a margin of error of plus-or-minus 1.8 percentage points.

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