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10/23/23 Monday

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'No Chance' Emergent Multipolar World Will Accept New US-Led World Order

The US lacks the geopolitical gravitas to bring a self-centered “new world order” into being, and perhaps even the military power to force the globe into accepting such a system, an expert told Sputnik, as the world has grown tired of such an order over the past 30 years.

At a recent event for his 2024 US presidential election campaign, US President Joe Biden invoked the language of a “new world order,” saying Washington has the ability in the next few years to ensure that it will remain the dominant global power for the next several decades.

“We’re at an inflection point in history, and that is that decisions we make in the next four or five years are going to determine what the next four or five decades look like,” Biden said. “If we do what I know we can do, we can change history.”

“I think we have an opportunity to do things, if we’re bold enough and have enough confidence in ourselves, to unite the world in ways that it never has been,” he continued. “We were in a post-war period for 50 years where it worked pretty damn well, but that’s sort of run out of steam. It needs a new world order in a sense, like that was a world order.”

It’s not the first time Biden has used the phrase in recent years. After the US attempted to turn Russia into a pariah state with punishing sanctions and other pressures in early 2022, Biden gloated about a “ liberal world order” in the world, saying, “There’s going to be a new world order out there, and we’ve got to lead it.”

Biden’s rhetoric follows a move by his predecessor, Donald Trump, to reorient US foreign policy toward “great power competition” with Russia and China, which Trump and Biden have accused of seeking to upend a so-called “rules-based international order.”

In response to Biden’s remarks, on Monday, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said the Russian government “agrees with Biden,” that “the world needs a new world order, based on completely different principles, free from attempts to concentrate all mechanisms of global governance in the hands of one state.” However, he added that Moscow “disagrees” with how Biden intends for such a world order to be shaped, because “no matter what world order they talk about, they mean an American-centric world order, that is, a world that revolves around the United States. It won't be that way any more."

Dan Kovalik, former adjunct professor of law at the University of Pittsburgh and the author of "No More War: How the West Violates International Law by Using 'Humanitarian' Intervention to Advance Economic and Strategic Interests," told Sputnik on Monday that much of US foreign policy since the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s has been directed at demonstrating its contempt for institutions of international law and cooperation, most especially the United Nations, since the Soviet Union no longer existed as a superpower counterweight to American ambitions.

“The old world order - meaning what [then-US President] George Bush announced as the New World Order, I think in 1989 - what went wrong was that, once the Soviet Union collapsed and

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there was no check on US power," he explained. "The US was the only power in the world and it misused it to go to war numerous times without [UN] Security Council authorization in places like the former Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya. And essentially, through that process, international law was totally undermined. In fact, on purpose, Bill Clinton was very clear that he wanted to go to war in Yugoslavia, in part to make a point that he could go to war without Security Council authorization."

"Essentially, international law and the international law system has been systematically dismantled since the so-called 'New World Order' - which is now the 'old world order', if that makes sense. And so now I think the world wants to try to put things back in place," Kovalik said.

"For Biden, the new rules order that he's contemplating is basically, the US will make up the rules as it goes along, everyone else will have to go along. So that's not really a rule of law, that's more the rule of the mighty. The rest of the world, I think, or most of the rest of the world wants to go back to the UN charter and have a real law-based system instead of a 'US rules based system', which is what Biden is really talking about."

"There's no chance" such a framework would genuinely prioritize another nation's interest over those of the United States, he said. "That's not the goal. The goal is to prioritize the US' interest over everyone else's, and that's why the rest of the world is balking at it. Well, we see that right now with the Israeli-Palestine conflict, that the US is now the only country to veto at least three resolutions attempting to end the war there, to protect civilians. And so the US wants to be able to basically go its own way in the world without any brakes on it. I think the whole goal is for the US to prioritize itself over everyone else."

"I think the rest of the world won't sign up for that. I think the rest of the world wants to go back to a real law based order in the UN Charter. Several years ago, there was a group founded called the Group of Friends of the UN Charter. China was part of that, Russia, Iran, several other countries essentially wanting to reassert the UN charter as the law that everyone follows, and that was the whole idea. So I think most of the countries in the world want that."

Kovalik said the US doesn't have the political or diplomatic influence to be able to actually bring such an order into existence any longer, especially considering its involvement in both the conflict in Ukraine and the one in the Middle East, where Israel and Hamas are locked in a war that threatens to draw in nearby powers.

"It certainly has military might - and that's pretty much all it has. But I don't think that's enough to be able to get countries to go along with this New World Order, so-called. And I think even countries in Europe won't go along with it because they now feel that they were tricked into supporting the Ukraine conflict to their own detriment. I don't think they're going to get many takers here."

"Given the emergence of the multipolar world, I think, the US ultimately is going to have to find a way to comply more with the wishes of other countries. It's not going to have the same ability to dictate to the world. I think those days are over."

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New Study Finds Moon 40 Million Years Older Than Previously Thought

While it was initially assumed that the protoplanet Theia had struck the proto-Earth with a glancing blow in the event that formed the moon, recent studies have found that a direct impact would not have necessarily destroyed both planets.

She doesn't look a day over 4.51 billion years old!

A new study of how Earth's moon formed has found that the natural satellite is actually 40 million years older than previously believed, putting its formation at 4.52 billion years ago.

The new age was determined by studying ancient crystals found in the rocks retrieved from the lunar surface by the Apollo 17 mission, the last time humans walked on the moon, in 1973.

Called zircon, the gemstone is formed when the elements zirconium, silicon, and oxygen crystallize in magma, or liquefied rock.

Zircon is a useful crystal for dating rock samples because it contains a certain amount of the radioactive elements uranium and thorium, which can be used to tell when the crystal first formed based on how much of them has undergone radioactive decay into smaller elements.

The scientists used this method to find out when the zircon crystals formed and got a shocking number: 4.52 billion years ago, about 40 million years earlier than the previous estimated age of 4.46 billion years old.

"It's amazing being able to have proof that the rock you're holding is the oldest bit of the moon we've found so far," study lead author Jennika Greer, a research associate at the University of Glasgow, told US media. "It's an anchor point for so many questions about the Earth. When you know how old something is, you can better understand what has happened to it in its history."

According to the prevailing theory about the moon's formation, early in the solar system's formation, Earth was struck by a smaller planet about the size of Mars, which turned both planets molten and blew out a huge amount of rock, some of which fell back on Earth but some of which remained in orbit around the Earth, coalescing into the moon. This explains why unlike almost any other moon in the solar system, ours looks like a planet on the inside, bearing almost the same composition and structure as the Earth.

"It moves the goal post. It pushes back the minimum age of the moon formation," Greer added. "It's important to point out, this is the oldest age to date. It doesn't mean we now know the age of the moon and we should stop looking."

Their study was published on Monday in Geochemical Perspectives Letters.

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UAW Strike Expands to 40,000 as 6,800 Workers at Ford Truck Factory Walk Out

The historic strike by American automobile workers has continued to expand its ranks after more than a month on the picket line, with 6,800 Stellantis employees at a pickup truck factory halting operations on Monday.

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The latest factory to join the strike was Stellantis' Sterling Heights Assembly Plant in Detroit, Michigan, which makes Dodge Ram 1500 pickup trucks, one of the company's most profitable and high-profile vehicles.

The new walkout comes after UAW President Shawn Fain accused Stellantis of continuing to offer insulting terms during contract negotiations. Fain said in a Friday statement that the auto giant "is trying to lowball and undercut us," proposing cuts to workers' medical coverage and 401(k) contributions, and the right to make new demands before the contract expires.

In response, Stellantis issued a statement saying it was "outraged" at the Sterling Heights walkout, as it believed contract talks had been progressing.

"Last Thursday morning, Stellantis presented a new, improved offer to the UAW, including 23% wage increases over the life of the contract, nearly a 50% increase in our contributions to the retirement savings plan, and additional job security protections for our employees," Stellantis said in the statement, adding that the UAW had not made a counter-offer since then.

In his Friday comments, Fain said there was "more to be won" than the 23% wage increase, but also signaled he thought a deal might be close. The union opened bargaining with a 40% wage hike demand, as well as restoration of a slew of other benefits the union had agreed to allow to be cut when two of the "Big Three" automakers - General Motors and Chrysler, the latter of which is now part of Stellantis - required federal government bailouts in 2009.

In all, some 40,000 UAW workers are on strike from Stellantis, Ford, and General Motors - just a fraction of the 143,000 UAW members whose contracts are at stake. When the workers first walked out in protest in mid-September, their ranks were just 18,000 strong.

The Sterling Heights strike comes less than two weeks after another walkout by 8,700 workers at Ford's Kentucky Truck Plant, which makes F-series trucks, the best-selling pickups in the United States. The workers at both plants have implemented a new tactic for the union dubbed a "stand-up strike," in which the union gives the workers as little as two hours' notice before sending them on strike, which amplifies the damaging effects on the targeted company by denying them time to prepare for the interruption.

Stocks in GM and Ford slid on Monday, having fallen about 23% (Ford) and 27% (GM) since the strike began. Stellantis' stocks have increased slightly since the strike began.

In addition, the "Big Three" have together laid off about 5,000 workers, saying the strikes had made the firings necessary because the workers have no work to do. However, the UAW has characterized it as a pressure tactic against the workers.

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Senate Republicans Urge House GOP to End Party's 'Embarrassment', Elect New Speaker

The clock is ticking on the continuing resolution Congress passed on September 30, giving them another 45 days to finish the urgent business of passing a 2024 budget. However, the House cannot move forward without first selecting a new speaker - a task that has so far eluded the factionally-divided GOP majority.

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Senate Republicans are becoming increasingly fed up with their colleagues in Congress' lower chamber, urging them to move quickly to elect a new House speaker and end the "embarrassment" created by the party's infighting.

"My message to fellow Republicans is: people elect us to lead, and they're not leading right now," US Sen. Thom Tillis (R-NC) told US media on Monday, adding that the House's failure to elect a successor to now-deposed House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) has been an "embarrassment."

US Sen. Mitt Romney (R-UT) also said: "It's going to be hard for us to govern if we can't come together [in support of] people who represent the majority of the members of the House. I presume the Democrats are going to say, 'Do you really want to have Republicans run your government if they can't run themselves?'"

Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) noted the infighting "doesn't help the Republican brand," saying that when Republicans won a new majority in the November 2022 elections, it gave them "a great opportunity to demonstrate leadership" that had since been squandered.

After McCarthy signed a last-minute agreement with Democrats on September 30 to avoid a federal government shutdown, some Republicans who felt that a shutdown was preferable to sacrificing their demands for spending cuts moved to force McCarthy's ouster. In a historic vote on October 3, McCarthy became the first person to be voted out of the speaker's chair, when that small faction of Republicans joined with the large minority of Democrats.

In the three weeks since, several potential candidates to replace McCarthy have emerged, such as Reps. Steve Scalise (R-LA) and Jim Jordan (R-OH), but none have been able to pull together enough Republicans. The GOP commands a tiny four-seat majority in the House, giving even a few dissidents the power to upend the party's plans.

A novel idea was floated last week to create a temporary "caretaker speaker" with the authority to bring new business to the House floor, but it was eventually shot down over fears that doing so would be unconstitutional.

If the House cannot select a new speaker and pass the set of essential budget bills by November 17, it will trigger a shutdown of the federal government, shuttering most non-essential functions. Such a development would have an economic impact and likely add to the growing perception that Washington is unable to responsibly manage its financial affairs, which helped motivate international ratings agency Moody's to downgrade the US' credit rating in August.

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US Made 'Serious Proposal' to Russia to Release Paul Whelan - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) – The Biden administration has made a "serious proposal" to Russia to release ex-Marine Paul Whelan, who is serving a 16-year prison sentence in Russia for espionage, the State Department said.

"We offered Russia a serious proposal for Paul's release and will not stop working on his case until he is reunited with his family," a State Department spokesperson told CNN.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken remains committed to returning Whelan back to the

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United States, the spokesperson reiterated. They also called on Russia to immediately release the US national.

Separately, Whelan told CNN that during an August call with Blinken he had urged the secretary to make everything possible for his release.

"I told him point blank that leaving me here the first time painted a target on my back and leaving me here the second time basically signed a death warrant," Whelan said in a call to CNN last week from his remote prison camp in Mordovia.

He said he told Blinken that "unless they got me back, it could be quite challenging in the future, especially with my age and the sort of work we have to do from a health and safety point of view."

At the same time, Whelan expressed confidence that the US administration is working on his release. However, he was frustrated because of the slow pace of the process and wanted to know that he was not forgotten amid major geopolitical problems, the report said.

"I think everyone's trying to do the right thing, and I know that this will come to an end at some point. How long it will take I don't know. But I'm being promised that I won't be left behind here," Whelan told CNN in an interview from the prison.

Whelan also noted that he would like to speak with US President Joe Biden to understand if he is going to fulfill his promises.

Paul Whelan, a former US Marine, was arrested in Moscow in December 2018 and subsequently sentenced to 16 years in prison on charges of espionage. Whelan, who is also a citizen of Canada, Ireland, and the United Kingdom, has maintained his innocence, insisting that he came to Russia to attend a friend's wedding.

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Canada, Taiwan Complete Talks on Foreign Investment Promotion Deal – Global Affairs

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) – Canada and Taiwan have completed their negotiations on a foreign investment promotion and protection arrangement and intend to sign the deal soon, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) said on Tuesday.

Ottawa and Taipei had launched the negotiations in February.

"Canada recognizes the value in creating greater access to investment potential for businesses of all sizes and sectors in Canada and Taiwan. That is why Canada is pleased to announce that negotiations on a foreign investment promotion and protection arrangement have finished and Canada is working with Taiwan to ensure that the arrangement will be signed and come into effect promptly," GAC said in a statement.

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PREVIEW - US House Set to Hold 4th Vote to Elect Speaker

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives is set to hold a fourth floor vote to elect a speaker on Tuesday.

On October 3, House lawmakers ousted Congressman Kevin McCarthy as speaker in a historic first, leaving the lower chamber leaderless ahead of a government funding deadline and calls for new foreign aid packages.

The House of Representatives is limited in its ability to pass bills or conduct other normal legislative business until they elect a new speaker. Some lawmakers have also proposed empowering temporary speaker pro tempore Patrick McHenry, although other members of Congress have questioned the constitutionality of such a move.

House Republicans initially nominated Majority Leader Steve Scalise as their speaker-designate, but the congressman dropped out of the race after failing to secure enough support behind the scenes to pass a floor vote. House Republicans then nominated Congressman Jim Jordan, who failed to win the speakership after three floor votes last week.

House Republicans began a forum for new speaker nominees Monday evening. The House Republican conference was hearing from eight candidates during the forum, before holding a vote to select a nominee on Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. ET.

House Republicans intend to hold a floor vote to elect a speaker on Tuesday after the conference selects its nominee, although the timeline largely depends on the outcome of the candidate forum Monday evening, a congressional source told Sputnik.

Candidates include congressmen Jack Bergman, Byron Donalds, Tom Emmer, Kevin Hern, Mike Johnson, Gary Palmer, Austin Scott and Pete Sessions. Whomever House Republicans nominate as speaker must then secure a majority of votes on the House floor.

As of around 9:00 p.m. ET on Monday, Emmer and Donalds had early leads, according to data released by CNN reporter Haley Talbot, although it appeared like there was a long way to go. Donalds had won the backing of eight Republicans while Emmer had seven.

Republicans hold a 221-212 majority in the House of Representatives, leaving the party little room to split their votes. House Democrats have unified behind Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, who has thrice won a plurality of support during floor votes.

The US Congress must pass government funding legislation before November 17 or the government will shut down. The Biden administration has also requested $106 billion in supplemental funding for border security, Israel and Ukraine.

Former US President Donald Trump said on Monday that he is attempting to stay out of the race for speaker as much as possible, adding that he believes House Republicans will get the issue "straightened out."

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Biden's Address to Nation 'Disaster, Call for More War' - Jeffrey Sachs

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WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden's address to the nation last Thursday underscoring a need to continue US support for Ukraine and Israel was a call for more war that lacked a diplomatic plan to resolve dire global issues, world-renowned economist and UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network President, Jeffrey Sachs, told Sputnik.

Biden warned that the United States is facing an inflection point, a moment when decisions made now determine the future for decades to come. The US president then emphasized that the United States must boost security assistance for Israel and Ukraine.

"Biden's speech was a disaster, a call for more war, not for diplomacy," Sachs said.

The speech reflects the control of US foreign policy by the military-industrial complex in the United States.

"We need diplomacy in Ukraine, Israel-Palestine, US-Iran, and other hotspots or war zones," Sachs said. "The United States' militarized approach is solving no problems."

On Friday, Biden submitted a $106 billion supplemental funding request to Congress that includes $61.4 billion for Ukraine, half of which is to provide Kiev with weapons and replenish US weapon stockpiles.

The supplemental package also proposes $14.3 billion for Israel, which includes $10.6 billion for security assistance such as air and missile defense support and industrial base investments.

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Wider Mideast Conflict Likely to Disrupt Oil Markets, Destabilize World Economy - Sachs

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - A wider conflict in the Middle East stemming from the Israel-Hamas war would likely disrupt oil markets and destabilize the global economy, Jeffrey Sachs, a world-renowned economist and President of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, told Sputnik.

"If there is a wider war in the Middle East, the oil markets will likely be disrupted," Sachs said. "This in turn would of course further destabilize the world economy."

Sachs expects that an Israeli ground invasion of Gaza will likely lead to a widening war.

"I don't believe that the Muslim world will look on quietly and passively if Israel is committing mass killings in Gaza, especially in a ground offensive," Sachs said.

The United States has reportedly been urging Israel to delay its ground invasion in order to buy more time to negotiate the release of more hostages held by Hamas. Moreover, President Joe Biden said in later remarks that any talks about a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas may only be possible if all hostages are released.

Meanwhile, the United States is deploying the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower carrier strike group to the Persian Gulf amid an escalation of attacks on US forces in the region by Iran's "proxy forces." Moreover, the USS Gerald R. Ford carrier strike group is positioned in the Eastern Mediterranean to serve as a deterrent to any third parties that might consider joining the conflict against Israel, according to the Pentagon.

The Muslim world, Sachs said, should immediately call for a political solution to the Israel-Palestine crisis, meaning establishing a Palestinian state combined with a plan for the

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demilitarization of the conflict, including the disarming of Hamas and the introduction of United Nations peacekeepers.

According to Sachs, Hamas may have many motives for conducting its attacks against Israel on October 7, including to disrupt the Israel-Saudi normalization talks.

US officials have indicated that Saudi-Israel normalization talks have not been scrapped, but negotiations are reportedly at a pause amid the Israel-Hamas crisis.

On October 7, Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip. Israel launched retaliatory strikes and ordered a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, home to more than 2 million people, cutting off supplies of water, food and fuel. The blockade was later eased to allow trucks with humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. The escalation of the conflict has resulted in thousands of people killed and injured on both sides.

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Russia Sees Unacceptable Attempts to Remove Kosovo From UNSC Agenda - Nebenzia

UNITED NATIONS, October 24 (Sputnik) - Russia sees unacceptable attempts to remove the issue of Kosovo from the consideration of the UN Security Council, Permanent Representative to the UN, Vassily Nebenzia, said at a Security Council meeting.

"Attempts to remove the Kosovo file from the Security Council agenda is unacceptable," Nebenzia said on Monday.

The Russian diplomat stressed the importance of the work of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). He also reminded a number of cases of violence against the mission employees, warning that the absence of an adequate response would lead to similar situations in other parts of the world.

"It is only a question of time," he said.

Nebenzia pointed out that some countries say nothing serious is happening in Kosovo and insist on "automatic" discussions on the matter only once or twice a year.

"Regular discussions on the situation in Kosovo in current circumstances should remain on the Council's agenda," he said.

On September 24, a shooting occurred near the village of Banjska in Kosovo, some 30 miles from Pristina, between local residents of Serbian descent and Kosovar police, resulting in the deaths of one officer and four Serbs, with several sustaining injuries on both sides.

Nebenzia stressed that this violence underscored the seriousness of the situation in the region.

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'Manufactured Chaos' in Israel, Ukraine Useful to America's Oligarchy - Experts

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WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration manufactured crises in Israel and Ukraine helped line the pockets of American defense contractors, however, the world has recognized the destructive power of such policies which is why US global leadership is in decline, experts told Sputnik.

President Joe Biden during a national address last week outlined his rationale for asking Congress for over $100 billion in security aid to support Israel's operation in Gaza, Ukraine's military, and Indo-Pacific security. Biden said defending two democracies, Israel and Ukraine, is vital for America's national security, and likened the struggle to the US role in WWII.

On Friday, the White House unveiled the funding proposal requesting $60 billion for Ukraine, about 75% of which was for military aid, and $14.3 billion for Israel, including $10 billion in security assistance.

"Manufactured chaos is always useful for a morally and financially bankrupt government," former Pentagon analyst and retired US Air Force Lieutenant Colonel, Karen Kwiatkowski, told Sputnik. "Biden may indeed be playing a role that he doesn't even understand, but one that is useful to the American oligarchy."

Former Pentagon analyst Chuck Spinney said the massive funding to Israel and Ukraine is yet another illustration as to how the military industrial complex shapes White House strategy.

"We are facing a grand strategic disaster of our own making. And it is being driven by the American Political Economy Eisenhower warned us about," Spinney told Sputnik.

CIA Station Chief Phil Giraldi took aim at Biden's argument that American leadership is needed to keep freedom alive in both the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

"Opinion polls suggest that the world overwhelmingly sees the United States as the most disruptive and dangerous nation on the planet," Giraldi said. "So Biden's inability to recognize that he is, in reality, presiding over the death throes of America's global leadership is especially striking."

Giraldi said Biden's attempt to justify the spending on Ukraine and Israel was built on false premises - including that the US interests were at risk and America was defending democracy.

"The speech could have been written by any neocon scribbler in its efforts to claim that the United States is actually threatened by developments in those two countries," Giraldi said.

The president cannot even recognize that Russia is more democratic by most measures than Ukraine, Giraldi added.

"And how many Arab inhabitants of Israel would agree it is a democracy? No Palestinians for sure," Giraldi said.

American University in Moscow President Edward Lozansky found Biden's claim that the US is building the "arsenal of democracy" laughable as well as his attempt to compare it to the US role in World War II.

"Comparing today's policy with one in World War II is equivalent to a betrayal of the US war veterans who fought shoulder-to-shoulder with the Russians to defeat Nazi Germany," Lozansky said.

Former hedge fund manager and political commentator Charles Ortel argued that Biden's handling of the crises in Israel and Ukraine on top of the botched exit from Afghanistan have delivered a severe blow to America's reputation.

"In less than three years, President Joe Biden has done more to damage America's standing on

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the world stage than any elected leader since Jimmy Carter," Ortel said.

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US Approves $500Mln Sale of Anti-Radiation Missiles to Finland - Defense Security Agency

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - The US government has approved the sale of half a billion dollars worth of extended range anti-radiation missiles to Finland, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) announced.

"The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Government of Finland of Advanced Anti-Radiation Guided Missiles-Extended Range (AARGM-ER) and related equipment for an estimated cost of $500 million," the DSCA said in a press release on Monday.

The DSCA delivered the required certification notifying Congress of this possible sale earlier in the day, the release said.

"The government of Finland has requested to buy up to 150 AGM-88G AARGM-ERs," the release added.

Also included are Dummy Air Training Missiles; missile containers; software; training; support equipment; spare and repair parts; publications and technical documentation and contractor engineering, according to the release.

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Biden Approves $100Mln Air-to-Air Missiles Sale to Lithuania - Defense Security Agency

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration has approved a $100 million sale of advanced air-to-air missiles to its NATO ally Lithuania, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) announced.

"The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Government of Lithuania of AIM-120C-8 Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAM) and related equipment for an estimated cost of $100 million," the DSCA said in a press release on Monday.

The DSCA delivered the required certification notifying Congress of this possible sale earlier in the day, the release said.

"The government of Lithuania has requested to buy 36 AIM-120C-8 AMRAAM and one AIM-120C-8 AMRAAM Guidance Section. Also included are Common Munitions Built-In-Test (BIT)/Reprogramming Equipment (CMBRE); ADU-91/E adapter group computer test sets [and] AIM-120 spare control sections," the release added.

This proposed sale will be for use with the National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System and will improve Lithuania’s capability to conduct self-defense and regional security missions

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while enhancing interoperability with the United States and other NATO members, according to the release.

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US Approves $957Mln Sale of 3,000 Air-to-Ground Missiles to UK - Defense Security Agency

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration has approved an almost $1 billion sale of 3,000 air-to-ground missiles to the United Kingdom (UK), the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) announced.

"The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Government of the United Kingdom of Joint Air-to-Ground Missiles (JAGM) for an estimated cost of $957.4 million," the DSCA said in a press release on Monday.

The DSCA delivered the required certification notifying Congress of this possible sale earlier in the day, the release said.

"The Government of the United Kingdom has requested to buy 3,000 JAGM, AGM-179A. Also included are dummy missiles; technical assistance; publications; integration support; and other related elements of logistics and program support," the release added.

The proposed sale will improve the United Kingdom's capability to meet current and future threats and enable the country to strengthen its homeland defense and deter regional threats, according to the release.

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Blinken to Host Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Washington October 26-28 - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will host Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Washington from October 26-28 for talks on an array of issues, the State Department said in a statement.

"Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken will host PRC Director of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Foreign Affairs Commission and Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Washington on October 26-28," the State Department said on Monday.

Blinken and Wang will discuss bilateral, regional and global issues as part of an effort to responsibly manage the US-China relationship and maintain open channels of communication, the statement said.

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Oil Plunges 3% as World Powers Try to Bring Peace to Gaza Strip

NEW YORK, October 24 (Sputnik) - Oil prices fell 3% as global powers attempted to bring peace to Gaza, dousing a rally in crude markets triggered by worries that fighting between Israel and Hamas will spill over and directly impact some of the biggest oil producers in the Middle East.

New York-traded West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude for December delivery settled on Monday at $85.49, down $2.59, or 2.94%. WTI rose 2% last week, adding to the prior week's gain of around 6%.

UK-origin Brent crude for December delivery settled down $2.33, or 2.5%, at $89.83 per barrel. Last week, the global crude benchmark rose 1.4%, adding to the prior week's gain of 7.5%.

The retreat in oil prices came amid peace efforts for Gaza after US President Joe Biden visited Israel last week. The leaders of France and the Netherlands are to visit this week in search of a solution to the conflict. Prior to these diplomatic efforts, crude markets had risen as much as 10% over the past two weeks.

"Any prospect of de-escalation in Gaza and Israel will help to cool the moves we've seen in recent weeks," Craig Erlam, analyst at online trading platform OANDA, said.

The comment came as Israel held off launching a ground invasion of Gaza to provide time to negotiate the release of more hostages and create a window for diplomacy, even though it kept up with its aerial bombardment of the area.

Many oil traders seem to think crude prices should be higher due the relative proximity of the showdown in Gaza to some of the biggest oil producers, such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq and Kuwait.

While Israel barely registers in the global oil trade, the Strait of Hormuz straddling the current war zone is a key chokepoint for the movement of crude, where a fifth of all oil passes through the waters there.

Also, the almost daily saber-rattling by the fifth largest oil producer Iran, and concerns of reprisals against Tehran by Israel and the United States, have added to concerns about the possibility of widening the conflict.

Some view the developments as a major political event that has not shown any demonstrable risk so far to the crude trade. To them, oil is a commodity that attains its value from demand-related consumption and unlike gold or the dollar, it is not a safe haven to keep benefiting from a risk that has not hit home.

"There's no such thing as a free lunch, and that applies to oil bulls who have been riding this crisis in Gaza for free, despite its non-material impact thus far on the trade," John Kilduff, partner at New York energy hedge fund Again Capital, said.

Earlier on Monday, a senior Israeli official whose identity was withheld told US media that there will be no ceasefire in Gaza amid the US and Qatari efforts to free more than 200 hostages held by Hamas. The official said he was not aware of US calls for a delay to Israel's expected ground operation in Gaza, although he concurred that both Israel and the United States want all the hostages released as quickly as possible.

Humanitarian efforts cannot be allowed to impact the mission to dismantle Hamas, the official added.

But, as with any conflict with decision-making at multiple levels, the notion that peace was

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given a chance still persevered.

Price direction in the oil market continues to be dictated by developments in the Middle East, ING analysts said, noting that Monday's declines coincided with the ground operation into Gaza appearing to have been delayed.

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Trump Claims Russia Stole 'Super Duper' Missile Plan During Obama Administration

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump during a campaign speech in New Hampshire claimed Russia stole hypersonic missile technology from the United States during the Obama administration and used it to develop its own hypersonic missiles.

"You know Russia stole the super, we call them the Super Duper [missile]. they go super fast. They stole that during the Obama administration. they stole the plan. so it was all very highly classified. they stole the plans and they built it," Trump said on Monday.

However, Russia has already fielded its Kinzhal hypersonic missile in the battlefield while the United States continues to struggle to field its own hypersonic weapon.

Last March, President Joe Biden said Russia's Kinzhal missile is a consequential weapon that is almost impossible to stop.

The US Army hopes to field its Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon (LRHW) missile by the end of fiscal year 2023 while the US Air Force aims to field a hypersonic cruise missile by 2027, media reported

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Tensions In Northern Kosovo Grow, No Tangible Progress in Dialogue With Serbia – UN

UNITED NATIONS, October 23 (Sputnik) –Tensions in northern Kosovo continue growing, while the negotiation progress remain fragile, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) Caroline Ziadeh said on Monday.

"Political and security tensions in northern Kosovo steadily grow in the absence of tangible progress in the EU-facilitated dialogue," Ziadeh said at the UN Security Council meeting.

She reminded that the most recent high-level meeting in Brussels in September produced no consensus on the implementation of previously adopted agreements. This was another missed opportunity to engage constructively towards a program for the implementation of the parties' respective commitments, she added.

"Both sides have exchanged inflammatory public allegations, damaging the fragile communication channels between the communities in Kosovo and between political leaders in Belgrade and Prishtina," Ziadeh said.

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The UN official pointed out that people in Kosovo are frustrated by uncertainty. Tensions and anxiety across Kosovo reported particularly from Kosovo Serb communities, have been fueled by divisive rhetoric narratives, she added.

On September 24, a shooting occurred near the village of Banjska in Kosovo, some 30 miles from Pristina, between local residents of Serbian descent and Kosovo police, resulting in the deaths of one officer and four Serbs, with several sustaining injuries on both sides.

Serbia has still not recognized the self-proclaimed independence of Kosovo, its former province, which it continues to refer to as its Kosovo and Metohija region. A large ethnic Serb community is still residing in Kosovo's north, often bearing the brunt of diplomatic tensions between Belgrade and Pristina, and protesting what they consider discriminatory Kosovo policies.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, October 24 (Sputnik) -

MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

* International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) representatives are on their way to the Gaza Strip to rescue 50 hostages held by Hamas and the movement may release civilians holding foreign passports in the next several hours, Israel's I24NEWS broadcaster reported on Monday.
* The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) said that six more of its employees have been killed in the Gaza Strip since the escalation of the conflict between Israel and Hamas.
* The United States is already leading the countries that are interfering in the conflict between Israel and Palestine, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said.
* Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said that the next stage of the war in the Gaza Strip will include air, land and sea attacks.
* The Palestinian Hamas movement said that it released two more hostages, adding that it had intended to hand them over to Israel two days ago.
* US President Joe Biden said that Palestinian Hamas militants should release hostages before beginning any negotiations on a ceasefire with Israel.

US-CHINA TALKS

* Chinese President Xi Jinping is expected to dispatch Foreign Minister Wang Yi to Washington this week to attend meetings in preparation for an expected summit with US President Joe Biden next month, The Wall Street Journal reported Monday.
* US Department of State spokesperson Matthew Miller said he has no announcement with regard to media reports that Wang Yi will visit Washington this week.
* White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said that there have been

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some discussions about potential meetings with Wang Yi in Washington as soon as this week.

3+3 MINISTERIAL MEETING ON SOUTH CAUCASUS

* All members of the 3+3 ministerial meetings on South Caucasus agree that the door should remain open for Georgia, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Monday.
* Turkey will host the next meeting of the 3+3 format on the South Caucasus in the first half of 2024, Lavrov said.

PUTIN-LULA TALKS

* Russian President Vladimir Putin held a telephone conversation with Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and discussed the serious escalation of Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Kremlin said on Monday.
* Lula da Silva called for finding ways to resolve the conflict in Ukraine by political and diplomatic means during a phone conversation with Putin, the Kremlin said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* The EU foreign ministers failed to agree on the provision of the eighth military aid package to Ukraine, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said on Monday.
* The Russian armed forces have repelled 16 attacks by the Ukrainian military in the Zaporizhzhia and Kupyansk directions, the Russian Defense Ministry said.
* The assassination of Daria Dugina was orchestrated by Ukraine's security service SBU, The Washington Post reported, citing unnamed officials.

WESTERN SANCTIONS ON RUSSIA

* The EU sanctions envoy David O'Sullivan said on Monday that the restrictive measures imposed on Russian oil will remain in place for the long term, perhaps five or 10 years.
* The United States filed a civil forfeiture complaint to seize the $300-million superyacht Amadea allegedly owned by Russian businessman Suleiman Kerimov, the US Justice Department said.
* The G7 countries are "actively working" on new measures to crack down on shipping evasions of sanctions on Russian oil, O'Sullivan said.

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US Hopes for Military-to-Military Contacts With China in Coming Months - Pentagon Official

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - The United States remains hopeful that it will have military-to-military contacts with China in the coming months, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for China, Taiwan and Mongolia Michael Chase said on Monday.
"In terms of hopefully kind of kick-starting some of the military-to-military engagements, yes, i am hopeful that we'll have an opportunity to do that in the coming months," Chase said during an event at the Atlantic Council.

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In October, the Defense Department said in the report that China is continuing to resist military-to-military communications with the United States.

The Defense Department confirmed its commitment to maintaining open lines of communication with China to ensure competition does not veer into conflict.

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US Ready to Respond Decisively to Any Escalation Against Its Forces in Mideast - Official

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik)- The United States is bracing for the possibility of a substantial escalation against its forces in the Middle East and is committed to responding decisively, a senior US defense official said on Monday.

"We are preparing for this escalation, both in terms of defending our forces and being prepared to respond decisively," the official said during a press briefing.

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Ex-US National Security Agency Worker Pleads Guilty to Attempted Espionage - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - A former US National Security Agency (NSA) employee pleaded guilty to six counts of attempted espionage for trying to pass sensitive information to Russia, the US Justice Department said on Monday.

"Jareh Sebastian Dalke, 31, of Colorado Springs, pleaded guilty today to six counts of attempting to transmit classified National Defense Information (NDI) to an agent of the Russian Federation," the Justice Department said in a statement.

Dalke worked for the NSA as an Information System Security Designer, the statement said. Between August and September 2022, Dalke used excerpts of three classified documents to a person he believed to be a Russian agent, the statement said; however, the person was an undercover FBI agent.

Dalke requested $85,000 in return for more information in his possession that could be valuable to Russia, the statement said. The FBI arrested Dalke after he transferred top secret information as part of a sting operation.

Dalke's sentencing is set for April 26, 2024 and he faces a sentence of a life in prison.

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US Has Limited Number of Military Personnel in Israel to Support CENTCOM - Pentagon

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WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) – The United States has a limited number of military personnel on the ground in Israel to support the Central Command (CENTCOM) contingency planning and augment the embassy staff in the country amid the escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a senior US defense official said on Monday.

"There are a limited number of military personnel on the ground to support CENTCOM for contingency planning and augmentation to the embassy staff," the official said during a press briefing.

The official added that US advisors in Israel have provided advice to Israel on best practices for mitigating civilian casualties as Tel Aviv prepares for a ground operation in Gaza.

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Biden on Israel Ceasefire: Hamas Should Release Hostages, 'Then We Can Talk'

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Monday that Palestinian Hamas militants should release hostages before beginning any negotiations on a ceasefire with Israel.

"We should have those hostages released, and then we can talk," Biden said during a press conference, when asked about a ceasefire.

Hamas has taken more than 200 hostages, including US citizens, since launching a surprise attack on Israel earlier this month. However, Hamas may turn over 50 hostages within the next few hours amid negotiations led by Qatar, according to Israeli media reports.

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Trump Says Trying to Stay Out of US House Speaker Race as Much as Possible

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said on Monday that he is attempting to stay out of the speaker race in the House of Representatives as much as possible.

"We're looking at a lot of people, and sort of trying to stay out of that as much as possible," Trump said during an appearance in the US state of New Hampshire, when asked about the speaker race.

Earlier this month, House lawmakers ousted Congressman Kevin McCarthy as speaker. House Republicans, who hold a majority in the lower chamber of Congress, have since been attempting to elect a new leader.

Majority Leader Steve Scalise and Congressman Jim Jordan both ended speakership bids after failing to secure enough votes within the Republican conference to pass a floor vote. House Republicans are set to meet Monday evening for a candidate forum and then select a new nominee on Tuesday morning.

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Nine Republicans, including Majority Whip Tom Emmer, are competing for the nomination. Trump said that Emmer called him on Sunday and referred to himself as the former president's biggest fan. Emmer voted to certify the 2020 US presidential election results, which declared Joe Biden the winner over Trump.

Trump said that he gets along with Emmer and the rest of the Republican speaker candidates. House Republicans will get the speaker situation "straightened out," Trump added.

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US Welcomes Erdogan Proposal to Ratify Protocol on Sweden NATO Membership - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - The United States welcomes the decision by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to propose to the country's parliament to ratify Sweden's protocol for NATO membership and expects the legislature to ratify it promptly, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Monday.

"We welcome that step," Miller said during a press briefing. "Obviously we have been calling for ratification of Sweden's accession for some time, and we look forward to that bill being considered in the Turkish parliament and passed as soon as possible,"

Earlier on Monday, the Office of the President told Sputnik that Erdogan proposed to Turkey's Grand National Assembly to ratify the protocol on Sweden's membership in NATO.

The Swedish government expects the country's NATO membership bid to be ratified by Turkey "within a few weeks," Swedish newspaper Expressen reported on Saturday, citing sources.

Last week, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said that Turkey remained committed to the deal it reached with NATO and Sweden in July to ratify Sweden's membership in the alliance.

The Turkish parliament has made no progress in ratifying Sweden's accession since it reconvened in October following the summer recess.

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White House Says No Indication Humanitarian Aid Sent to Gaza Diverted to Hamas

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - The United States has seen no indication to date that humanitarian aid sent to Gaza has been diverted to the Palestinian Hamas group, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Monday.

"We have seen no indications as of today that any of the material in those trucks have been diverted to Hamas or been absconded by Hamas," Kirby said during a press briefing.

On October 7, Palestinian group Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip. Israel launched retaliatory strikes and ordered a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, home to more than 2 million people, cutting off supplies of water, food and

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fuel.

On Saturday, however, the first 20 trucks with humanitarian aid for the Gaza Strip were allowed into the region through the Rafah checkpoint on the Egypt-Gaza border. The cargo was handed over to the Palestine Red Crescent Society.

On Sunday, the United Nations said that another 14 trucks carrying humanitarian aid arrived in the Gaza Strip.

The current escalation of the conflict has resulted in thousands of people killed and injured on both sides.

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US Senator Sanders Says Cannot Back $106Bln Aid Request Without Funds for Domestic Issues

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - Independent US Senator Bernie Sanders said on Monday that he cannot support the Biden administration's supplemental aid request for $106 billion unless more funds are dedicated to addressing domestic issues.

"Congress cannot approve billions in a supplemental budget that only addresses critical emergencies around the world. We have crises here at home too - child care, health care, housing, opioid addiction - that need major funding now and must be included in the supplemental," Sanders said in a statement via X (formerly Twitter).

On Friday, the White House Office of Management and Budget requested $106 billion in emergency funding for Ukraine, Israel and the Indo-Pacific region as well as US border security.

The billions in funding would be used to provide Ukraine and Israel with more weapons, replenish US military stocks, bolster Indo-Pacific security, counter Chinese financing in developing countries and fund operations at the US-Mexico border.

The US House of Representatives is currently limited in its ability to pass legislation, after ousting Congressman Kevin McCarthy as speaker. The US Congress must also pass government funding measures before November 17 or the government will shut down.

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Guterres Has No Mandate to Probe Gaza Hospital Blast, Accountability Must Be Ensured - UN

UNITED NATIONS, October 23 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has no mandate to investigate the deadly attack on a Gaza hospital, but those responsible should be held accountable, spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Monday.

"On the legal aspect, the Secretary General needs a mandate to form such a committee. However, for any damage done to UN premises, there is automatically a board of inquiry and we've seen that set up in the past and I have no doubt that it will be set up again, when it comes

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to UN premises. But there will need to be accountability for all the violations of law that we've seen," Dujarric told a briefing.

The remarks were in response to a question about why Guterres has not established a committee to investigate the hospital attack and other violations, including those committed by Israeli forces.

On Tuesday, a large explosion hit the Al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City, killing almost 500 people. Hamas attributed it to an Israeli airstrike, while the Israel Defense Forces blamed a failed rocket launch by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement.

On October 7, Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip. Israel launched retaliatory strikes and ordered a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, home to more than 2 million people, cutting off supplies of water, food and fuel. Last week, several trucks with humanitarian aid were allowed into the Gaza Strip. The escalation of the conflict has resulted in thousands of people killed and injured on both sides.

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Ceasefire Risks Giving Hamas Ability to Rest, Continue Attacks on Israel- State Dept

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik)- The United States expressed concerns that a ceasefire in Gaza could allow Hamas to rest, regroup, and prepare for further attacks on Israel, Department of State spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Monday.

"There are rockets, as I said a moment ago to continue to be launched from Gaza targeting Israel. Any ceasefire would give Hamas the ability to rest to refit and get ready to continue launching terrorist attacks against Israel. You can understand perfectly clearly why that's an intolerable situation for Israel, as it would be an intolerable situation for any country that has suffered such a brutal terrorist attack and continues to see the terrorist threat right on its border," Miller said during a press briefing.

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UNGA Special Session on Israel-Gaza Conflict to Convene on October 26 - President

UNITED NATIONS, October 23 (Sputnik) - The United Nations General Assembly will convene for an emergency special session on October 26, UN General Assembly President Dennis Francis said on Monday.

"I have the further honor to inform you that, in accordance with resolution ES-10/20 of 13 June 2018, I will convene the 39th plenary meeting of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly on Thursday, 26 October 2023, at 10:00 a.m. [14:000 GMT] at the General

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Assembly Hall, UN Headquarters, New York," Francis said in a letter shared with journalists.
The session was called last week after the United States vetoed a draft UNSC resolution on the Israel-Gaza conflict.

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State Dept. Says No Announcement on Chinese Foreign Minister's Possible Visit

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - US Department of State spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Monday he has no announcement with regard to media reports that Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will visit Washington this week.
"I don't have any announcements to make but stay tuned," Miller said.
Chinese President Xi Jinping is expected to dispatch Wang to Washington this week to attend meetings in preparation for an expected summit with US President Joe Biden next month, The Wall Street Journal reported earlier in the day.
While Xi has not formally agreed to the invitation, the White House has been working to arrange a meeting between the two presidents at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in San Francisco next month.

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Hong Kong Court Charges Washington State Senator With Illegal Arms Possession - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - A Hong Kong court has charged a senator from the US state of Washington with possessing arms without license after arriving at the Hong Kong International Airport, the Standard reported on Monday.
The senator, Stephen Jeff Wilson, who represents the 19th Legislative District of Washington State, was arrested on October 21 when the authorities found a revolver in his luggage, the report said.
Wilson could not provide any documentation for the gun, the report said.
The court granted Wilson bail of $2,500 and ordered him to surrender his travel documents and stay in Hong Kong, the report added.
The next hearing in Wilson's case is scheduled for October 30, according to the report.

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US Has Yet to Gain Consular Access to RFE/RL Reporter Detained in Russia - State Dept.

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WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - The United States has asked for but has yet to receive consular access to Alsu Kurmasheva, a correspondent of Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) who holds Russian and US passports, State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Monday.

"We are deeply concerned about her pretrial detention. We have requested consular access. So far it has not been granted," Miller said in a press briefing. "We will continue to press for it, and we have asked the Russian government for more information on her situation."

RFE/RL, a US state run news agency, in a statement said Kurmasheva was detained and charged on October 18 with failure to register as a foreign agent, which carries a maximum sentence of five years' imprisonment.

According to RFE/RL, Kurmasheva traveled to Russia for a family emergency in May and was temporarily detained while waiting for her return flight on June 2. Authorities at Kazan airport confiscated her US and Russian passports and fined her for not registering them with Russian authorities, RFE/RL said.

The Kremlin on Friday said it is completely unaware of Kurmasheva's case and is not monitoring it.

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White House Says There Are Talks on Possible Visit From Chinese Foreign Minister This Week

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Monday that there have been some discussions about potential meetings with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Washington as soon as this week.

"There have been some discussions about some some potential meetings with Wang Yi maybe as soon as this week," Kirby said during a press briefing.

State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a separate briefing that there are no announcement's to make at present regarding Wang's possible visit to Washington this week.

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Seasoned US Military Officers in Israel to Share Perspectives, Ask Hard Questions - Kirby

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - The United States is sending experienced military officers to Israel to share perspectives regarding Israeli operations in Gaza and to ask hard questions of their Israeli counterparts, White House Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Monday.

"I can tell you that there are a few relevant [US] military officers with experience, the kinds of experience that we believe is appropriate to the sorts of operations that Israel is conducting and may conduct in the future, to go over there to share some perspectives from their own

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experience and to ask the hard questions, the same hard questions that we've been asking of our Israeli counterparts since the beginning," Kirby said during a press briefing.

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US to Hold Iran Accountable for Rising Attacks by Proxies in Middle East - State Dept

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - The United States is concerned about the mounting attacks orchestrated by "Iranian proxies" in the Middle East and is committed to holding Iran responsible for these actions, Department of State spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Monday.

"I will say that we are concerned about an increase in attacks by Iranian proxies in the region, whether they be targeting US interests or whether they be targeting other interests in the region. We hold Iran accountable for those attacks," Miller said during a press briefing.

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Man Under Arrest After Disrupting US Flight, No More Threats Related to Incident - FBI

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - Law enforcement arrested a man who caused a disruption in the cockpit of a US flight, forcing the pilots to conduct an emergency landing in Portland, Oregon, on Sunday, the FBI told Sputnik in a statement.

"One man is under arrest on state charges in Oregon, booked by the Port of Portland Police Department, after an incident in the air on Horizon Air flight 2059 from Everett, Washington to San Francisco, California," the FBI said on Monday. The airplane's pilot was able to safely land the plane at Portland International Airport around 6:25pm on Sunday, October 22. No injuries were reported."

The FBI said it is investigating the incident and assured the traveling public that there is no continuing threat related to this incident.

The Port of Portland state agency told Sputnik the suspect is Joseph D. Emerson, who is an off-duty employee from another airline.

The state agency said Emerson caused a disturbance while in the cockpit, but the flight crew was able to detain him and the aircraft landed safely at Portland International Airport on Sunday afternoon.

"Yes, I can confirm that a flight was diverted to PDX [Portland International Airport]," the spokesperson said. "On October 22, 2023, Horizon Airlines flight 2059 from Everett, Washington to San Francisco, California made an emergency diversion to Portland International Airport after an in-flight disturbance in the cockpit."

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Three-Star US Marine Corps General, Other Officers Advising Israel on Operations - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - A three-star US Marine Corps general and other US military officers are on the ground advising Israeli forces on their operation in Gaza, Axios reported on Monday.

The advisors include Lt. Gen. James Glynn, who led the Marine Corps special operations division and participated in the fight against the Islamic State terror group (banned in Russia) in Iraq, the report said, citing two US and two Israeli officials.

Glynn and other US military officials are advising the Israeli Defense Forces on their operations in Gaza, but are not directing them, the report said. The advice has largely been focused on expected ground operations in Gaza, the report said.

Earlier this month, Palestinian Hamas fighters launched a surprise attack on Israel, prompting a state of war in the country. Israel has since launched a number of strikes on Gaza in advance of the expected ground assault.

Glynn is not expected to remain in Israel to track the ground operations, the report added.

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US Knows Iran Closely Monitoring Events in Mideast, Sometimes Facilitating Attacks - Kirby

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - The United States knows Iran is closely monitoring events in the Middle East and in some cases facilitating attacks against US forces in the region, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Monday.

"We know Iran continues to support Hamas and Hezbollah, and we know that Iran is closely monitoring these events, and in some cases actively facilitating these attacks and spurring on others who may want to exploit the conflict for their own good," Kirby said during a press briefing.

Kirby added that Iran's goal is to maintain some level of deniability amid these attacks, but the United States will not allow them to do that.

Earlier in the day, Pentagon Press Secretary Brig. Gen. Patrick Ryder told reporters the United States sees no evidence Tehran gave a direct order for the escalating attacks on US forces in the region, but Washington will ultimately hold Iran responsible.

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UN Says 'Very Concerned' About Israel-Palestinian War Potential Spillover to Lebanon

UNITED NATIONS, October 23 (Sputnik) - The United Nations is very concerned about the situation in the south of Lebanon and that the Israeli-Palestinian war could potentially spillover to that country, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Monday.

"We are very concerned about the situation in the south," Dujarric said during a press briefing.

Dujarric explained there is a mechanism, chaired by the United Nations mission in Lebanon, which brings together the Lebanese military and the Israeli Defense Forces.

On Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned the Lebanese armed militia Hezbollah against joining the ongoing war in the Gaza Strip.

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US Reaffirms Support for Philippines Amid Tensions With China - White House

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke by telephone with his Philippine counterpart Eduardo Ano and reaffirmed the United States' support for the Philippines amid the country's tensions with China in the South China Sea, the White House said on Monday.

"Mr. Sullivan reiterated US support for our Philippine allies following the PRC [China] Coast Guard and maritime militia's dangerous and unlawful actions on October 22 obstructing a routine Philippine resupply to Second Thomas Shoal," the White House said in a statement.

Last week, the Chinese Coast Guard reported that four Philippine vessels trespassed into the waters surrounding the contested Nansha islands, alternatively referred to as the Spratly Islands, in the South China Sea. This event resulted in a minor clash between a vessel from China and one from the Philippines.

Sullivan and Ano reaffirmed the enduring US-Philippine alliance and discussed upcoming bilateral engagements and ways to further strengthen the partnership, the statement said.

Sullivan emphasized Washington's unwavering commitment to Manila under the US-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty, the statement added.

The treaty covers armed incidents involving Philippine state vessels, aircraft and military, including its Coast Guard, in the Pacific and the South China Sea, according to the statement.

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US Holds Iran Responsible for Iraq and Syria Attacks - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - The US has concluded that Iran-backed groups are behind a series of attacks in Iraq and Syria and holds Tehran responsible, Politico reported citing a Pentagon spokesperson.

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Defense Department spokesperson Patrick Ryder confirmed that while the US has no evidence Tehran gave a direct order for the attacks, ultimately the United States holds Iran responsible, the report added.

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UN Says US, Russia Made 'Significant' Progress Returning Nationals From Syria Camps

UNITED NATIONS, October 23 (Sputnik) - The United States and Russia have made significant efforts to repatriate nationals from detention camps in northeastern Syria, UN Special Rapporteur on promoting human rights and freedom while countering terrorism Fionnuala Aolain said on Monday.

"There are actually four states [active in northeastern Syria]: there's the United States, the Turkish government, the Russian government and the Iranians… My mandate has had discussions with all of them," Aolain said during a press conference. "I'll acknowledge that both the United States and the Russian Federation have made significant efforts to bring their own nationals home."

Aolain visited the detention facilities in July, including al-Hol, al-Raj and Panorama prisons, as well as some so-called rehabilitation centers for boys, which the special rapporteur said are actually prisons for boys under the age of 18.

There is no process of law justifying detention in the camps, Aolain said. Torture and other acts of cruelty and degradation are rife in all of the facilities, Aolain said.

There are more than 70,000 people detained in such facilities in northeastern Syria, the majority of which are children, Aolain said.

Countries are obliged to seek the return of their nationals from the camps, Aolain said. The security implications of non-return could be "catastrophic," Aolain added.

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Canada Concludes Evacuation Flights Out of Tel-Aviv, Over 1600 Canadians Airlifted – Joly

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) – The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) have conducted their last evacuation flight out of Tel-Aviv's Ben Gurion international airport having airlifted a total of 1600 nationals, Minister of Foreign Affairs Melanie Joly said on Monday.

Shortly after the Israeli-Gaza war broke out, the Canadian government tasked CAF with operating evacuation flights from Tel-Aviv toward Athens. On October 7, there were 4,200 Canadians were registered in Israel and 475 in Palestinian territories.

"Today is our last flight out of Tel-Aviv. It's our nineteenth flight. We've been able to evacuate more than 1600 Canadians, plus other nationals from different countries ... We've been able to evacuate 45 Canadians out of the West Bank and this work continues," Joly said during a news

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conference from Abu-Dhabi, UAE.

Joly also addressed Canadian citizens and permanent residents currently staying in Lebanon asking them to leave the country. – "My message is clear. If you are in Lebanon, it is now time to come back home," she said.

On October 7, the Palestinian movement Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack on Israel, prompting the latter to declare a state of war the following day and launch retaliatory strikes. On October 9, Israel ordered a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, home to more than 2 million people, cutting off supplies of water, food and fuel. Both Israel and Palestine have reported over 1,000 deaths and thousands of injured as a result of the escalation.

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Russia Ready to Expand Sanction List on Haiti, Calls For Caution in Adding Names -UN Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, October 23 (Sputnik) - Russia is ready to expand sanctions against Haiti but it believes members need to be extra careful when adding new names to the sanction list, the Russian Deputy Permanent Representative Anna Evstigneeva said on Monday.

"Haiti's issues are a particular focus of the international community: this is proven by the two latest adoptions of the Security Council on extending the sanctions regime and establishing a multinational security support mission in Haiti," Evstigneeva told the Security Council members in a meeting on Haiti. "We are prepared to consider any proposals to expand the sanction list along the lines of Security Council Committee 2653. Nonetheless, we believe it's important to be as careful as possible when introducing new names to the list."

The West should not be imposing its political preferences on Haiti, she added.

Earlier in October, the UN Security Council approved a resolution to deploy a task force to Haiti in cooperation with the Haitian government. The measure was approved with 13 votes in favor, with Russia and China abstaining.

The task force is supposed to cooperate and closely coordinate activities with the Haitian government as well as provide support to the Haitian National Police during security-related operations and in the protection of infrastructure.

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US Senate Minority Leader McConnell Says 'Completely Recovered' From Freezing Episodes

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - US Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said that he had completely recovered from a recent string of "freezing" episodes in public, according to a CBS interview with the lawmaker that aired on Sunday.

"I'm completely recovered and I'm just fine," McConnell said. "I'm in good shape, completely recovered, and back on the job."

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In July, McConnell froze midsentence while speaking during a news conference at the US Capitol and had to be escorted away. The following month, he froze again while speaking with reporters in the US state of Kentucky.

A letter released by the Capitol's attending physician in August said there was no evidence that McConnell was suffering from a seizure disorder, stroke, transient ischemic attack or movement disorder like Parkinson's disease.

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Drones Attack Base Housing US Forces in Syria, No Injuries or Damage - Defense Official

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - Drones attacked a base in Syria housing US and Coalition forces, but there were no injuries or damage, a US defense official told Sputnik on Monday.

"An attack against US and Coalition forces occurred early this morning in Syria. There were no injuries or damage," the official said when asked to confirm reports drones attacked US forces in Syria.

On Saturday, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced the United States was sending the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower carrier strike group to the Persian Gulf, placing additional troops on standby to deploy to the Middle East and deploying additional air defenses throughout the region as it anticipates a continued escalation of attacks against US forces in the region by Iran's "proxy forces."

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US Talking With Israel About All Consequences of Ground Invasion in Gaza - Kirby

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - The United States is talks with officials Israel about all consequences of undertaking a ground invasion in the Gaza Strip, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Monday.

"We are talking to them about all kinds of consequences," Kirby told reporters.

However, Kirby also said that it is up to Israel to make a final decision whether it will undertake a ground invasion in Gaza in an attempt to destroy the Palestinian organization Hamas.

"[T]he Israeli Defense Forces, they and their political leadership will make the decision about what they do, when they do it and how they do it," Kirby added.

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US Files Complaint to Seize $300Mln Yacht Owned by Russian Tycoon Kerimov - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) – The United States filed a civil forfeiture complaint to seize a $300 million superyacht Amadea allegedly owned by Russian businessman Suleiman Kerimov, the US Justice Department said on Monday.

"Damian Williams, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and Michael Khoo and David Lim, Co-Directors of Task Force KleptoCapture, announced today the filing of a civil forfeiture complaint against the Motor Yacht Amadea, a 348-foot luxury vessel reportedly worth over $300 million," the department said in a press release.

The yacht is under the US government control in San Diego, California after it was seized pursuant to a court order issued by the Republic of Fiji in response to a US request, the release said.

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us files complaint to seize amadea superyacht owned by Russian businessman Suleiman Kerimov and valued at over $300 mln - Justice Department

Lawmakers Request Intelligence Briefing on How China Leverages US House Dysfunction

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - A group of 11 Democratic lawmakers on the US House Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party on Monday sent a letter to National Intelligence Director Avril Haines and CIA Director William Burns to conduct a briefing on how China may use the current situation of not having a speaker in the House of Representatives.

House Republicans on Friday rejected Congressman Jim Jordan as the party's nominee for speaker after he lost the support of the conference in a secret ballot.

"We respectfully request a classified briefing from the US Intelligence Community ('IC') on how the CCP [Chinese Communist Party] and our foreign adversaries are leveraging current political dysfunction in the US House of Representatives to discredit democracy globally in their efforts to promote an alternative authoritarian model of governance internationally, enhance their ability to form economic and national security alliances, and harm our standing with strategic partner," the lawmakers said in the letter.

The lawmakers expressed deep concern that China and other adversaries are working to capitalize on the vacant speaker position in the House of Representatives.

They said that of particular concern is the fact that the adversaries may use the potential US government shutdowns to discredit democracy globally.

The lawmakers asked Haines and Burnes to provide a picture of China's and other adversaries' global messaging regarding the vacant speaker position and a potential government shutdown.

"We must now be clear-eyed that current US political dysfunction is providing the CCP with fodder to achieve its objectives, and we must assess the extent to which it is succeeding," the

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letter said.

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EU 'Very Disappointed' Turkey, Serbia Not Imposing Sanctions on Russia –Senior Official

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) – The European Union (EU) is "very disappointed" that Serbia and Turkey are taking part in the sanctions on Russia, but understands their decision, International Special Envoy for the Implementation of EU Sanctions Ambassador David O'Sullivan said on Monday.

"Obviously, for the European Union, we have two countries in that list … that we are very disappointed about, which is Serbia and Turkey because they are kind of countries, that would normally be aligning with our common foreign and security policy, and their decision not to align, which we understand, I mean, we are not stupid, but we regret it," O'Sullivan said during a discussion hosted by the Atlantic Council.

After Russia launched its special military operation in Ukraine in February 2022, the European Union, together with the United States and other countries, imposed unprecedented sanctions against Moscow, including a $60 price cap on oil, seized and confiscated the property of Russian citizens, and also imposed an embargo on hundreds of products.

At the same time, Serbia and Turkey announced their refusal to succumb to pressure from their European and American partners and join the sanctions, citing the protection of national interests and the desire to maintain good relations with Moscow.

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EU Sanctions on Russian Oil to Remain At Least Five, Ten Years - Sanctions Envoy

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) – The EU sanctions envoy said Monday that EU sanctions on Russian oil will remain in place for the long term, perhaps five or 10 years.

"I'd say prepare yourselves for…five, ten years. I do not see any imminent lifting of these sanctions in any significant way, even if there were to be a cessation of the hostilities at some point, which doesn't certainly look likely now, but at some point it will happen. There will be so many other issues," Ambassador David O'Sullivan, international special envoy for the implementation of EU sanctions, said at an Atlantic Council event.

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Washington Post Says CIA Paid for New Headquarters of Ukraine Military Intel's Spetsnaz

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - The CIA paid for new headquarter buildings for the special services of Ukraine's GUR military intelligence agency, fearing that the agency's aging facilities were likely compromised by Russian intelligence, The Washington Post reported on Monday, citing current and former Ukrainian and US officials.

The CIA also paid for a headquarter building for a separate directorate in charge of electronic espionage, the report said.

The new capabilities proved transformative, enabling Ukraine to daily intercept 250,000 to 300,000 separate communications from Russian military and FSB units, a former senior GUR official was cited as saying in the report.

Troves of data were relayed through the new CIA-built facility back to the United States, where they were scrutinized by American intelligence services, officials said.

"We were giving them the ability — through us — to collect on [Russian targets]," the former GUR official was quoted as saying.

The former official estimated the CIA's investments at "millions of dollars."

"We calculated that GUR was a smaller and more nimble organization where we could have more impact," a former US intelligence official who worked in Ukraine told the Post. "GUR was our little baby. We gave them all new equipment and training."

The former US official said GUR officers "were young guys, not Soviet-era KGB generals." Having started in 2015, the CIA "had kind of rebuilt" the GUR "from scratch" the official stated.

One of the key architects of the effort, who served as CIA station chief in Kiev, is now in charge of the Ukraine Task Force at CIA headquarters, the report said.

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EU Sanctions Will Have Steady Effect on Russia's Economy Over Time - Sanctions Envoy

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - The sanctions imposed by the European Union (EU) on Russia will have a slow but steady effect on the country's economy, with Moscow paying a higher price as time goes on, International Special Envoy for the Implementation of EU Sanctions Amb. David O'Sullivan said on Monday.

"Sanctions have an impact over time. This is probably more of a slow puncture than a blow-out, but the fact remains that air is escaping from the tire at a fairly rapid rate, and I think the longer this goes on, the higher the price Russia is going to pay across all those three objectives," O'Sullivan said during an event at the Atlantic Council.

The objectives Sullivan referred to include depriving Russia's military of access to weapons technology; denying the Russian government revenue to fund its special military operation in Ukraine; and imposing a high cost on Russia's military-industrial complex.

James O'Brien, US assistant secretary for European and Eurasian affairs, concurred with O'Sullivan, saying the conflict in Ukraine was clearly long-term in nature and time was not on

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Russia's side.

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G7 to Issue New Measures to Curb Evasion of Russia Oil Sanctions – EU Sanctions Envoy

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) – G7 countries are "actively working" on new measures to crack down on shipping evasions of sanctions on Russian oil, the EU sanctions envoy said Monday.

"The G7 are actively working on a new set of measures, and I think we will see measures in the next few weeks," aid Ambassador David O'Sullivan, international special envoy for the implementation of EU sanctions, at an Atlantic Council event. "We have already issued an advisory warning [shipping] operators of these practices and the risks they are taking, but I think we will probably take some additional legal action in the coming weeks."

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Canada Says Chinese 'Spamouflage' Op. Targeted Several Lawmakers – Global Affairs

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) – Several Canadian lawmakers were targeted by a spamouflage operation with ties to China, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) said on Monday.

"Global Affairs Canada's (GAC) Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) Canada has detected a 'Spamouflage' campaign connected to the People's Republic of China. Beginning in early August 2023 and accelerating in scale over the September long-weekend, a bot network left thousands of comments in English and French on the Facebook and X/Twitter accounts of Canadian Members of Parliaments (MPs)," GAC's statement said.

Accordingly, the campaign affected lawmakers all around Canada and from all political parties, including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, cabinet members, and the leader of the Conservative Party Pierre Poilievre.

GAC said all the affected lawmakers have been briefed on the mater and were provided with advice by the RRM on ways to protect themselves from foreign interference and on how to report its suspected activity.

"Nothing observed in this activity represents a threat to their safety, or that of their family," the statement said, adding that the RRM assessed that the goal of the spamouflage operation was likely to discredit the targeted individuals, and to silence criticism of the Chinese Communist Party.

Canada's RRM is part of a broader structure established in 2018 at the Charlevoix, Quebec G7 Summit, comprising all its member states. They most notably lead and support operations to counter state-sponsored disinformation threatening democracy.

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CIA Helped Develop Naval Drones Used in Ukraine Attack on Crimea Bridge - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - Naval drones that Ukraine used to strike the Crimea bridge in July were developed as part of a top secret operation involving the CIA and other Western intelligence services, The Washington Post reported on Monday.

On July 17, a submersible drone attack on the Crimean Bridge killed a woman and a man and wounded their teenage daughter.

It came nine months after the explosion of a bomb loaded onto a truck killed five people, including the truck driver, and seriously damaged the bridge.

US officials had been notified in advance about the October 2022 attack and raised concerns about it, the report said.

The report also said that Ukraine's military intelligence agency has used its own fleet of drones to launch dozens of attacks on Russian soil, including the May 3 drone strike on the Kremlin.

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Ohio Senator Leads Charge to Split Up Ukraine, Israel Supplemental Funding – Memo

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) – Ohio Senator J.D. Vance is spearheading an effort to split up the White House's proposed supplemental funding package that combines assistance to Israel and Ukraine, according to a memo published by Politico.

"The administration seeks to link Ukraine and Israel funding. This is a grave error that betrays a lack of strategic focus. Each conflict is distinct and represents a different claim on U.S. interests," the memo stated.

In the three-page memo, Vance laid out five key arguments that include Israel's military operations in Palestine leading to a more stable Israel, whereas the Russia-Ukraine conflict continues to destabilize Europe, and that the US political and military relationship with Israel is different from that with Ukraine.

In addition, the memo noted that Israel's defense capabilities are much more sophisticated from Ukraine's and that Israel's operations have an achievable objective, while Ukraine's do not; and that the US has a plan in Israel, while it does not in Ukraine.

On Friday, the White House asked Congress for nearly $106 billion that combined funding for Israel and Ukraine, in addition to funding for US border security, measures to counter China, and other issues.

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Senior US Diplomat to Visit El Salvador, Guatemala from October 23-27 – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) – The Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs Brian A. Nichols will travel to El Salvador and Guatemala to demonstrate "steadfast commitment" to the promotion of democracy, the US Department of State said on Monday.

Nichols would be traveling to the Central American countries between October 23 and 27.

"Assistant Secretary Nichols' visits to Guatemala and El Salvador demonstrate the United States' steadfast commitment to promoting democracy, inclusive economic prosperity, collaborative migration management, and the protection of human rights in the region," the State Department statement reads.

In Guatemala, the diplomat will meet with President-elect Bernardo Arevalo and Foreign Minister Mario Bucaro to address the necessity of a peaceful and democratic transitional process amid the ongoing political crisis in the country, the statement said, adding that Nichols is set to encourage dialogue as a mean of resolving the matter.

Other scheduled events include meeting with Indigenous communities, human rights defenders, and representatives of the private sector to discuss their participation in Guatemala's political process, as well as economic prosperity and investments the statement added.

In El Salvador, Nichols will hold a bilateral meeting with President Nayib Bukele as well as several other Salvadoran officials. Discussions are set to revolve around the rule of law and human right, as well as migration and security.

The US diplomat will visit the Human Rights Institute at the University of Central America and meet with local businesses to address economic growth and investment opportunities.

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China to Dispatch Foreign Minister to US This Week to Prepare For Biden Meeting – Reports

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) – Chinese President Xi Jinping is expected to dispatch Foreign Minister Wang Yi to Washington this week to attend meetings in preparation for an expected summit with US President Joe Biden next month, The Wall Street Journal reported Monday.

While Xi has not formally agreed to the invitation, the White House has been working to arrange a meeting between the two presidents at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in San Francisco next month.

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Pentagon Assessing US Military Needs Amid Aid Supply to Ukraine, Israel - Kirby

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WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - The US Department of Defense assesses its own military needs each time it sends defense aid to Ukraine and Israel, White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said on Monday.

"With every single aid package that goes to Ukraine and now Israel, the Department of Defense has to do an assessment to make sure that we can continue to meet our own war plans, our own operational needs," Kirby told CNN.

He said the Biden administration is concerned about the US's own military stockpiles.

"Of course, it is a concern, that is why we ask for extra supplemental funding from Congress," Kirby stated.

The US military has enough munitions to defend national security interests all around the world, "but this is something that we watch very-very closely," Kirby said.

Last week, the Biden administration has requested $106 billion in extra funding. The supplemental package includes $61.4 billion for Ukraine, half of which is to provide Kiev with weapons and replenish US military stocks. It also seeks $14.3 billion in assistance for Israel.

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Joly to Inaugurate First Canadian Embassy to Armenia During Visit – Global Affairs

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) – Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Melanie Joly will inaugurate Canada's first embassy in Yerevan during her visit to Armenia, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) said on Monday.

Earlier, GAC announced that Joly would be traveling to the UAE from October 22 to October 24, and to Armenia from October 25 to October 27, in a bid to enhance bilateral ties with both nations.

"While in Yerevan, Armenia, Minister Joly will discuss means to strengthen bilateral relations between Canada and Armenia with Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan, the Armenian Prime Minister and the President of the Republic of Armenia. She will officially open the new Embassy of Canada, which will allow for stronger bilateral ties and increased Canadian support to Armenian democracy," the GAC statement said.

Joly will also look for ways in which Ottawa can help address the humanitarian needs of the thousands of displaced ethnic Armenians out of Nagorno-Karabakh following Azerbaijan's military operation in the region, GAC added.

The top diplomat is also set to visit the Armenian Genocide Memorial complex to honour the victims of the 1915 Genocide, GAC said, adding that Joly will reaffirm Canada's commitment to fighting denial or revisionism on the matter.

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Kirby Says No Indication of Regional Escalation in Hamas-Israel Conflict

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) – The United States does not see signs that a major player in the Middle East is willing to significantly escalate the Hamas-Israel conflict, National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said Monday.

"We are watching this very, very closely, so I don't want to get ahead of where we are but right now we don't see an indication that a major player is willing to escalate in a major way," Kirby said in an interview with CNN. "That said, I don't want to diminish the kinds of attacks that we've seen in the last few days on our troops."

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Washington Post Says Ukraine's Security Service Behind Assassination of Daria Dugina

WASHINGTON, October 23 (Sputnik) - The assassination of Daria Dugina was orchestrated by Ukraine's security service SBU, The Washington Post reported on Monday, citing unnamed officials.

Ukrainian operatives had installed components of a bomb that killed Dugina in a hidden compartment in a pet carrier, the report said, citing officials in the know.

The pet carrier was part of the luggage of the car that entered Russia a month before the assassination carrying a mother and her 12-year-old daughter, the Post said.

The report also said that since 2015, the CIA has spent tens of millions of dollars to transform Ukraine's special services into potent allies against Moscow.

The CIA has provided Ukraine with advanced surveillance systems, trained recruits at sites in Ukraine and the United States, built new headquarters for departments in Ukraine's military intelligence agency, and shared intelligence on a much greater scale that would have been unimaginable before 2014, the report said.

Ukraine's affinity for lethal operations, however, has caused unease among US officials and complicated its cooperation with the CIA, The Post reported.

Over the past 20 months, the SBU and the Ukrainian Defense Ministry's Main Directorate of Intelligence have carried out dozens of assassinations, including of war correspondent Vladlen Tatarsky at a cafe in St. Petersburg, the report said, citing Ukrainian and Western officials.

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