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Dwarf Planet Ceres Likely Made Own Organic Molecules, Scientists Say

After a close-up examination of the nearby dwarf planet Ceres, which orbits inside the Asteroid Belt---revealed the presence of organic compounds---scientists went looking for an explanation. Now, they think they can dismiss the idea that the molecules were deposited by asteroid impacts.

When NASA's Dawn spacecraft orbited Ceres between 2015 and 2018, it detected water in several forms on the planet, including vapor and brine in the crust, and spotted organic compounds called aliphatic molecules on the surface near a massive impact crater.

Research presented at the Geological Society of America's GSA Connects 2023 meeting earlier this week demonstrated how scientists have attempted to explain the presence of these molecules, which are similar to hydrocarbons like those found in fossil fuels here on Earth. Their research suggests the molecules were most likely developed on the planet itself, rather than deposited by asteroids carrying the materials.

Their research looked at whether organic molecules like those on the planet could exist after an asteroid strike, so they used a hypervelocity gun to reproduce in their lab the conditions of an asteroid strike on Ceres. They tested speeds of between 4,400-13,000 miles per hour and strike angles of between 15 and 90 degrees to the horizontal.

"The organics were initially detected in the vicinity of a large impact crater, which is what motivated us to look at how impacts affect these organics," Terik Daly, a planetary scientist at Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory who led the study, said in a statement. "We are finding that organics may be more widespread than first reported and that they seem to be resilient to impacts with Ceres-like conditions."

The scientists also combined data from two different sources on the Dawn spacecraft - its camera data and its spectrometer - and made a startling discovery.

"People had looked at the Dawn camera data and the Dawn spectrometer data separately, but no one else had taken the approach our team used to extrapolate the data from one instrument to another, which provided new leverage in our search to map and understand the origin of organics on Ceres," said co-author Jessica Sunshine of the University of Maryland.

"By capitalizing on the strengths of two different datasets collected over Ceres, we've been able to map potential organic-rich areas on Ceres at higher resolution. We can see a very good correlation of organics with units from older impacts and with other minerals like carbonates that also indicate the presence of water. While the origin of the organics remains poorly understood, we now have good evidence that they formed in Ceres and likely in the presence of water," noted Juan Rizos, an astrophysicist at Spain's Instituto de Astrofisica de Andalucia.

"There is a possibility that a large interior reservoir of organics may be found inside Ceres. So, from my perspective, that result increases the astrobiological potential of Ceres."

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NATO Poised to Adopt First Counter-Drone Doctrine

The NATO alliance is preparing its first-ever alliance-wide doctrine for dealing with drones on the battlefield, as the unmanned aerial vehicles continue to proliferate and find new applications in warfare.

According to a senior NATO adviser who spoke with US media this week, the effort has been in the works since the beginning of the year and is based on a 2019 handbook outlining the basics of counter-drone tactics for US forces.

Formally dubbed counter-unmanned aircraft systems (C-UAS), the doctrine will standardize how armies across the NATO alliance fight drones, which have become essential parts of modern warfighting. Armies today use aerial drones for reconnaissance, artillery spotting, search and rescue, and airstrikes, among other tasks, and are increasingly adopting ground and maritime drones as well.

It's unclear what the contents of the doctrine will be, but based on previous comments by NATO officials, it will aim to incorporate C-UASinto the wider field of air defense, rather than being considered in isolation.

While for many years US forces were the predominant users of combat drones as a cornerstone of the War on Terror, several recent conflicts have highlighted the increasing availability of drones for other powers and their potency in combat, including in Yemen, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Ukraine, and most recently Hamas' use of drones to destroy Israeli Merkava tanks.

After the Yemeni Houthis used kamikaze drones to get past US air defense systems and attack two major Saudi oil facilities in 2019, the Pentagon launched a major effort to develop both short-range air defense(SHORAD) systems and specifically counter-drone systems, ranging from vehicle modifications to handheld devices for soldiers and even directed-energy weapons on vehicles and warships.

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NASA Testing Moon Suits With Anti-Dust Force Fields

Ahead of its planned return to the moon in 2025 with the Artemis program, the US space agency NASA is testing out a new type of fabric for space suits that could "repel lunar dust on demand."

When American astronauts last visited the moon in the late 1960s and early 1970s, they found the ultra-fine lunar dust to be a constant problem. Made of silicates similar to that found in volcanic rock, lunar dust is abrasive, clinging to everything and caking on the bottoms of anything set on the ground, including astronauts' boots and the treads of moon rovers. After the

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Apollo astronauts returned to their spacecraft, the fine dust irritated their eyes and lungs in ways similar to what miners experience.

That's why this time around, NASA is looking for solutions to the pesky problem, especially since astronauts might be on the moon for a lot longer than three days, the longest any Apollo astronaut stayed there.

Called Liquid Metal Electrostatic Protective Textile (LiqMEST), the prototype fabric was developed at Hawaii Pacific University (HPU) in Honolulu with a $50,000 grant from NASA under the Lunar Surface Innovation Initiative (LSII), which kicked off in 2019. It will use electrostatic forces to push dust away from the fabric.

"The technology is designed to be stretchable, and when activated, it generates an electric field that repels lunar dust, preventing the dust from adhering to the LiqMEST fabric. This strategy can be applied both to spacesuits and fabric covers for lunar equipment during moon missions," Arif Rahman, an HPU assistant engineering professor who led the grant proposal, explained in a news release.

"When activated, it generates an electric field that repels lunar dust, preventing the dust from adhering," Rahman added. "This strategy can be applied both to spacesuits and fabric covers for lunar equipment during moon missions."

The Artemis program's space suits have already been selected and revealed, which were designed by Axiom Space.

NASA is testing out other dust mitigation measures as well, including an electrodynamic dust shield on the International Space Station.

Americans are expected to return to the moon in 2025 on the Artemis III mission, marking the first time humans have walked on Earth's only natural satellite since the Apollo 17 mission in 1972. The Space Launch System (SLS) rocket and the Orion spacecraft have been undergoing testing, including the uncrewed Artemis 1 mission in November 2022. Artemis II, a manned mission that will fly by the moon but not land on it, is scheduled for November 2024.

Rather than launch with its lunar lander, the Artemis program will use a Starship Human Landing System (HLS) pre-positioned in lunar orbit, to which the astronauts will have to relocate from the Orion spacecraft for their visit to the lunar surface.

Other nations also have plans to send manned missions to the moon, including Russia and China, and all three nations have iterated plans to establish permanent moon settlements in the coming decades.

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'Full Of Prejudice': China Blasts US Report About Nuclear Arsenal

China criticized a US Pentagon report about its military capabilities Friday, pointing out major differences in philosophy regarding foreign policy.

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China's Foreign Ministry sharply criticized a US report on China's nuclear capabilities Friday, amidst continued tension between the two major world powers.

"China firmly adheres to a nuclear strategy of self-defense," said spokesperson Mao Ning during a press conference. "We have always maintained our nuclear forces at the lowest level required for national security, and we have no intention of engaging in a nuclear arms race with any country."

The Pentagon's report, released Thursday, claimed China has 500 operational nuclear weapons in its arsenal, and also speculated that the Asian country is building greater capacity in non-nuclear arms.

"The United States report, like similar reports before it, ignores the facts, is full of prejudice and spreads the theory of the threat posed by China," added Mao.

Mao also stressed that, unlike the US, China maintains an official "no first use" policy regarding nuclear arms, meaning that China would only use nuclear weapons if another country used them against China. Meanwhile, the US remains the only country to have ever used nuclear arms in a military conflict, having killed at least 200,000 people in their dropping of nuclear bombs on Japan during World War II.

"As long as any country does not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against China, it will not be threatened by China's nuclear weapons," concluded Mao.

The concern over Chinese military capabilities comes amidst significant US funding for Ukraine's military and proposed funding for Israel. Meanwhile, China has not been involved in a major military conflict since the Sino-Vietnamese War in 1979.

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'Unwinnable From the Beginning': Two-Thirds of US Believe Afghan War Was Not Worth It - Poll

The survey shows Americans think the long war wasn't worth fighting and achieved nothing positive.

Amidst political dysfunction and a major crisis of institutional legitimacy in the United States, Americans are now beginning to question the role of the country's military in the world as well. That's the finding of new poll released this week regarding America's recently ended war in Afghanistan.

The survey, funded by a US media outlet and the University of Chicago, showed that 66% of Americans now believe the country's 20-year war in Afghanistan was not worth fighting. The results represent an increase from a similar poll two years ago which found 62% of Americans held this belief.

"It was unwinnable from the beginning," said Martin Stefen, 78, a Republican voter interviewed about the poll by US media.

"I don't think it was worth us staying over there," said Justin Campbell, 28. Campbell said he was unhappy the Taliban was back in power in the Middle Eastern country, but he acknowledged the US never had broad support there.

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The survey polled Americans about four proposed goals put forth by American leaders during the US's long occupation of Afghanistan. A plurality of respondents only believed that one of them had been achieved, with 46% saying people in Afghanistan responsible for the September 11, 2001 attacks had been brought to justice.
Pluralities of Americans said the war had failed to create a functioning Afghan government, eliminate the threat of so-called Islamic extremists in Afghanistan, or improve opportunities for women and girls in the country.
The poll comes amidst proposed military funding for US ally Israel after the October 7 surprise attack there by Hamas. On Thursday, during a rare address, US President Joe Biden argued for support for Israel as a matter of US security. Israel has long been a close US ally, assisting in military training for allied governments in Latin America and other regions.

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'Interesting Landing': UK Airport Closed as Plane Slides Off Runway During Storm - Photo

The incident occurred as a storm brings harrowing wind and rain across Europe.
A plane skidded off the runway at Leeds Bradford Airport in the UK on Friday, causing the airport to shut down for the day.
The incident occurred during the afternoon as the flight landed in the central UK city, with rain from Storm Babet creating hazardous conditions on the runway. The plane came to a stop in a grassy area off the tarmac, with no one injured during the incident.
"All passengers have now safely disembarked the aircraft," said a spokesperson for the airport. "We are working with the airline, relevant operations teams and emergency authorities to resolve this situation and return services safely as quickly as possible."
The airport is redirecting people scheduled to fly out of Leeds on Friday to nearby Manchester Airport. Leeds Bradford Airport is scheduled to resume operations on Saturday.
"TUI Airways is now fully assisting the AAIB [Air Accidents Investigation Branch] with their investigation," read a statement from the airline involved in the incident.
Witnesses and passengers sounded off on the event on social media, with one wryly posting, "Interesting landing," and saying they were "going to be here for a while." Another noted the aircraft's "bumpy hard landing."
"We hoped to be back home and having a cup of tea by 2.30pm," posted a passenger who had been delayed by the incident. "But we're still here, drenched, waiting for another bus into town… It's not a great end to the week."

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Special Counsel in Hunter Biden Case Set To Meet With Republican House Judiciary Panel

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Members of the House Judiciary Committee will grill Special Counsel David Weiss over alleged favoritism in a criminal trial against the US president's son.

Special Counsel David Weiss is scheduled to meet with members of the House Judiciary Committee next month as Republicans continue to probe the handling of Hunter Biden's criminal case.

The private meeting will take place November 7 after prodding from House Judiciary Committee chair Jim Jordan (R-OH) who has alleged favoritism in the handling of charges against US President Joe Biden's son. Jordan has long been a critic of the handling of the case, criticizingthe role of Attorney General Merrick Garland, among others.

Two IRS workers claiming to be whistleblowers have some forward in recent months claiming the investigation into Hunter Biden has been "slow-walked," claiming Weiss had purposefully delayed the trial in order to favor Hunter Biden. Weiss has denied the claim.

Hunter Biden was previously set to accept a plea deal in the case, pleading guilty to willfully failing to pay taxes, but the deal fell apart amidst questions over to what degree the deal would shield the president's son from future charges. Critics have alleged the deal was designed in an overly-favorable way to protect Hunter Biden from prosecution over several crimes.

Weiss has indicated charges may be filed against Hunter Biden in Washington, DC or California where the IRS workers say there is more evidence of tax crimes.

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US Sen. Fetterman Rejects Former Staff's Calls to Halt Israeli Violence

Former staffers for US Senator John Fetterman penned a letter this week urging him to support a ceasefire in Israel's ongoing campaign against Gaza. Spokespeople for Fetterman brusquely rejected the demand.

Opponents of Israel's bombing of civilians in Gaza turned their attention to US Senator John Fetterman (D-PA) this week, calling upon him to support a ceasefire.

"We, former staffers of the Fetterman for Senate campaign, write this letter to you with deep grief and anguish over the Palestinian and Israeli lives lost over the past two weeks," the letter to the Senator began. The former staffers penned the message anonymously, in fear of openly breaking the powerful political taboo against criticizing Israel in the US.

"Since October 7th, the Israeli government has cut off access to water, food, and electricity from Gaza; restricted internet access inside of Gaza and outside journalists from entering Gaza to observe the conditions and document the air siege; used white phosphorus on civilians, in violation of international law; displaced over one million people, half of them children, in Northern Gaza; and bombed innocent Palestinians in their homes, churches, hospitals, and along so-called evacuation corridors; all while blocking life-saving humanitarian aid from reaching Gazans."

"We call on you to use the position we elected you to to [sic]champion peace, not war; and demand a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel."

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Additionally, activists protested at Fetterman's office in Philadelphia on Thursday, also calling for a ceasefire. They claimed via a post on social media that they were expelled from the office. A spokesperson for Fetterman denied his staff had forced them to leave, but was unapologetic in rejecting the protesters' demands.

"The thing about being a staffer is that no one elected you to represent them," said Adam Jentleson in a post responding to the staffers' letter on the X platform, speaking for Senator Fetterman.

The response from Fetterman comes amidst multiple failed efforts to convince allegedly progressive Democrats in the United States to support a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza. A similar letter to Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) has also failed to achieve support for the measure. On Monday, Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) declared she would support continued US funding for Israel.

Israel's bombing campaign in Gaza has killed 3,785 people so far according to the Gaza Ministry of Health.

On October 7, after the failure of peaceful protest efforts in Gaza as recently as 2019, the Palestinian militant group Hamas launched a surprise attack that killed some 1,400 Israelis. The armed group has historically benefitted from funding from Netanyahu's government, which preferred for Hamas to represent Palestinians in Gaza rather than a more mainstream force that might have successfully pursued Palestinian statehood.

Israel has been engaged in violence against the country's indigenous Palestinian Arab population since large numbers of Zionist settlers arrived in the territory to establish the settler colonial regime in 1948.

That year, Zionists were given a green light by Western powers to establish Israel, wiping out more than 500 Palestinian villages and killing thousands of Palestinians as they sought to ethnically cleanse the territory. Albert Einstein called the groups responsible for the acts "terrorist organizations" and decried Israel's major conservative partyat the time as "closely akin… to the Nazi and Fascist parties."

Zionism is the ideology that Jewish people have a right to a state in the region they consider their historical homeland in West Asia. The ideology has guided the establishment and continuation of the modern-day country of Israel as well as the displacement and killing of Palestinian people in the territory.

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Report: Chinese Warships Present in Middle East Amidst Israeli Violence in Gaza

Reports coming out this week revealed that Chinese ships have been stationed in the Middle East since May. They were recently joined by the warships sent by the United States to the area last week, potentially increasing tensions.

As Israel continues its campaign of airstrikes in Gaza, new reports reveal the Chinese People's Liberation Army has stationed six warships in the Middle East this week.

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The PLA's 44th naval escort task force was in Oman conducting joint exercises with the country's navy during routine operations that have seen the ships in the area since May. The ships included a guided-missile destroyer, an integrated supply ship, and a frigate.
Meanwhile, the United States has sent ships to the eastern Mediterranean near Israel explicitly to protect US interests there, according to US National Security Council Spokesperson John Kirby.
"The president as commander-in-chief is going to do what he has to do to look after [US] national security interests," said Kirby to US media last week.
The statement came after President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Türkiye slammed the announced move, saying US military presence in the area would give Israel a green light to commit "massacres" in Gaza with implicit protection from the United States. The comment is significant as Türkiye and the United States are both NATO members.
As of Thursday, the Dwight D Eisenhower carrier strike group was en route to the region, with the deployment of the USS Mount Whitney, another command ship, also announced.
Israel's bombing campaign in Gaza has killed 3,785 people so far according to the Gaza Ministry of Health.

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Presidential Candidates DeSantis, Scott Propose Punishing Students for Palestine Support

Both Republican candidates promised they would crack down on support for Palestine and criticism of Israel among students if elected.
Polling in the United States has shown significant opposition to Israelamong younger Americans, but two Republican Party presidential candidates are promising to help put a stop to that if elected.
"You see students demonstrating in our country in favor of Hamas," said Gov. Ron DeSantis (R-FL) at a campaign event in Iowa, failing to cite any examples. "Remember, some of them are foreigners," he added.
DeSantis promised he'd cancel the student visas of such protesters and force them to leave the United States.
Sen. Tim Scott (R-SC) claimed he would deny Pell Grants to universities that failed to address "antisemitism." The charge is often used uncritically against people who support the rights of Palestinians or criticize Israel.

The US state of Florida has a large Jewish population; DeSantis has sought to appeal to them lately through actions such as sanctioning Iranian businesses in the state. He has also denounced protests in favor of Palestinians, calling them "a total disgrace."
"Something is really, really wrong with our education system," said DeSantis, criticizing student groups at Harvard in particular.

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Students at Harvard and Columbia have faced a doxing campaign for signing a statement of solidarity with Palestine. As a result, at least one law firm has revoked job offers for three students who signed the statement.
DeSantis is a veteran of the US Navy and provided legal counsel to US Navy Seals at the Guantanamo Bay detention center in Cuba. He has been accused of witnessing torture of detainees during his time there.
DeSantis is seen as the most viable alternative for the Republican nomination for President to former US President Donald Trump. He currently trails in most polls by around 30 to 40 points.

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Antagonism Toward Israel on Historic Uptrend Amid Migrant Influx - Ex-US Senator

WASHINGTON, October 21 (Sputnik) - Antagonism towards Israel is currently on a record rise and the influx of refugees will likely overwhelm the traditional support for it in the near future, former Virginia State Senator Richard Black told Sputnik.
"This passionate outpouring of support for Hamas, both in the US and in Europe, was a clear wakeup call for supporters of Israel. If globalists continue forcing western nations to accept waves of immigrants, Israel is likely to face diplomatic isolation within ten years," Black said. "Antagonism toward Israel is on an historic uptrend; soon, the influx of migrants will overwhelm traditional support for Israel."
Black believes that before the Hamas attacks, the world had nearly abandoned the long-held plan for a two-state Palestinian solution.
"But President Biden resurrected it by referring to the plan during his speech in Israel. Many world leaders have also resumed their support for the two-state plan for Palestine," he said. "The attack forced Saudi Arabia to indefinitely abandon the idea of normalizing relations with Israel."
Black also pointed out that the military activities of Israel against Gaza prompted global protests in support of the people of Gaza and Palestine.
"Simmering anger over Palestinian suffering burst open on streets and campuses across the world. In Chicago, soon after the attacks, throngs of angry pro-Hamas demonstrators packed city streets for as far as the eye could see," he noted. "They were undeterred by uniformly negative press reports condemning the bloody, indiscriminate attacks on Israeli civilians."
On October 7, Palestinian group Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip and breached the border, killing and seizing people in neighboring Israeli communities. 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 escalation of the conflict has resulted in thousands of people killed and injured on both sides.

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Biden on Tightrope as Global Opinion Turns Against Israel's 'Siege' of Gaza - Ex-Senator

WASHINGTON, October 21 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden is on a tightrope amid the global position turning against Israel's military operation in Gaza, former Virginia State Senator Richard Black told Sputnik.

"Gaza is totally blockaded, without food, water, electrical power, communications, or medical supplies. Some are questioning how long Israel's reprisals can continue before becoming excessive under the Law of Land Warfare," Black said. "More importantly, global opinion is turning against Israel's siege, which has already killed more than twice as many Arabs as the Israelis lost. Biden is on a tightrope."

Black went on to say that Biden now faces a sharp clash between two of the Democrat Party's most important blocs: Muslims and Jews.

"Their stark divide is a daunting political challenge for him," Black said.

Black pointed out that while in Israel, Biden tried to appeal to the two opposing factions.

"He expressed unwavering support for Israel, promised massive new military aid, and touted the naval fleet gathering offshore to prevent others from intervening on the side of Hamas," he said. "The president's emotional speech whipped up sympathy for the murdered Israelis, but it also urged Israel to recognize that most Palestinians were innocent."

Besides, Black added, Biden said he would provide Gaza with $100 million in humanitarian aid and said the US was arranging for relief supplies to cross from Egypt into the Gaza Strip.

"To satisfy major Jewish donors, the president must permit Israel to wage an unrestrained siege campaign for as long as possible," Black said.

However, Black pointed out, the siege will undoubtedly lead to the starvation, death by thirst, and aerial slaughter of thousands of Palestinians, most of them civilians.

"While the siege rages, the president must appear sympathetic toward innocent Palestinians in order to assuage the rising anger evident in pro-Palestinian demonstrations erupting around the world," he said.

Considering boosted military assistance to Israel, Black thinks, that "war hawks" hope this conflict will trigger a vast new Mideast war.

"Their reputations have suffered from a series of failed foreign ventures, including devastating wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Decades of unprovoked conflicts have damaged America's global reputation," he said. "Together with the failed war in Ukraine, the neocon's plans have weakened America's moral standing and shaken its finances."

Black also said the attack by Hamas gives neocons a chance to burnish their tarnished prestige.

"They hope to expand the war into Iran, Lebanon, and Syria, despite reliable intelligence that none of these were complicit in the attack by Hamas," he added. "Indeed, US intelligence showed that they were taken completely by surprise."

On October 7, Palestinian group Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip and breached the border, killing and seizing people in neighboring Israeli communities. 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

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White House Says Biden Did Not Mean to Confirm Wanting Israel to Delay Ground Invasion

WASHINGTON, October 21 (Sputnik) - The White House pushed back on the pool reporting that President Joe Biden said "yes" when asked if he wanted Israel to delay its ground invasion in Gaza until more hostages are freed.

"The president was far away. He didn't hear the full question. The question sounded like 'Would you like to see more hostages released?' He wasn't commenting on anything else," White House spokesperson Ben LaBolt said as quoted by a pool reporter on Friday.

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US Official to Visit Riyadh, Doha on Efforts to Disrupt Hamas Finance Support - Treasury

WASHINGTON, October 21 (Sputnik) - Senior US Treasury official Brian Nelson will be in Saudi Arabia and Qatar next week to work on efforts to disrupt Hamas' financial network, the Treasury Department said in a press release.

"Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Brian Nelson will travel to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and Doha, Qatar from October 23 – 26, 2023 to further US efforts to deny Hamas and other terrorist organizations the ability to raise and move funds for their violent acts," the release said on Friday.

While in Riyadh, Nelson will also meet with key Saudi national security official, the release said.

Nelson will also co-chair a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Terrorist Financing Targeting Center, a multilateral body created to strengthen cooperation among seven countries - Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and the United States, the release noted.

In Doha, the release said Nelson will meet with senior Qatari officials to discuss countering terrorist financing.

Nelson during both stops will also discuss the facilitation of humanitarian aid to people in Gaza, according to the report.

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Ex-US Congressman Amash Says Several Relatives Killed by Israeli Strike on Gaza Church

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WASHINGTON, October 21 (Sputnik) - Former US Congressman Justin Amash said in a statement that several of his relatives were killed as a result of an Israeli strike that impacted Saint Porphyrius Orthodox Church in Gaza.

"With great sadness, I have now confirmed that several of my relatives… were killed at Saint Porphyrius Orthodox Church in Gaza, where they had been sheltering, when part of the complex was destroyed as the result of an Israeli airstrike, " Amash said on Friday.

Amash, a Palestinian-American and the first Libertarian Party member to serve in the US Congress, shared a photo of two of the family members killed in the Israeli airstrike.

The Palestinian Christian community is "often forgotten" amid the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, Amash said.

Amash opted not to seek re-election in the House of Representatives in 2020, after having served in the lower chamber of Congress since 2011, where he helped found the House Freedom Caucus.

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Biden Says Hamas Attack Meant to Disrupt Effort to Normalize Israel-Saudi Ties

WASHINGTON, October 21 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden during remarks at a campaign fundraiser in Washington said he thinks the Palestinian Hamas movement carried out attacks against Israel earlier this month to intentionally disrupt US efforts to normalize ties between Saudi Arabia and Israel, according to the White House press pool.

"One of the reasons Hamas moved on Israel… they knew that I was about to sit down with the Saudis," Biden said on Friday as quoted by a reporter in the White House press pool. "Guess what? The Saudis wanted to recognize Israel."

Earlier this week, Biden said that the process of normalizing ties between Israel and Saudi Arabia is not dead but will take some time.

According to Biden, the Saudis, the Emiratis, and other Arab nations understand that their security and stability is enhanced if there's normalization of relations with Israel.

Saudi Arabia reportedly ended the normalization talks after the Hamas-Israel conflict broke out on October 7, although Biden has insisted that a deal is still possible.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman during his Sunday meeting with Blinken emphasized the need to rein in Israel's retaliatory response to Hamas' attacks and stop its military operations and siege on Gaza's civilian population.

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Biden Says Wants Israel to Delay Ground Invasion of Gaza Until More Hostages Free

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WASHINGTON, October 21 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden told reporters he wants Israel to delay its ground invasion of Gaza until more hostages held by Hamas militants are freed, according to a reporter in the White House press pool.

"Yes," Biden said on Friday when asked if he wanted Israel to delay its ground invasion of Gaza.

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Canadian Lawmakers Call on Trudeau to Back Ceasefire in Gaza - Letter

WASHINGTON, October 21 (Sputnik) - Dozens of Canadian lawmakers from multiple political parties urged Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to call for an immediate ceasefire in the conflict between Israel and Hamas that is unfolding in Gaza.

"Canada has long been a voice for peace. The longer this conflict goes on, the more innocent civilians will pay with their lives," the lawmakers wrote in a letter released on Friday. "We demand that Canada join the growing international call for an immediate ceasefire. Canada must act before more innocent children are killed."

The letter, which was signed by more than 30 parliamentarians from the Liberal, NDP, and Green parties, while condemning the October 7 Hamas attack that killed innocent civilians, also stressed the need to abide international law in responding.

"Finally, we call on Canada to strongly stand up for international law. International law is clear that innocent civilians and all those not taking part in the fighting must on no account be attacked and must be spared and protected. Canada must remind all parties to this conflict of their responsibilities in this regard," the letter said.

The Trudeau government has said Canada supports a two-state solution but also believes Israel has a right to defend itself.

On October 7, Palestinian group Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip and breached the border, killing and seizing people in neighboring Israeli communities. 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 escalation of the conflict has resulted in thousands of people killed and injured on both sides.

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US, EU to Explore Directing Revenues from Russian Assets to Support Ukraine - Statement

WASHINGTON, October 21 (Sputnik) - The United States (US) and the European Union (EU) plan to explore redirecting certain revenues derived from immobilized Russian assets to aid Ukraine's recovery, provided such actions align with existing laws, according to a summit statement.

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"As part of our efforts to aid Ukraine, in the short term, we will explore how any extraordinary revenues held by private entities stemming directly from immobilized Russian sovereign assets, where those extraordinary revenues are not required to meet obligations towards Russia under applicable laws, could be directed to support Ukraine and its recovery and reconstruction in compliance with applicable laws," the US and the EU said in a joint statement on Friday.

According to the statement, the US-EU Summit this year emphasized their strengthened unity, commitment to a beneficial transatlantic relationship, and their concerted efforts to address global challenges, including unwavering support for Ukraine.

"The United States and the European Union, together with other international donors, will continue to provide Ukraine with financing to help achieve these objectives, including to defend, repair, and rebuild its energy sector aligned with EU standards. We acknowledge Ukraine's commitment and progress in their reform efforts, and underline the strategic importance of its EU accession process," the statement said.

Furthermore, the US and EU, conveyed their intention to examine every potential approach to assist Ukraine in line with their respective legal systems and international law, the statement added.

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Biden Spoke With 2 American Hostages Released by Hamas - White house

WASHINGTON, October 21 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden spoke over the telephone with the two Americans released by Hamas and with their families, the Whited House announced in a release.

"This afternoon, the president spoke by phone with the family of the two Americans released today after being taken hostage by Hamas during the horrific terrorist assault against Israel," the White House said in the release on Friday.

Biden relayed that the two freed Americans will have the full support of the US government as they recover from the terrible ordeal, the release said.

Earlier on Friday, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that the two Americans are in the hands of the Israeli authorities, while ten other Americans remain unaccounted for.

The US government is committed to find and effect the release of the rest of the hostages, Blinken added.

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US Concerned by Canadian Diplomats Departure From India - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 21 (Sputnik) - The United States is alarmed by the departure of Canadian diplomats from India and is urging New Delhi to abide by its obligations under the

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Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a statement.

"We are concerned by the departure of Canadian diplomats from India, in response to the Indian government's demand of Canada to significantly reduce its diplomatic presence in India," Miller said in the statement on Friday.

The United States has urged the Indian government not to insist upon a reduction in Canada's diplomatic presence, the statement said.

"We expect India to uphold its obligations under the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, including with respect to privileges and immunities enjoyed by accredited members of Canada's diplomatic mission," the statement added.

Canada paused the operation of its Consulates General in three Indian cities following the withdrawal of more than 40 Canadian diplomats amid a diplomatic row over the murder of a Sikh activist.

On Thursday, Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly announced Canada had withdrawn 41 diplomats from India after their diplomatic immunity was threatened. According to the statement, India intended to carry out "a unilateral revocation of diplomatic privileges and immunities" of Canadian diplomats.

The Canadian governmental website states services are paused at the Consulates General of Bengaluru, Chandigarh and Mumbai. All services can be obtained at Canada's High Commissioner's office in New Delhi.

In September, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said that Ottawa was examining credible allegations linking Indian officials to the killing of Sikh separatist leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar. The activist, who was shot by two masked men in the Canadian province of British Columbia on June 18, campaigned for the creation of an independent Sikh state in India called Khalistan.

Following the incident, Canada expelled a high-ranking Indian diplomat allegedly linked with Indian foreign intelligence. In response, the Indian authorities ordered a senior Canadian diplomat to leave the country. The Indian Foreign Ministry later urged its citizens planning to visit or currently in Canada to exercise extra caution in view of the growing anti-India activities.

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Judge in Trump Election Interference Case Grants Temporary Pause on Gag Order - Filing

WASHINGTON, October 21 (Sputnik) - Federal Judge Tanya Chutkan, who oversees former President Donald Trump's election interference case in the US District Court for the District of Columbia, granted Trump a temporary pause on the gag order imposed on him, a court filing revealed.

"Upon consideration of defendant's opposed motion for stay pending appeal, request for temporary administrative stay, and memorandum in support, it is hereby ordered that the court's opinion and order is administratively stayed to permit the parties' briefing and the court's consideration of defendant's motion," Chutkan said in the court filing on Friday.

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Trump urged Chutkan to lift her gag order, arguing that it may be a violation of his right to free speech protected by the First Amendment of the US Constitution.

Chutkan gave federal prosecutors until October 25 to file any opposition to the motion and Trumps' legal team must file a reply by October 28 if they choose to do so, according to the file.

Earlier on Friday, the New York Supreme Court said in a ruling that Trump has been fined $5,000 for violating Judge Arthur Engoron's gag order by failing to remove an allegedly offensive post on social media about the court clerk.

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Biden Speech on Aid to Israel, Ukraine Embodied America Last Policy - Ex-US Diplomat

WASHINGTON, October 21 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden's nationally broadcast speech seeking broad support for stepping up already huge levels of US aid to Ukraine and Israel was another unthinking, reflexive expression of the globalist mindset that has been destroying the US economy and society over the past several decades in pursuit of crazed international goals, former State Department diplomat James Carden said.

"The speech will be remembered, if at all, as a perfect encapsulation of the 'America Last' mindset of our ruling class, which privileges foreign countries over middle and working class Americans," Carden said.

The US president said he was requesting that Congress fund renewed supplies of weapons and other aid to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's regime in Ukraine and he was linking that goal with pushing through a parallel enormous increased aid package to Israel as it prepares to invade Gaza to eliminate Hamas.

However, Carden pointed out that Biden paid no attention to the out of control crime, security, economic, social and drug crises now sweeping the United States.

Biden spent no time at all addressing the sufferings of the domestic communities that have been destroyed over the past three decades by free trade agreements, endless wars and an open border policy that has flooded the country with fentanyl and opioids which are killing what little remains of their communities, Carden said.

The almost-81-year-old president gave no hint of new thinking, moderation, compromise or flexibility in his address, Carden said.

"Biden's speech signals that there will be no rethinking US policy toward Ukraine or the Middle East," he said.

Instead, the strategic assumptions in the speech were absurd and obsolete, Carden also said.

Biden's comments "validated George Kennan's view that the United States is similar to one of those prehistoric monsters with a body as long as this room and a brain the size of a pin," Carden added.

The Biden administration is requesting from Congress funds in the amount of $106 billion, primarily for the defense needs of Ukraine and Israel, but also for strengthening the United States' position in the Indo-Pacific and for operations on the southern US border. Of the total

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sum, the administration is requesting more than $60 billion for Ukraine.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, October 21 (Sputnik) -

HAMAS RELEASES TWO AMERICANS

* The Palestinian movement Hamas released two captive US citizens on "humanitarian grounds," spokesman for Al-Qassam Brigades, a military wing of the Hamas, Abu Obaida, said on Friday.
* The Israeli government confirmed the release of two hostages from captivity in the Gaza Strip, the office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said.
* US President Joe Biden confirmed his administration secured the release of two American hostages held by the Palestinian Hamas movement after the October 7 attacks on Israel.

ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT

* The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) said on Friday that they eliminated a senior member of a unit in the Palestinian movement Hamas responsible for the "development of strategic weapons."
* If Israel enters the Gaza Strip with a ground operation, then another 10,000 to 15,000 Palestinians will die, Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh said.
* At least 30% of residential buildings in the Gaza Strip have been destroyed, damaged or rendered uninhabitable by strikes since October 7, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said.
* Russian Special Presidential Representative for the Middle East and Africa Mikhail Bogdanov will represent the country at the summit on Gaza in Cairo on October 21, the Russian Foreign Ministry told Sputnik.
* The number of Russians killed during the escalation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has increased to 20, Russian Ambassador to Israel Anatoly Viktorov said.

BIDEN SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING REQUEST

* President Joe Biden is asking Congress for $106 billion in extra funding to provide further support to Ukraine, Israel, the Indo-Pacific region and to strengthen security on the southern border, the White House Office of Management and Budget said in a document provided to Sputnik.
* The Biden administration has requested from Congress $14.3 billion in funds to meet Israel's defense needs, the summary of the Biden administration's Funding Request revealed.
* The Biden administration has requested from Congress $9.15 billion in funds for humanitarian aid for Ukraine, Israel and the Gaza Strip, the summary of the Funding Request revealed.

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SELECTING US HOUSE SPEAKER

* US Congressman Jim Jordan is again set to fail to secure enough support in the House of Representatives to win the speakership in the vote on Friday, as several Republican members continue to oppose his leadership bid.

* House Republicans rejected Jordan after losing the support of the conference during a secret ballot, Congressman Kevin McCarthy said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* Russia's air defense systems activated on Friday in Sevastopol, and a missile was downed over the Black Sea according to preliminary information, Governor Mikhail Razvozhayev said.

* Ukraine has lost more than 2,000 soldiers both in the Donetsk direction over the past week, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

* The delivery of long-range Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS) by the United States to Ukraine shows Washington's desire to escalate the conflict, Alexey Zaytsev, the deputy director of the Information and Press Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry, said.

BALTICCONNECTOR INCIDENT

* The Finnish foreign affairs minister has contacted China and Russia via diplomatic channels over the incident at the Balticconnector gas pipeline and informed Moscow about the seriousness of the problem and of the ongoing investigation, US media reported on Friday.

* The investigation into the damage done to the Balticconnector gas pipeline, which runs from Finland to Estonia under the Baltic Sea, is now focused on the role of the vessel Newnew Polar Bear under the flag of Hong Kong, the Finnish National Bureau of Investigation said.

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UPDATE - US Government Deficit Widens By 23% To $1.7Tln For Fiscal Year 2023 - Treasury

(Adds details, comments and context, paragraphs 3-7)

WASHINGTON, October 21 (Sputnik) - The US government deficit has ballooned by $320 billion, or 23%, to reach $1.7 trillion for the fiscal year 2023, the Treasury said in a statement on Friday.

"Year-end data from the September 2023 Monthly Treasury Statement of Receipts and Outlays of the United States Government show that the deficit for FY 2023 was $1.7 trillion; $320 billion higher than the prior year's deficit," said the statement jointly issued by Treasury Secretary Janet Yelle and Director of the Office of Management and Budget Shalanda D. Young.

The two officials noted that after atypically strong revenue growth in 2022, driven by record-high capital gains receipts and the historic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic, revenues in 2023 fell to 16.5 percent of gross domestic product, or GDP.

Individual and corporate receipts also returned to lower levels in line with projections made after the passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017.

"This drop in revenues was the primary driver of the increase in the deficit as a share of GDP,"

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the statement said. “By contrast, non-interest spending did not meaningfully contribute to the increase in the deficit as a share of GDP.”

The two officials also noted that the deficit remains more than $1 trillion lower than when President Joe Biden took office, thanks to the economic recovery that followed the administration's vaccination program for the COVID-19 breakout.

Bipartisan legislation signed by Biden-led Democrats with their rival Republicans is expected to reduce the deficit by a further $1 trillion over the next decade, the statement added.

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New York Court Fines Trump $5,000 for Violating Judge's Gag Order

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump has been fined $5,000 for violating Judge Arthur Engoron's gag order by failing to remove a disparaging post on social media about the judge's court clerk, the New York Supreme Court said in a ruling.

"Today, in open court, counsel for Donald Trump stated that the violation of the gag order was inadvertent and was an 'unfortunate part of the process that is built into the campaign structure,'" the ruling said. "Given defendant's position that the violation was inadvertent, and given that it is a first time violation, this Court will impose a nominal fine, $5,000, payable to the New York Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection."

On October 3, Trump posted a comment on social media about the principal clerk and was asked to remove the comment; Trump indicated that he did remove the comment about ten minutes later, the ruling said.

In addition, Judge Engoron said that he placed a limited gag order on all involved parties, prohibiting them from publicly discussing any members of the court staff as they would be considered "inappropriate" and violations would potentially lead to significant sanctions, the ruling said.

However, Trump removed the alleged offending post on Thursday night only in response to an email from the court, the ruling said.

Any subsequent breaches, regardless of intent, could result in more stringent penalties, including holding Trump in contempt of court and even possibly imprisoning him, it added.

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Blinken Says 2 US Citizens Released by Hamas in Hands of Israeli Authorities

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Friday that the two US citizens just released by Hamas are in the hands of the Israeli authorities, while the ten others remain unaccounted for.

"About an hour ago, two American citizens held by Hamas since October 7 were released,"

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Blinken said.
The secretary of state said that US diplomats at the embassy in Israel expect to meet with the two released Americans very soon.
"There are still ten additional Americans who remain unaccounted for in this conflict. We know that some of them are being held hostage by Hamas along with the estimated 200 other hostages held in Gaza," Blinken said.
The United States is committed to find and effect the release of the rest of the hostages, Blinken added.

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US House Republicans to Hold Speaker Election on Tuesday at 9:00 A.M. ET - Notice

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - The US House Republican conference will hold an election to select a new speaker nominee on Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. ET, according to an official notice sent Friday.
The notice lists an internal speaker election for 9:00 a.m. Tuesday in the Longworth House Office Building.
On Monday at 6:30 p.m. ET, House Republicans will hold a candidate forum to hear from the potential speaker nominees, the notice also said.
Earlier on Friday, House Republicans deselected Congressman Jim Jordan as their speaker nominee. Jordan failed to garner enough support to secure the speakership after three floor votes.

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US Government Deficit Widens By 23% To $1.7Tln For Fiscal Year 2023 - Treasury

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - The US government deficit has ballooned by $320 billion, or 23%, to reach $1.7 trillion for the fiscal year 2023, the Treasury announced on Friday.
“Year-end data from the September 2023 Monthly Treasury Statement of Receipts and Outlays of the United States Government show that the deficit for FY 2023 was $1.7 trillion; $320 billion higher than the prior year’s deficit,” the Treasury said in a statement.

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UNICEF Chief Believes Gaza War Has to Operate According to Humanitarian Laws

UNITED NATIONS, October 20 (Sputnik) - The ongoing war in Gaza has to work according to humanitarian laws, the UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell said on Friday.

"War has rules. International humanitarian law applies to all parties," Russell posted on X, formerly known as Twitter.

UNICEF calls for a ceasefire in Gaza and unimpeded humanitarian access, she added.

On Wednesday, Russell said that more than 300,000 children have been forced to flee their homes since the conflict between Israel and Palestine escalated.

On October 7, the Palestinian movement Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip, prompting Israel 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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Biden to Host Western Hemisphere Leaders at White House on November 3 - White House

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden will host the Western Hemisphere leaders in Washington on November 3 to discuss ways to deepen economic integration and bring about economic growth, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said on Friday.

"President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. will host leaders from the Western Hemisphere at the White House on November 3, 2023, during the inaugural Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity Leaders' Summit," Jean-Pierre said in a statement.

Biden will reaffirm during the summit the United States' commitment to work together with its partners to deepen economic integration in the Western Hemisphere, drive more inclusive and sustainable economic growth and tackle the underlying economic drivers of irregular migration, the statement said.

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Over 80 Nobel Laureates, Families Petition for Release of Child Hostages in Gaza

UNITED NATIONS, October 20 (Sputnik) - More than 80 Nobel Prize winners and families of the Israeli hostages held in Gaza have signed a petition advocating for the release of the kidnapped children, the Government Press Office (GPO) of Israel said on Friday.

"Let us not surrender to the moral exclusion of the world. The act of holding young children in

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captivity constitutes a war crime, a grievous offense against humanity itself. Our moral call is resolute: Let The Children Go," the petition signed by 86 Nobel Prize winners said.

Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations Gilad Erdan, joined by Nobel Prize laureate Professor Daniel Kahneman and family members of the Israeli hostages, is set to deliver the petition to US Ambassador Robert Wood.

Wood will subsequently deliver it to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

The petition says that Hamas abducted hundreds of Israeli soldiers and civilians during the assault, including children ranging from 6 months to 18 years old.

The petition warns that even in the face of the "dubious" assumption that Hamas is providing basic necessities to the kidnapped children, the reality is that "children in captivity are left vulnerable, and their time in such conditions is finite."

This comes after a large-scale attack by the Gaza-based Palestinian movement Hamas on Israel earlier this month, which led to thousands killed and injured on both sides. In response, Israel declared a state of war with Hamas, imposing a complete blockade on the Gaza Strip, affecting water, electricity, and food supplies.

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Biden Confirms Securing Release of 2 American Hostages Held by Hamas

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden on Friday confirmed his administration secured the release of two American hostages held by the Palestinian Hamas movement after the October 7 attacks on Israel.

"Today, we have secured the release of two Americans taken hostage by Hamas during the horrific terrorist assault against Israel on October 7," Biden said in a press release. "We have not ceased our efforts to secure the release of those who are still being held."

He also thanked the government of Qatar and Israel for their partnership in this work.

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Congressman Comer Says US House Oversight Committee Has Proof of $200K Payment to Biden

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - US House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer said on Friday that the panel has obtained evidence Joe Biden received a $200,000 direct payment from his brother James Biden in March 2018 for his brokering of an investment from the Middle East.

"Bank records obtained by the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability have revealed a $200,000 direct payment from James and Sara Biden to Joe Biden in the form of a personal check," Comer said in a video posted on X (formerly Twitter).

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According to Comer, on March 1, 2018, Biden received a check from his brother James for $200,000, which he in turn received from a near-bankrupt rural hospital operator company, Americore.

James Biden signed the check to his brother as a "loan repayment" on the same day he received this amount from Americore, Comer said.

Before March 2018, Americore loaned James Biden $600,000 in the hope that Joe Biden could 'open doors' and obtain investment from the Middle East that could save the company, Comer added.

In September, the House Oversight Committee, citing bank records, found that Hunter Biden in 2019 received two payments wired from China totaling $260,000 with President Joe Biden's Delaware home listed as the beneficiary address.

Also in September, the House Oversight Committee subpoenaed James Biden's personal and business bank records as well as those of the president's son Hunter, related to their dealings with China.

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Russian UN Draft Resolution Aims to Prevent Arms Race in Space - Official

UNITED NATIONS, October 20 (Sputnik) - Russia's United Nations draft resolution makes sure that all options in prevention of arms race in space are dealt with but the countries have to deal with their differing opinions within the group, the Russian Foreign Ministry Non-Proliferation and Arms Control Department Deputy Director Kosntantin Vorontsov said on Friday.

"The proposal by Russia is aimed at ensuring continuous and successive consideration of all aspects of the prevention of... arms race in outer space and doing this inclusively, comprehensively and in line with established practice," Vorontsov told the First Committee members on Disarmament.

The countries working in a group on this issue, however, are in disagreement and differentiate in their opinions, he added.

During the past meetings at the UN's First Committee, Vorontsov also voiced out his concerns over the US military biological program and said implementation in Ukraine with the support of the Defense Department and affiliated entities requires close attention.

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Canadian Forces Preparing for Possible Evacuation of Nationals From Lebanon - Official

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) are preparing a contingency plan in the event that a spillover of the Israel-Gaza war to neighbouring Lebanon requires the evacuations of nationals and permanent residents, Major General Darcy Molstad

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said on Friday.

"There's nothing that's telling us that something's going to happen in Lebanon right now... but we're making plans, and preparations, and coordination to be prepared to react if we have to, so that we can do it quickly in order to save Canadian lives," Molstad said during a briefing over the situation in Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank.

That assessment was made following CAF's continued assessment of all intelligence and activities coming from the Lebanese-Israeli border, as well as the reactions of Hezbollah to the ongoing situation, Molstad said, nonetheless noting that Canada wants to be ready for any eventuality.

Global Affairs Canada (GAC) Assistant Deputy Minister, Consular, Security, and Emergency Management Julie Sunday further noted that 14,500 Canadian citizens and permanent residents are currently registered as being in Lebanon.

Sunday reminded Canadians in Lebanon and those who might be planning on traveling there that Ottawa updated its travel advisory for the country to "avoid all travel," and the governments best advice for them would be to leave while commercial flights remain available.

"It is entirely undesirable to have to be in a situation where an assisted departure or an evacuation is required," Sunday said. – "Those are very difficult," she added.

Sunday's advice echoes that made earlier this week by Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs Melanie Joly who called on Canadians to leave due to the increasingly volatile situation around the crisis in Gaza.

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Jordan Ousted as House Republican Speaker Nominee After Losing Party's Support - McCarthy

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - US House Republicans ousted Congressman Jim Jordan as the party's nominee for speaker after losing the support of the conference during a secret ballot, Congressman Kevin McCarthy said on Friday.

"Unfortunately, Jim is no longer going to be the nominee," McCarthy said after the internal vote. "We'll have to go back to the drawing board."

Earlier on Friday, Jordan failed to secure enough votes to become speaker after three floor votes.

House Republicans will reportedly hold a candidate forum on Monday, with the intention of holding another floor vote on Tuesday. Congressman Kevin Hern released a statement on Friday after the vote announcing his bid for speaker.

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Biden Says First 20 Trucks With Aid Will Get Through to Gaza in Next 24-48 Hours

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WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Friday that he believes the first 20 trucks carrying humanitarian aid from Egypt to Gaza will begin flowing in within the next 24 to 48 hours.

"I believe that within the next 24 to 48 hours, the first 20 trucks will come across," Biden told reporters.

Biden explained that there was a delay with deliveries of humanitarian assistance to Gaza because the Egyptian had to fix the road connecting Egypt to Gaza.

The US president emphasized that his Egyptian counterpart gave assurances to allow humanitarian aid to flow into Gaza from Egypt through the Rafah border crossing.

Media reported that more than 200 trucks laoded with aid are waiting to cross into Gaza to deliver the assistance to Palestinians.

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US Lawmaker at Protest in Washington Says More Money for Gaza War 'Not Under Our Watch'

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - Cori Bush, a Congresswoman who introduced a resolution calling for a ceasefire between Israel and Gaza, joined a mass protest in Washington, DC against Israel's military operations in the Gaza Strip, a Sputnik correspondent reported on Friday.

"We are calling for an end to the violence, we are calling for a ceasefire now," Bush said from the stage.

Thousands of people have gathered on the National Mall in the heart of Washington, DC and steps away from the Capitol, to which US President Joe Biden sent a request earlier in the day for $14.3 billion in support for Israel.

Bush denounced this request, saying "Not under our watch, not again."

Other speakers have also taken to the stage talking about the violence in the Middle East and the need for ceasefire.

Some speakers are crying and many in the crowd are crying.

The protest started at noon and in half an hour participants, the majority of whom are Muslims, held a mass prayer to honor the victims of the latest escalation of Israel-Gaza violence.

At the front of the lawn, hundreds of flowers have been laid as a symbolic memorial honoring the victims. Many are holding flags and banners saying "Ceasefire Now," "Free Gaza," and "Stop Israel."

The protest is peaceful with lots of local and international media covering it.

As the protest kicked off, police vehicles and officers appeared on the adjacent road, blocking the way to the Capitol building.

On Wednesday, protesters calling for an Israel-Gaza ceasefire entered the Cannon House Office Building, with over 400 arrested.

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

Biden Says Will Discuss With EU Officials Steel And Aluminum Imports, Critical Minerals

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Friday that he will discuss with EU officials matters concerning steel and aluminum imports and ongoing negotiations between the two parties on critical minerals.

Biden is hosting European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen at the White House for their second US-EU Summit.

"We look forward to discussing how we're going to continue to seize the full potential of our partnership including working together to drive the clean energy transition, to address unfairly traded steel and aluminum imports," Biden said during remarks ahead of the meeting.

The meeting will also seek to advance progress on critical mineral negotiations that are underway and include discussions on artificial intelligence, Biden added.

Moreover, Biden said the two sides will also discuss the situations in Ukraine and Israel.

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UN on Israeli Strike Near Greek Orthodox Church Says Holy Sites Must Be Protected

UNITED NATIONS, October 20 (Sputnik) - The United Nations believes that all Holy Sites should be protected in context of a deadly strike to a adjacent building to the Greek Orthodox Church in Gaza, the UN spokesperon Farhan Haq said on Friday.

"We believe all holy sites should be protected at all times and call on all parties not to involve them in the conflict," Haq told Sputnik.

Greece's foreign ministry expressed "deep sorrow" on Friday over a deadly strike on a building adjacent to the Greek Orthodox Church of Saint Porphyrius in Gaza.

On Thursday, Greek media reported that the church had been destroyed in the Israeli bombing, which left dozens of people injured and some killed. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem condemned the attack on the church, calling it a war crime.

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Two American Hostages Confirmed Released From Gaza - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) – Fox News confirmed on Friday that Hamas has released two American hostages from Gaza.

Earlier in the day, a military wing of Hamas, Abu Obaida, announced that it had decided to release two captive US citizens on "humanitarian grounds."

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Russia Seeks to Further Develop CSTO Cooperation With UN, Regional Organizations -Nebenzia

UNITED NATIONS, October 20 (Sputnik) - Russia intends to continue strengthening the capacity and authority of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and further develop CSTO's cooperation with the United Nations, Russian Ambassador to the world body Vassily Nebenzia said on Friday.

"We intend to continue to work to strengthen the CSTO, strengthen its capacity and authority on the international stage. We advocate for further development of the cooperation between the CSTO and the UN," Nebenzia said during a meeting of the UN Security Council.

The Russian ambassador noted that the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) continues to cooperate on maintaining peace and stability, and maintaining that goal is one of its key priorities.

Nebenzia noted Russia's support to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's contribution to conflict prevention and expressed Moscow's commitment to working with various regional organizations such as the African Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

By contrast, the European Union has produced mainly destructive initiatives in recent years, including not bringing anything positive to the conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh and Ukraine, Nebenzia said.

"It is clear that Brussels is only motivated by geopolitical ambitions," Nebenzia said.

The ambassador also pointed out that NATO, like the European Union, has a similar neocolonial approach to its operations.

"The NATO operations are characterized by many civilian casualties, the destruction of infrastructure and economic damage to de-jure or de-facto collapsed states," Nebenzia said.

Moreover, NATO's policy has for many years been focused on effecting a strategic defeat of Russia, Nebenzia added.

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Thousands Gather in Washington DC to Protest Israel Activities in Gaza

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) -Thousands of people have gathered at the National Mall in Washington DC to protest against the military activities of Israel in the Gaza Strip, a Sputnik correspondent reported from the scene on Friday.

Several thousand protesters, are currently gathering on the lawn just blocks away from the Capitol building where US President Joe Biden sent a request earlier in the day asking for more than $14 billion in support for Israel.

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The protest kicked off at noon, however, more and more people are joining the crowd.
At the beginning of the lawn, there are hundreds of flowers as a symbolic memorial honoring the victims. Many are holding flags and banners saying "Ceasefire Now", "Free Gaza, "and "Stop Israel."
The protest is peaceful with lots of local and international media covering it.

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China Urges Adherence to Peaceful Uses of Outer Space - Deputy Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, October 20 (Sputnik) - China urges states to adhere to the international consensus on peaceful uses of outer space, but notes with regret that some states obsessed with great power competition have declared outer space to be a warfighting domain, Chinese Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations Shen Jian said on Friday.
"First, we should adhere to the international consensus on the peaceful uses of outer space, as global common outer space bears on the well-being of all humanity. Regrettably, certain countries, obsessed with great power competition and cold war mentality, have pursued dominance in outer space through declaring outer space as a warfighting domain, accelerating the buildup of space military capabilities, and even planning to deploy missile defense weapons in outer space" Shen said.
The Chinese diplomat made the remarks during a meeting of the UN General Assembly First Committee.
Shen also said that a negotiation on a legally binding instrument should be advanced in order to prevent an arms race in outer space.
China and Russia had jointly submitted a draft treaty to the Conference on Disarmament, seeking to prevent deploying weapons in outer space and to address the potential threat or actual use of force against objects in space.

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No New Weapon Systems for Ukraine Included in Biden's Request for Funds - Sullivan

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden's new supplemental request to Congress to fund US national security needs for 2024 does not include any new weapon systems for Ukraine at present, but that could change in the future, White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Friday.
"This supplemental does not specifically answer the question as to which weapon systems will be provided to Ukraine in terms of additional capacities that haven't been provided, but we'll stay closely aligned with the Congress and consult with them as we always do if indeed we introduce a new capability in Ukraine," Sullivan told reporters.

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Sullivan pointed out that the funding and authorities the Congress previously approved have nearly run out, and congressional action is needed to ensure that the United States can continue to meet Ukraine's defense and security needs.

The White House Office of Management and Budget said in a document provided to Sputnik that Biden is asking Congress for nearly $106 billion in funding to provide further support to Ukraine, Israel, the Indo-Pacific region as well as to fund operations on the US southern border.

The supplemental request seeks $61.4 billion for Ukraine, half of which is to provide Kiev with weapons and replenish US military stocks.

The supplemental request also seeks $14.3 billion for Israel, which includes $10.6 billion for security assistance such as air and missile defense support, industrial base investments and replenishment of US weapons stocks.

In addition, the supplemental request seeks $2 billion for Indo-Pacific security assistance and another $2 billion to counter China's financing in developing countries.

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Jim Jordan Fails in Third Bid to Secure US House Speakership, Opposition Grows

(Update: edits headline, adds para 5, details throughout)

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - US Congressman Jim Jordan again failed to secure enough support in the House of Representatives to win the speakership in the first vote held on Friday, as more than two dozen Republican members now oppose his leadership bid.

House lawmakers held their third floor vote this week in an effort to fill the vacant speakership, after ousting Congressman Kevin McCarthy from the role earlier this month. Jordan received 194 votes, with 25 House Republicans voting for other party members; Jordan needed 214 votes to win the speakership.

House Republicans maintain a slim majority in the lower chamber of Congress, but have failed to unify support behind Jordan, whom the conference nominated to run for the speakership. House Democrats have rallied their support around Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, who received a plurality of votes at 210.

The House of Representatives is unable to conduct normal legislative business until they elect a new speaker. Alternatively, some lawmakers have proposed empowering temporary speaker pro tempore Patrick McHenry, although other lawmakers have questioned the constitutionality of such a move.

House lawmakers went into recess following the floor vote. House Republicans are expected to meet for a closed-door conference meeting Friday afternoon.

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US Imposes Non-Proliferation Sanctions on Entities in China, Hong Kong - Treasury Dept.

(Updates with additional details in paras 3-5)
WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - The United States has imposed sanctions on entities in China and Hong Kong for allegedly being involved in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the US Treasury Department announced on Friday.
The Office of Foreign Assets Control added Beijing Luo Luo Tech Development Limited, Changzhou Utek Composite Co., Ltd., and General Technology Ltd. to its list of designated entities pursuant to Executive Order 13382 from 2005 on Blocking Property of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferators and Their Supporters, the Treasury Department said.
State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a statement that the three entities from China have allegedly worked to supply missile-applicable items to Pakistan's ballistic missile program.
More specifically, General Technology Limited supplied Pakistan with brazing materials used to join components in ballistic missile rocket engines and in the production of combustion chambers, while Beijing Luo Luo Technology Development Co Ltd. has worked to supply mandrels and other machinery, which can be used in the production of solid-propellant rocket motors and can be controlled by the Missile Technology Control Regime, Miller said in the statement.
Changzhou Utek Composite Company Ltd. has supplied Pakistan since 2019 with D-glass glass fiber, quartz fabric and high silica cloth, all of which have applications in missile systems, according to the statement.

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Canada Committed to a Two States Solution for Israeli-Palestinian Conflict - Trudeau

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) – Canada remains committed to its stance on the necessity of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by the creation of two viable and independent states, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Friday.
"Canada remains firm and steadfast in our commitment to a two-state solution. The world and the region need a peaceful, safe, prosperous, viable Palestinian state alongside a peaceful, prosperous, democratic, safe Israeli state," Trudeau said during a press conference.
Canada has always called for two-state solutions, Trudeau continued, and will pursue its goal of achieving said outcome.
The Prime Minister however stressed Israel's right to self-defense and pointed the "terrorist" nature of Hamas, which has been labeled as such by the Canadian government for several years now.
"They [Hamas] launched one of the most horrific terrorist attacks on civilians in history," Trudeau said, adding that the groups actions cannot be condoned in any way.
On October 7, Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip, prompting Israel to declare a state of war the following day and launch retaliatory

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strikes. The Israeli army has also ordered more than 1 million Gazans to relocate from the north in preparation for a massive ground offensive. The exclave has been without food, water or fuel supplies for a week. The conflict has left thousands of people dead and injured on both sides.

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Jim Jordan Set to Fail in Third Bid to Secure US House Speakership, Voting Continues

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - US Congressman Jim Jordan is again set to fail to secure enough support in the House of Representatives to win the speakership in the first vote on Friday, as several Republican members continue to oppose his leadership bid.

House lawmakers are holding their third floor vote this week in an effort to fill the vacant speakership, after ousting Congressman Kevin McCarthy from the role earlier this month.

House Republicans hold a slim majority in the lower chamber of Congress, but have failed to unify support behind Jordan, whom the conference nominated to run for the speakership. House Democrats have rallied their support around Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries.

The House of Representatives is unable to conduct normal legislative business until they elect a new speaker. Alternatively, some lawmakers have proposed empowering speaker pro tempore Patrick McHenry, although other lawmakers have questioned the constitutionality of such a move.

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White House Asks Congress for $106Bln to Support Ukraine, Israel, US Border, Other Matters

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden is asking Congress for nearly $106 billion in extra funding to provide further support to Ukraine, Israel, the Indo-Pacific region, as well as to fund operations on the US southern border, the White House Office of Management and Budget said in a document provided to Sputnik on Friday.

The supplemental package includes $61.4 billion for Ukraine, half of which is to provide Kiev with weapons and replenish US military stocks, White House said.

Moreover, $14.3 billion is for Israel, which includes $10.6 billion for security assistance such as air and missile defense support, industrial base investments and replenishment of US weapons stocks, according to the document.

There's also a request of $6.4 billion to fund operations on the US southern border, $2 billion for Indo-Pacific security assistance, and another $2 billion to counter China's financing in developing countries, the White House said.

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

New York Judge Threatens to Imprison Trump for Defying Partial Gag Order - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - New York Judge Arthur Engoron said that former President Donald Trump had not removed an offending social media post about his clerk and demanded an explanation as to why he should not sanction or imprison Trump, NBC reported on Friday.

"I ordered him [Trump] to remove the post immediately and he said he did take it down," Engoron said. "Despite this order, last night I learned the offending post was never removed from a website. This is a blatant violation of the gag order. … Incendiary untruths can and have led to serious physical harm. I will now allow the defendant to explain why this should not end up with serious sanctions or I could possibly imprison him."

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US Announces New Balkans-Related Sanctions on Milorad Dodik's Children - Treasury

(Adds quote in para 2, details in paras 4-6)

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) – The United States imposed new Balkans-related sanctions on Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik's children, Gorica and Igor Dodik, as well as on companies affiliated with them, the US Department of the Treasury said on Friday.

"Today, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control is designating two individuals and four entities that form a core part of Specially Designated National and Republika Srpska (RS) President Milorad Dodik's patronage network. Members of this network, which include Dodik's adult children, facilitate Dodik's ongoing corruption in Bosnia and Herzegovina's RS entity, allowing him to siphon public funds from the RS and enrich himself and his family at the expense of BiH citizens and functional governance in the country," the department said in a press release.

The United States has designated Restoran Agape Gorica Dodik i Ivana Dodik s.p. Banja Luka, Agro Voce d.o.o. Laktasi, Fruit Eco d.o.o. Gradiska, and Global Liberty d.o.o. Laktasi for being linked to either Gorica or Igor Dodik.

The US Treasury alleges that as a member of Milorad Dodik's family, Igor was directly involved in his father's purported corruption schemes, including in bribery of opposition politicians and offering them political appointments in exchange for critical information and election observer positions at polling locations.

Gorica has allegedly been involved in handling political and business activities for her father, including owning several entities that receive substantial government funding at Dodik's direction, the release stated.

The United States designated both Gorica and Igor for having materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of, Dodik pursuant to Executive Order 14033 from 2021 on Blocking Property and Suspending

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Entry Into the United States of Certain Persons Contributing to the Destabilizing Situation in the Western Balkans, the release said.

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Biden Asks Congress for $6.4Bln to Fund US Border Security Operations - White House

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden is requesting from Congress $6.4 billion to fund US border security operations through 2024, the Office of Management and Budget said in a Funding Request on Friday.

Some $4.4 billion will go toward funding immigrant holding facilities and for reimbursement of Defense Department support at the southern border, the document said.

An additional $204 million is sought for the Justice Department's effort to collect DNA from migrants at the border and $1.9 billion to support eligible migrants and unaccompanied migrant children, the document said.

The supplemental request totals nearly $106 billion, which includes $61.4 billion for Ukraine and $14.3 billion for Israel, according to document.

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Biden Admin. Asks Congress for $9.15Bln for Humanitarian Aid for Ukraine, Israel - OMB

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration has requested from Congress $9.15 billion in funds for humanitarian aid for Ukraine, Israel and the Gaza Strip, the summary of the Funding Request from the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) revealed on Friday.

"Humanitarian assistance: $9.15 billion, for the State Department, to provide humanitarian assistance for Ukraine, Israel, Gaza and other needs," the document said.

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Biden Admin. Requests $14.3Bln in Additional Funds for Israel - White House

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration has requested from Congress $14.3 billion in funds to meet Israel’s defense needs, the summary of the administration’s Funding Request revealed on Friday.

"$10.6 billion for DOD [US Department of Defense], including air and missile defense support, industrial base investments and replenishment of DOD stocks," the document said.

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In addition, the Biden administration is seeking $3.7 billion for the State Department, including for "foreign military financing and embassy support," the document said.

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Biden Asks Congress for $2Bln for Indo-Pacific Security,$2Bln to Counter China-White House

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden is asking Congress to approve $2 billion for Indo-Pacific security and another $2 billion to counter China's financing in developing countries, the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) said in a document released on Friday.

The supplemental request totals nearly $106 billion, which includes $61.4 billion for Ukraine and $14.3 billion for Israel, according to the OMB.

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Biden Request to Congress Invests Over $50Bln in US Defense Industrial Base - White House

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - The supplemental request by President Joe Biden to Congress invests more than $50 billion in US defense industrial base, the Office of Management and Budget said in a letter to US House Speaker Pro Tempore Patrick McHenry on Friday.

"This supplemental request invests over $50 billion in the American defense industrial base - ensuring our military continues to be the most ready, capable and best equipped fighting force the world has ever seen," the letter said. "The funding will expand production lines, strengthening the American economy and creating new American jobs."

The Biden administration is partnering with the US defense industry to increase the United States' capacity and meet its needs as well as those of its allies at present and in the future, the letter said.

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Biden Admin. Asks Congress for $61.33Bln in Additional Funds for Ukraine - White House

WASHINGTON, October 19 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden is requesting from the legislative an additional $61.33 billion for Ukraine, the Office of Management and Budget said in a letter to US House Speaker Pro Tempore Patrick McHenry on Friday.

"For an additional amount for 'Operation and Maintenance, Marine Corps,' $61,336,000, to remain available until September 30, 2024, to respond to the situation in Ukraine and for related

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expenses: Provided, That such amount is designated by the Congress as an emergency requirement pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(A) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, as amended: Provided further, That such amount shall be available only if the President designates such amount as an emergency requirement pursuant to section ," the letter said.

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US Congresswoman Greene Says Security Bolstered Around Capitol Amid Pro-Palestine Protests

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - Law enforcement at the US Capitol is bolstering security on Friday amid the potential for pro-Palestine protests on its grounds, according to a statement shared by Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene.

"Due to the potential for demonstration activity on US Capitol Grounds, a heightened security posture and an increased police presence will be in place on Friday, October 20, 2023," the Office of the Sergeant at Arms said in a statement.

The US Campaign for Palestinian Rights listed a "mass mobilization" in support of Palestinians for Friday at 12:00 p.m. ET on the National Mall. There are also a number of other Pro-Palestine protests scheduled in cities around the United States.

Earlier this month, Palestinian Hamas fighters launched a surprise attack on Israel, sparking a state of war in the country which has since killed and injured thousands of people.

On Wednesday, hundreds of pro-Palestine protestors were arrested at demonstrations at the US Capitol. Advocacy group Jewish Voices for Peace entered Cannon House Office Building to demand a ceasefire.

"We have been warned that the terrorists [sic] sympathizers that waged the insurrection in Cannon building on Wednesday may be coming back today," Greene said in a statement. "Will there be a suicide bomber in the crowd?"

Greene has been a vocal critic of the protests and condemned lawmakers who supported them, including Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib. Greene said that she is filing a resolution to censure Tlaib for her support of the demonstrations.

The bolstered security measures on Friday are intended to ensure continued operations throughout the Capitol campus, the Sergeant at Arms' statement said. The House of Representatives is meeting in an attempt to elect a new speaker.

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US Imposes Non-Proliferation Sanctions on Entities in China, Hong Kong – Treasury Dept.

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WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) – The United States imposed sanctions on entities in China and Hong Kong for being allegedly involved in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the US Department of the Treasury announced on Friday.

The Office of Foreign Assets Control added Beijing Luo Luo Tech Development Limited, Changzhou Utek Composite Co., Ltd., and General Technology Ltd. to its list of designated entities pursuant to Executive Order 13382 from 2005 on Blocking Property of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferators and Their Supporters, the Treasury said.

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UNGA Emergency Session on Mideast Won't Take Place Monday, to Be Set in Due Time - Brazil

UNITED NATIONS, October 20 (Sputnik) - The UN General Assembly's emergency session on the Israel-Gaza conflict will not convene on October 23 and will be scheduled in due course, the Brazilian mission to the UN said on Friday.

Brazil holds the UNSC presidency during the month of October. The session was called after the United States vetoed a draft UNSC resolution on the Israel-Gaza conflict.

"We double checked with the office of the President of the General Assembly and we learnt that the formal meeting of the 10th Emergency Session of the General Assembly will *not* take place on Monday October 23rd. The date will be set by the office of the President of the General Assembly in due course," the statement said.

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US Announces New Balkans-Related Sanctions on Milorad Dodik's Kids - Treasury Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) – The United States imposed new Balkan-related sanctions on President of Republika Srpska Milorad Dodik's kids, Gorica and Igor Dodik, as well as on companies affiliated with them, the US Department of the Treasury said on Friday.

The United States has designated Restoran AGAPE Gorica Dodik i Ivana Dodik s.p. Banja Luka, AGRO VOCE d.o.o. Laktasi, FRUIT ECO d.o.o. Gradiska, and Global Liberty d.o.o. Laktasi for being linked to either Gorica or Igor Dodik.

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US Urges Chad to Investigate Deadly Violence During October 2022 Protests - State Dept.

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WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - The United States has urged Chad to investigate the killings of four demonstrators outside the US Embassy in N'Djamena on October 20, 2022 and detentions of other protesters, the State Department said on Friday.

"The United States renews its call for full investigations of these events and accountability for anyone responsible for human rights violations and abuses," spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a statement.

According to the State Department, Chad's security forces killed the four demonstrators and used lethal force against other protesters during and after the demonstrations that broke out a year ago over an election delay. Miller pointed out that US representatives have raised the issue in multiple meetings with senior Chadian officials.

"Despite assurances that the matter had been handed over to the Public Prosecutor, we have seen no sign that the Government of Chad is taking action to investigate or bring the perpetrators to justice," he said.

Miller noted that the US is also unaware of government actions to investigate the detention and death of protestors in custody. He urged the country's authorities to create conditions for unarmed opposition and civil society groups to fully participate in the political process.

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UNGA's Emergency Session on Palestine Will Convene on Monday - UNSC President

UNITED NATIONS, October 20 (Sputnik) - The UN General Assembly will convene on October 23 for an emergency special session after the United States vetoed a draft UNSC resolution on the Israel-Gaza conflict, the Brazilian mission to the UN said on Friday.

Brazil holds the UNSC presidency during the month of October.

"The Presidency of the Security Council has been informed that the President of the General Assembly intends to convene a formal meeting of the 10th Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly as early as Monday, October 23. This announcement follows the use of a veto on the draft resolution on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question," the statement said.

Earlier this week, Russian Ambassador to the UN Vasily Nebenzia called for the resumption of the 10th Emergency Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly to address the pressing issue of civilian protection in Palestine.

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UN Opposes Israel's Plans to Shut Down Al-Jazeera Bureau - Secretary-General's Office

UNITED NATIONS, October 20 (Sputnik) - The United Nations is opposed to Israel's plans to shut down Al-Jazeera's news bureau in the country, spokesman Farhan Haq told Sputnik on

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Friday.

"We are opposed to any restrictions on the freedom of the press," Haq said.

According to The Times of Israel, Israel's communications minister announced on Friday that the government had approved emergency regulations to close down news outlets that damaged state security. The regulations still need to be approved by the defense minister and security cabinet.

The emergency regulations would be valid for three months or until the government formally ends the state of emergency.

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Congressman Jordan Urges US House to Elect Speaker to Expedite Help for Israel

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives stands with Israel and the best way to expedite help for the Jewish state is to elect speaker, Congressman Jim Jordan said Friday ahead of a third ballot vote in his bid to win speakership.

"We stand with Israel. I've been there five times. Amazing people, amazing country and we should do everything we can to help them. The quickest way to do that is to elect the Speaker," Jordan said during a news conference.

Jordan said the US must ensure help for Israel, but it cannot be done until the speaker is elected and the House can return to normal business.

Electing the speaker and opening the House are necessary to consider a multi-billion-dollar supplemental funding request to be sent by President Joe Biden to Congress to help both Ukraine and Israel, Jordan said.

Earlier this month, the House of Representatives ousted Congressman Kevin McCarthy from the leadership role, restricting its ability to pass legislation. The US Congress must pass government funding legislation before November 17 to prevent a shutdown.

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US Soldier Travis King Charged With Desertion, Possession of Child Pornography - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 20 (Sputnik) - Travis King, the US Army private who fled to North Korea in July, has been charged in the United States with desertion and possession of child pornography, CNN reported on Friday, citing a charging document.

In total, King was charged with a total of eight counts that include assaulting fellow soldiers and disobeying a superior officer, the report said.

King was deported from North Korea and returned to US custody last month.

He is being held in pre-trial detention in Texas.

On July 18, King was scheduled to board a flight to return to the US to face further disciplinary

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action after being jailed for assault in South Korea. Instead, he managed to leave Seoul's airport and join a tour to the border village of Panmunjom, where he fled over the border to North Korea.

The state news agency KCNA reported that Pyongyang had decided to expel King after an investigation found that he confessed he had "illegally intruded" into North Korea because of "ill feeling against inhuman maltreatment and racial discrimination within the US Army and was disillusioned about the unequal US society."

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