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10/27/23 Friday

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US Jets Scrambled After Aircraft Violates Restricted Airspace Near Biden's Delaware Home

Biden's Wilmington home previously saw an armed individual carrying signs referring to the president's family as "criminals" and blasting the commander-in-chief over his alleged ties to his son Hunter's business deals.

A civilian US aircraft prompted fighter jets to scramble on Saturday after it violated airspace restrictions implemented in Delaware, near the Wilmington home of US President Joe Biden.

Anthony Guglielmi, the chief of communications for the US Secret Service, detailed in a release that the incident took place just after 2 p.m. local time, and that the matter was handled quickly.

"As a precaution, assets were scrambled to intercept and the civilian aircraft safely landed at a nearby airport," the release reads. "There were no impacts to the protectee's movements as a result of this incident."

Biden has not yet commented on the incident. The US president is spending his weekend in Wilmington, having earlier attended his usual church services.

It was further detailed that US Secret Service agents and the Federal Aviation Administration are investigating the incident.

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'Friends' Star Matthew Perry Dead at 54 After Apparent Drowning - Report

MOSCOW (Sputnik) - American-Canadian actor Matthew Perry from the US TV sitcom "Friends" has reportedly died after an apparent drowning. He was 54.

Citing law enforcement sources, various US outlets reported late Saturday that the actor was found at a Los Angeles area home after first responders rushed over on a call for cardiac arrest.

Perry was reportedly found inside a hot tub at his home. No drugs were found at the scene and there was no foul play involved, sources relayed.

Detectives with the Los Angeles Police Department are said to be examining Perry's death. A spokesperson with the department would not confirm the deceased's identity but detailed to one outlet that police were called to the home to address the death of a male in his 50s.

Police were said to have responded to the home at about 4:10 p.m. local time.

Incidentally, the actor posted a photo of himself inside a pool earlier this week. It's unclear if it's at the same location in which he was found on Saturday.

Perry previously disclosed his long history of drug and alcohol abuse in his 2022 memoir "Friends, Lovers and the Big Terrible Thing."

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In total, the actor entered a rehabilitation center 15 times and underwent over a dozen surgeries to counteract health ailments brought on by his drug use.
"The first time I took my shirt off in my bathroom after returning from the hospital after my first surgery I burst into tears," he recalled in his book. "I was so disturbed by it. I thought my life was over. After about half an hour I got my s**t together enough to call my drug dealer."
Perry was best known for portraying the ever-sarcastic character Chandler Bing on the popular American sitcom "Friends," which ran for 10 seasons and saw Perry and fellow cast members Jennifer Aniston, Courteney Cox, Lisa Kudrow, David Schwimmer and Matt LeBlanc earn an astounding $1 million per episode.
In a 2016 interview with British media, Perry revealed he had no memory of any filming for the show between seasons three and six.
Following the end of "Friends" in 2004, Perry appeared in a few TV productions although none carried quite the same popularity.
Perry was born in Williamstown, Massachusetts, but went on to live in Ottawa, Canada, with his mother after his parents parted ways. He eventually made his way to Los Angeles, California, as teen, landing occasional guest spots before hitting it big in 1994 with "Friends."

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US Judge Reinstates Gag Order on Trump in Federal Election Case

The federal judge had issued the order earlier this month after concerns were raised by prosecutors that the former US president could intimidate witness and/or encourage harm against the prosecuting team through his social media posts and public comments.
A federal judge overseeing former US President Donald Trump's federal election subversion case has reinstated a gag order that had earlier been issued against the one-time commander-in-chief.
The late Sunday ruling also saw US District Judge Tanya Chutkan deny a request by Trump lawyers to prolong the earlier gag order freeze, explaining it would instead remain active while it's reviewed by a federal appeals court.
Chutkan issued the gag order at the behest of the US Department of Justice before temporarily halting it on October 20 as Trump's lawyers filed an appeal and argued it was vaguely worded.
The matter has remained a heated topic of debate among lawyers, with representatives for the former president arguing it bars Trump from his First Amendment rights and acts as a hitch as he undertakes his 2024 reelection effort.
Prosecutors have underscored that regardless of Trump's 2024 bid, he does not have clearance to issue public remarks that appear to threaten any individuals tied to the election interference case.
Trump appears to have publicly responded to the development on social media, writing in a Truth Social post: “The Corrupt Biden Administration just took away my First Amendment Right To Free Speech. NOT CONSTITUTIONAL! MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN."

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The weekend decision now puts the former president under two gag orders that prevent him from discussing any aspects of his legal cases with the wider public. The second gag was implemented as part of Trump's civil fraud trial in New York, which has so far prompted two fines to be issued over violations.
Trump pleaded not guilty in August to four charges outlined under the federal election case that accuses him of a "criminal scheme" to undermine the 2020 election.
The case marks just one of four criminal investigations that have been launched against him, the other cases centering on election interference in Georgia, mishandled classified documents, and his New York case related to hush money payments.

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Pets Owners Seem to Love Their Dogs More Than Cats - But There's a Catch!

Do cats rule and dogs drool? The endless debate between felines and canines, and more specifically on whether one pet is more beloved than the other may be all down to cultural influences in some cases, new findings have suggested.
A recent study led by researchers with the University of Copenhagen determined that pet owners seem to care far more about their dogs than their furry felines, often choosing to dish out endless doses of affection to man's best friend.
Officials came to their conclusion by surveying nearly 18,000 pet owners aged between 18 and 89 across Denmark, Austria and the UK. Among the various metrics tapped for the study, one included the Lexington Attachment to Pets Scale, which calls on pollsters to respond to over 20 varying statements and questions on owners' willingness to pay for pet health insurance and life-saving treatments.
"While people care more about their dogs than their cats in all countries, the degree of difference varied dramatically between countries," Peter Sandøe, a bioethicist from the University of Copenhagen in Denmark, said.
The difference proved to be the largest in Denmark, with only slight changes with individuals in Austria and the UK. "It doesn't therefore seem to be a universal phenomenon that people care much less about their cats than their dogs," Sandøe admitted.
As such, researchers determined that "the difference is likely to depend on cultural factors, including whether the animals spend a lot of time with their owners in the home."
However, officials have explained that additional research is needed in order really pinpoint the matter as their study had limitations by only analyzing data from smaller European nations.
In an interview with US media, Sandøe further detailed that the study had been prompted by a trend in cat owners appearing to spend more on veterinary care than dog owners, as such prompting the question on whether dogs were being best by their feline counterparts.
The findings were published in the journal Frontiers in Veterinary Science.

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Manhunt for Suspected Maine Gunman Shifts to Underwater Searches by Officials

The search for Card, the suspect in the deadliest shooting for the US this year, has involved hundreds of state and local officers and at least 80 FBI agents. Residents of a typically peaceful, rural state are sheltering in place as the manhunt for the veteran remains ongoing.

The Maine State Police dive team are heading an underwater investigation as a manhunt for the Lewiston suspect Robert Card, 40, drags into a third day.

The shooting suspect's car, a white Subaru Outback, was found abandoned near a boat launch along the Androscoggin river in Lisbon, Maine. Mike Sauschuck, the commissioner of the Maine Department of Public Safety, said on Friday that divers will be "checking for evidence" and "potential bodies."

"There will be a lot of activity in the water today," Sauschuck said. "The river is a big piece of this."

Sauschuck added that sonar technology will be used to aid the search, and that the local power company that operates the two dams on the river will try and lower the current to make it easier for divers to navigate the waterway.

An arrest warrant was issued for Card, who is from Bowdoin, Maine, following a mass shooting that left at least 18 dead and another 13 injured. Card opened fire with an AR-15-style rifle in two different locations in Lewiston, Maine on Wednesday. The initial shooting unfolded at the bowling alley Just-In-Time Recreation, with the second at the Schemengees Bar & Grille, an eatery four miles away.

The warrant was issued on eight counts of murder, though the total number of counts may rise as more people are identified, said Operations Major for the Maine State Police Colonel William Ross.

The US Coast Guard crews out of Boothbay Harbor were also searching for a 15-foot lake boat owned by Card. According to reports, Card owned more than one boat.

Card's cellphone was also discovered, according to two law enforcement officials. It's speculated that discovering the device will likely make the manhunt that much more difficult, as they are often used as tracking devices in searches.

Maine is a densely-forested state, with 90% of the state being covered by trees. The Androscoggin River, which connects to the Kennebec River, is also more than 170 miles long. The city of Lewiston is also located less than four hours from the Canadian border, while the entire state shares 18 official entry points with New Brunswick, Canada, and another six with Quebec.

On Thursday, the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) said they were working closely with law enforcement in both the US and in Canada to "ensure the safety and security of Canadians and protect Canada's borders against any threat or (attempted) illegal entry." Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told reporters in Ottawa on that same day that the federal government was working to provide support whenever necessary.

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"Our thoughts go out to our friends in Maine and neighbors in Maine who are suffering a terrible, terrible moment right now," he said. "Of course, we have been engaged with our border services agencies and with appropriate police forces to ensure extra protections for Canadians."
Jacqueline Roby, a CBSA senior spokesperson, added that the agency had issued an "Armed & Dangerous - Firearms lookout" alert to border officers.
It was reported that a high-powered weapon was also found in the car that Card had abandoned, though it is unknown if it was the weapon used in the shooting. The gun was purchased legally. Federal agents also reportedly found a suicide note within Card's home that was addressed to his son. It has been speculated by the media that this may be a suicide note.
According to Card's sister-in-law, Katie Card, the 40-year-old suspect had been "humiliated" by voices he was hearing: "He was just very set in his belief that everyone was against him all of a sudden," she recalled.
Richard Goddard, a neighbor of Robert Card, said he had heard that Card had spent time at Togus VA Medical Center in the state's capital. Togus is a health center that assists veterans with physical and mental health ailments. Card is a military reservist and had a history of mental health issues, according to records.
Card had previously threatened to shoot up a military base in Saco, according to law enforcement. He was then committed to a mental health facility for two weeks this past summer. Card had no combat deployments, according to a US Army spokesperson.
"It happened. He went and did what he said he was gonna do. It doesn't make any sense why that wasn't addressed before the fact that it was actually capable of happening," said Goddard.
Maine's Office of the Chief Medical Examiner said that all 18 people killed had been identified. US media reported that the ages of those who were killed ranged from 14 to 76. A majority of those killed were male.
The shooting, in a state with relatively low violence rates, is now the deadliest shooting in the US for the year of 2023, and is the eight deadliest since 2006.
It is the deadliest shooting for a state in which half of documented households have guns, but where few fatal shootings take place. In a report from the summer of 2022, Michael Rocque, a criminologist at Bates College and a resident of Maine, said the state was "lucky" that it had yet to see a high-profile mass shooting.
Maine has a "yellow flag" law that allows law enforcement to take guns away from people who may be in danger of hurting themselves or others. The law was first implemented in 2019.
Maine, a hunter and sport shooting state, does not require permits to carry guns. In the year of 2022 alone, the state had experienced just 29 homicides.
"Our gun laws are woefully weak," said Cam Shannon, chair of the nonprofit Maine Gun Safety Coalition. "We have long felt that this is a question of not if, but when."

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Three of Trump's Adult Children Set to Testify in New York Fraud Trial

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Former US President Donald Trump was earlier hit with a $10,000 fine after he violated a gag order that was implemented as part of his New York civil fraud trial. The fine marked the second such incident after the former president was slapped with a $5,000 fine the week prior.

All three of former US President Donald Trump's older kids - Ivanka, Donald Trump Jr. and Eric - are scheduled to provide testimony next week as part of a multimillion civil fraud case launched by the New York Attorney General's Office, it was determined on Friday.

It was previously understood that the former president and his two adult sons would testify; however, New York Supreme Court Justice Arthur Engoron recently ruled that Ivanka Trump, 41, would have to testify after the judge rejected her bid to avoid providing testimony.

Engoron has granted Ivanka time to appeal the ruling.

Trump's attorneys have argued that Ivanka should not have to testify as an appeals court earlier ruled that she be removed as a defendant over statute of limitations issues. Officials have argued the attorney general's office was trying to "continue to harass and burden President Trump's daughter" even after the appeals court mandated she could be dismissed from the case.

Despite the legal team's argument, the AG's office determined Ivanka still had important information related to the case.

"While no longer a defendant in this action, she indisputably has personal knowledge of facts relevant to the claims against the remaining individual and entity defendants," the AG wrote in a court filing.

"But even beyond that, Ms. Trump remains financially and professionally intertwined with the Trump Organization and other defendants and can be called as a person still under their control."

The AG's office has indicated it intends to question Ivanka about the Trump International Hotel in Washington DC, which sold for $275 million to a Miami investor group. The AG's office asserts Ivanka profited from the sale.

"Ms. Trump remains under the control of the Trump Organization, including through her ongoing and substantial business ties to the organization," the AG explained.

"[Ivanka] does not seem to be averse to her involvement in the family business when it comes to owning and collecting proceeds from the OPO (hotel) sale, the Trump Organization purchasing insurance for her and her companies, managing her household staff and credit card bills, renting her apartment or even paying her legal fees in this action. It is only when she is tasked with answering for that involvement that she disclaims any connection."

Trump, and his three children, will have to take the stand before the defense begins its case, however, the defense will be able to call them afterward.

Kevin Wallace, of the attorney general's office, state lawyers will call Donald Trump Jr. to the stand on Wednesday, Eric Trump on Thursday, and Ivanka Trump will be called on Friday. Both Eric and Donald Jr. are executives at the Trump Organization, while Ivanka is a former executive and a former White House adviser.

The former US president is expected to be the last family member to take the stand, and will do so on November 6, the day before Election Day. Trump, who is running in the 2024 election, is far ahead of Republican rivals. The former president has led US President Joe Biden by 2 points in a hypothetical 2024 general election. According to the poll, 47% of American voters back Trump, while 45% support Biden.

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The AG's lawsuit alleges the Trumps' company and its executives falsified the value of Trump's net worth by up to $2.2 billion between 2011 and 2021 so they could receive better loan rates from lenders, as well as lower insurance premiums. The Trump family has denied any wrongdoing, with the former commander-in-chief claiming the legal case is politically motivated.

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'Time to Heal': State Officials Confirm Maine Shooting Suspect Found Dead

Earlier unconfirmed reports indicated that the body of the gunman, identified as Robert Card, had been found near the Lisbon, Maine, woods in an area near a recycling center that the suspect had recently been fired.

The Maine mass shooting suspect was found dead following a dayslong manhunt, state officials confirmed late Friday.

Maine Governor Janet Mills detailed during a Friday news conference that the suspected shooter is "no longer a threat," adding that she informed US President Joe Biden and the state's congressional delegation of the development.

"Now is the time to heal," Mills said. "With this search concluded, I know that law enforcement continues to fully investigate all the facts so we can bring what closure we can to the victims and their families."

Michael Sauschuck, Maine's commissioner of Public Safety, did not disclose how the suspected gunman was found, but did indicate the body was discovered at 7:45 p.m. local time near the Androscoggin river, in Lisbon, Maine. Sauschuck confirmed earlier reports that the gunman died from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot.

An intensive manhunt for the Maine mass shooting suspect, Robert Card, came to a grim end days after the shooting took place on Wednesday night. The search required hundreds of state and local officers and at least 80 FBI agents.

Card's vehicle, a white Subaru Outback, was first found abandoned near a boat launch along the Androscoggin river, in Lisbon. A gun had also been found in the abandoned vehicle. Authorities had carried out a search for evidence of Card, as well as a potential body along the river. The Maine State Police earlier employed a dive team, as well as sonar technology, to search the body of water, as Card was known to have owned more than one boat or vessel.

At the time of the search, the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) also reported that they were paying close attention to the US-Canadian border. The state of Maine has more than 20 entry points to Canada. The rural state is also densely frosted with 90% of its land being covered by trees, which likely hampered efforts in the manhunt.

Card, 40, was suspected of carrying out a mass shooting in which at least 18 people were killed and another 13 injured. Card first opened fire with an AR-15-style rifle at a local bowling alley, and then at a local eatery just four miles away. Card had a history of mental health issues, and had reportedly threatened to carry out a shooting in the past. The gun found in his abandoned vehicle was purchased legally.

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The victims in the shooting, according to a social media post made by US Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-ME), include two women and one child, the other deceased victims were adult men. The child, 14, was killed alongside his father. A married couple were also killed in the shooting.
During a Thursday briefing, US Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) questioned why Maine's "yellow flag" law was not triggered. The law allows Maine police to temporarily take away a person's firearms if deemed a danger to themself or others. The law was first passed in 2019 and invoked at least 24 times in the state.
Collins, who supports the law, said it should have prevented the Lewiston shooting. Card has been committed to a mental health facility for two weeks this past summer, per a Maine law enforcement bulletin. Card had been hearing voices and threatened to shoot up a military base in Saco.

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Who is Dean Phillips, Latest Democrat to Challenge Biden for 2024 Election Ticket?

Dean Phillips, a businessman and representative from Minneapolis' suburbs, is joining author Marianne Williamson and media personality Cenk Uygur in the Democratic Party's presidential primary. Activist Robert F Kennedy Jr, formerly running as a Democrat, is also challenging Biden as an independent candidate.
US Rep. Dean Phillips (D-MN) announced his intention on Thursday to challenge US President Joe Biden for the Democratic presidential ticket in the looming 2024 election.
"I invite you to join me in declaring a new American independence… from fear and the status quo," said Phillips at a campaign event in New Hampshire.
The little-known Phillips has been a consistent critic of Biden's decision to run for a second presidential term.
Recent polling has shown former US President Donald Trump tied or leading Biden in a rematch of 2020's contest, building support among political independents. Other polling has demonstrated a series of dire warnings for Biden, with three-quarters of Americans considering his advanced age to be a problem and about half believing he and his family are "corrupt."
"I will not sit still and not be quiet in the face of numbers that are so clearly saying that we're going to be facing an emergency next November," said Phillips in an interview with US media Thursday.
Biden has chosen not to participate in New Hampshire's presidential primary, currently scheduled for January 23, after the state defied Democratic Party leadership, which wished to move South Carolina ahead of the state's traditional "first in the nation" status. Phillips' performance in the contest could generate publicity for Phillips, though it's uncertain to what degree the primary will receive attention from mainstream US media.
Democratic Party politicians expressed confusion and opposition when asked to weigh in on Phillips' unexpected candidacy and potential motivations for launching it. "He does have a very good heart," said one anonymous Democratic member of the House. "I believe that in his heart, he thinks this is the right thing to do. But it's quite the opposite."

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"I don't know if he's hoping to come out in favor of a certain cause, elevate an issue that's not receiving attention or whether he has some other goal, but I haven't heard it clearly articulated," said another anonymous Democratic Party lawmaker. "I'm concerned, in the absence of that type of articulation, it appears as though he is doing it in a way that could possibly harm Biden's standing."

Phillips is considered a moderate Democrat and a rising star within the party, first winning election to the House of Representatives in a 2018 midterm election that saw him claim the seat for his party for the first time since 1958. With a reported net worth of $77 million, Phillips will enjoy the ability to self-fund his campaign launch.

The Minnesota lawmaker serves as the current president and CEO of Phillips Distilling Company, which is owned by his family, and a former co-owner of the Talenti gelato brand.

The announcement comes amidst a complex and rapidly evolving international landscape, with Biden recently advocating for continued US military funding for Ukraine, as well as financial support for Israel in their military operation against the Hamas group.

Recent polling shows a majority of US voters of all political affiliations support a ceasefire in the Palestine-Israel conflict, potentially creating a challenge for Biden as he doubles down on US support for the Middle Eastern ally.

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Report: China Unlikely to Attend Ukrainian 'Peace Formula' Summit in Malta

Beijing has consistently charted an independent course since Russia launched their special military operation in Ukraine more than one year ago.

A report in US media on Thursday indicated it was probable that China may not send representatives to a Ukraine-organized international summit in Malta this weekend.

The meeting is intended to bring together security officials from various corners of the globe, with a specific focus on countries that have so far remained non-aligned, according to the report.

Ukrainian spokesperson Andrey Yermak outlined the agenda of the so-called 'peace formula' meeting scheduled to take place Saturday and Sunday, including food, humanitarian issues, energy and nuclear security, and "the restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity."

The Volodymyr Zelensky regime in Ukraine still lays claim to breakaway provinces in the eastern Donbass region, whose leaders long expressed desire to become part of Russian territory. Zelensky also hopes to reestablish Ukrainian control of Crimea, where people overwhelmingly voted to become part of Russia in a 2014 referendum.

Zelensky has proposed a 10-point plan to resolve military confrontation between Russia and Ukraine since last year. Among the items stipulated by Zelensky are a tribunal to prosecute alleged Russian "war crimes" and a withdrawal of Russia from territory still claimed by Ukraine. The proposal, long on Ukrainian demands and short on acknowledgment of Russia's security concerns, has been dismissed by Russian officials as unserious.

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Among the countries sending representatives to the summit in Malta are Qatar, India, South Africa, Turkiye, and members of the G7, according to the report. Other countries, including Brazil and Chile, will participate in the meeting virtually.

Among those not present will be Russia; Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova slammed the summit as "pointless and counterproductive" on Thursday, claiming foreign countries were being coerced to take part via "blackmail and threats." An official from Turkiye previously claimed meetings not including Russia would be "futile," yielding "no results and no solution."

Beijing has charted an independent course on the issue since Russia launched a special military operation in Ukraine in February last year. China has rejected calls to take part in Western sanctions against Russia and has acknowledged Moscow's security concerns as NATO has continuously expanded eastward. The Asian world power has previously claimed China and Russia enjoy a "boundless friendship."

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US Covertly Expands Military Base in Israel Amidst IDF Violence in Gaza

A contract announcement from the US Department of Defense reveals Washington is expanding an unacknowledged military base in Israel's Negev desert 20 miles from Gaza.

As the death toll climbs amidst Israeli military action in Gaza, the United States has repeatedly denied any intention of sending American troops to assist their Middle Eastern ally. But information recently released by the Pentagon shows the US is nevertheless investing significantly in an unacknowledged military base in Israel's Negev desert.

The report, posted in August on the Pentagon's website, reveals over $35 million in funds being granted to a Colorado-based firm for a "life-support area," to house military personnel. The construction is to take place at Site 512, a classified base with an expansive view of the surrounding territory from atop Mount Har Qeren.

"Sometimes something is treated as an official secret not in the hope that an adversary would never find out about it but rather [because] the US government, for diplomatic or political reasons, does not want to officially acknowledge it," said Paul Pillar, a former CIA analyst asked for comment about the revelation. The United States' support for Israel has long damaged the country's reputation throughout the Arab world.

"My speculation is that the secrecy is a holdover from when US presidential administrations tried to offer a pretense of not siding with Israel in the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab conflicts," agreed David Vine, a professor of anthropology. "The announcement of US military bases in Israel in recent years likely reflects the dropping of that pretense and a desire to more publicly proclaim support for Israel."

The United States has made similar moves in recent years to more openly back Israel, such as when former US President Donald Trump announcedin 2018 the United States would be moving their embassy in the country to Jerusalem.

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The pronouncement was highly controversial as the city possesses religious importance for both Jews and Muslims. Israel sees Jerusalem as the capital of Israeli territory, unparalleled in its historical significance.

Meanwhile, proposals for a Palestinian state have suggested making the Eastern portion of the city the capital of Palestine. The move of the embassy was interpreted by Palestinians as confirmation of a lack of genuine interest in solving the longstanding impasse between Jews and Arabs in Israel.

Trump moved rapidly to negotiate diplomatic normalization between Israel and several Middle Eastern countries; US President Joe Biden was working to establish normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabia until recent violence sidetracked the process.

Analysts say an installation such as Site 512 would be focused primarily on monitoring attacks from Israel's neighbors, chiefly Iran, rather than observing rocket launches from Gaza.

The United States has long been Israel's closest ally, providing the country with billions in assistance each year. Theodor Herzl, the founder of the Zionist movement that inspired Israel's founding, specifically referred to a proposed Jewish state in the region as a "colonial" project and "garrison state" for the West in the Arab world.

Common justifications for Israel as an outpost for democracy and liberal governance in the Middle East mirror similar rhetoric used by neoconservatives to justify wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other parts of the world.

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How Former Israeli Soldier Turned Anti-War After Witnessing 2014 Gaza Invasion

Serving in the IDF brought Benzion Sanders face-to-face with Israel's treatment of Palestinians, turning him into a committed anti-war activist.

As aerial bombardments in Gaza give way to a ground invasion, activists around the world have criticized Israel's violent response to this month's surprise attack by Hamas. Many of those activists are Jewish. Some are even Israeli citizens.

Such is the case for Benzion Sanders, a former soldier in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Raised in a highly religious Orthodox Jewish family, Sanders was steeped in Zionist ideology, the name for the philosophical and political movement that drove Israel's creation. He even participated in "settling" of the West Bank, the process by which Jewish families displace Palestinians in territory illegally occupied by Israel.

Sanders' time in the IDF prompted an unresolvable moral dilemma.

"When my Israeli infantry unit arrived at the first village in Gaza, in July 2014, we cleared houses by sending grenades through windows, blowing doors open and firing bullets into rooms to avoid ambush and booby traps," wrote Sanders in an essay published Saturday in US media. "We were told Palestinian civilians had fled."

"I realized this wasn't true as I stood over the corpse of an elderly Palestinian woman whose face had been mutilated by shrapnel. She had been lying on the sand floor of a shack, in a pool of blood."

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The experience shook Sanders' conviction in the righteousness of Israel's conduct, especially under Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He joined the organization Breaking the Silence, a group of anti-occupation Israeli veterans who protest Israel's ongoing violence against Palestinians and their culture. He's now a director of Extend, a group connecting Israeli and Palestinian human rights activists to Jewish audiences in America.

Sanders joins activists like Miko Peled, a former member of Israel's Special Forces who has called Israel a "radical regime" where "half of the population lives in what it thinks is a Western democracy while keeping the other half imprisoned by a ruthless defense apparatus that is becoming more violent by the day."

Several Jewish media figures have also engaged in prominent criticism of the Middle Eastern country in recent weeks, including commentator Katie Halper, "Chapo Trap House" co-host Felix Biederman and academic Norman Finkelstein.

Sanders believes Israel's ground invasion of Gaza will ultimately fail in its stated aim of eliminating Hamas.

"For years, many of us on the left in Israel have been warning that we will never have peace and security until we find a political agreement in which Palestinians achieve freedom and independence," Sanders writes.

"It isn't just human rights activists taking this position: Even Ami Ayalon, the former head of the Israeli security service Shin Bet, has argued for years that Palestinian terror can be defeated only by creating Palestinian hope."

Israel has bombed Gaza since an October 7 surprise attack by Palestinian group Hamas that killed 1,400 Israelis. The death toll among Palestinians quickly eclipsed that tally, in accordance with Israel's official policy of "disproportionate force," now standing at over 7,000 and still rising as the IDF pursues a ground invasion of Gaza.

Israel has been engaged in violence against the country's indigenous Palestinian Arab population since large numbers of Zionist settlers arrived in the territory in the early to mid 20th century. The country has repeatedly worked to undermine efforts towards statehood in occupied Palestinian territory, pointing to armed Palestinian resistance as an excuse to avoid compromise in the name of Israeli national security.

The Netanyahu government has deliberately worked to promote and strengthen Hamas, recognizing the value of the controversial armed group in delegitimizing the Palestinian cause. "Anyone who wants to thwart the establishment of a Palestinian state has to support the bolstering of Hamas and transferring money to Hamas," Netanyahu told a group of fellow members of his Likud party in 2019. "This is part of our strategy."

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UAW Union Reaches Preliminary Agreement With Automaker Stellantis

After reaching a deal with Ford three days ago, only GM remains among the "big three" US automakers yet to reach a deal with the United Auto Workers union amidst their current strike.

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Stellantis, the Dutch company that owns the Jeep, Ram, and Chrysler auto brands, has reached a tentative deal with the United Auto Workers union, officials have confirmed.

Reports of the breakthrough emerged on Saturday in US media, and come three days after a similar agreement was reached with US-based automaker Ford. The new contract is an example of the "pattern bargaining" the UAW union typically engages in, in which a contract with one company is used as a template for deals with others.

UAW President Shawn Fain said the union's strike "showed the incredible power of regular working class people to fight for economic justice and win big."

"Once again we've achieved what just weeks ago we were told was impossible," said Fain in a statement posted to the UAW's account on the X social media platform.

"Over the 44 days we were on strike, Stellantis more than doubled the total value of the proposals they had on the table… We not only secured a record contract, we have begun to turn the tide on the war on the American working class, and we truly are saving the American dream."

Among the terms of the new agreement are a 25% wage increase for UAW members at both companies and the potential for future wage adjustments if inflation spikes. The top UAW wage will increase to $40 per hour over more than four years, meaning employees working full time will earn $84,000 yearly.

The contract proposal with Stellantis now moves to a UAW committee responsible for negotiations with the company. It will then need to be approved by a full vote of UAW members.

The UAW has been engaged in strike action against US automakers since September 15, when the union's previous contracts expired. The walkouts have targeted both auto plants and parts warehouses across the US and have involved more than 45,000 workers. Recently, the strike intensified when UAW members picketed at a Stellantis plant in Sterling Heights, Michigan.

While celebrating the union's victory in their talks with Stellantis, the UAW announced an expansion of their action against GM, hoping to quickly leverage their success to put pressure on the auto giant. UAW members will be engaging in additional walkouts at GM assembly plants across the country, including in Michigan and Tennessee.

Known for his fiery rhetoric and wearing t-shirts emblazoned with the slogan "eat the rich," Fain has pursued a more aggressive stance against US automakers than his predecessors. Fain slammed the high pay for CEOs at Ford, GM, and Stellantis compared to other automakers, claiming the companies are capable of paying rank-and-file workers more.

Prices for automobiles have steadily risen in the United States, with outstanding car loan debt representing a major potential problem for the US economy. Automakers face unique challenges manufacturing automobiles in the United States, where the country's comparatively meager social safety net means they must devote significant resources towards health care and other benefits for workers.

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Broken Promises: Thousands of US National Guard Members Not Receiving Bonuses

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Red tape and technical snafus have delayed the payment of bonuses due to thousands of soldiers.

The US armed forces have been plagued for unflattering revelations recently: decrepit living conditions, recruiting shortfalls, a sexual assault crisis. Now, reports of consistent delays in the payment of enlistment bonuses to US service members have come to light.

“I did my end of things,” said a soldier speaking to US media recently, lamenting his failure to receive the money guaranteed to him upon enlistment in the Army National Guard.

“This is a really bad introduction to the Army, not taking care of people."

The anonymous service member has been waiting over a year for the first half of the $20,000 bonus guaranteed to him upon enlistment. He’s one of at least 9,000 others who have been delayed payment as a result of an Army imbursement system plagued by oversights, understaffing, and technical problems.

The bonuses are an important incentive offered to drive participation in the United States’ all-volunteer armed forces, which have long dealt with significant recruiting shortfalls. They’re one of a number of perks offered, including scholarships and job training benefits.

But some service members have been waiting years to receive even the first payment guaranteed to them upon joining. In a few cases, some soldiers have even completed military service and rejoined civilian life without ever receiving their bonus.

The National Guard unveiled new technology, known as the Army National Guard Incentive Management System, in 2012 to rectify the longstanding problem. Instead it has added to the problems – the system crashed in 2018 and 2012, requiring 10 months to come back online each time.

Administrators have been forced to manually process bonus payments amidst the technical snafus, adding to a significant backlog. Additionally, poor training and lack of accurate information among staff members has caused soldiers to receive conflicting information regarding the status of their payments.

“There is frankly a lot of misinformation on the [unit] level,” said one state National Guard administrator to a US media outlet, speaking anonymously to avoid retaliation. “It isn't their fault, and it's something I'm trying to fix… The soldier shouldn't be coming to us … for their money. We should just pay our bills on time.”

The news comes amidst uncertainty on the world stage as Israel pursues military action against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. President Joe Biden has committed to sending millions of dollars in additional funding to their Middle Eastern ally, which has also previously engaged in joint military drills with members of the US armed forces.

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US, Peru Joint Navy Drills Reveal How Sonar Tech Helps Locate Sunken Submarines

Sonar imaging helps rescuers detect stricken submarines on the ocean floor and rescue their crew members.

US and Peruvian armed forces engaged in joint exercises this week to improve cooperation between the two countries’ navies.

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The drill, known as SIFOREX (Silent Forces Exercise) took place from October 20 until the 27th off the coast of Callao, a port city near Lima. The exercises are intended to improve anti-submarine warfare and demonstrated the use of sonar technology to detect sunken submarines.

Images released from the exercise demonstrate the impressing imaging capabilities of the technology, which is able to depict the shape of a submerged vessel simply by measuring the reflection of sound waves.

Once a sunken submarine is detected, it then becomes a race against time to find it and rescue its crew. The situation is complicated further if the state of a vessel's nuclear reactor must be taken into account.

The exercises also included anti-surface warfare (ASuW) and submarine escape and rescue (SMEREX) drills.

The Peruvian scientific research vessel Carrasco was primarily used, a technologically sophisticated ship with various types of sonar equipment as well as separate Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUV).

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New Deep-Water Reefs Discovered Off Coast of Ecuador's Galápagos Islands

Ongoing efforts in the Galápagos Islands by the team of researchers is part of a larger project to analyze the archipelago's ecosystem.

Two large "pristine" coral reefs were discovered last week off the coast of the Galápagos Islands in South America, according to an international group of scientists at the Schmidt Ocean Institute.

In contrast to the shallow reefs scuba divers may be familiar with, deep-water reefs thrive without sunlight in cold, dark conditions. The ones recently discovered are as long as half a mile and rest a quarter of a mile beneath the surface on the ocean floor. They are said to be thousands of years old.

The discovery was made by a remotely-operated vehicle examining the sea floor with laser scanners. Scientists say the high-resolution maps resulting from the discovery will aid in conservation of animals and future research.

Squid, shrimp, and brittle stars were among the animals inhabiting the reefs.

"Finding such deep and long-lived reefs takes us important steps closer to protecting hidden dimensions of ocean diversity and understanding the role that deep habitats play in maintaining our ocean's health," Stuart Banks, a senior marine scientist with the Charles Darwin Foundation, said in a statement.

In April, a similar discovery was announced of a deep-sea reef in the Galápagos Marine Reserve.

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'Nearly Impossible': Retired US General Says Israel Unlikely to Achieve Stated Aim in Gaza

General Robert Abrams said it's unlikely Israel will be able to accomplish their purported goal of eliminating Hamas while also protecting Palestinian civilians.

Retired US General Robert Adams sounded a note of pessimism early Sunday when asked by US media for his thoughts on Israel's ongoing military action in the besieged Gaza Strip.

"I think it's going to be what I would consider nearly impossible, to destroy Hamas, to eliminate their capability to do harm to Israel and Israeli people, while simultaneously protecting what some people have estimated as to be a million Palestinians who are in harm's way and they can't get out of harm's way," said Adams in an interview on US television.

Adams noted the difficulty of Israel's objective given the complex urban terrain of Gaza.

"This is going to be a very difficult task for the Israeli Defense Forces, that the defense that Hamas will put up in that very dense urban terrain, unlike anything that we've seen in recent years, is going to require some very siege fighting, and simultaneously trying to ensure that the Israelis do not target unwittingly the locations of the hostages," said Adams.

"This is going to prove to be a very difficult task and we'll just have to see how their plan plays out here over the coming days."

Hamas' armed wing claimed Thursday that 50 captives being held by the armed group since their October 7 surprise attack have already been killed by Israeli bombing raids in Gaza.

Families of captives have repeatedly called on the Israeli government to pull back on hostilities over concerns the continued bombardment threatens the lives of their family members – a meeting was held Saturday between the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and captives' families after threats of protests were raised.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu's rhetoric appeared to deliberately downplay concerns over protecting Palestinian civilians. The Israeli prime minister referenced scripture in a televised address on Saturday, appearing to compare Palestinians to the Biblical Amalekites, who were systematically killed by the Israelites.

Over 8,000 Palestinians have been killed so far in Israeli attacks since October 7, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, while over 20,200 have reportedly been injured. Authorities in Gaza recently released a list of names of the dead in response to speculation from US President Joe Biden and others that the Hamas-run government in Gaza inflated death counts. United Nations officials have noted death tolls from the Gaza Health Ministry have proven to be "credible" in the past.

Recently, speculation has emerged suggesting the number of civilian deaths attributed to Hamas in their surprise attack may be inflated.

Israeli military forces have historically operated under a controversial policy, known as the "Hannibal Directive," of killing Israelis at threat of being taken captive rather than allowing them to be seized as hostages by enemy forces. Eyewitness reports have stated IDF forces engaged in indiscriminate shelling of buildings, killing Israelis and Hamas fighters alike.

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On Saturday, an essay was published in US media by an Israeli activist also warning about the high potential for civilian casualties amidst Israel's military operation in Gaza. Former IDF soldier Benzion Sandersnoted the Israeli government invaded Gaza in 2014 with a similarly stated goal of destroying Hamas. The military incursion failed to eliminate the armed group, and in the years since Hamas has remained a useful justification for Israel's unyielding stance against Palestinian interests.

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How Netanyahu Strengthened Hamas to Discredit Palestinian Cause

Netanyahu has vowed to destroy Hamas as Israeli Defense Forces intensify their assault on Gaza, but the hardline prime minister has continuously supported the armed group in an effort to divide and discredit the Palestinian cause.

"Our heroic troops have one supreme goal: to completely defeat the murderous enemy and to guarantee our existence in this country," declared Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a televised address Saturday evening.

The speech took on a near-messianic tone, replete with references to the Biblical triumphs of the Jewish people that could've been aimed at religious Israelis or Christian Zionists alike. The rhetoric was typical of Netanyahu, who has repeatedly promised to "destroy Hamas" in the weeks since the armed group's surprise October 7 attack on Israeli police and military installations.

But Hamas has served as an historically useful tool over the years for the populist prime minister as he's sought to consolidate support and tighten Israel's grip on occupied Palestinian territory. Here, Sputnik offers a brief explainer on the symbiotic relationship between the controversial prime minister and the armed Islamist group.

Palestinian Politics

Since the country's official founding in 1948, all sides of Israel's political spectrum have been dominated by Zionism, the ideology proclaiming Jews' transcendent right to a state in the territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

In response, displaced Palestinians have rallied behind nationalist parties declaring their right to return to their historic homeland under international law. In the Israeli-occupied West Bank the most popular Palestinian force is currently Fatah, a secular, social democratic party seen as somewhat of a moderating force in the conflict. Another popular party is the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a revolutionary socialist party advocating for a one-state solution.

In previous decades, left-wing forces like the PFLP began to rally significant international support behind the Palestinian cause, especially within the Eastern Bloc. This culminated in 1975 with the successful adoption of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3379, an initiative led by the Soviet Union declaring that "Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination."

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Israel was alarmed by the success of the initiative, and began looking for ways to undermine global solidarity for the Palestinians. Around the same time, Palestinian radicals began turning to violent force in their struggle against Israeli aggression.

Extreme Measures

As Israeli occupation intensified after the Six-Day War, some Palestinians began to increasingly adopt violent tactics. A series of aircraft hijackings took place in the late 1960s and 1970s, as well as suicide bombing attacks in Israeli cities. The violence culminated in two periods of intensified attacks: The First Intifada, lasting from 1987 to 1993, and the Second Intifada, lasting from 2000 until 2005.

The attacks shocked Israeli society but provided an excuse to delay Palestinian statehood or any peaceful settlement of the conflict. Additionally, Palestinians found themselves facing greater political isolation with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Many of them devoted themselves fully to armed struggle, both within Israel and in neighboring countries via groups like Hezbollah in Lebanon.

It was in this desperate environment that the political and military group Hamas emerged in the late 1980s.

In contrast to the secular Fatah and PFLP, Hamas is an explicitly Islamist group. The political party began to gain support in Palestinian society for their provision of social services and leadership of armed resistance. However, international support for the Palestinian cause was damaged as the United States, the UK, and other Western powers designated Hamas as a terrorist organization, a label that increasingly stigmatized supporters of Palestinian liberation, especially after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

The deeply polarizing nature of Hamas and their tactics began to be recognized as politically useful by certain enterprising figures in Israeli politics.

Netanyahu Chooses His Enemy

"Netanyahu and Hamas are political partners," declared a recent articlein the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, "and both sides have fulfilled their side of the bargain."

The article goes on to document some of the ways Netanyahu has materially supported the armed group during his over 16 years as Israeli prime minister, including allowing untraceable cash contributions to Hamas from Iran and Qatar. In the latter country, Hamas' leader Ismail Haniyeh is allowed to operate freely. Israel tightly controls who and what is allowed to enter into Gaza, but the Qatari envoy is permitted to arrive with suitcases of cash to fund Hamas' operations.

The Israeli government often argues Hamas invests money in building military capability rather than providing social services in Gaza. The free flow of funds to the group, overseen and approved by Israel's hands-off approach, ensures that this continues. Netanyahu retains his useful talking point demonizing the terrorist threat while Hamas periodically rebuilds its capability to wage war, providing justification for Netanyahu's hardline approach.

"Netanyahu is the one who turned Hamas from a terror organization with few resources into a semi-state body," noted Haaretz, emphasizing that the group's rule in Gaza politically isolates Palestinians in the enclave from those in the West Bank.

In case the politically symbiotic relationship weren't clear, Netanyahu made it explicit during a meeting with members of his Likud party in 2019: "Anyone who wants to thwart the establishment of a Palestinian state has to support the bolstering of Hamas and transferring

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money to Hamas. This is part of our strategy, to isolate the Palestinians in Gaza from the Palestinians in the West Bank."

A Symbiotic Relationship

Hamas cemented their rule in Gaza in 2006 after winning a plurality of votes during an election among Palestinians that year. The electoral triumph is often put forward as an excuse for collective punishment of Palestinian civilians, although given that around half of Gaza's population is under 18, most Gazans were not able to vote in Palestinians' last election to date, much less vote for Hamas.

Hamas' institution of effective one-party, authoritarian control over the Gaza Strip succeeded in helping Netanyahu make the Palestinian cause synonymous with Hamas' Islamist jihadic vision. It also provided a useful political punching bag for the Israeli right and a periodic target for the Israeli military: Netanyahu launched an invasion of Gaza in 2014, then as now promising to eliminate Hamas. The military campaign provided Netanyahu with a political boost while Hamas slowly arose from the ashes, becoming more militant than ever before.

The rivalry has polarized Israeli society as well as Hamas' periodic launching of crude rockets helps solidify public perception of Palestinians as a threat. The zeitgeist was aptly demonstrated in 2021 when Neftali Bennett, a purportedly moderate opposition figure who briefly dislodged Netanyahu from his role as prime minister, recalled his time in the Israeli military by proclaiming, "I've killed lots of Arabs in my life and there's no problem with that."

The political opportunism of the moment has become clear in recent days, as a report from an Israeli think tank as well as leaked analysis from Israeli intelligence agencies have noted the "rare opportunity" for the country to finally clear Palestinians from Gaza and annex the territory amidst the reaction to Hamas' October 7 attack. Viewed through this lens, Israel's attempted evacuation of the northern half of the Gaza Strip may be seen as a way to gradually colonize the enclave, while proposed "humanitarian relocation" of Gazans to Egypt or elsewhere would serve to clear the territory as a whole.

Hajo Meyer, a noted Jewish Holocaust survivor from Auschwitz, spent the final years of his life comparing Israel's treatment of Palestinians to that of the Nazis towards Jews. Yeshayahu Leibowitz, an Orthodox Jewish public intellectual in Israel, similarly lamented the ongoing demonization of Palestinians, warning that the country would eventually succumb to "Judeo-Nazism" if the trend continued.

With all 2.3 million residents of Gaza now in extreme danger, many observers worry that day has now come. With at least 2 million Arabs killed in 21st-century US-led intervention in the Middle East, Arabs may now be seen as modern-day Jews, their deaths met with widespread indifference in Western society. So far US President Joe Biden has appeared to give his Israeli allies carte blanche in handling their "national security" matters as Netanyahu ominously threatens to "change the Middle East."

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'There Were Warning Signs': Maine Police Were Aware of Gunman Weeks Before Mass Shooting

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Information emerged on Sunday about the mental health of Robert Card, the man responsible for a shooting rampage last week that killed 18 and injured 13.

Police were alerted to mass shooter Robert Card's erratic behavior last month but he fell off their radar after they were unable to find him during a wellness check, according to new information emerging on Sunday.

"He slipped through the cracks. There were warning signs," Jody Madeira, a professor and gun law expert, said in an assessment of Card who killed 18 people during a shooting spree at a bowling alley and bar in Lewiston, Maine, last week.

The comments came in response to new information about Card, who was found dead of a self-inflicted gunshot wound Friday after an exhaustive three-day manhunt.

Local law enforcement officials revealed Card was on their radar as recently as September after making threats to commit a mass shooting at his Army Reserve base in Saco, Maine. It was the second time he had engaged in such behavior after making threats during an Army training exercise in West Point, New York, in July.

The incident resulted in Card being committed to a mental health facility for two weeks after claiming he had been "hearing voices and threats to shoot up" the base, according to police.

The incident in September resulted in stepped-up security on the base in Saco and a welfare check to Card's home address, where police didn't find him. After police failed to contact Card he apparently fell off their radar, without being reported to the FBI or other police agencies.

The revelation came amidst news Card had attempted to purchase a silencer for his rifle from a gun shop in Lewiston three months before last week's shooting. Personnel at Coastal Defense Firearms prevented Card from making the purchase after he disclosed his prior commitment to a mental institution on a form.

"We did what we were supposed to do and hopefully saved a lot of lives by … just following the proper procedures," Rick LaChappelle, owner of the Coastal Defense Firearms company, told US media of the encounter.

The mass shooting has rekindled a periodic debate over gun control in the United States which suffers from an epidemic of gun deaths. The Maine mass shooting proved to be the deadliest shooting incident this year alone. Political opposition and the influence of the gun lobby repeatedly combine to make significant regulation of firearms impossible in the country.

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White House Says Rise in Anti-Semitic, Anti-Muslim Threats in US 'Unacceptable'

WASHINGTON, October 30 (Sputnik) – A growing number of anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim threats in the United States is unacceptable and dangerous, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Monday.

"This year, in 2023, we can continue to see that rise. It is dangerous, it is unacceptable anywhere in the world, and certainly here in the United States of America," Kirby told CNN, commenting on Cornell University reporting a series of anti-Semitic threats made against its

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Jewish community.

Cornell University President Martha Pollack said in a statement on Sunday that the police are investigating a series of anti-Semitic online messages threatening violence to the school's Jewish community

Kirby pointed out that in 2022, the US saw a record number of "anti-Semitic events" since 1979.

"We are working very closely at the federal level with states and local authorities to be able to better identify threats to the Jewish community and disrupt them before they can actually take action. We are working on that very hard," he said.

He also acknowledged a growing number of anti-Muslim threats in the country.

"We are watching that very closely. But this is unacceptable in the United States of America in 2023," Kirby said.

The increase in threats toward Jews, Arabs and Muslims comes amid the Israel-Gaza conflict, which has spanned into its fourth week and killed and injured thousands of people on both sides.

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Canada to Host Summit With EU in Newfoundland - Prime Minister's Office

WASHINGTON, October 30 (Sputnik) – Canada will host the Canada-EU summit in Newfoundland's capital of St. John's next month, the prime minister's office said on Monday.

"The Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, today announced that Canada will welcome European Union (EU) leaders to St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, for the 19th Canada-EU Leaders' Summit, which will run from November 23 to 24, 2023," the office said in a statement.

Trudeau will host European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen. The summit will be an opportunity to highlight the strong ties between Canada and the EU, and further build on them.

The discussions will follow up on progress made on key commitments established during the 2021 Canada-EU Leaders' Summit in Belgium. The topics include creating jobs, countering climate change and boosting cooperation on technology.

"The leaders will also reaffirm their support for strengthening trade under the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement," the statement said.

In addition, Trudeau, Michel and von der Leyen will reaffirm their commitment to the promotion of democracy and human rights, clean energy and the rule of law, according to the statement.

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US Forces Have Been Attacked 20 Times in Iraq, Syria Since October 17 - Pentagon

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WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - US forces have been attacked 20 times throughout Iraq and Syria since October 17, Pentagon Press Secretary Brig. Gen. Patrick Ryder said in a statement.

"Between Oct. 17-27, US and Coalition Forces have been attacked at least 14 separate times in Iraq and six separate times in Syria by a mix of one-way attack drones and rockets, for a total of 20 attacks to date," Ryder said on Friday.

Ryder said that most of the attacks were disrupted by defensive actions and failed to reach their targets.

Earlier in the day, the Pentagon confirmed that two US fighter jets carried out strikes against two targets in eastern Syria in response to attacks against US forces in Iraq and Syria. The targets, according to the Pentagon, were ammunition and weapons depots belonging to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC).

According to the Pentagon, the airstrikes were carried out in response to an uptick in attacks by Iran's "proxy forces" against US forces in Iraq and Syria.

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US Expects Peaceful Resolution to Tensions Across Taiwan Strait - Official

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - The US reaffirmed its steadfast dedication to preserving peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, a senior administration official told reporters.

"We continue to expect the peaceful resolution of cross strait differences, and we remain committed to preserving peace and stability across the Taiwan strait" the official said on Friday.

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Blinken, China's Wang Discussed Russia, N. Korea Ahead of APEC - US Official

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken during a meeting with Chinese Foreign Affairs Minister Wang Yi discussed matters concerning Russia and North Korea, a senior US administration official told reporters.

"The Secretary hosted Director and Foreign Minister Wang Yi for meetings that we described as candid and in depth," the officials said on Friday. "The Secretary's meeting with Director Wang, which totaled more than six hours, provided an important opportunity to discuss a range of bilateral, regional and global issues in advance of APEC."

The discussions between Blinken and Wang includes matters concerning Russia and North Korea, the official said.

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

Blinken Expressed Concerns to Wang Over China's Actions in South China Sea - Official

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken expressed deep concerns to Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi about China's actions in the South China Sea and the East China Sea, a senior administration official told reporters.
"There is no higher priority than the safety and well-being of US citizens overseas. The Secretary raised US concerns about PRC actions in both the South China Sea and the East China Sea. That includes the PRC's dangerous and unlawful obstruction of a Philippine resupply mission to Second Thomas Shoal in the South China Sea on October 22, and its unsafe intercept of a US aircraft in the South China Sea on October 25," the official said on Friday.

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Blinken Pressed China to Take More Constructive Approach in Mideast - Official

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - Secretary of State Antony Blinken Pressed China to encourage the Iranians towards calmness during his meetings with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, senior Administration officials said.
"I think it's fair to say we expressed deep concern with the situation and press China to take a more constructive approach. And that would include, of course, their engagements with the Iranians to urge calm," said officials Friday.

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US, China Affirm to Work Towards a Biden-Xi Meeting at APEC Summit - Official

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Chinese Foreign Affairs Minister Wang Yi during a meeting agreed they will continue to work towards setting up a potential meeting between President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping on the margins of the APEC summit in San Francisco next month, a senior US administration official told reporters.
"The two sides affirmed that they would work together toward a meeting between President Biden and President Xi in November in San Francisco," the official said on Friday.
The official added that the United States is making preparations for the possible Xi-Biden meeting in San Francisco.

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US Syria Strikes Unrelated to Israel-Hamas Conflict, No Shift in Approach - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - The US strikes in Syria are not indicative of a shift in the US approach to the Israel-Hamas conflict, Pentagon Press Secretary Brig. Gen. Patrick Ryder said in a statement.

"These narrowly tailored strikes in self-defense were intended solely to protect and defend U.S. personnel in Iraq and Syria. They are separate and distinct from the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, and do not constitute a shift in the U.S. approach to the Israel-Hamas conflict," Ryder said during an update to a briefing on Friday.

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Pentagon Says No Casualties in Airstrikes on Iran-Linked Weapons Depots

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - There were no causalities in the US airstrikes this week that destroyed two Iran-linked weapons depots, Pentagon Press Secretary Brig. Gen. Patrick Ryder said in a statement.

"US military F-16 and F-15 fighter aircraft conducted self-defense strikes October 26 (Eastern Time) on a weapons storage facility and ammunition storage facility used by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and affiliated groups, located in the vicinity of Abu Kamal, Syria. Both facilities were destroyed. We currently assess there were no casualties in the strikes," Ryder said on Friday.

According to the Pentagon, the airstrikes were carried out in response to an uptick in attacks by Iran's "proxy forces" against US forces in Iraq and Syria.

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US Border Patrol's Highly-Skilled BORTAC Unit in Maine to Help Find Suspect - DHS

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - US Border Patrol deployed a highly-skilled unit to the US state of Maine to help law enforcement locate the suspect of Wednesday night's mass shooting, a Department of Homeland Security official said in a statement to Sputnik.

On Wednesday night, 40-year-old Robert Card attacked a restaurant and a bowling alley in Lewiston. Eighteen people have been reported killed in the attack and numerous others injured. Card currently remains a fugitive.

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"The DHS workforce – across the agency – is working closely with local law enforcement and federal partners to provide both personnel and resources," the official said on Friday. "[US Border Patrol's] personnel deployment includes BORTAC, BORSTAR, K9 teams, and Mobile Response Team members from its Special Operations Group and Special Operations Detachments."

The BORTAC unit is well known for its ability to capture fugitives.

According to DHS, the agency has more than 200 of its personnel involved in ongoing efforts in Maine to help apprehend the suspect.

The DHS response also includes teams from the US Coast Guard and US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, including Homeland Security Investigations and Enforcement and Removal Operations, the statement said.

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US Develops Secret Military Base in Israel - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - Two months prior Hamas' attack on Israel, the Pentagon granted a multi-million dollar contract for the construction of facilities for US troops at a confidential base located in Israel's Negev desert, known by the codename Site 512, The Intercept reported.

Site 512, previously termed a "cooperative security location," a label meant for low-cost, minimal presence bases, has been applied to facilities capable of housing up to 1,000 troops, the report said on Friday.

Furthermore, Site 512 was not created to address the threat posed by Palestinian militants in Israel, but rather to counter the danger presented by Iranian mid-range missiles, the report said.

However, on October 7, when thousands of Hamas rockets were launched, Site 512 remained inactive because its primary focus is on monitoring Iran, which is over 700 miles away, the report said.

Despite President Joe Biden's denial of plans to deploy US troops to Israel during the conflict with Hamas, a covert US military presence is in place and expanding, as indicated by government documents, the report added.

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Nebenzia on UNGA-Adopted Gaza Truce Resolution Suggests More Can Be Done

UNITED NATIONS, October 28 (Sputnik) - The United Nations General Assembly-approved resolution calling for a humanitarian truce in the Israel-Gaza conflict is the bare minimum that could be done for citizens in the conflict area, the Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said at the UNGA.

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"This resolution is less than what we could, and must do for them," Nebenzia told the General Assembly hall after the vote on the Gaza resolution on Friday.

This resolution is a clear reflection showing the concern of the international community over the citizens of Gaza and Israel, he added.

Earlier today, the United Nations General Assembly countries approved Jordan-submitted resolution calling for the humanitarian truce in Gaza.

The resolution was adopted in a 120-14 vote, with 45 abstentions. Some of the countries which voted against the resolution on the humanitarian truce were: the United States, Austria, Israel and Hungary. On the other hand, countries such as France, Belgium or Ireland voted in favor of the document. This means that the European Union could not have a unified position due to the sensitivity of the issue.

This successfully approved resolution follows four attempts of the UN Security Council to adopt its own resolution on the Israel-Gaza situation but these resolutions did not gather enough votes or were vetoed.

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UNICEF Chief Says 'Lost Touch' With Colleagues in Gaza, Concerned for Their Safety

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) shared that they have now no connection with the colleagues inside the Gaza Strip, and are worried about their safety amid the expanded Israeli operation, UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell said in a statement via Twitter.

"We have lost touch with our colleagues in Gaza," Russell said Friday. "I'm extremely concerned about their safety and another night of unspeakable horror for 1M children in #Gaza. All humanitarians and the children and families they serve MUST be protected."

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Safety of UN Staff, Civilians, Health Workers, Journos At Grave Risk - UN Official

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - The safety of personnel of the United Nations as well as civilians, health workers and media representatives is at grave risk amid the expanded operation of Israel, United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Palestine said in a statement.

"Gaza has lost contact with the outside world amid reports of intensified bombardment," Hustings said. "Phone lines/internet/mobile networks cut. Hospitals & humanitarian operations can't continue without communications, energy, food, water, meds. Safety of civilians, incl health workers/journos/UN staff at grave risk. Wars have rules. Civilians must be protected."

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US Immigration Enforcement Released 900,000 Migrants Into Country This Year - CBP Data

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) - US immigration enforcement released more than 900,000 migrants into the United States in fiscal year 2023, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) data revealed.

The data showed on Friday that some 155,821 migrants were released in September.

The releases include migrants who qualified for parole or were given notices to appear for their immigration court proceedings.

The Biden administration witnessed its third-consecutive record of yearly illegal crossings by migrants on the US southern border in fiscal year 2023.

According to CBP data, some 2.4 million illegal migrants were encountered on the US southern border this fiscal year, which is measured from October 2022 to September 2023.

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US State of Maine Rescinds Shelter in Place Order, Prohibits Hunting in 4 Towns – Official

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) – The US State of Maine rescinded its shelter-in-place order but prohibited hunting in four towns beginning Saturday as the manhunt for the suspected shooter who killed 18 people and injured over a dozen continues, Maine Department of Public Safety Commissioner Mike Sauschuck told reporters.

"The Shelter in Place Order is rescinded, except hunting is prohibited in the towns of Lewiston, Lisbon, Bowdoin, and Monmouth beginning Saturday 10/28/23 until further notice," Sauschuck said on Friday.

Sauschuck underscored that the rescission of the shelter-in-place order does not mean that the crisis in the state is over and urged everyone to remain vigilant.

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TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) –

MASS SHOOTINGS IN US

* Maine authorities will deploy divers and air resources to continue the search for Robert Card, the suspected shooter who killed 18 people in the city of Lewiston, Maine Department of Public Safety Commissioner Mike Sauschuck said on Friday.

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* US authorities will not reveal details of a note found at the house of Card, following reports of this note to be suicidal, Sauschuck said.
* US President Joe Biden has discussed with FBI Director Christopher Wray the ongoing manhunt for Card, the suspect in the deadly mass shooting in Maine, the White House said.

MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

* The United States is privately urging Israel not to conduct a full-scale invasion of Gaza, but it is not confident it can persuade Israeli officials to reverse their decision, The Washington Post reported on Friday, citing US officials.
* The military wing of Hamas said that it is repelling a ground incursion of the Israeli military in the eastern part of the Bureij refugee camp in the Gaza Strip.
* It does not appear likely that Hamas will release all hostages, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said.
* The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is expanding ground operations in the Gaza Strip, IDF spokesman Daniel Hagari said.
* Jawwal, a Palestinian telecommunications operator, said that there is a complete shutdown of communications and internet in the Gaza Strip.
* The military wing of the Palestinian movement Hamas, the Al-Qassam Brigades, said on Friday that it is shelling Tel Aviv in response to Israel's mass killings of civilians.
* The United Nations General Assembly on Friday approved a Jordan-submitted resolution calling for a humanitarian truce in the Israel-Gaza conflict, a Sputnik correspondent reported.

US-CHINA COMMUNICATIONS

* White House Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Friday the United States is confident that US President Joe Biden and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping will have a bilateral meeting.
* The US has voiced strong concerns about a recent incident involving a Chinese pilot's intercept of a US B-52 aircraft in the South China Sea, Kirby said.
* The US national security team will meet with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi later in the day at the Blair House, Kirby said.
* Biden met with Wang Yi, who is currently in Washington DC, and discussed the bilateral relationship and the importance of maintaining open lines of communication, the White House said.

SITUATION IN SYRIA, IRAQ

* The United States Central Command and the military are still evaluating the impact of recent US airstrikes in Syria, White House Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Friday.
* There are no concerns that Russia will be drawn into hostilities, but the conflict between Palestine and Israel provokes tension in the region, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Friday, commenting on recent US strikes on targets in Syria.
* US forces in Iraq successfully shot down an attack drone a few kilometers away from Al-Assad Air Base in Iraq, a US defense official said in a statement to Sputnik.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* The European Union should change priorities in the budget to be able to combine assistance to Ukraine with the implementation of other tasks, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said on Friday.

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* Providing financial support for Ukraine remains a priority for the European Union, European Council President Charles Michel said after the European Council meeting in Brussels.
* Ukraine has lost over 2,055 soldiers in the Donetsk direction in the past week, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

RUSSIAN ECONOMY

* The Russian Agriculture Ministry has upgraded the forecast for grain exports in the 2023-2024 agricultural season to 65 million tonnes, Minister Dmitry Patrushev said on Friday.
* The Russian Ministry of Industry and Trade proposed to introduce a quota for the export of fertilizers starting December 1, 2023, to May 31, 2024, in the amount of 16.9 million tonnes, according to a document published on the official legal information portal.
* All major exporting companies have been included on the list for the mandatory sale of foreign currency earnings, Russian Central Bank Head Elvira Nabiullina said.
* Russia's budget for 2024-2026 has become the main reason for raising the key rate by two percentage points, Nabiullina said.
* The annual inflation in Russia has increased to 6.6% as of October 23 after 6.0% in September, the Central Bank said.

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US Still Laser Focused on Indo-Pacific Region Despite Other Crises - Senior Diplomat

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - The United States has not taken its primary focus off the Indo-Pacific region despite the escalating conflicts in Ukraine and between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Camille Dawson said on Friday.

"We have not taken our focus off the region: We will continue to be laser focused on the Indo-Pacific region," Dawson told an audience at the Atlantic Council. "We are building an effective latticework of overlapping partnerships."

Dawson said that since coming into office the Biden administration had been pursuing a policy of augmenting existing US bilateral relationships with its major allies in the Indo-Pacific with a "latticework" of what she described as "mini-lateral' relationships between groups of two or more states at a time. She cited the deepening of the long standing Quad relationship with Japan, Australia and India and the creation of the new Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) partnership to pool advanced technology and build nuclear submarines for Australia as examples of this new approach.

However, the new strategy was not aimed against China, Dawson insisted. "Our vision includes strategy but there is not a China strategy that we will use for the region. It is the exact opposite.... We are seeking to convert strategic convergence into practical sustainable actions," she said.

The United States held, for the first time, joint Indo-Pacific naval exercises with the European Union off the coast of Oman in March, Dawson recalled. Washington had also expanded its strategic engagements with the Republic of Korea, Japan and the Philippines, she said.

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US Recommends Americans Leave Lebanon Now Due to 'Unpredictable' Security Situation

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - The State Department issued an advisory on Friday urging American citizens in Lebanon to consider leaving the country immediately due to the unpredictable security situation in the region.

"The State Department recommends that US citizens in Lebanon leave now, while commercial flights remain available, due to the unpredictable security situation," the advisory said.

Earlier in the day, the United States conducted strikes against Iran's "proxy forces" in Syria while Israel announced it will be expanding ground operations in Gaza, but clarified it does not indicate the start of its planned invasion.

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UNGA Adopts Jordan's Resolution Calling for Humanitarian Truce in Gaza - Correspondent

UNITED NATIONS, October 27 (Sputnik) - The United Nations General Assembly on Friday approved a Jordan-submitted resolution calling for a humanitarian truce in the Israel-Gaza conflict, a Sputnik correspondent reported.

The resolution was adopted in a 120-14 vote, with 45 abstentions.

Some of the countries which voted against the resolution on the humanitarian truce were: the United States, Austria, Israel and Hungary. On the other hand, countries such as France, Belgium or Ireland voted in favor of the document. This means that the European Union could not have a unified position due to the sensitivity of the issue.

The resolution "calls for an immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities." It also urges "immediate, full, sustained, safe and unhindered humanitarian access" for the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies.

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Oil Prices Down 3% on Week After Chasing Gaza War Headlines

NEW YORK, October 27 (Sputnik) - Oil finished one of its most volatile weeks of the year with a 3% loss as traders reacted to a blitz of headlines on the Middle East that showed warring parties Israel and Hamas no closer to a solution despite intense mediation by the United States and other global powers.

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New York-traded West Texas Intermediate, or WTI, crude for December delivery, settled Friday's session at $85.54, up $2.33, or 2.8%. The US crude benchmark had been in yo-yo mode over the past four days, rising 2% or more in one session to promptly give that back in the next. For the week, WTI finished down 3.6%.

UK-origin Brent crude for December delivery settled at $90.48, up $2.55, or 2.9%. For the week, the global crude benchmark showed a drop of nearly 2%.

An official of the militant Hamas group conditioned the release of hostages in Gaza on a ceasefire in Israel's bombardment of the Palestinian enclave, media reports said. Israel says it is preparing a ground invasion, but has been urged by the US and Arab countries to delay an operation that would multiply the number of civilian casualties in the densely populated coastal strip and might ignite a wider conflict.

"It's a 'mess', in one word," John Kilduff, partner at New York energy hedge fund Again Capital, said, referring to the war. "No oil trader, I can tell you, knows where this thing is heading and everyone is just racing from headline to another."

Crude prices rebounded from Thursday's tumble as Israeli forces carried out their biggest Gaza ground attack on Hamas overnight, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu saying Israeli troops were still preparing for a full ground invasion.

While that was being held up amid intense mediation by world powers, the threat of fifth largest oil producer Iran thrusting itself into the battle seemed to intensify with each passing day of the three-week old war.

Tehran, a vociferous supporter of Hamas, has had a war of words with Israel ally Washington since the deadly Hamas rampage into southern Israel on October 7 that triggered the worst fighting the Middle East has seen in decades. US military struck Iranian targets in Syria on Friday and Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian warned that the United States will "not be spared from this fire".

Separately, projectiles hit two Egyptian Red Sea towns on Friday injuring several people, according to reports that showed the risk of regional spillover from the conflict.

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Russia Says US Consciously Choosing Path of Conflict Escalation in Ukraine- UN Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, October 27 (Sputnik) - Washington is consciously choosing the path of conflict escalation in Ukraine, First Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy said on Friday.

"Obviously, Washington has consciously taken the path of escalation of the conflict and upping the ante," Polyanskiy said during the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

Polyanskiy further said that Russia had previously emphasized that the Americans and their allies do not require peace in Ukraine, instead the US views the Kiev regime as a means to weaken Russia.

Since Russia's military operation began in February 2022, Western countries have been supplying military aid to Ukraine. This assistance has progressed from artillery munitions and

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training in 2022 to more substantial weapons such as tanks, a move that the Kremlin has consistently cautioned against.

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Musk at Company-Wide Meeting Says X to Be 'Fully Fledged' Dating Site in 2024 - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - Elon Musk shared his vision for X, formerly know as Twitter, to become a dating app and a digital bank during a company-wide meeting on the anniversary of his Twitter takeover, Business Insider reported on Friday.

According to the report, a year into his ownership of X, Elon Musk is continuing to generate unforeseen concepts for the platform's future, as he conveyed his enthusiastic vision for X in the coming year, aiming for it to become a fully developed dating site and digital bank by next year.

Furthermore, Musk refrained from providing detailed insights into the specific steps required to transition X into a dating app, address potential user demand for these features, or outline additional product modifications, the report said.

However, this proposal aligns with Musk's overarching strategy of introducing payment-driven features, a move consistent with the prevailing subscription-based model in most contemporary dating apps, the report added.

Dating site Match.com saw its stock plummet by 4.7% in the wake of the report.

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UNGA Adopts Jordan's Resolution Calling for Humanitarian Truce in Gaza - Correspondent

UNITED NATIONS, October 27 (Sputnik) - The United Nations General Assembly on Friday approved a Jordan-submitted resolution calling for a humanitarian truce in the Israel-Gaza conflict, a Sputnik correspondent reported.

The resolution was adopted in a 120-14 vote, with 45 abstentions.

The resolution "calls for an immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities." It also urges "immediate, full, sustained, safe and unhindered humanitarian access" for the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies.

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UNGA Rejects Amendment to Israel-Gaza Resolution Condemning Hamas Attack

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UNITED NATIONS, October 27 (Sputnik) - The United Nations General Assembly has voted against amending a draft resolution on Israel and Gaza to include condemnation of the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel, a Sputnik correspondent reported on Friday.

The draft resolution, proposed by the Arab Group at the United Nations, "calls for an immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities" and does not condemn violence by either side.

The proposed amendment, drafted by Canada, would have altered the text to include a clause that “unequivocally rejects and condemns the terrorist attacks by Hamas that took place in Israel starting on 7 October 2023 and the taking of hostages, demands safety, well-being and human treatment of the hostages.”

Pakistan's Ambassador to the UN, ahead of the vote, said that if the amendment passed, his country would seek to again amend the draft resolution to condemn violence by the Israeli side.

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US Forces 'Successfully' Shot Down Attack Drone Near Al-Asad Air Base in Iraq - Official

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - US forces in Iraq successfully shot down an attack drone a few kilometers away from Al-Assad Air Base in Iraq, a US defense official said in a statement to Sputnik on Friday.

"At approximately 0700 EDT on 27 OCT[ober], US forces engaged a one-way attack drone a few kilometers from Al-Assad Air Base, Iraq, and successfully shot it down without further incident," the official said.

Earlier in the day, the Pentagon confirmed that two US F-16 fighter jets had carried out strikes against two targets in eastern Syria in response to attacks against US forces in Iraq and Syria. The targets, according to the Pentagon, were ammunition and weapons depots belonging to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps.

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Austin, Ukrainian Counterpart Discuss Plans for Next Contact Group Meeting - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin and Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov in a phone call on Friday discussed plans for the next meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group (UDCG), Pentagon Press Secretary Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder said.

"Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III spoke by phone today with Ukrainian Minister of Defence Rustem Umerov to discuss ongoing U.S. security assistance for Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression, as well as plans for the next Ukraine Defense Contact Group meeting that will again bring together some 50 countries supporting Ukraine," Ryder said in a readout.

The two also discussed recent developments on the ground in Ukraine.

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The UDCG, a coalition of some 50 nations, has committed more than $33 billion in security assistance to Ukraine, Austin said at the 16th UDCG meeting earlier his month.

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Biden Discussed Ongoing Manhunt in Maine With FBI Chief - White House

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden has discussed with FBI Director Christopher Wray the ongoing manhunt for Robert Card, the suspect in the deadly mass shooting in Maine, the White House said on Friday.

"This afternoon the President was updated by his senior staff on the latest information about the mass shooting in Lewiston, Maine," the release said. "He also spoke with FBI Director Christopher Wray, who described the more than 200 FBI personnel who are in Maine to support the investigation – including the ongoing manhunt – and provide assistance to the victims. The President expressed appreciation for the courageous work of all the Federal, State and local law enforcement personnel."

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Voting Against Jordan Resolution Means Approving 'Senseless War' - Foreign Minister

UNITED NATIONS, October 27 (Sputnik) - Countries voting against Jordan's resolution to the UN General Assembly would mean approving the senseless war between Israel and Gaza, Jordanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi said on Friday.

"Israel just launched a ground war on Gaza. Outcome will be a humanitarian catastrophe of epic proportions for years to come. Voting against Arab #UNGA resolution means approving this senseless war, this senseless killing. Millions will be watching every vote. History will judge." Safadi said via X (formerly Twitter).

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US Warns Against Full-Scale Invasion of Gaza, Not Sure Israel Will Change Course - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - The United States is privately urging Israel not to conduct a full-scale invasion of Gaza, but it is not confident it can persuade Israeli officials to reverse their decision, The Washington Post reported on Friday, citing US officials.

Earlier in the day, Israel's armed forces announced they will expand ground operations in northern Gaza later today.

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The report said that US officials highly doubt a full-scale ground assault by Israel in Gaza would achieve its goals of eliminating Hamas, but would only derail ongoing negotiations for the release of hostages and result in numerous causalities of Palestinian civilians and Israeli troops. Moreover, the report said the United States has not threatened to suspend support or impose a consequence on Israel should ground invasion plans move forward.

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RPT - US Raised Concerns Over Chinese Pilot's 'Unsafe Intercept' of B-52 - White House

(Repeats to fix date in dateline)
WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - The US has voiced strong concerns about a recent incident involving a Chines pilot's intercept of a US B-52 aircraft in the South China Sea, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Friday.
"We have absolutely raised our concerns about the unsafe intercept in the South China Sea," Kirby said during the day gaggle.

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US Confident That Biden-Xi Meeting Will Happen - Kirby

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - White House Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Friday the United States is confident that US President Joe Biden and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping will have a bilateral meeting.
"President has said that he fully expects to meet again with President Xi ... We are confident that that's going to happen," Kirby told a briefing.

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US To Pursue Modern Variant of B61 Gravity Bomb, Pending Congressional Authorization

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) – The United States will pursue a modern variant of B61 Nuclear gravity bomb, the Pentagon said on Friday.
“Today, the Department of Defense (DoD) announced that the United States will pursue a modern variant of the B61 nuclear gravity bomb, designated the B61-13, pending Congressional authorization and appropriation,” the statement said.
The Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) would produce the B61-13, it added.

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White House Says Hamas Unlikely to Release All Hostages

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - It does not appear likely that Hamas will release all hostages, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Friday.
"All I can tell you is that we [US] want to see the hostages released, obviously they should just all be released, anyway. But that does not appear to be likely, you know, just on the face of it," Kirby said during the day gaggle.

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US Raised Concerns Over Chinese Pilot's 'Unsafe Intercept' of B-52 - White House

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - The US has voiced strong concerns about a recent incident involving a Chinese pilot's intercept of a US B-52 aircraft in the South China Sea, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Friday.
"We have absolutely raised our concerns about the unsafe intercept in the South China Sea," Kirby said during the day gaggle.

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Kirby Says Biden Hopes to Meet With China’s Xi in Near Future

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden hopes to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping in the near future, White House Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Friday.
"Both sides have regularly acknowledged the importance of leader-level channels of communication to manage this most consequential bilateral relationship," Kirby said during a press briefing. "The President [Biden] has stated multiple times that he hopes to see President Xi in the near future."

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White House Says No Update on Qatar Vowing to Reassess Its Ties With Hamas

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Friday that he does not have an update on reports that Qatar notified the United States it is open to reassessing its ties with the Palestinian Hamas group.
"No, I don't have any updates or anything to speak to with respect to that," Kirby told reporters regarding Qatar's relations with Hamas.

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US National Security Team to Meet With China's Wang Yi on Friday – Kirby

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) – The US national security team will meet with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi later in the day at the Blair House, White House Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Friday.
"The [US] national security team also has an additional meeting with Director Wang this afternoon at the Blair House," Kirby said during a press briefing. "We're obviously aiming for a constructive meeting between [national security advisor] Jake Sullivan and Director Wang this afternoon at the Blair House."

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White House Says Nothing Has Changed About US Desire to Get Hostages Out of Gaza

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - Nothing has changed about the United States' desire to get hostages out of Gaza and returned to their families safely, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Friday.
"Nothing has changed about our desire for any and all opportunities to get the hostages out to get them back and their families safely," Kirby said at a press briefing.

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US Anticipates Fuel in Gaza Will Only Last Couple of Days - White House

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - The United States anticipates fuel in Gaza will only last a couple of days, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Friday.
"We also understand that the UN would be able to access some fuel starting today," Kirby told

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reporters. "Again, that's a good thing, but that fuel is only anticipated to last for the next couple of days."

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US After Strikes in Syria Will Not Hesitate To Take Further Action in Self-Defense - Kirby

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - The United States will not hesitate to take additional actions in self-defense, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Friday after the United States carried out airstrikes in Syria.

Earlier in the day, the Pentagon confirmed that the United States had carried out strikes against targets in eastern Syria in response to attacks against US forces in Iraq and Syria.

"We will not hesitate to take further actions in our own self-defense," Kirby said.

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US Central Command, Military Still Evaluating Impact of US Airstrikes in Syria - Kirby

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - The United States Central Command and the military are still evaluating the impact of recent US airstrikes in Syria, White House Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Friday.

"Certainly you're all aware of the self defense airstrikes that we took last night in response to the attacks against US personnel since October 17. The Central Command and the military are still evaluating the impact of those strikes," Kirby said during a briefing.

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White House Says Would Be Inappropriate to Comment on Reports of Israeli Ground Operations

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Friday that he will not comment on reports about the Israeli ground operations expanding in northern Gaza because it is inappropriate and could risk impacting their operations.

"We have, of course, certainly seen Israel undertake varied operations on the ground in the last couple of days, but again, we're not going to get into the habit of chiming in from the sidelines here on what they're trying to do on the ground, wouldn't be appropriate, I certainly wouldn't want to see anything in this setting that might affect our operational security," Kirby told

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reporters.
Earlier in the day, Israel's armed forces announced it will expand ground operations in northern Gaza later today.

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Maine Shooting Suspect's Note Represents Suicidal Note in Some Manner - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - The note found at the house of Robert Card, the suspect in the deadly mass shooting in the US state of Maine, in some way represents a suicidal note, the US media reported on Friday.
The noted indicated that Card didn't expect to be alive when it was found, and provided information and instruction to others on where things could be found and disposed of, CNN reported, citing a law enforcement official.
The source also told the channel that this is in part the reason why the search has now moved to nearby waterways, the law enforcement source said.
Maine Department of Public Safety Commissioner Mike Sauschuck said earlier on Friday that US authorities will not reveal details of a note found at the house of Robert Card, the suspect in the deadly mass shooting in the US state of Maine, following reports of this note to be suicidal.
On Thursday, ABC News, citing law enforcement sources with knowledge of the probe, reported that the found note is being described as a suicide note addressed to Crad's son. The sources also told the channel that the note does not provide information indicating a motive for the shooting.
Sauschuck also announced during the press briefing that Maine authorities will deploy divers and air resources to continue the search for Card.
Divers will be screening the area and checking for evidence of potential bodies, he added.
On Wednesday night, 40-year-old Card opened fire at a restaurant and a bowling alley in Lewiston. Eighteen people were killed in the attack, and dozens of others injured. Card is still on the run.

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Biden Meets With Chinese Top Diplomat, Discusses Bilateral Relationship - White House

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden met with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who is currently in Washington DC, and discussed the bilateral relationship and the importance of maintaining open lines of communication, the White House said in a press release on Friday.
"President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. met today with the People’s Republic of China Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission and Foreign Minister Wang Yi," the press release said.

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"The President emphasized that both the United States and China need to manage competition in the relationship responsibly and maintain open lines of communication. He underscored that the United States and China must work together to address global challenges."

During the meeting, Biden expressed his condolences on the passing of former Premier Li Keqiang who died from a heart attack on Thursday, the release added.

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UN Chief Has No Authority to Designate Situation in Gaza As Genocide - Spokesperson

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has no authority to designate the situation in Gaza as genocide, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Friday when asked about qualifying Israel's actions in the region.

"It is not a designation that the Secretary-General has the legal authority to make within the UN context," Dujarric told reporters.

The designation of a genocide needs to be made by a competent legal body, he added.

Palestinian Justice Minister Mohammed al-Shalaldeh told Sputnik earlier this week that Palestine will file a complaint with the International Criminal Court against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and accuse them of genocide against the Palestinian people.

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 abducting 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 the deaths of around 1,400 Israelis and over 7,000 Palestinians.

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Judge Orders Ivanka Trump to Testify at Trump Civil Fraud Trial - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - A New York judge ruled that Ivanka Trump must provide testimony in the ongoing civil fraud trial against her father Donald Trump and the family business, Politico reported on Friday.

The case revolves around a lawsuit brought by New York Attorney General Letitia James against Trump, his sons Don Jr. and Eric and the Trump Organization.

Judge Arthur Engoron supported the state's position, referencing documented evidence that indicated Ivanka Trump maintained connections with certain businesses in New York and retained ownership of Manhattan apartments, the report said.

Nevertheless, following Ivanka Trump's dismissal as a defendant four months ago, her legal

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team and defense attorneys contended that she should not be compelled to testify, citing her relocation from New York and departure from the Trump Organization in 2017, the report said.

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UN Will Not be Able To Deliver Aid To Gaza Without Shaping Delivery System - Spokesperson

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) – The United Nations will not be able to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza without immediate improvement of the delivery process, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Friday.

"Given the desperate and dramatic situation, the United Nations will not be able to continue to deliver inside Gaza without an immediate and fundamental shape in how aid is going in. The verification system for the movement of goods through Rafah Crossing must be adjusted to allow for more trucks to enter Gaza without delay," Dujarric told reporters.

He stressed that currently, the supply deliveries to the region do not include fuel necessary for UN operations, as well as for hospitals and other critical civilian infrastructure.

Dujarric pointed out that the humanitarian system in Gaza is facing a "total collapse." Consequences would be "unimaginable" for more than 2 million civilians, he added.

"About 500 trucks per day were crossing into Gaza before the hostilities began. In recent days, an average of only 12 tucks per day have been able to go in, despite needs the far greater than they were anytime before," UN spokesperson said.

He urged all responsible parties to allow deliveries of life-saving humanitarian aid, food, water, medicine, and fuel swiftly, safely and at scale.

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 abducting 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 the deaths of around 1,400 Israelis and over 7,000 Palestinians.

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US Leading The World in Both Inflation Fight and Economic Growth - Brainard

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - The United States is leading the world in both the fight against inflation and economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic, President Joe Biden's top economic aide said Friday.

"The US is bringing inflation down faster than other advanced economies, while growing more robustly," Lael Brainard, director of the White House National Economic Council, said in a live-streamed speech.

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Brainard's remarks came after the Commerce Department said this week that US Gross Domestic Product, or GDP, grew 4.9% year-on-year for the third quarter, after an annual growth of 2.1% in the second quarter. The Personal Consumption Expenditures Index, which serves as the Federal Reserve's preferred inflation indicator, meanwhile, showed a 3.4% expansion year-on-year in September versus 3.5% in August.

"The US currently has the lowest inflation both at a headline and core level of any G7 economy," Brainard, referring to the Group of Seven countries which aside from the United States consist of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Britain. "We've also seen faster, post pandemic productivity growth as measured by output per worker. We've seen high growth in business investment relative to other G7 countries."

US GDP contracted by 8.9% in the second quarter of 2020, after the outbreak of the COVID-19 in the first quarter of that year. Final GDP growth for all of 2020 was minus 2.8%. By 2021 though, the economy had rebounded strongly from the pandemic, registering a 5.9% growth. GDP expansion moderated by last year but remained positive, with a 2.1% growth.

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Harris Met With Families of Americans Still Unaccounted For After Hamas Attack-White House

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - US Vice President Kamala Harris and Second Gentleman Douglas Emhoff have held a meeting with families of Americans who are still unaccounted for after the Hamas attack earlier this month, the White House announced in a release on Friday.

"Vice President Kamala Harris and Second Gentleman Douglas Emhoff met with families of Americans still unaccounted for following the horrific October 7 Hamas terrorist attacks in Israel," the release said. "They listened to the families' experiences over the past several weeks, which has been an agonizing ordeal, and expressed their support."

The meeting was led by Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs Roger Carstens and took place at the State Department, according to the release.

"The Vice President relayed to the families that there is no higher priority for her and President Biden than the safety of American citizens," the release said. "The Vice President emphasized that the Biden-Harris Administration is doing everything possible to bring these Americans home and secure the release of all hostages held by Hamas."

The White House concluded by saying that Harris stressed that Washington is working with partners in the Middle East to ensure that any country with influence over Hamas helps secure the release of hostages.

On October 7, Palestinian group Hamas launched a large-scale rocket attack from the Gaza Strip and breached the border, killing more than 1,000 people and abducting over 200 others. 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.

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US Shoots Down Attack Drone Near Iraq Air Base – Reports

WASHINGTON, October 28 (Sputnik) – US troops shot down an attack drone near Al-Asad Air Base in Iraq on Friday, Fox News reported, citing a US defense official.

"Early in the morning of 27 OCT, U.S. forces engaged a one-way attack drone a few kilometers from Al-Assad Air Base, Iraq, and successfully shot it down without further incident," a Fox correspondent posted on social media.

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US Authorities Say Won't Reveal Details of Maine Shooting Suspect's Note

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - US authorities will not reveal details of a note found at the house of Robert Card, the suspect in the deadly mass shooting in the US state of Maine, following reports of this note to be suicidal, Maine Department of Public Safety Commissioner Mike Sauschuck said on Friday.

"There was a note at one of these residences. I'm not permitted to really talk about what that included," Sauschuck stated.

Meanwhile, on Thursday, ABC News, citing law enforcement sources with knowledge of the probe, reported that the found note is being described as a suicide note addressed to Crad's son. The sources also told the channel that the note does not provide information indicating a motive for the shooting.

Sauschuck also announced during the press briefing that Maine authorities will deploy divers and air resources to continue the search for Card.

Divers will be screening the area and checking for evidence or potential bodies, he added.

On Wednesday night, 40-year-old Card opened fire at a restaurant and a bowling alley in Lewiston. Eighteen people were killed in the attack, and dozens of others injured. Card is still on the run.

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US Encourages Israel,Egypt To Take Steps To Alleviate Humanitarian Crisis In Gaza-UN Envoy

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - The United States is calling on Israel, Egypt an other partners to take necessary steps to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield said on Friday.

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"We continue to encourage Israel, Egypt and all partners to take concrete steps to alleviate this humanitarian crisis," Thomas-Greenfield stated.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday that the United States is closely coordinating with Egypt, Israel, other regional partners and the United Nations to establish effective mechanisms for the continuous delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza's civilian population.

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Shireen Abu Akleh Shrine in West Bank Bulldozed, Desecrated – Journalist Group

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) – The West Bank site where Al-Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh was shot dead by Israeli forces last year was bulldozed and her shrine was desecrated, the International Federation of Journalists said in a press release on Friday.

"The site of Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh's killing in Jenin has been bulldozed and her shrine desecrated, in an unexplained early-morning operation on 26 October. A surfaced road running between houses has been reduced to huge boulders of broken concrete, and earth dug to over half a meter's depth," the release stated.

It added that Balat al-Shuhada' Street is believed to have been bulldozed by "heavy civil engineering vehicles" around 3:00 a.m. on what was technically October 27. Local residents said the vehicles were operated by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). Paintings of the journalist and other tributes to her at the site were destroyed.

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate (PJS) condemned the vandalism, with PJG President Nasser Abu Bakr stating that it was "surely revenge for the report just issued by the UN that states that Israeli forces 'wilfully or recklessly killed Abu Akleh.'"

The West Bank human rights organization Al Haq and UK human rights violations research group Forensic Architecture also concluded in a joint investigation that the IDF had deliberately targeted Abu Akleh and her colleagues. As Israel has continued to deny responsibility, the journalist associations called again on the International Criminal Court to open an investigation into her killing.

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Diplomatic Source Says Progress Made in Qatar-Led Hostage Release Talks with Hamas-Reports

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - Significant headway has been achieved in the negotiations for the release of hostages held by Hamas although issues still persist, CNN reported on Friday.

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"Negotiations are going very well. We have a breakthrough...There are issues still remaining, but talks are ongoing, and we remain hopeful," the diplomatic source said as cited by the report.
According to the report, Barbara Leaf, the US Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs, is presently in Doha engaging in meetings with Qatar's leadership, the report said.
On October 7, the Palestinian movement Hamas initiated an unexpected large-scale rocket assault on Israel from the Gaza Strip. In response, Israel carried out retaliatory strikes and imposed a complete blockade on the Gaza Strip, which is home to over 2 million residents, resulting in the disruption of essential supplies such as water, food, and fuel.

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Maine Police to Deploy Divers, Air Resources as Search for Lewiston Shooter Continues

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) – Maine authorities will deploy divers and air resources to continue the search for Robert Card, the suspected shooter who killed 18 people in the city of Lewiston, Maine Department of Public Safety Commissioner Mike Sauschuck said on Friday.
"We will be putting divers in the water ... You are going to see some air resources that will fly over this particular area, and they are looking to see what can clear from the air," Sauschuck told reporters.
Divers will be screening the area and checking for evidence or potential bodies, he added.
"I am not saying that we know the suspect is in the water," Sauschuck said.
He also pointed out that the authorities continue to investigate Sparetime Recreation bowling alley and Schemengees Bar and Grille, where the shootings occurred.
"I would expect we are still days away from completing those particular investigations, those particular crime scenes," Sauschuck said.
On Wednesday night, 40-year-old Card opened fire at a restaurant and a bowling alley in Lewiston. Eighteen people were killed in the attack, and dozens of others injured. Card is still on the run.

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Austin Reaffirms Support for Philippines Following Maritime Incident With China – Pentagon

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) – US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin in a call with Philippine Secretary of National Defense Gilberto Teodoro Jr. reaffirmed US support for the country following a maritime incident involving China in the vicinity of Second Thomas Shoal earlier this month, according to a joint press release published by the Pentagon on Friday.
“Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III and Philippine Secretary of National Defense Gilberto Teodoro Jr spoke by phone yesterday. Secretary Austin reinforced U.S. support for the Philippines following the PRC Coast Guard and maritime militia's dangerous obstruction of a

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Philippine resupply mission to Second Thomas Shoal on October 22," the joint release said.
The release added that the defense secretaries are looking forward to meeting in person in Jakarta on the margins of the upcoming ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM)-Plus on November 16.
On October 23, the China Coast Guard said that four Philippine ships had entered the waters of the disputed Nansha Islands, also known as the Spratly Islands, in the South China Sea "without permission of Chinese authorities." The incident led to a light collision between a Chinese and a Philippine vessel.
The territorial affiliation of a number of islands in the South China Sea has been the subject of disputes between China and several other Asia-Pacific countries for decades. Significant oil and gas reserves have been discovered on the continental shelf of those islands, including the Paracel Islands, the Spratly Islands, Thitu Island, and Scarborough Shoal. Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan, and the Philippines are involved in the disputes to some extent.

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House Democrat Dean Phillips Announces Run for US President in 2024

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) – House Democrat from Minnesota Dean Phillips announced on Friday his bid to become the next US President and plans to visit New Hampshire to kick off his campaign and meet with voters.
"I'm Dean Phillips and I'm running for President of the United States of America and I'm coming to New Hampshire to answer your questions," Phillips said in a short video ad.
In the video, Phillips pledged to repair the US economy and the United States itself if elected president.
In an X post, Phillips outlined the four main priorities of his campaign, namely the economy, public safety, investing in young people, and dialogue with Republicans, without which he believes it is impossible to achieve any meaningful national goals.
He said he will run for president because he is concerned that the course that the Democrats have chosen is putting the country at risk of former President Donald Trump returning to the White House. He still, however, paid tribute to sitting President Joe Biden for his performance.
"I think President Biden has done a spectacular job for our country, but it's not about the past. This is an election about the future. I will not sit still, I will not be quiet in the face of numbers that are so clearly saying that we're going to be facing an emergency next November," Phillips said in an interview with CBS.
To this day, besides Phillips, only three Democrats have announced their plans to join the race for the Oval Office – Biden, Marianne Williamson, and Cenk Uygur, while as many as 10 Republicans, including Trump, are vying for their party's nomination in the upcoming election.

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China Urges Respect for One-China Principle as Canada Eyes Investment Deal With Taiwan

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - China calls on Canada to respect the One-China principle and refrain from any official interaction with Taiwan, including by signing an investment deal, the Chinese Embassy in Ottawa told Sputnik.

On Tuesday, Canada and Taiwan completed negotiations on a foreign investment promotion and protection arrangement. Global Affairs Canada said it is looking forward to signing the deal "promptly."

"Taiwan is an inalienable part of China. China strongly opposes official interaction of any form between China's Taiwan region and countries that have diplomatic relations with China. That includes negotiating or signing any agreement of sovereign implication or official nature. This position is clear and consistent," the embassy told Sputnik.

China urges the Canadian government to abide by the One-China principle, and "prudently and properly handle relevant issues," the embassy added.

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UN Says Gaza Aid Delays Partly Due to Israel Political Issues

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) – The UN said on Friday that the delays in delivering assistance to Gaza are in part due to political issues with Israel.

"President Biden had to call Prime Minister Netanyahu on the second day that goods were supposed to go in…because in addition to the technical issues and the security issues, there's political issues as well," Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory Lynn Hastings said at a press briefing.

"There's a certain amount of pressure on the government of Israel in terms of its domestic politics," she added. "And that delays things just also in terms of the maximum number that I think the government of Israel is prepared to allow us to bring in. So it's technical and political."

Hastings said that the humanitarian situation in Gaza was dire, noting that prior to October 7, there were 450 trucks of assistance crossing into Gaza each day, including 46 trucks of fuel. Since the war broke out, only about 74 trucks have managed to get into Gaza, none of which were permitted to contain fuel.

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US Congress' Job Approval Rating Drops to 13% Lowest Level Since 2017 – Poll

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WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) – Only 13% of Americans look positively at the current performance of US Congress, which is the lowest result in the last six years, a new Gallup poll said on Friday.

"Amid a prolonged search for a new House speaker that paralyzed the House of Representatives for three weeks while two U.S. allies are engaged in wars, Americans' approval of Congress' job performance fell from 17% to 13%," the poll said.

The same rating was in October and November 2017, it added.

The survey was conducted on October 2-23, when US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy had been ousted, and three other his colleagues failed bids to replace him. Supporters of both major political parties expressed negative views on Congress' work: only 8% of Republicans and 10% of Democrats said that they agree with the job it is doing.

"It is the lowest rating Democrats have given Congress since a 9% reading in December 2018, when Republicans controlled both houses of Congress under Republican President Donald Trump," the poll said.

At the same time, only 19% of independent voters approve of Congress' activity.

The poll, which was conducted among 1,009 adults in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia, said that only 37% of Americans support President Joe Biden's performance.

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