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**10/26/23 Thursday**

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Watch Chinese Warship Protest 'Provocative' Maneuver by US Navy Destroyer

The US has sought to portray China as aggressive, claiming its warships and warplanes operating just off the Chinese coast are being harassed in unprovoked incidents. Now, Beijing has fired back, publishing proof the US warships, thousands of miles from US territory, are doing the same.

In response to the Pentagon releasing footage of allegedly "risky" air encounters between US and Chinese aircraft near Chinese airspace, Beijing has replied in kind with videos of its own.

On Thursday, Sen. Col. Wu Qian, a spokesperson for the Chinese Ministry of National Defense (MND), presented reporters with footage of two incidents on August 19 involving US Navy and Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) warships that he described as "provocative." Both incidents occurred in the South China Sea near the Xisha Islands, a Chinese-controlled archipelago called the Paracel Islands in English.

In the first clip, the USS Ralph Johnson, an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer that is 513 feet long and displaces 9,217 tons, is seen maneuvering near the PLAN Type 051 destroyer Guilin, which is 433 feet long and displaces 3,670 tons, and the Type 054A frigate Huangshan, which is 440 feet long and displaces 4,053 tons.

The clip shows the USS Johnson performing several maneuvers, including cutting across the Guilin's bow, which forces the Chinese ship to sail through the disrupted waters of the Johnson's wake, and engaging in a sudden acceleration.

"US Warship 114, this is Chinese 164," audio recorded on the Guilin's bridge can be heard in the video, referring to the two ships' hull numbers, "you are crossing my bow forcibly. It's interfering [with] my safety."

The MND noted the maneuvers violated the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea, and the Rules of Behavior for Safety of Air and Maritime Encounters between China and the US.

In the second clip, the USS Johnson is seen sailing through a gap between the Chinese warships Guilin and Huangshan, which were sailing in a line as a task group.

"This act of the US side violated the Rules of Behavior for Safety of Air and Maritime Encounters between China and the US," the Chinese MND noted.

"This video proves that it is the US side that is making provocations, taking risks and muddling the water," MND spokesperson Wu told reporters. "We have much similar video evidence, but I won't show them today because of time constraints. What I'm emphasizing here is to pay close attention to where things are happening."

"We all know that all the close encounters between Chinese and US aircraft and warships were all in the waters and airspace around China, not in the Gulf of Mexico or on the West Coast of America," Wu continued. "It was the US side that came to China's doorstep to provoke and stir

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up troubles. How is the Chinese military supposed to intercept the US aircraft and warships if they don't come?"

"That is an impossible task for the US to endanger China's national security while making unfettered provocations. The Chinese military is always on high alert and will take all necessary measures to resolutely defend China's national sovereignty, security, and maritime rights and interests," the MND spokesperson added.

The Chinese release comes a week after the US Department of Defense published dozens of photos and videos depicting encounters between US spy planes and Chinese fighter aircraft in the airspace off China's coast. In many of the examples, the Chinese aircraft are flying close to US aircraft, sometimes as close as 30 feet, and engaging in maneuvers such as dropping flares or flying directly in front of the US warplanes.

The Pentagon said the releases "underscore the coercive intent of (China) by engaging in behaviors particularly in international airspace," adding that "this type of operational behavior can cause active and dangerous accidents and can lead to inadvertent conflict."

In recent years, the US has dramatically increased its military presence in the air, sea, and land near China as part of its "great power competition"with China as well as Russia. The US has accused both nations of seeking to overturn the so-called "rules-based international order," including by making what Washington considers "excessive claims" of control, such as over islands and waterways in the South China Sea or over Taiwan and the strait that separates it from the mainland.

The US and its allies engage in what it calls "freedom of navigation operations" in such areas, which involve their aircraft and warships passing through them as if China had no claim over them, resulting in frequent tense encounters between them and the Chinese military units ordering them to leave.

In the South China Sea, Beijing has joined other regional nations in attempting to forge a code of conduct for the waterway, which will regulate encounters between nations at sea based on UN conventions, in a bid to defuse tensions.

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Radhika Desai: Western Press Uses 'Ankle-Biting Yappy Dog' Pseudo-Academics to Silence Critics

A prominent Canadian academic has come under fire in the Canadian press for attending the Valdai Forum in Russia. She told Sputnik that the Western press uses government-funded "lapdog" academics to smear the reputations of those who criticize Western policies and highlight how they have discredited themselves.

After University of Manitoba professor and geopolitical economist Radhika Desai accepted an invitation to attend an academic event in Russia, she was attacked in the Canadian press for allegedly "spreading disinformation." Her crime? Asking Russian President Vladimir Putin about the Canadian Parliament's decision to honor a Ukrainian Nazi last month.

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The Valdai Forum is an event hosted every year in Sochi by the Valdai Club, a Russian think tank and discussion forum that focuses on geopolitical and economic issues. Putin has made a habit of speaking at the event, as he did earlier this month.

Desai, who accepted an invitation for her and her husband to attend the event, used the opportunity to ask Putin a question about the Canadian government honoring a Nazi last month. Yaroslav Hunka, a veteran of the 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS, the fanatical Nazi paramilitary organization that helped perpetrate the Holocaust, was honored as a "Ukrainian hero" by Canadian lawmakers, including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, because his unit fought against the Soviet Union - who in Western parlance are often reduced to "the Russians" - in World War II.

Following mass outrage, Trudeau apologized for the honors, claiming he was unaware of Hunka's Nazi connections, but not before trying to parry the accusations by labeling them "Russian disinformation." House Speaker Anthony Rota also resigned from his post over the affair.

Putin said the incident shows "the kind of people we have to deal with ... in certain Western countries."

Canadian state media has led the repeated and widespread attacks against Desai in the time since, claiming she "helped Moscow's propaganda efforts against Ukraine" by highlighting how Kiev and its Western sponsors continue to uphold Nazis and their collaborators as heroes worthy of respect, admiration, and emulation.

Desai told Sputnik that the Western media deliberately obscures facts in order to provide cover for their governments, which have "discredited" themselves.

"Well, what I say is that, first of all, this guy says that I'm siding with a warmonger," she said of one critic cited in Canadian media, who claimed to be a former student of hers. "But you know, he's siding with the warmongers because who has started this war? It is the West, led by the United States, followed by loyal lapdog poodle countries like Canada - at least our government, our governments have done this - they have essentially fomented this war. Because right from the beginning, right from the point where the Soviet Union disintegrated, they have essentially been on a campaign to try to subordinate and, if possible, break up Russia. And essentially, once it became clear that the Russians were not having any of it under President Putin after 2000, there has been a mounting campaign of hostility towards Russia, which has resulted in this current war. As [American political scientist John] Mearsheimer says, this conflict is the West's fault, it is directly the result of the incessant eastward expansion of NATO. We know all these things."

"But of course, the whole point of the kind of news and scholarship that is produced these days by so much of the mainstream is just totally decontextualize everything. And once you decontextualize it, it becomes easy to manipulate. And then who is the warmonger completely changes," she emphasized.

Desai said it was "a great honor" to be invited to attend Valdai, noting that Russia is "in the eye of the storm that is changing the world," referring to the emergence of a multipolar world order amid the West's attempts to keep itself at the center of global affairs.

"And that means that the discussions that are going on there about what is driving multipolarity, what are the new problems and opportunities it is creating for different countries in the world," she said. "There are people from all over the world there and the discussions there are really

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fascinating - and of course, far above and beyond what mainstream media in the West and even mainstream scholarship in the West is producing."

"We claim to have free speech and academic freedom and freedom of association and all of these wonderful things, but the fact of the matter is, particularly in recent years, the spectrum of debate has been massively narrowing. In fact, you know, funnily enough, I was just watching the speech given by the German Die Linke leader, Sahra Wagenknecht, announcing the fact that they are leaving the Die Linke party because it is no longer the political home that it once was for them, because Die Linke has become part of this narrowing of opinion. And you know, as part of the four main items that they listed, one of them was to broaden the spectrum of opinion. That is to say, we are living in a world where if you disagree with the authorities - of course, they can't persecute anyone and everyone who disagrees with them. Well, what they do is they organize people, including people who work in government-funded think tanks and think tanks financed by the military-industrial complex and so on. These are the people who try to name and shame you. That is how they essentially try to make you out into a pariah," Desai said.

Desai noted that in the articles used to attack her, Canadian state media cited under-qualified academics as a counterweight to her, calling them "a very useful instrument" for "taking down" critics of Western imperialism. She specifically focused on Marcus Kolga, the head of a website called "DisinfoWatch," which describes itself as "a leading Canadian foreign disinformation monitoring and debunking platform" and who is among Desai's attackers in the Canadian press.

"I don't know that much about Marcus Kolga, although I have read some things that other people have written that he works for this McDonald-Laurier Institute and he has a fairly senior apparently academic position there, but he has nothing more than a B.A. in political science from some American university. So he does not have a graduate degree, he does not have a Ph.D., but he is certainly a very useful instrument."

"So these are the sorts of people, they are basically the front line of defense of the government - the front line of attack, I should say - the sort of little 'ankle-biting yappy dogs' who kind of try to take you down. You know, they work on Twitter and blah, blah and so on. And of course, our media, the CBC, goes to them to ask them, rather than asking serious scholars who may have studied Russia, who may have written books about Russia - or about world affairs, for that matter - instead they go to them."

"And indeed, the other thing is it is also an interesting question who funds the McDonald-Laurier Institute? Because again, from what I read, they recently have not put up any - you can't find any funding information."

"But Kolga similarly attacked my friend and very well-known politician and public figure in Canada, Dimitri Lascaris, because he decided to undertake, on his own accord, a trip to Russia to investigate what was going on. And upon his return he tried to do a series of speaking tours, essentially kind of creating people-to-people contacts, you know, engaging in exactly the sort of dialog we need to have with the Russians, which is why Alan [Freeman, Desai's husband] and I went to Valdai. So Kolga went after him. And Dimitri actually did a lot of research and discovered also that the McDonald-Laurier Institute - for the years where information is available, which is until quite recently - has some big corporations and also the [Canadian] Department of National Defense as its big funder. So you can imagine how - we say that we have independent media and independent research institutes and so on. There's nothing independent about these people."

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Desai said that most Western governments “have thoroughly discredited themselves, but the media chooses not to pay attention to that, but instead to focus on attacking those who point it out.

“The big story is not our parliament. I mean, there were more than 400 people in that room, not one person said, ‘Wait a minute, what are we doing? Are we doing the right thing?’ Everybody went off and applauded this guy. And the fact of the matter is, there's no way the government didn’t know. Our deputy prime minister is Chrystia Freeland: Chrystia Freeland has herself been exposed to have not only - I mean, nobody can help who their parents or grandparents are - but she continues to express admiration for her maternal grandfather, who is known to have been part of this Bandera group” of Ukrainian Nazi collaborators, similar to Hunka, Desai explained.

“So she and not only that, she has a Ph.D. in Russian and Slavic studies, so there's absolutely no way the government didn't know about what it was doing. Of course it knew what it was doing, but it was trying to push the envelope. We live in such dangerous times. Our governments are not only allying with fascists in Ukraine, for example, but they want us now to accept that this is perfectly fine. The fascists are actually just, you know, agreeable people who we can be proud of relying on and be proud of having descended from and these sorts of things.”

“So we are living, as they say, in very dangerous times. And that's partly why I think it's very important for us to insist that there's absolutely nothing wrong about going to Valdai, absolutely nothing wrong in engaging in academic discussion - and by the way, also absolutely nothing wrong in asking President Putin this question. Why? Because Russia is perhaps the country most wronged, or among the handful of countries most wronged, by what this parliament has done. So in that sense, asking -because you know, the whole gesture was entirely to legitimize the crusade against Russia that Canada, along with the rest of the West, is participating in. So in that sense, asking President Putin his views on this, there was absolutely nothing wrong about it. He is the president of the country whose contribution to winning the Second World War is being erased by the Canadian Parliament. And instead, we are praising those who were allied with those whom our soldiers, Canadian soldiers, American soldiers, were giving their lives to fight.”

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At Least 27 Dead in Mexico After Country’s Strongest-Ever Hurricane Comes Ashore

The storm was the most powerful to ever make landfall on the Central American nation, and broke records with its rapid intensification in the hours before striking the Guerrero coast.

At least 27 people are dead after Hurricane Otis struck Mexico’s Pacific coast on Wednesday, Mexican authorities said on Thursday.

The powerful storm had winds of 165 miles per hour when it made landfall near the resort city of Acapulco, smashing buildings and dumping several inches of rain on the mountainous region, triggering floods and landslides.

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“The mountain came down on them. The mud took her from the mother’s arms,” one woman from the Acapulco outskirts told US media of a 3-year-old girl torn from her mother's side. “We need help,” she said, noting the girl had not yet been found.

With nearly all communications and electricity severed in the region and its main airport too damaged to be used, Mexican authorities were working to plough their way through the debris along the roads using an army of bulldozers and electrical workers, who were steadily removing down wires and restoring the power.

According to Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who visited the area on Wednesday after the storm had passed through, every single electrical pole was down and more than 1 million people were without power.

Just 24 hours before Otis made landfall, it was just a Category 1 storm with winds below 96 miles per hour. As it neared land, it underwent the second-most rapid intensification ever observed in a tropical cyclone, reaching Category 5 strength with winds of 165 miles per hour. The intensification caught many by surprise, but Mexican authorities reacted quickly and were able to open even more shelters than they had already planned.

“The people sheltered, protected themselves and that’s why fortunately there weren’t more tragedies, loss of human life,” López Obrador told reporters.

Acapulco residents told local media they expected it to take at least a year for the city to recover. Footage posted online by locals showed the city’s grand coastal boulevard smashed by the powerful storm, with many building facades missing and their contents strewn across the neighborhood. The coastal hotels, which afford guests stunning views of the Pacific Ocean and the nearby mountains alike, were gutted by Otis’ winds.

Widespread looting of stores has been reported in the wake of the storm, with some taking food while others grabbed phones and more expensive items.

Despite its fury, Hurricane Otis quickly dissipated after making landfall, its storm bands weakened by the high Sierra Madre del Sur mountains that run along the coast. Within hours, Otis had been reduced to a tropical depression.

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Astronomers Spot Mysterious ‘Almost Dark’ Galaxy Three Times Larger Than Any Cluster

A strange new galaxy has been spotted some 350 million light-years away, which is the largest diffuse galaxy ever seen. Officials believe dark matter might be to blame for its unique structure.

Named Nube, the galaxy is roughly the size of the Small Magellanic Cloud, a dwarf galaxy near the Milky Way that is about 19,000 light-years across and about 7 billion solar masses. However, the light it emanates is much less than would be expected.

A team of astronomers led by Mireia Montes of Spain’s University of La Laguna has been investigating Nube as part of the IAC Stripe 82 Legacy Project, which is looking for just such phenomena near the celestial equator. A paper discussing the discovery was uploaded on the arXiv preprint server and accepted for publication in the journal Astrophysics of Galaxies.

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According to their findings, Nube is the most massive ultra-diffuse galaxy (UDG) ever found. Such galaxies are believed to be so dim because of their age, which has left them with relatively few stars. Some are as large as the Milky Way but have just 1% of the stars. Nube has a stellar mass of 390 million solar masses, which is 5% of the stellar mass of the Small Magellanic Cloud, a comparable-sized galaxy.

However, Nube is vastly larger than any other known UDG - three times as wide.

In attempting to understand how and why such a bizarre galaxy formed, astronomers suggest dark matter may be to blame.

"To this end, and under the hypothesis that the distribution of stars in Nube is representative of the distribution of the dark matter halo, we found that a soliton-shaped profile (typical of fuzzy dark matter) reproduces the observed distribution of stars very well," the authors wrote.

Dark matter is a stand-in term used by astrophysicists to describe a type of matter that has not yet been directly observed, but the effects of which can clearly be seen on the surrounding matter. It has been theorized to exist because of otherwise-unexplainable behavior by stars and galaxies, which is inconsistent with the mass of observable matter known to be interacting with them.

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US Launches Strikes in Syria After Targeted Attacks Against American Troops

Earlier in the day, the Pentagon confirmed that 21 US personnel suffered minor injuries from 16 attacks that began on October 17. Most of those injuries, 19 of them, were classified as "traumatic brain injuries" and all have since returned to service. The US has placed blame for the attacks on "Iranian-backed militia groups."

The US Department of Defense revealed late Thursday that forces had fired strikes against two facilities in Syria following earlier attacks against American and allied troops in Iraq and Syria.

"Today, at President [Joe] Biden's direction, US military forces conducted self-defense strikes on two facilities in eastern Syria used by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and affiliated groups," the release said on Thursday.

"These precision self-defense strikes are a response to a series of ongoing and mostly unsuccessful attacks against US personnel in Iraq and Syria by Iranian-backed militia groups that began on October 17."

The release underscored that the US strikes were not related to the Palestine-Israel conflict.

The statement added that the US does not seek an escalation of the conflict in Palestine.

"These narrowly-tailored strikes in self-defense were intended solely to protect and defend US 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 our approach to the Israel-Hamas conflict," the release said.

Information on the specific targets hit by US forces has not been provided. A US journalist reported that a pair of F-16 fighter jets were used in the attack. The reporter claims, citing US

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officials, that the attacks hit ammunition depots near Abu Kamal on the eastern Syria border with Iraq.

There have been no reports of fatalities or injuries, and it is unknown if anyone was inside the facilities when the strikes were launched.

Earlier Thursday, Pentagon Press Secretary Pat Ryder said the US has, or was in the process of, deploying around 900 troops to the Middle East to bolster security in the area. He did not provide details on where the troops were going specifically, only confirming they would not be deployed to Israel. Ryder further stated that a US response to the attacks would come "at the time and place of our choosing."

Also Thursday, Biden reiterated that he sent a message to Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, warning against strikes on US troops. The remark came after the US president earlier noted he had filed to the Ayatollah that retaliation might be forthcoming.

"My warning to the Ayatollah was that if they continue to move against those troops, we will respond, and he should be prepared. It has nothing to do with Israel," Biden said at a conference with visiting Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Wednesday.

This attack is not the first US attack on Syria this year. In March, the US responded to a drone attack in Syria that killed a US contractor and wounded five service members; however, the Thursday strike is the first attack since the start of the escalated Palestine-Israel conflict on October 7.

That conflict has raised tension in the region, particularly after an explosion at the Ahli Arab Hospital, leading to protests around the Muslim world. Both sides of the conflict have blamed the other for the explosion that killed hundreds of civilians.

Iran has likewise warned the US against further escalation in the Middle East.

"I say frankly to the American statesmen and military forces who are now managing the genocide in Palestine," Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian stated at the UN General Assembly, "that we do not welcome the expansion and scope of the war in the region."

In addition to the 900 recently-deployed troops, there are roughly 35,000 US troops deployed in the Middle East, according to Responsible Statecraft. Most of those forces are in Gulf bases, far from any fighting; however, roughly 3,400 remain stationed in Syria and Iraq.

Last year, the Ministry of Oil in Syria accused the US and its "mercenaries" of stealing Syrian oil. The Syrian government has repeatedly called out the illegal American presence in the country as a violation to its sovereignty.

The United States also recently deployed two aircraft carrier strike groups to the region, along with several Patriot missile systems and a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) battery.

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Nearly 20 Soldiers Diagnosed With ‘Traumatic Brain Injuries’ in Iraq, Syria Amid Base Attacks

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Attacks on US forces in the Middle East have seen a sharp increase over the last several days following the start of the Palestine-Israel conflict, and as Israel prepares for a ground invasion of the Gaza Strip.

The US Department of Defense confirmed on Thursday that 19 US service personnel suffered what has been described as “traumatic brain injuries" during recent attacks against troops stationed at bases in Syria and Iraq.

No details were provided on the severity of the injuries.

The most common form of a traumatic brain injury is a concussion, which can occur from a jolt or blow to the head.

The type of injury is common in contact sports such as American football and Rugby, and often result in symptoms including blurred vision, tinnitus, mood/behavior changes, nausea.

More serious cases involve slurred speech, seizures, numbness, state of confusion, or loss of consciousness.

The Pentagon detailed that 15 service members at the Al Tanf garrison in Syria and four troops at the Al Asad air base in Iraq suffered injuries from recent attacks, believed to be in response to the Palestine-Israel conflict.

The confirmation comes after the Defense Department earlier detailed that 21 service members in total had suffered minor injuries on October 17 and 18. More attacks have occurred in the interim but did not result in any reported injuries.

The escalation in tensions between Palestine and Israel were in response to Hamas' October 7 surprise attack against Israel that has killed around 1,400 Israelis, according to Israeli figures.

The death toll in Palestine has since risen to 7,028, per the Gaza Ministry of Health.

Retaliatory strikes by Israel have been condemned by nearby Arab and African countries, including those where US forces have been attacked. Some countries in the region, including NATO member Turkiye, Syria and Iran have called the attacks an act of “genocide,” while others have condemned Israel’s actions as crimes against humanity and collective punishment.

Meanwhile, the Arab League and African Union have warnedthe conflict may turn into a genocide.

The United States has become the focus of anger for some critics as it is Israel’s strongest ally and provides billions in aid to the Israeli state annually.

Last week, the UN Security Council failed to pass a resolution calling for a humanitarian pause in the conflict after the US vetoed it. Two more draft resolutions failed on Wednesday, which the US also voted against.

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Maine Mass Shooting: Manhunt Remains Underway Amid Speculation Gunman Fled State

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The manhunt for the suspected shooter that killed at least 18 and injured 13 more in Lewiston, Maine, late Wednesday remains ongoing as authorities have indicated the gunman may have escaped into the nearby US state of Massachusetts.

A 40-year-old gunman identified by authorities as Robert Card, was captured on CCTV tape opening fire with an AR-15-style rifle in a bowling alley in the small Maine city of Lewiston before firing at a restaurant four miles away sometime later. Some survivors reported hiding inside the bowling lanes while the shooter carried out his rampage.

It has been reported that Card, who was a firearms instructor and a US Army Reservist, suffered from mental health issues, and that he was hearing voices and wanted to shoot up the National Guard base in Saco, Maine.

US media reported on Thursday that investigators found a note in Card's house, although its contents have not yet been revealed. One outlet reported that Card's sister said he may have been looking for his ex-girlfriend when he entered the bowling alley.

The attack reportedly took place during a gathering for Maine's deaf community, of which some members were killed in the shooting.

Residents in Lewiston have remained under a stay-at-home order, which has been expanded to the nearby cities of Lisbon and Bowdoin. But police are also searching for a Blue Chevy Suburban with Maine license plate 6625ZD, which was spotted crossing into the state on I-93 on Thursday morning and is suspected to be carrying Card.

A Subaru vehicle registered to Card was spotted abandoned at a nearby boat launch, and his 15-foot Bayliner boat is also unaccounted for. He also registered a See-Doo Jetski in June, leading to speculation that he may have used it in his escape.

The US Coast Guard is searching nearby waterways for signs of Card but has not found anything out of the ordinary yet. Chief Petty Officer Ryan Smith said the agency had no specific intelligence that led them to believe Card had escaped on his boat, but are doing their "due diligence."

Officials are also operating under an arrest warrant, which is charging Card with eight counts of murder.

The shooting was the deadliest mass shooting this year and the eighth deadliest since 2006. It is also the 36th mass shooting event this year in the US, defined as an event when four or more people are killed within 24 hours, excluding the shooter.

At least 190 people have died in mass shootings in the US in 2023.

White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre called on Congress to pass stricter gun control in the wake of the tragedy.

"It's within Congress's power to pass legislation that will make our streets safer, that will make our communities safer, that will make our schools safer," she said.

US President Joe Biden has ordered flags to fly at half-staff until Monday in honor of the victims.

US Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME), who refused to offer comment on the ongoing investigation over concerns it would threaten the probe, did state that she was engaged in extensive discussions with authorities. She further indicated that some 80 FBI agents were involved in the manhunt.

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Slip 'n Slide Biden - Cartoon

US President Joe Biden has suffered a large drop in polls among his own party over the past month, a drop that has been attributed to his handling of the Palestine-Israel conflict.
The latest Gallup poll, conducted from October 2 to 23, showed Biden's support among Democrats dropping 11 points to a new low: 75%. That, along with a four-point drop among Independents resulted in a four-point drop among all voters for the president, giving him a 37% approval rating, which matches the lowest of his presidency.
The nosedive comes on the heels of the Hamas' October 7 surprise attack against Israel, which has engaged repeat retaliatory strikes. Hundreds of deaths have been reported on both sides of the conflict as more than 200 people have been taken hostage.
A Gallup poll from earlier this year showed that sympathy for Palestinians among Democrats outpaced sympathy for Israelis for the first time in the poll's history - well before the latest escalation in hostilities.
Meanwhile, a poll by Marist showed less than half of Gen-Z and millennials, of all political stripes, believe the US should publicly support Israel. Support remains high among the Greatest and Silent Generations, with 86% backing public support of Israel.
Biden has said US support of Israel is "vital" for national security, and that the country "will stand forever" with Israel. But as the conflict continues and Israel prepares for a ground siege of Gaza, the US president has also offered some platitudes towards the Palestinian people, stressing they are separate from Hamas and that Israel must "operate under the laws of war" and "protect civilians in combat as best they can."

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Biden's Popularity Among Democrats Splinters Amid Israel-Gaza Conflict – Reports

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden's popularity among American Democrats is splintering as a result of his unyielding support for Israel's war on Gaza, The New York Times reported on Friday.
Discontent is particularly on the rise among Democrats who are under 35, people of color, or left-leaning progressive activists, as seen in protests, walk-outs, open letters, and even staff revolts on Capitol Hill that call for the US to withdraw its political, financial, and military support for Israel and use its leverage to order a ceasefire. Some view their support for the Palestinian cause as an extension of the Black Lives Matter movement.
Biden also faces new resistance within his party from a congressional faction of people of color who helped him secure his 2020 presidency. Eighteen House Democrats have signed a resolution calling for an "immediate de-escalation and cease-fire."
However, it remains unclear how much Biden's loyalty to Israel will damage his reelection prospects, since many on the left still acknowledge that he remains preferable to a Republican

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alternative in 2024, the report said.

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Arab Group Circulates New UNGA Draft Resolution on Gaza-Israel, Amended Call For Ceasefire

UNITED NATIONS, October 27 (Sputnik) - The Arab Group at the United Nations has circulated a new draft resolution on Israel-Gaza with several amendments - including one replacing the call for a ceasefire with a call for a humanitarian truce, according to the document seen by Sputnik.

The draft resolution now "calls for an immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities," while in the previous version the document called for an "immediate ceasefire".

Furthermore, the document now mentions the attack of 7th October as the "latest escalation" but it does not call out Hamas as the perpetrator.

On Thursday, the Emergency Special Session of the United Nations on the Israel-Gaza conflict started and state representatives have been reading their countries' positions.

The Arab Group, led by Jordan, has prepared this text as a way to reach a peace in the region. The UN Security Council has failed to adopt a resolution and therefore, the General Assembly is the only body which can now make a difference within the UN system. Nevertheless, Israel said from the onset that it will not support this document.

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US Lawmakers Urge Navy Chief to Speed Up Missile Deliveries to Taiwan

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - The US government needs to arm Taiwan to the maximum in coming months to deter a possible invasion from China, a House panel said in a letter to Secretary of the Navy Carlos del Toro.

"Time is running out to deter the Chinese Communist Party from invading Taiwan," the letter said.

However, the crucial weapons systems were not yet being sent fast enough and in sufficient quantities to Taipei's armed forces, the letter warned.

The lawmakers said "bureaucratic delays" within the Navy are impeding the timely production and delivery of key weapons to Taiwan - including critical anti-ship missiles.

The letter asked when the delivery of air launched 400 Harpoon weapons systems and 100 Harpoon Coastal Defense Systems (HCDS) agreed back in 2020 would be completed.

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FBI Surrounds House With Maine Shooting Suspect, Orders Him to Come Out - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - The FBI has surrounded a house where Robert Card, the suspect who allegedly killed 18 people in a mass shooting in the US state of Maine, is believed to be inside and is ordering him to come out with his hands up, ABC News reported.

"Robert Card, we know you're in there, come out with your hands up," the FBI said as quoted by an ABC reporter on Thursday night.

The reporter said there is a convoy of about a dozen police vehicles outside the home and a drone flying above the home surveilling the area. However, the reporter pointed out they have not been able to independently confirm that Card is in the home in Bowdoin, Maine.

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US Navy Orders Six Sikorsky Seahawk Helicopters Costing $364Mln for Norway - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - The US Navy has ordered six Lockheed Martin/Sikorsky MH-60R Seahawk helicopters costing more than $364 million for NATO ally Norway, the Department of Defense announced in a press release.

"Lockheed Martin Corporation [of] Owego, New York is awarded a $364,312,098 ...order ...for the production and delivery of six MH-60R aircraft for the government of Norway," the release stated on Thursday.

Most of the work on the order will be performed in Owego, New York (52%); Stratford, Connecticut (40%); and Troy, Alabama (8%) and is expected to be completed in just under four years in July 2027, the Defense Department noted.

The Sikorsky SH-60/MH-60 Seahawk is a twin turboshaft engine, multi-mission United States Navy helicopter based on the United States Army UH-60 Black Hawk, according to published sources

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Chinese J-11 Fighter Intercepts US B-52 Strategic Bomber Over South China Sea - PACCOM

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - A Chinese Air Force J-11 combat fighter intercepted a US long-range B-52 strategic bomber over the South China Sea in what US officials called an "unsafe" maneuver, US Pacific Command (USPACCOM) announced.

"On October 24, 2023, a People's Republic of China J-11 pilot executed an unsafe intercept of

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a US Air Force B-52 aircraft, which was lawfully conducting routine operations over the South China Sea in international airspace," PACOM said in a press release on Thursday.

The Chinese intercept was conducted at night, with limited visibility, in a manner contrary to international air safety rules and norms, the release said.

"During the night time intercept, the PRC [People's Republic of China] pilot flew in an unsafe and unprofessional manner, demonstrated poor airmanship by closing with uncontrolled excessive speed, flying below, in front of, and within 10 feet of the B-52, putting both aircraft in danger of collision. We are concerned this pilot was unaware of how close he came to causing a collision," the release added.

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US Senator Collins Withholds Comment on Manhunt for Shooter to Avoid 'Jeopardizing' Search

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - US Senator Susan Collins declined to discuss the manhunt for Robert Card, the suspected shooter who killed at least 18 people in Lewiston, Maine, due to concerns that any comments may impact the search.

"I cannot [comment] because I don't want to jeopardise the search for him in any way," Collins said during a press briefing on Thursday.

However, Collins did say that she is having extensive discussions with law enforcement agencies and met with the FBI Deputy Director, yet would not disclose any details, emphasizing again her determination to avoid jeopardizing the search.

On Wednesday night, 40-year-old 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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Lewiston 'Ghost Town' Amid Lock Down Due to Mass Shooting - Sputnik Correspondent

LEWISTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - The town of Lewiston in the US state of Maine on Thursday resembled a "ghost town" after the authorities placed residents on a county-wide lockdown while a manhunt continues for mass-shooting suspect Robert Card, a Sputnik correspondent reported from the scene.

Streets in Lewiston were empty outside the bowling alley, where several people were killed and others injured late on Wednesday, and the town's normally bustling business sector remained deserted. Makeshift "Closed" signs remain hanging on doors and windows of restaurants, banks and grocery stores.

However, marked and unmarked police cruisers are scurrying back and forth in the town, which is home to some 40,000 people.

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Local and state authorities in Androscoggin County, where Lewiston is located, have declared an extended "shelter in place" warning and have urged residents to remain in their homes with the doors locked.

Police officers armed with long guns and bullet-proof vests guarded all entrances of the Central Maine Medical Center, where many victims of the shootings have been taken for treatment. The officers are refusing to let anyone inside out of an abundance of caution.

Superintendent of Lewiston Public Schools Jake Langlais issued an announcement on the school district's website that there would be no school on Friday, adding that buildings will be closed and the school bus transportation will not run.

Schools and businesses in nearby municipalities also remained closed, including all Hannaford supermarkets in Maine.

In the nearby town of Monmouth, several gas stations and coffee shops were closed.

Police helicopters are searching for the suspect, monitoring hundreds of acres of wooded landscape.

Media reported that Card served in the military and was a firearm instructor, but also had mental health issues. He served two weeks at a mental health institution over the summer after he threatened to carry out a shooting at a National Guard facility.

Police said the search for the suspect remains active and ongoing.

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Eighty FBI agents in Maine Looking for Shooting Suspect Robert Card - Senator Collins

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - Eighty FBI agents are on scene in Maine searching for mass shooting suspect Robert Card, Senator Susan Collins said on Thursday.

"I had a call from the Deputy Director of the FBI who told me that 80 FBI agents are on site participating in the search for the killer," said Collins during a press conference.

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Wang Says US, China Need to Resume In-Depth Dialogue, Stabilize Relations

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - China and the United States need to resume their in-depth bilateral dialogue that will make a return to healthy, stable and sustainable development for both countries possible, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said at the top of a meeting with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Washington.

"China and the United States are two major countries we have disagreements we have differences. At the same time, we also share important common interests and we face challenges that we need to respond to together," Wang Yi said on Thursday.

Wang said China and the United States should not only resume the dialogue, but it should be

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"in-depth so that with that dialogue we have increased understanding, reduced misunderstanding.

The Chinese foreign minister said that way Washington and Beijing can "constantly seek to expand common ground and pursue cooperation that will benefit both sides so that we can stabilize China-US relations and return it to the track of healthy, stable and sustainable development."

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Bangs Heard at Last Known Residence of Maine Shooting Suspect Amid FBI Manhunt - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - Loud bangs have been heard at the last known address of Robert Card, the suspect in the deadly mass shooting in the US state of Maine, amid the massive manhunt by the law enforcement, including the FBI, CNN reported.

It was not immediately clear where the bangs came from, the report said on Thursday.

Meanwhile, a New Nations correspondent posted a video on the social media platform X (formerly known as Twitter) where the command "FBI! Open the door!" can be heard.

On Wednesday night, Card attacked a restaurant and a bowling alley in Lewiston, Maine. Eighteen people have been reported killed in the attack and numerous others injured. Card remains a fugitive at present.

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US Coast Guard Assisting Police Hunt Down Gunman in Maine Mass Shooting - Statement

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) - The US Coast Guard is assisting the authorities in their hunt of the alleged gunman who killed 18 people in the US state of Maine, a spokesperson told Sputnik.

"We are working closely with our federal, state, and local partners during the search for a person of interest following yesterday's shooting in Maine," the spokesperson said on Thursday. "Currently, we have crews assisting with patrols by water within the affected counties. The Maine State Police are the lead agency in the search, please direct further inquiries to them."

On Wednesday night, a gunman attacked a restaurant and a bowling alley in Lewiston, Maine. Eighteen people have been reported killed in the attack and numerous others injured.

The authorities identified the gunman to be 40-year-old Robert Card. He is currently a fugitive.

Media reported that Card has a record of military service, served as a firearm instructor, but also had mental health issues. He served two weeks at a mental health institution over the summer after he threatened to carry out a shooting at a National Guard facility.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, October 27 (Sputnik) -

MASS SHOOTINGS IN US

* Eighteen people were killed and 13 injured in the two mass shootings in Lewiston, Maine, Governor Janet Mills said on Thursday.
* An arrest warrant has been issued for the shooting suspect, Robert Card, charging him with eight counts of murder, one for each identified victim, Maine State Police Col. William Ross said.

MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

* The United States has deployed or is in the process of deploying about 900 troops to the Middle East in a bid to deter the possibility of a broader conflict amid the Israeli-Palestinian war, Defense Department spokesperson Pat Ryder said on Thursday.
* Ryder said that Israel will receive two additional Iron Dome systems from US inventories.
* The Israeli military conducts ground raids into the Gaza Strip as part of the preparation for the next stages of the ongoing war with Hamas, Israel Defense Forces spokesman Daniel Hagari said.
* An Israeli drone attacked a "terrorist cell" in Lebanon on Thursday after it attempted to launch anti-tank missiles, the Israel Defense Forces said.
* The military wing of the Palestinian movement Hamas, the Al-Qassam Brigades, said that it is shelling Tel Aviv in response to Israel's mass killings of civilians.

ATTACK ON US TROOPS IN IRAQ

* The Islamic Resistance in Iraq said on Thursday that it has attacked a US military base in Iraqi Kurdistan with two drones.
* US troops were targeted in Iraq's Erbil on Thursday, but the attack was unsuccessful, Defense Department spokesperson Pat Ryder said.

IRAN-RUSSIA TALKS

* Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Galuzin on Thursday met with his Iranian counterpart Ali Bagheri in Moscow, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.
* Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov and his Iranian counterpart, Ali Bagheri, discussed the Iranian nuclear program issues during a meeting in Moscow, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.
* Russian Deputy Foreign Mikhail Bogdanov and his Iranian counterpart, Ali Bagheri, discussed the escalation of the Middle East conflict and agreed on the necessity to end hostilities in the Gaza Strip, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

HAMAS DELEGATION VISIT TO MOSCOW

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* Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova on Thursday confirmed that a delegation of the Hamas movement has arrived in Moscow.
* Hamas said during a meeting with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov that it highly appreciates the position of Russian President Vladimir Putin on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the efforts of Russian diplomacy.
* National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said that he cannot speak about Hamas' travel habits nor about their conversations with Russian officials.
* Russian President Vladimir Putin is not planning to hold contacts with the Hamas delegation in Moscow, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

RUSSIA CLIMATE DOCTRINE
* Russian President Vladimir Putin has approved the country's climate doctrine, according to a decree published on the official legal information portal on Thursday.
* The key goal of Russia's climate policy is to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060, according to the country's climate doctrine.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE
* The United States believes that Russia may be able to achieve tactical gains in Ukraine in the coming months, White House Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Thursday.
* The United States announced a new $150 million security assistance package for Ukraine that includes anti-aircraft Stinger missiles, additional artillery rounds, and munitions for NASAMS and HIMARS missile systems, among other items, the Defense Department said.
* Ukraine has lost up to 295 soldiers in the Donetsk direction over the past 24 hours, the Russian Defense Ministry said.
* The European Union needs to change its role of a supplier of weapons to Ukraine to a role of a peacemaker, Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico said.

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UPDATE- US Lawmaker Introduces Measure to Censure Rashida Tlaib Over Alleged Anti-Semitic Beliefs

(Updates with Tlaib's reaction in paras 8-9)
WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - US Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene said on Thursday she introduced a measure to censure her colleague Rashida Tlaib over alleged anti-Semitic beliefs and hatred toward Israel.
"I just introduced my resolution to censure Rashida Tlaib as privileged to force a House vote in two legislative days," Greene said in a statement.
According to Greene, Tlaib allegedly led a pro-Hamas "insurrection" into the Capitol, has repeatedly displayed anti-Semitic views, and has shown a hatred toward Israel.
Green said Tlaib must be held accountable and censured.

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Far-right conservatives have criticized Tlaib over her public statement condemning Israel's military actions in Gaza that have killed civilians, but failing to condemn Hamas militants for their violence against civilians as well.

Tlaib is the first woman of Palestinian descent in Congress. If censured, she would have to give up any committee chairs they held, but it would not remove her from office or have any legal consequences.

On Wednesday, Tlaib was one of 10 House members to vote against a bipartisan resolution reaffirming US support for Israel and condemning Hamas' attacks on Israel.

Later on Thursday, Tlaib issued a statement calling Greene's resolution "unhinged" and "deeply Islamophobic," and reiterated her call for a ceasefire amid an escalation in the Israel-Palestinian conflict following a Hamas attack on Israel on October 7.

"I will not be bullied, I will not be dehumanized, and I will not be silenced. I will continue to call for a ceasefire, for the immediate delivery of humanitarian aid, for the release of hostages and those arbitrarily detained, and for every American to be brought home," Tlaib's statement said.

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Investigators of Maine Mass Shooting Found Note At Suspect's House - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - The investigators of the Maine mass shooting have found a not in the house of Robert Card, the suspect in the deadly mass shooting in the US state of Maine, the US media reported on Thursday.

Investigators are now trying to determine the meaning of the note and how it could potentially guide their investigation and manhunt, NBC News reported citing four senior law enforcement officials

Meanwhile, Card's sister reportedly said that he may have been looking for his ex-girlfriend at the shooting locations, ABC News reported citing law enforcement officials briefed on the ongoing probe.

The family of mass shooting suspect Robert Card is cooperating with authorities, the report by ABC News added.

On Wednesday night, Card attacked a restaurant and a bowling alley in Lewiston, Maine. Eighteen people have been reported killed in the attack and numerous others injured. Card remains a fugitive at present.

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'Soft Landing' Looks Likely for US Economy as It Leads World Consumer Spending - Yellen

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - The United States seems headed for a so-called soft economic landing versus a recession projected by some economists as strong consumer spending helps the country lead world growth, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said on

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Thursday.

"You know what we have looks like a soft landing with very good outcomes for the US economy," Yellen said in a televised conversation on Bloomberg TV. "So, I think there's a lot to be pleased about, [when] you see good strong-spending consumers [who] still have substantial wealth since the pandemic. And I think [this] US growth is making a contribution to stronger global outcomes as well."

Consumer spending, which accounts for almost 70% of US economic activity, was largely responsible for leading the nation's recovery from the more than two-year long impact of the coronavirus measures.

Yellen's comments came after the US Commerce Department reported on Thursday a forecast beating GDP growth for the third quarter at an annual rate 4.9%. The figure was well above the 4.3% growth consensus of Wall Street's economic forecasters, although it was below the 5.4% predicted by the Atlanta Fed, a division of the Federal Reserve.

Most Wall Street economists had warned at one time or another this year about the potential for a recession as the Federal Reserve hiked rates aggressively to counter inflation.

To fight inflation, the Fed hiked rates 11 times between March 2022 and August 2023, raising them by 5.25% from a base rate of just 0.25%.

The central bank is scheduled to decide on rates again at its next two-day policy meeting ending on November 2. The unchanged reading on federal funds futures as of Thursday indicated the Fed will skip a rate hike again at that meeting, just as it did in September, although it will not likely cut interest rates until late 2024 or 2025 to stimulate growth.

Yellen said high interest rates were a product of solid economic growth.

"I think it's a reflection of the resilience that people are seeing in the US economy that we're not having a recession, that consumer spending and demand continue to be strong," Yellen said. "The economy is continuing to show tremendous robustness and that suggests that interest rates are likely to stay higher for longer."

The Commerce Department said the increase in real GDP reflected growth in consumer spending, private inventory investment, exports, state and local government spending, federal government spending, and residential fixed investment that were partly offset by a decrease in nonresidential fixed investment.

Imports, a subtraction in the calculation of GDP, increased, the Commerce Department added.

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Five People Found Fatally Shot in Clinton, North Carolina - Sheriffs Office

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - The Sampson County Sheriffs Office in a statement on Thursday said that five people were found shot dead in in Clinton, North Carolina (NC).

"On Thursday, October 26, 2023, around 12:41 AM, the Sampson County E-911 Center received a report of 5 bodies located inside a residence at 10310 Garland Highway," the statement said.

According to the statement, a caller had been in touch with a resident of the home around 11:00

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PM on Wednesday and upon visiting the residence after work, they found the bodies.
"Responding deputies discovered four males and one female with apparent gunshot wounds inside the residence upon arrival. The victims ranged in age from the 30's to the 80's and were of different races and ethnicities. The identities of all the victims have not yet been confirmed, nor have the connections between the victims," the statement said.
Furthermore, the crime scene is currently being investigated by investigators from the Sampson County Sheriff's Office and the NC State Bureau of Investigation, who are also actively pursuing potential leads. As of now, they have not identified any persons of interest, the statement said.

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Senate Votes Down Senator Paul's Bill to Withdraw US Troops From Niger

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - The US Senate on Thursday overwhelmingly rejected Republican Senator Rand Paul's measure to withdraw US forces from Niger.
The Senate blocked Paul's measure with a 11-86 vote.
Paul has raised concerns about the presence of US troops in Niger amid an going military coup.
According to Paul, the United States has some 1,100 troops in Niger, which they have partnered with to carry out counterterrorism efforts in the region.
However, Paul has said he believes it's best for the US public to weigh in on whether the Biden administration should continue to have American forces partner with the Niger's armed forces that are leading the coup in the country.
The United States at the moment has suspended military cooperation with Niger due to the coup.

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Biden Meets House Leaders Ahead of Briefing on His Security Funding Request - White House

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden met with House Speaker Mike Johnson and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries to discuss his $106 billion supplemental funding request to address national security concerns, including additional aid for Ukraine and Israel, the White House said on Thursday.
"The President met with Speaker Johnson and Leader Jeffries at the White House ahead a briefing on the need for his national security supplemental request," the White House said in a statement.
Earlier in the day, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters that Johnson was at the White House attending a bipartisan briefing on Biden's new budget request.
Last Friday, the White House submitted a $106 billion supplemental funding request to Congress that includes $61.4 billion for Ukraine and $14.3 billion for Israel.

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US Military Base in New Jersey Briefly Placed on Lockdown After Active Shooter Reported

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst (JBDML) in the US state of New Jersey on Thursday was briefly placed on lockdown after reports of an active shooter were communicated but the order was soon ended.

"All clear. JBMDL is no longer under a lockdown condition, we have confirmed all members of JBMDL are safe," the joint base said via X (formerly known as Twitter).

Earlier on Thursday, the base command said via X that it had ordered all its personnel on lockdown and to take cover amid reports of an active shooter in one of the buildings.

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'Obsessed' Man Arrested Twice For Trespassing Kennedy Jr's Home This Week - Statement

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - An man was arrested two times this week for repeatedly trespassing on US presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr's home in Los Angeles, his campaign said on Thursday.

"On Wednesday an intruder was arrested after climbing a fence at the residence of Robert F. Kennedy, Jr," the campaign said in a press release. "The candidate was home at the time of both arrests."

Kennedy's security team detected and detained the intruder, who asked to see the candidate, but was turned over to the Los Angeles Police Department, the release said.

Los Angeles police released the man later on Wednesday, but he immediately returned to Kennedy's home and was arrested again, the release said.

Kennedy's security team, the release said, notified the US Secret Service about this specific "obsessed" individual several times in recent months and shared "alarming" messages he has sent to the candidate.

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US, Coalition Troops Targeted In Iraq, Syria 16 Times In 10 Days – Pentagon

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) – US and coalition military combating terrorism in Iraq and Syria was attacked at least 16 times in the last ten days, Pentagon spokesperson Pat Ryder said on Thursday.

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"Between October 17 and 26, US and coalition forces have been attacked at least 12 separate times in Iraq, four separate times in Syria by a mix of one-way attack drones and rockets.," Ryder told reporters.

He declined to reveal who is responsible for these attacks.

"I am not going to have more specific to provide to you in terms of specific groups that have claimed responsibility other than to say that we know that these groups are affiliated with Iran," he added.

Ryder also promised that the US would continue to revise the number of the attack as new information comes in.

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US May Seek Deal to Commit Russia,US to Respect New Start Until New Agreement Reached -ACA

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - While the current conflict in Ukraine is making it difficult to have a new bilateral agreement between Russia and the United States on the nuclear arms, but Washington could seek an executive deal aimed at committing Russia and the United States to respect New START's (The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) central limits, Arms Control Association (ACA) Executive Director Daryl Kimball said on Thursday.

"New bilateral nuclear arms control limits with Russia may be difficult to achieve as long as Russia's war on Ukraine rages," Kimball said. "Even so, the United States could seek an executive agreement or a reciprocal unilateral arrangement verified with national technical means of intelligence that commits Russia and the United States to respect New START's central limits on strategic arsenals until a more permanent, comprehensive nuclear arms control arrangement is concluded."

"Instead of threatening to take actions that might accelerate dangerous nuclear competition, the United States must exercise prudent nuclear restraint and energetically pursue effective arms control and disarmament diplomacy with Russia, China, and other nuclear-armed states inside and outside of the NPT," Kimball said.

Meanwhile, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Thursday that The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) is still in effect, and Russia is committed to the parameters that exist, Lavrov added.

On February 21, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Russia was pausing its involvement in the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) without formally exiting the accord. Putin highlighted the need for Russia to account for not just the United States' arsenals but also those of other NATO nuclear powers like the United Kingdom and France.

By February 28, Putin had authorized a law temporarily halting Russia's participation in the New START treaty.

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Increase Of US Strategic Nuclear Arms May Trigger Dangerous Action-Reaction Cycle - ACA

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - Any increase in the numbers of the US strategic nuclear weapons could lead to dangerous action-reaction cycle, Arms Control Association (ACA) Executive Director Daryl Kimball said on Thursday.

"In the current context, any decision to increase the number of deployed U.S. strategic nuclear weapons higher than the levels of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) could trigger a dangerous action-reaction cycle," Kimball said. "It would not enhance deterrence in the face of China's growing nuclear capabilities or Russia's existing capabilities. In response, China could deploy more nuclear weapons on an even wider array of delivery systems, and Russia would seek to match any increases in the U.S. nuclear force."

Kimball pointed out that the Cold War has demonstrated that there are no winners in an unconstrained arms race, only losers.

"Leaders in Beijing, Moscow, and Washington need to engage in nuclear risk reduction talks, negotiate sensible and verifiable reductions of their arsenals, and refrain from building new destabilizing types of weapons rather than proceed down the dangerous path of unconstrained nuclear competition," he said.

Kimball went on to say that the final report of the Congressional Commission on the US Strategic Posture suggests the US arsenal "should be supplemented" to add more capability and flexibility to counter Russia and China, while the bipartisan commission of 12 national security insiders advises that Washington must be prepared to deter and defeat them in simultaneous wars, including by boosting its missile defense capabilities and nuclear weapons capabilities.

"If there is a military conflict between nuclear-armed states, however, deterrence will have failed, and there will be no "winners," he argued. "Once nuclear weapons are used in a war between nuclear-armed adversaries, there is no guarantee that a nuclear war could be contained."

Kimball also noted that the US nuclear arsenal of some 1,800 deliverable strategic warheads, 150 substrategic warheads, and thousands of warheads in reserve, "still exceeds what is needed to hold a sufficient number of adversary targets at risk so as to deter a nuclear attack."

Russia believes it is possible and necessary to prevent any armed confrontation between nuclear powers while the United States and NATO are risking such a conflict as they are escalating hostilities in Ukraine, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said in August.

Russia is forced to remind the West about military and political risks as it believes that a nuclear war will have no winners, the top diplomat said. Lavrov recalled that the Nuclear Five states have confirmed that nuclear war should never be unleashed in their joint statement on January 3, 2022.

For Russia, the possession of nuclear weapons today is the only answer to some of the threats the country faces, according to the minister.

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US Firms Can Now Launch Rockets From Australia Under New Agreement - Blinken

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - American companies will now be able to launch rockets from Australia under a new agreement between the two countries, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Thursday.

"Once it enters into force, American companies will be able to complete space launches from Australia while keeping their technology secure and adhering to our international nonproliferation commitments in Australia," Blinken said at the signing ceremony for the US-Australia Technology Safeguards Agreement.

According to Blinken, Australia is a prime spot for launches because of its location close to the equator, where the Earth spins the fastest, meaning rockets get an extra boost and use less fuel.

The agreement gives US companies access to more high quality launch sites so that they can increase the frequency of their operations, Blinken said.

This cooperation will grow investment and help create jobs in both countries, Blinken noted.

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US Troops Targeted in Erbil in Unsuccessful Attack – Pentagon

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) – US troops were targeted in Iraq's Erbil on Thursday, but the attack was unsuccessful, Pentagon spokesperson Pat Ryder said.

"We are aware of an attack today against US forces at Erbil Air Base in Iraq. It was unsuccessful. No casualties, some minor damage to infrastructure," Ryder told reporters.

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About 900 US Troops Have Deployed or in Process of Deploying to Middle East - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) – The United States has deployed or is in the process of deploying about 900 troops to the Middle East in a bid to deter the possibility of a broader conflict amid the Israeli-Gaza war, Pentagon press secretary Pat Ryder said on Thursday.

"As part of our efforts to deter a broader conflict and further bolster US force protection capabilities, I can confirm that since our initial force posture announcement, approximately 900 troops have subsequently deployed or are in the process of deploying to the US Central Command Area of Responsibility," Ryder said during a press conference.

Ryder said he would not give details on the exact destination of those troops, but confirmed they were not going to Israel.

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US to Send 2 Additional Iron Dome Systems From Inventory to Israel – Pentagon

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) – Pentagon Press Secretary Pat Ryder said on Thursday that Israel will receive two additional Iron Dome systems from US inventories.

"In addition to the security assistance for Israel we've announced previously I can confirm that in addition to the Iron Dome interceptors we're flying to Israel, we're also planning to provide the two US Iron Dome systems currently in our inventory to Israel to help further bolster their air defense capabilities and protect citizens from rocket attacks," Ryder said during a press briefing.

Ryder declined to provide delivery timelines and referred to Israel for future deployment and use of the systems.

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DHS, FBI Warn of Increase in Threats to Jews, Arabs, Muslims in US – Notice

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - The United States is facing an increase in threats toward Jews, Arabs and Muslims in recent weeks amid the ongoing Israel-Gaza conflict, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and FBI said.

"Since DHS and FBI issued the 10 October Public Service Announcement, the volume and frequency of threats to Americans, especially those in the Jewish, Arab American, and Muslim communities in the United States, have increased," the two agencies said in a joint announcement on Wednesday.

They expressed rising concern that violent extremists and lone offenders motivated by or reacting to ongoing events could target these communities.

These dangers have included hoax bomb threats targeting houses of worship, as well as violent rhetoric online encouraging attacks against relevant ethnic communities across the country, according to the notice.

They also referred to the October 14 attack in which an individual in Illinois stabbed and killed a six-year-old Palestinian-American child and severely wounded his mother. The incident is being investigated as an anti-Muslim hate crime.

The DHS and FBI stressed that there is no evidence of foreign adversaries plotting attacks against the US homeland. However, they said, some groups are "seeking to take advantage of the conflict."

The two agencies also took note of media outlets linked to Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (both terrorist organizations banned in Russia) calling for support for the Palestinian group Hamas and attacks on American bases, airports, battleships, and embassies as well as Jewish neighborhoods in America and Europe.

"Recent events have increased the possibility of potential attacks against individuals and

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institutions in response to developments in the Middle East," the notice said.
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 blockade was later eased to allow trucks with humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. The escalation of the conflict has resulted in thousands of people killed and injured on both sides.

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Kirby Says Cannot Speak for Hamas' Travel Habits, Talks With Russian Officials

WASHINGTON, October 26, (Sputnik) - National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Thursday that he cannot speak about the Palestinian movement Hamas' travel habits nor about their conversations with Russian officials.
Hamas representatives traveled to Russia earlier on Thursday for a meeting with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov.
"I can't speak for their travel habits or their conversations with the Russians. Our message to any other nation around the world is: This is not a time to be supporting Hamas' ability to continue to kill Israelis. Any nations out there that wants to be involved should look for ways to be involved to help Israel defend itself and to help get humanitarian assistance in," Kirby said during a press briefing.

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US to Seek China's Perspective on Mideast During Foreign Minister's Visit - White House

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration will seek the Chinese perspective on the Middle East during Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit to the United States this week and encourage Beijing to play a constructive role, White House Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Thursday.
"I have no doubt that part of this discussion in the agenda will be what's going on in the Middle East and getting the Chinese perspective and certainly looking for ways to encourage them to be helpful," Kirby said during a White House press briefing.

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Yellen Says Sees No Consequences for World Economy, Oil Prices From Mideast Conflict

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - The United States does not see global consequences from the escalation of the current Middle East conflict on oil prices and the world economy, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said on Thursday.

"There could be consequences if [the] wider Israel-Hamas war happens but that does not seem to be the case for now," Yellen said in a televised conversation on Bloomberg TV.

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US Official Says Maine Shooting Suspect Exhibited Erratic Behavior in July - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - A US Defense Department official said that Robert Card, the suspect in the deadly mass shooting in the US state of Maine, exhibited erratic behavior at the Camp Smith Training Center in July, ABC News reported on Thursday.

The official explained that Card was deployed with his Army Reserve Unit at Camp Smith Training Center in New York State to assist in the training of West Point cadets, the report cited the official as saying.

During that time, Card exhibited erratic behavior, the report cited the official as saying.

On July 17, garrison staff at the training site were informed about his behavior by the leaders of the Army Reserve's 3rd Battalion, 304th Infantry Regiment, the report said.

On Wednesday night, Card attacked a restaurant and a bowling alley in Lewiston, Maine. Eighteen people have been reported killed in the attack and numerous others injured. Card remains a fugitive at present.

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Russia May Be Able to Achieve Tactical Gains in Ukraine in Coming Months - Kirby

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - The United States believes that Russia may be able to achieve tactical gains in Ukraine in the coming months, White House Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Thursday.

"This is a dynamic conflict, and we need to remember that Russia is still maintain some offensive capability and may be able to achieve some tactical gains in the coming months," Kirby said during a White House press briefing.

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US Hasn't Formally Determined Whether Israel Complying With Laws of War - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - The United States has not formally conducted an assessment to determine whether Israel is following international law when conducting its airstrikes in Gaza, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Thursday.
"We have not made any kind of formal assessment," Miller said during a press briefing.

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US Thinks It's Important for UN to Enter Gaza for Humanitarian Purposes - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - The United States believes it is important for the United Nations to have access into the Gaza Strip to be able to deliver humanitarian goods to Palestinians, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Thursday.
"We do think that it's important that fuel be able to make it into Gaza for humanitarian purposes," Miller said regarding UN efforts to deliver aid into Gaza. "Obviously the aid workers who are delivering humanitarian assistance through Rafah [border crossing] and then onward inside Gaza need to be able to get fuel to be able to advance those deliveries."

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UNRWA Reducing Operations in Gaza as Fuel Reserves Almost Exhausted - UN

UNITED NATIONS, October 26 (Sputnik) - The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) has almost exhausted its fuel reserves in Gaza and is now significantly scaling down its operations in the exclave, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Thursday.
"Fuel, which is desperately needed to run back-up generators, is still unable to get into Gaza. As a result, the UN Relief and Works Agency has almost exhausted its fuel reserves and began significantly reducing its operations," Dujarric told reporters.
He declined to provide a specific timeframe for how long the UNRWA will be able to work under the current circumstances but said that it is a very short amount of time.
"They are trying to squeeze the last drop," Dujarric added.
On Wednesday, Dujarric warned that the UNRWA will be forced to cease its humanitarian operations in the Gaza Strip by the end of the day if Israel continues to not allow fuel deliveries to the area.
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 blockade was later eased to allow trucks with humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. The

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

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Schumer Says Will Limit Debate on US Envoy to Israel Nominee, Sets Up Final Vote Next Week

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - US Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said on Thursday that he will limit debate on the nomination of Jack Lew for the position US ambassador to Israel, setting it up for a final vote later next week.

"Later today, I will file cloture on this most urgent nomination, so Mr. Lew can be appointed to the post of Ambassador ASAP [as soon as possible]," Schumer said during remarks on the Senate floor.

A cloture will set up a final vote later next week to confirm Lew's nomination.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee advanced Lew's nomination on Wednesday in a 12-9 vote. Senator Rand Paul was the only Republican to join all Democrats in supporting Lew.

Lew previously served as Secretary of the Treasury Department during the Obama administration.

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UN Engages With Israel Through Normal Channels to Get Visas for UN Staff – Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, October 26 (Sputnik) – The United Nations continues to engage with the Israeli authorities through normal channels to obtain visas for its personnel, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Thursday.

“We continue to engage through the normal channels with Israeli officials in order to get visas that are needed for the UN staff,” Dujarric told reporters.

On Tuesday, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said at the UN Security Council that the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7 did not happen in a vacuum. The Israeli authorities strongly criticized this and other comments by Guterres.

Following Guterres' remarks, Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations Gilad Erdan said that Israel would deny a visa to Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths as he planned to visit the country amid tensions with Hamas and the plight of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

On October 7, the Palestinian group Hamas launched surprise attacks against Israel from the Gaza Strip. Israel declared war on Hamas and launched massive strikes, as well as imposed a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, cutting off supplies of water, food, medicines, electricity, and fuel to some 2.3 million Palestinians.

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Canadians Optimism on Future Living Standards Reaches All Time Low – Poll

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) – The perspective Canadians have on future generations standards of living have reached an all time low as 67% expressed having a negative assessment on it, a Nanos poll revealed on Thursday.

Nanos began tracking Canadians perception of standards of living in the country, in 2012.

"Approximately two in three Canadians believe the next generation of Canadians will have a lower standard of living than they have today (67%) reaching an all time high numerically since tracking first started," the poll said.

Nearly 75% of those surveyed aged 18-34 expressed their belief that the next generation of Canadians would have lower standards of living, the poll said, an opinion held by 69% of those aged 35-54.

Individuals aged 55 and over were less likely to say the next generation would live under lower living standards, 62% supporting that possibility.

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Pentagon Records Increase in Suicides Over Past Decade With 492 Deaths in 2022 - Report

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - The overall suicide trend among US military personnel between 2011 and 2022 for all services is increasing despite the fact that fewer suicides occurred in 2022 than in 2021, the Defense Department said in a new annual report on Thursday.

"Fewer Service members died by suicide in 2022 (492) than last year (524). The suicide rate for the Active Component increased by 3% compared to 2021. For the Reserve and National Guard, rates decreased by 12% and 18%," the report said. "The overall trend from 2011-2022 for the Active Component is increasing."

Of the 492 cases of suicide in 2022, 331 were committed by active service members, 64 by those in reserve and 97 by members of the National Guard, the report said.

Nearly 70% of suicides were carried out by firearms, which continues to be the most common method, followed by hanging at 29%, the report added.

Nearly 70% of those who committed suicide were young or under 30 years old and 93% were male, according to the report.

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US Urges Properly Equipping UN Peacekeepers in Central African Republic - Envoy to UN

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UNITED NATIONS, October 26 (Sputnik) - The United States is re-emphasizing the importance of properly equipping the United Nations mission in the Central African Republic - also known by the acronym MINUSCA - to fully implement its mandate, US Alternative Representative for Special Political Affairs to the United Nations Robert Wood said.

"We reiterate the importance of properly equipping the mission to maneuver in this environment to fully implement its mandate," Wood said at a meeting of the UN Security Council on Thursday.

Wood noted that several peacekeepers from Morocco and Tanzania have been killed in automobile accidents earlier in October.

"These unfortunate events highlight some of the challenges that MINUSCA peacekeepers face," Wood said.

The US diplomat also highlighted the essential role MINUSCA has in protecting civilians and providing stability in the Central African Republic.

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US Announces $150Mln Ukraine Aid That Includes NASAMS, HIMARS Ammo - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - The United States announced a new $150 million security assistance package for Ukraine that includes anti-aircraft Stinger missiles, additional artillery rounds, and munitions for NASAMS and HIMARS systems, among other items, the Pentagon said on Thursday.

"The capabilities in this package, valued at up to $150 million, include: Additional munitions for National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems (NASAMS); AIM-9M missiles for air defense; Additional ammunition for High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS); 155mm and 105mm artillery rounds," the Pentagon said in a press release.

The release also noted the package includes TOW missiles, Javelin anti-armor systems, cold weather gear, spare parts, night visions devices, demolitions for obstacle clearing, and more than two million rounds of small arms ammunition.

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US Lawmaker Introduces Measure to Censure Rashida Tlaib Over Alleged Anti-Semitic Beliefs

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - US Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene said on Thursday she introduced a measure to censure her colleague Rashida Tlaib over alleged anti-Semitic beliefs and hatred toward Israel.

"I just introduced my resolution to censure Rashida Tlaib as privileged to force a House vote in two legislative days," Greene said in a statement.

According to Greene, Tlaib allegedly led a pro-Hamas "insurrection" into the Capitol, has

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repeatedly displayed anti-Semitic views, and has shown a hatred toward Israel.
Green said Tlaib must be held accountable and censured.
Far-right conservatives have criticized Tlaib over her public statement condemning Israel's military actions in Gaza that have killed civilians, but failing to condemn Hamas militants for its violence against civilians as well.
Tlaib is the first woman of Palestinian descent in Congress. If censured, she would have to give up any committee chairs they hold, but it does not remove her from office or have any legal consequences.
On Wednesday, Tlaib was one of 10 House members to vote against a bipartisan resolution reaffirming US support for Israel and condemning Hamas' attacks on Israel.

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Hamas Ready to Release Non-Military Hostages to Iran – Iran Foreign Minister

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) – Hamas is prepared to release its non-military hostages to Iran, Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said on Thursday during his speech at the UN General Assembly emergency session on the Israel-Palestine conflict.
"The leaders of the Hamas movement have voiced their readiness to release the non-military prisoners to us and the Islamic Republic of Iran stands ready to play its part in this very important humanitarian endeavor, along with Qatar and Turkey. Naturally, the release of the 6000 Palestinian prisoners is another necessity and responsibility of the global community," Amir-Abdollahian said in translated remarks.

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Maine Shooting Suspect Listed as Petroleum Supply Specialist in Reserve - US Army

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) – Maine shooting suspect Robert Card, 40, is a decorated petroleum supply specialist in the Army reserve enlisted in December of 2002 with no recorded combat deployment, a US Army spokesperson told Sputnik in a statement on Thursday.
"Sgt. 1st Class Robert R. Card II is a Petroleum Supply Specialist in the Army Reserve, enlisting in December 2002. He has no combat deployments. His awards include the Army Achievement Medal, Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal x2, Humanitarian Service Medal, National Defense Service Medal, and Army Service Ribbon," the statement said.

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Iran Warns US of 'Uncontrollable Consequences' of Israel Support – Foreign Minister

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) – Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs Hossein Amir-Abdollahian warned the US of “uncontrollable consequences” of its financial and military support to Israel during his speech Thursday at an emergency session on the Israel-Palestine conflict at the UN General Assembly

“We strongly warn against the uncontrollable consequences of the unlimited financial arms and operational support by the White House to the Tel Aviv regime, which have led to the expansion and added to the severity of the bombardment of the civilians…in Gaza and the West Bank,” Amir-Abdollahian said in translated remarks.

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Iran's Top Diplomat Says US Won't Be ‘Spared From Fire’ If ‘Genocide’ in Gaza Continues

UNITED NATIONS, October 26 (Sputnik) - The United States will not be spared from consequences if the "genocide" in Gaza continues, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said on Thursday.

"If the genocide in Gaza continues, they [US] will not be spared from this fire," Amirabdollahian told the UN General Assembly.

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Sanctions on CAR Hampers Its Ability To Impose Order In Country – Russian Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, October 26 (Sputnik) –The sanctions regime against the Central African Republic (CAR) is hampering its ability to maintain order and stability in the country, Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Anna Evstigneeva said on Thursday.

“The current sanctions restrictions enforced against CAR, despite the fact they have been eased, are hampering Bangi’s ability to impose order in the country,” Evstigneeva said during the meeting of the UN Security Council.

She reiterated Russia’s commitment to full lifting of those limitations.

Evstigneeva pointed out that Russia is convinced a long-term settlement and a fragile move to stabilization is only possible by effectively supporting the CAR and enhancing the military preparedness of its armed forces and law enforcement units.

At the same time, she emphasized that Russia welcomes the significant achievements in disarmament in the CAR. “As part of this program, about 4,500 people have laid down their arms and returned to civilian life,” she added.

Russia will continue to provide the CAR with all necessary support both as a permanent member of the Security Council and bilaterally, Evstigneeva said.

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Israel's Ambassador Says UN 'So Broken, So Morally Corrupt'

UNITED NATIONS, October 26 (Sputnik) – Israel's ambassador to the UN declared Thursday at the UN General Assembly that the United Nations was "so broken, so morally corrupt" that he did not think it was a sustainable organization.

"This week, the UN celebrated its 78th birthday. Yet looking at this resolution and the honorary guests hosted today in these halls, this organization has shown that it is so broken, so morally corrupt that I do not have high hopes that it will make it to 90, let alone 100," Gilad Erdan said.

Erdan was speaking at an emergency special session on the Israel-Palestine conflict at the UN General Assembly, amid a deadlock in the Security Council on the wording of a resolution.

The Security Council vetoed four draft resolutions regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict within 10 days. On Wednesday, the council did not adopt two opposing resolutions, one backed by the US and one by Russia. Last week, the US voted down a Russian-led draft resolution calling for an "immediate humanitarian ceasefire" and a Brazilian-led one for "humanitarian pauses."

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UNGA President Urges All Parties in Gaza Conflict to Abide by Humanitarian Law

UNITED NATIONS, October 26 (Sputnik) - The United Nations General Assembly President Dennis Francis called on the warring parties in Gaza to respect humanitarian ceasefire and allow conditions for opening a humanitarian corridor to the Gaza Strip.

“All parties to this conflict must abide by international humanitarian law and ... immediately create the necessary conditions to allow for an opening of the humanitarian corridor to the Gaza Strip,” Francis told the General Assembly hall.

The UN Security Council failed to adopt a resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza and therefore, the UN General Assembly is now the only hopeful UN body which could pass a resolution on ceasefire.

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 around 200 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 blockade was later eased to allow trucks with humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. The escalation of the conflict has resulted in thousands of people killed and injured on both sides.

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Biden Calls on Congress to Ban Assault Weapons After Maine Mass Shooting

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden on Thursday called on Congress to further regulate US gun control laws, including imposing a ban on assault weapons, after a gunman killed 18 people in the US state of Maine with an assault rifle.

"Today, in the wake of yet another tragedy, I urge Republican lawmakers in Congress to fulfill their duty to protect the American people," Biden said in a statement. "Work with us to pass a bill banning assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, to enact universal background checks, to require safe storage of guns, and end immunity from liability for gun manufacturers."

The suspect Robert Card killed 18 people and injured 13 others in a shooting in Lewiston, Maine, late Wednesday night, according to authorities. Card remains at large.

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Increased Police Deployment in Monmouth, Maine Following Lewiston Shooting - Reports

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - Heavy police deployment has been observed in the Monmouth woods im the US state of Maine after the fatal shooting spree in the nearby town of Lewiston, the local radio station WHZP reported on Thursday.

A New Hampshire State Police helicopter has been observed flying over the Monmouth area, the report said.

On Wednesday night, a gunman attacked a restaurant and a bowling alley in Lewiston. Eighteen people have been reported killed in the attack and numerous others injured.

The alleged gunman, identified by the authorities as 40-year-old Robert Card, is currently a fugitive.

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Arrest Warrant Issued for Maine Shooter on Eight Counts of Murder – State Police

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) – An arrest warrant has been issued for the Main mass shooting suspect, Robert Card, charging him with eight counts of murder, one for each identified victim, Operations Major for the Maine State Police Colonel William Ross said on Thursday.

“Currently, there is an arrest warrant for eight counts of murder for Mr. Card, and the reason it's eight counts is because ten people have not yet been identified. As those people are identified, the counts will probably go to the total of 18,” Ross said during a press conference.

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Israeli Envoy Says Jordan's Draft UNGA Resolution 'Distorted, Disconnected' From Reality

UNITED NATIONS, October 26 (Sputnik) - Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations Gilad Erdan said Thursday that Jordan's draft UN General Assembly resolution on the ongoing Israel-Gaza war is "distorted and disconnected" from reality.

"Tomorrow, there will be a vote on a proposed resolution submitted by Jordan that is distorted and disconnected from reality. The proposed resolution completely ignores the existence of Hamas, does not mention the barbaric massacre, and calls for an immediate ceasefire," Erdan wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Erdan accused the Organization of Islamic Cooperation of using its automatic majority in the General Assembly to pass "despicable" resolutions against the Jewish state.

Israel has recently warned it may reassess its relations with the UN after Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that Hamas' October 7 attack did not happen in a vacuum.

Erdan has since called twice for Guterres to resign over his remarks and his refusal to retract them.

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Eighteen Killed, 13 Injured in Lewiston Shootings - Maine Governor

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - Eighteen people were killed and 13 injured in the two mass shootings in Lewiston, Maine, Governor Janet Mills said on Thursday.

"I'm profoundly saddened to stand before you today to report 18 people lost their lives and 13 people injured in last night's attacks," Mills told a press briefing.

The suspected shooter, identified as Robert Card, 40, remains at large.

"Police advised that Maine people should not approach him under any circumstances," Mills said.

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Senator Schumer Says US Appropriation Bills May Include AI Funding This Year

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - US Senator Chuck Schumer said on Thursday that there is mainstream bipartisan consensus in Congress on the urgency of addressing Artificial Intelligence (AI), such that there could be funding for it in this year's appropriations bills.

Schumer answered in the affirmative when asked about funding during an AI summit hosted by

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the Washington Post.

"There's a broad mainstream of Republicans and … you know who tells us we need to go forward on AI, among others, [is] the military and the defense establishment and national security," Schumer said.

The senator also said that the US House Freedom Caucus members "just want to cut spending on everything" and are not representative of the Republican caucus.

Schumer added that a "broad spectrum of people" at a second forum held about AI on Wednesday agreed that the minimum level of federal funding necessary was $32 billion.

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US, Partners Ink Deal on African Rail Line to Connect Atlantic to Indian Ocean

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - The United States and partners signed an agreement on Thursday to cooperate on the Lobito Corridor and the Zambia-Lobito rail line that would link the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean, the State Department said on Thursday.

"Today at the Global Gateway Forum, the U.S. signed an agreement with partners to collaborate across sectors on the development of the Lobito Corridor and the Zambia-Lobito rail line, which will connect the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean," spokesperson Matthew Miller wrote on social media.

The other signatories include the European Union, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zambia, the African Development Bank, and the Africa Finance Corporation.

The new rail line is due to connect northwest Zambia to the Lobito Atlantic Railway and the port of Lobito in Angola.

The projects represent the most significant transport infrastructure that the US has helped develop in Africa in a generation, the State Department said in a separate statement.

The transport corridor will enhance regional trade and growth and "advance the shared vision of connected, open-access rail from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean," the statement added.

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Senator Schumer Warns US Must Keep Pace With China's AI Development

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - US Senator Chuck Schumer warned on Thursday that the United States must keep up with China in keenly pursuing the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies.

"China is moving very fast here. They're investing lots of money and they're doing it in a different way - they don't have the same kind of values that we have, they're putting a lot of focus on facial recognition, on following people around," Schumer said at the AI summit hosted

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by the Washington Post.

"If we don't move forward, it will lead to not only a different dominant system of AI with different values, but we'll fall behind economically rather dramatically," Schumer said.

There is now a bipartisan consensus that the US federal government should be involved in the AI development efforts and that significant funding is required for that purpose, Schumer added.

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Congress Recognizes Potential AI Role in Election Misinformation - Schumer

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) – New York Sen. Chuck Schumer said on Thursday that the US Congress is well aware of the potential for AI tools to spread election misinformation.

"The ability of AI to interfere with our elections to spread misinformation that's extremely believable is one of the things that's preoccupying us as we go through our actions at our AI group, and within the Congress," Schumer said an AI summit hosted by The Washington Post.

"There's so much good that could come out of AI, but there's also so much harm," he noted, warning that "if we don't have government-imposed guardrails, the lowest common denominator will prevail."

He noted that he was part of a bipartisan working group of four senators, along with Sens. Mike Rounds, Todd Young, and Martin Heinrich, focused on understanding and promoting AI to Congress as an urgent issue.

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Biden To Launch Advisory Council on African Diaspora In US – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden will start the new advisory council on the African diaspora in the United States on October 30, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Joy Basu said on Thursday

"On Monday, the President will be launching his President advisory council on the African diaspora in the US, Basu told reporters.

She stressed that the US pays great attention to strengthening ties between the authorities and African communities in the country, adding that this is an incredible opportunity. "It is one of the deep people-to-people connections that the US has with Africa, and one that we have to elevate," she added.

The announcement will precede the 20th US-Sub-Saharan Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation Forum (AGOA) that will take place on November 2-4 in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Speaking about achievements of the AGOA during its almost quarter-century history, Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for African Affairs Constance Hamilton pointed out that this

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cooperation is very useful for the continent but did not reach all the goals.
"We have to do better. AGOA has not met the expectations we had in 2000," Hamilton said.
She emphasized that while some African countries got benefits from participating in AGOA, most of them are still waiting for these advantages.
The AGOA was approved by the US Congress in May 2000 to enhance trade in the region and increase economic and investment cooperation between African countries and the US.

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Biden Says Hopes Republicans Will Not Put US Economy at Risk With Threats of Shutdown

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden said on Thursday that he hopes that Republicans in Congress will not put the US economy at risk with "reckless threats" of a government shutdown or with proposals to cut taxes for the wealthy and for large corporations.
"I hope Republicans in Congress will join me in working to build on this progress, rather than putting our economy at risk with reckless threats of a shutdown or proposals to cut taxes for the wealthy and large corporations, while slashing programs that are essential for hard-working families and seniors," Biden said in a statement.
Earlier on Thursday, the Commerce Department said the US economy grew at an annualized rate of 4.9% in the third quarter compared to 2.1% in the second quarter.

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US 3rd Quarter GDP Beats Forecast With 4.9% Growth, Boosts 'Soft Landing' Idea for Economy

(Updates with more details, background in paras 4-8)
WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - US Gross Domestic Product growth for the third quarter of 2023 has been estimated at an annual rate of 4.9%, the Commerce Department said in its first reading of the period issued on Thursday.
"Real gross domestic product (GDP) increased at an annual rate of 4.9 percent in the third quarter of 2023," the Bureau of Economic Analysis, a unit of the Commerce Department, said in a news release, comparing the performance to the 2.1% annual growth it finalized for the second quarter.
The Commerce Department releases three GDP readings for each quarter.
The reading for the third quarter came in well above the 4.3% consensus of Wall Street's economic forecasters and below the 5.4% predicted by the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta - a division of the Federal Reserve.

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"Compared to the second quarter, the acceleration in real GDP in the third quarter reflected accelerations in consumer spending, private inventory investment, and federal government spending and upturns in exports and residential fixed investment," the release said. "These movements were partly offset by a downturn in nonresidential fixed investment and a deceleration in state and local government spending. Imports turned up."

The outperformance of the economy in the third quarter reinforces Wall Street's expectations that the US economy might see a "soft landing" for 2023 instead of a recession likely caused by the Federal Reserve's aggressive interest rate hikes to counter inflation.

To central bank hiked rates 11 times between March 2022 and August 2023, raising them by 5.25% from a base rate of 0.25%.

The Fed is scheduled to decide on interest rates again at its next two-day policy meeting ending on November 2. But the unchanged reading on federal funds futures as of Thursday indicated that the Fed may skip a rate hike again at that meeting, just as it did in September.

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Biden Orders Flags at Half Staff Through October 30 After Mass Shootings in Maine

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden ordered flags to be flown at half-staff at all public buildings and grounds in the United States, including at US embassies and facilities abroad, following two deadly mass shootings in Lewiston, Maine, according to a proclamation published by the White House on Thursday.

"I hereby order that the flag of the United States shall be flown at half-staff at the White House and upon all public buildings and grounds, at all military posts and naval stations, and on all naval vessels of the Federal Government in the District of Columbia and throughout the United States and its Territories and possessions until sunset, October 30, 2023," the proclamation said.

"I also direct that the flag shall be flown at half-staff for the same length of time at all United States embassies, legations, consular offices, and other facilities abroad, including all military facilities and naval vessels and stations," the proclamation added.

According to local officials in the US state of Maine, between 16 and 22 people were killed and dozens injured in Lewiston on Wednesday night after a man opened fire at a restaurant and a bowling alley. The suspected shooter has been identified as Robert Card, 40. He remains at large.

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UPDATE - Shelter-in-Place Order Expands as Manhunt Continues After Mass Shootings in Lewiston

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(Adds notice from University of Maine in paras 6-7)

WASHINGTON, October 26 (Sputnik) - The police of the US state of Maine on Thursday expanded their shelter-in-place advisory as the manhunt for a person of interest in the two mass shootings in Lewiston continues.

"We are expanding the shelter in place advisory and school closings to include the town of Bowdoin," the police said on X, formerly known as Twitter.

The authorities urged residents to stay in their homes.

More than 100 investigators are working to locate Robert Card, 40, who is a person of interest in the Lewiston shootings, the police said.

The death toll from Wednesday's mass shootings at a restaurant and a bowling alley in Lewiston could be as high as 22, City Councillor Robert McCarthy previously told CNN.

In a notice sent on Thursday morning via its emergency alert system, the University of Maine said that its campuses in Orono and Machias would be closed for the day, adding that only essential employees should report for duty.

The campuses will remain closed for non-essential personnel until 7:00 a.m. (11:00 GMT) October 27, the university said.

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