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**11/3/23 Friday**

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Russian Artillerymen in Action Using Powerful Giatsint-B Field Guns

During World War II, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin characterized artillery as the "god of war," owing its huge importance in the success or failure of a military operation. A lot has changed since then, but the maxim continues to hold true to this day.

The Russia-NATO proxy war in Ukraine is the largest land conflict in Europe since the Second World War, with the United States and its European allies pouring tens of billions of dollars worth of military equipment, ammunition and supplies into the conflict, and Russia forced to dramatically ramp up its military production to deal with the threat and prevent the hostile bloc from encroaching even closer toward its Western frontiers.

The scale of the crisis has forced both sides to experiment with new armaments, tactics and forms of warfare, taking advantage of technological advances in areas like drones, electronic warfare, new forms of intelligence collection, ultra-high speed missiles, and more.

But while the high-intensity conflict has demonstrated the importance of some new technologies, tactics and weaponry and the waning significance of others, one place where things have remained unchanged is artillery support. Just as it did decades earlier during World War II, timely, precise and effective artillery support has proven crucial in both offensive and defensive operations in the present crisis, as have countries' ability to produce artillery pieces, howitzers, field guns, and the ammo to accompany them.

Helping to make up the backbone of Russia's artillery support forces is the 2A36 Giatsint-B, a powerful 152-mm towed field gun with a range of up to 40 km. First introduced into service with the Soviet military in the mid-1970s, this all-weather, heavy and reliable artillery piece has provided Russian forces with the firepower they need to suppress artillery fire and destroy the enemy.

Check out Sputnik's gallery to follow along with Russian troops stationed in the Krasnolimansk direction in the Donbass as they use these heavy guns:

Trooper carries a Giantsint-B shell through a trench. Shells can weigh 45 kg or more, depending on variant.

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Salts, Organic Compounds Discovered on Jupiter’s Ocean Moon Ganymede

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When NASA's Juno probe flew past Jupiter's moon Ganymede in June 2021, it detected several chemicals necessary for life to exist. The massive moon has a vast subterranean ocean that might hold more water than all of Earth's oceans combined.

The discovery was made while examining data gathered by Juno's Jovian InfraRed Auroral Mapper (JIRAM) spectrometer, a device used to study the chemistry of the atmospheres of Jupiter and several of its moons. A paper printed earlier this week in Nature Astronomy described the find.

Juno's JIRAM spotted salts such as hydrated sodium chloride, ammonium chloride, sodium bicarbonate, and possibly organic compounds called aliphatic aldehydes, which the National Institutes of Health (NIH) describes as "essential building blocks for the synthesis of more complex organic compounds."

"The composition and spatial distribution of these salts and organics suggest that their origin is endogenic, resulting from the extrusion of subsurface brines, whose chemistry reflects the water–rock interaction inside Ganymede," the paper said.

"We found the greatest abundance of salts and organics in the dark and bright terrains at latitudes protected by the magnetic field," said Scott Bolton of the Southwest Research Institute, who is Juno's principal investigator and one of the paper's co-authors. "This suggests we are seeing the remnants of a deep ocean brine that reached the surface of this frozen world."

Today, Ganymede's vast ocean can only be found beneath its ice surface, as the huge moon has almost no atmosphere. However, water still spews up into the skies over Ganymede through huge geysers, which Juno also observed during the 2021 flyby.

Ganymede is the largest moon in the solar system and is even bigger than the planet Mercury; it is about two-fifths the size of the Earth. It is one of the four Jovian moons discovered by Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei, using one of the first telescopes, in 1610 CE.

Due to its huge amount of liquid water, Ganymede is seen as one of the best candidates in the solar system for being a potential harbor for life. Others include several of Jupiter's other moons, including Europa and Callisto, and Saturn's moons Titan and Enceladus, and the planet Mars and dwarf planet Pluto.

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Surprise! First NASA Photos of Asteroid Dinkinesh Reveal It's Two Asteroids, Not One

When NASA's Lucy spacecraft sent back photos of the asteroid belt object Dinkinesh, astronomers were stunned to discover it wasn't a single rock, but actually a binary pair of asteroids.

On November 1, Lucy flew past Dinkinesh, snapped several photos, and confirmed what NASA astronomers had been suspecting for weeks: Dinkenesh is actually two rocks, not one.

In the weeks leading up to the encounter, they had observed Dinkinesh's brightness increasing and fading in regular intervals, suggesting something was moving near the rock. However, during Lucy's close pass to the Dinkinesh pair at 264 miles away from the larger asteroid, they suddenly spotted a second, much smaller rock lurking behind it.

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The larger asteroid measures some 2,591 feet across, but this second rock is about 721 feet wide, according to a NASA news release. The two orbit each other, with the smaller zipping around the larger, which also rocks (get it?) as it is orbited, in a manner similar to two ice skaters spinning while holding each others' hands.

"This is an awesome series of images. They indicate that the terminal tracking system worked as intended, even when the universe presented us with a more difficult target than we expected," Tom Kennedy, a guidance and navigation engineer at Lockheed Martin, said in a statement. "It's one thing to simulate, test, and practice. It's another thing entirely to see it actually happen."

Lucy was launched in 2021 to investigate a number of asteroids in the Asteroid Belt and in Jupiter's orbit, the latter of which are called "trojans."

It has two large solar arrays for power and carries a series of powerful cameras, including a thermal infrared spectrometer, a panchromatic and color visible imager, and a high-resolution visible imager, to study the asteroids without interacting with them directly. Its terminal tracking system helps it snap such high-quality photos even as it travels at more than 10,000 miles per hour.

First discovered in 1999, then lost and re-discovered in 2004, the asteroid was named Dinkinesh earlier this year by the International Astronomical Union, which means "you are wonderful," when said to a woman, in Amharic.

"Dinkinesh really did live up to its name; this is marvelous," said Hal Levison, Lucy principal investigator from the Southwest Research Institute. "When Lucy was originally selected for flight, we planned to fly by seven asteroids. With the addition of Dinkinesh, two Trojan moons, and now this satellite, we've 'turned it up to 11.'"

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Three Soldiers Who Destroyed 32 Ukrainian Tanks Awarded Hero of Russia & Gold Star Medals

Several Russian army officers received prestigious awards from Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu on Friday after units under their command recently destroyed nearly three dozen pieces of Ukrainian armor.

"The exploits of many of you were seen not only by the whole country, but also by almost half the world. I congratulate you on these high awards. I wish you that in the future, firstly, your awards will not be the last," Shoigu said. "Secondly, you continued to defend our Fatherland with dignity, no matter where you were, on what fronts and in what positions."

Two officers were awarded Hero of Russia medals: Colonel Roman Fedorov, commander of the motorized rifle brigade that prepared the defense, and Colonel Ivan Kleshcherev, commander of the motorized rifle regiment that led the counterattack. Sergeant Yuri Shcherbakov, commander of the anti-tank guided missile unit, which alone eliminated a massive amount of Ukrainian materiel, received the Gold Star Medal.

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“This award is not mine alone, it belongs to my entire unit, to the entire team. It is earned through joint efforts, common successes,” Kleshcherev said upon receiving the medal.
Fedorov’s well-prepared defenses included engineered barriers and fire ambushes, and enabled the Russian defense lines in his area to withstand more than 20 attacks by Ukrainian forces. During those battles, the Russian military destroyed 12 Ukrainian tanks, six foreign-made infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs), two self-propelled artillery mounts, 11 cars, 10 drones, and more than 230 Ukrainian attack aircraft.
Led by Kleshcherev himself, the subsequent counterattack effectively annihilated 11 Ukrainian tanks, 10 infantry fighting vehicles, and a staggering total of over 170 Ukrainian military personnel.
Shcherbakov’s missile squad seized on a moment of opportunity and by itself annihilated nine Ukrainian tanks, four armored personnel carriers, 12 IFVs, four trucks loaded with ammunition, two platoon strongholds, and over 100 Ukrainian military personnel.
"I heard on the radio that there was an attack on the neighbor to the right. I saw it myself, discovered it myself and opened fire," Shcherbakov said of the battle.
“I brought the fire to the end - that’s it, the offensive was completely disrupted and stopped. We just arrived in this direction, we didn’t know everything yet, where and where the enemy was coming from, and we were just studying all the heights, directions, where he could come from and where he would appear,” Shcherbakov stated.
Altogether, some 32 Ukrainian tanks were destroyed in the battle.

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‘Fighting Israel Won’t Be Limited to This’ - Hezbollah’s Nasrallah

Since the Oct. 7 attack by Palestinian militants on several Israeli towns near the Gaza-Israel border, Israeli and U.S. forces have faced a steady stream of attacks across the region, including from Lebanon's Hezbollah, Yemen's Ansarallah, militias in Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) and their allied groups in Syria.
The border battles between Hezbollah and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) were the beginning of a new type of struggle, one that “won’t be limited to this,” Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said in a highly anticipated speech on Friday.
The Lebanese political leader noted that his fighters have been engaged with the IDF since October 8, the day after hundreds of Palestinian militants breached the Gaza border fence and attacked several Israeli towns near the border, killing more than 1,400 people.
According to Nasrallah, Hezbollah's attacks have extended across the ambiguous Israel-Lebanon border, referred to as the Blue Line. He further emphasized that these actions should not be considered as the final or adequate measures.
“Our involvement has been limited so far, but it won't be limited to this,” Nasrallah said. “It is unprecedented in the history of the entity: daily, precise attacks on enemy military targets in the north of occupied Palestine.”

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The Hezbollah leader estimated that their attacks had drawn half of the IDF to the northern border and away from the attack on Gaza.
“If Israel continues to hit our civilians, I say with constructive ambiguity: All options are on the table on the Lebanese front,” Nasrallah said. He added that “we have our preparations” for the US Navy ships threatening Hezbollah as well, saying to the Americans: “remember how you humiliatingly withdrew from Afghanistan.”
Calling on Arab countries to stop exporting oil to Israel, Nasrallah said Muslim and Arab countries must do everything possible to stop Israel's assault on Gaza. "Speeches are not enough," he said, adding that a victory for Hamas and Gaza is in the interest of all countries bordering Israel.
The Hezbollah leader said that Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, the October 7 attack on the Israeli border towns near Gaza, was 100% planned by the Palestinians and “was the right, correct and courageous choice.”
"The Al-Aqsa Flood proved once again that the entity is weaker than a spider's web," Nasrallah said. "There are now some Israelis who believe this as well. The Al-Aqsa Flood was the right, correct and courageous decision. The enemy was in a state of loss and confusion. It seems they were all asleep," he said, noting that it took "hours" for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant "to show their faces.
Nasrallah accused the US of being “directly” responsible for blocking a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas, the Palestinian militant group that governs the Gaza Strip.
Also on Friday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was in Israel, pressing Netanyahu to allow “humanitarian pauses” in the fighting in Gaza, which has resulted in over 9,000 deaths and injured tens of thousands more. He did not call for a ceasefire - a position the White House has maintained since October 7. But Netanyahu said the attack would not stop without such a pause, including the release of all Israeli prisoners taken by Hamas in the October 7 attack.

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Dow Jones Surges Over 550 Points After Fed Leaves Interest Rates Unchanged

The US Federal Reserve earlier opted not to raise interest rates despite growing inflation concerns, a move that marked the fourth such time the central bank sided with maintaining rates kept since July.
US stocks skyrocketed into green territory on Thursday as investors moved to bet the Federal Reserve was just about done increasing interest rates any further for the year.
At closing bell, the Dow Jones Industrial Average index closed at 564.50 points higher (1.70%) while the S&P500 reported a spike of 79.92 points (1.89%), indices of which are both on track for their biggest weekly gains of the year. The Nasdaq Composite surged by 232.72 points (1.78).
The US Treasury yields, which topped 5% in October, have since plummeted, with the 10-year yield dropping by about 4.669%.

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“While earnings season wasn’t as good as it could have been, with lots of cuts in fourth-quarter estimates, the soft landing narrative is fully in charge, the seasonal rally is arriving right on queue, and the market is once again demonstrating its ability to shrug off what appears to be daunting geopolitical risks," Louis Navellier, of Navellier & Associates, told US media.
The Federal Reserve earlier Thursday received data revealing that labor costs were trending down, all while slightly higher jobless claims suggested the economic slowdown desired by the central bank was on the horizon. Additionally, findings by the CME Group's FedWatch Tool determined there was only a 14.6% chance interest rates would be raised.
Focus for investors is now shifting toward the looming jobs report, which is expected to release on Friday. Forecasts suggest the data will show the makings of a strong employment growth.
Shortly after announcing no interest rate changes on Wednesday, Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell reiterated that it remained unclear as to whether the bank would raise rate at its next meeting. In the last year, as a means to combat inflation that surpassed 9%, the agency repeatedly raised rates at its fastest pace in over 20 years.

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The Trump Hot Seat - Cartoon

The New York civil fraud trial at which the one-time US commander-in-chief remains the subject of focuses on his vast real estate empire, and more specifically on allegedly fraudulent business practices used to propel the Trump Organization. Also named in the case are the former president's two adult sons, both accused of knowingly joining schemes.
Former US President Donald Trump recently blew a gasket after all three of his eldest children were instructed to provide testimony in an ongoing New York trial looking into the allegedly fraudulent business practices used to bolster the Trump Organization.
In a series of Truth Social posts, Trump took the opportunity to attack Judge Arthur Engoron, who is presiding over the case, calling the official a "disgrace to the legal profession."
"Leave my children alone, Engoron," Trump fumed online.
It's worth noting the New York judge had nothing to do with Don Jr. and Eric taking the witness stand, as both were already named in the trial case as co-defendants, and had been subpoenaed by the New York Attorney General's Office. Engoron, however, did order Ivanka Trump to provide her testimony, which is due to take place on November 8.
Don Jr. took the stand on Wednesday and is expected to remains so during Thursday's proceedings. Eric is expected to testify later that day.
The former president has repeatedly referred to legal cases filed against him post-White House as being politically motivated and being part of a "witch hunt." He earlier stated at the start of the New York trial that the fraud charges were filed as a means to throw off his 2024 reelection campaign.

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Photo: Archaeologists Uncover Ancient Mayan Temple in Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula

Anthropologists and archeologists believe that the Mayan civilization started around 1500 BCE, and continued to thrive throughout Central America and southern North America until around 900 CE, but the civilization continued to thrive in the Yucatan Peninsula for centuries longer, with its last city falling to the Spanish in 1697.

Archeologists in Mexico have found a roughly 1,000-year-old ancient Mayan temple in El Tigre, an archaeological site in the Yucatan Peninsula.

Dating back to 1000 to 1200 AD, the circular structure has two levels and was likely capped with a flat roof. Archeologists believe it was dedicated to the Mayan serpent deity Kukulcan, one of four major deities of the ancient Mayan religion.

Officials further believe it may be the same temple described in the writings of Don Pablo Paxbolon, who led the Mayan people in what is now the Mexican state of Tabasco between 1575 and 1576. His writings describe four such temples in the area, each dedicated to one of the main deities.

While those specific temples have not yet been found, other circular structures in the Yucatan Peninsula have been uncovered, including in Edzna, Becan, Uxmal and Chichen Itza.

“This building broadens our knowledge of the late occupation of El Tigre,” Diego Prieto Hernández, an anthropologist and director general of the National Institute of Anthropology and History, said during an Oct. 30 conference, as quoted in Mexican media. “Circular structures generally correspond to the early Postclassic period between A.D. 1000 and 1200, when the Maya zone had links with other regions of Mesoamerica, in particular with central Mexico, Oaxaca and the Gulf Coast.”

The Yucatan Peninsula served as one of the last settlements for the Mayans before the civilization collapsed. Its fall remains a topic of debate among experts.

The discovery was made as part of a new railway, called the “Tren Maya” or Maya Train, being constructed in Mexico that will span 1,000 miles. The project has been taking special care to preserve archeological artifacts and has already uncovered a large number of discoveries since the project began. As of October 30, 2,698 structures, 249 items, 289,100 ceramic fragments and 177 partial or complete human remains have been found.

The Maya train is set to begin operations in December.

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US Job Numbers Down as Inflation Remains Stubbornly High

Inflation has plagued the US economy since pandemic-era restrictions were lifted, but recent signs show the national economy may be cooling.

The US economy added fewer jobs than expected in October and the Bureau of Labor revised its numbers for September and August, lowering the number of jobs created in those months compared to its previous estimates.

Nonfarm payrolls were up 150,000 in October, slightly missing the 170,000 that were predicted for the month. Unemployment also rose during October to 3.7%, the highest unemployment rate since January 2022.

The United Auto Workers' union strike has been blamed for the disparity, with the manufacturing sector posting a net loss of 35,000 jobs, 32,000 of those being attributed to the strike.

The best-performing sectors were health care, government and construction.

A more robust tracker of unemployment, which includes under-employed part-time workers who would like to work more and discouraged workers, puts unemployment at 7.2%.

The job numbers in September and August dropped from 336,000 to 297,000 and 227,000 to 165,000, respectively. Combined, there were 101,000 fewer jobs created in those months than previously estimated.

There are further signs that the economy is slowing. The gross domestic product (GDP) was a robust 4.9% annualized rate for September, but the Federal Reserve predicts there will only be a 0.7% growth in the fourth quarter of 2023 and a 1% total growth for all of 2024.

The Federal Reserve has intentionally been trying to slow the economy in an attempt to fight inflation, which has remained stubbornly high even as it has dropped from its astronomical levels in the post-pandemic economy.

In September, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose 4.1%, far above the Fed's goal of 2%. The Fed's preferred tracker, Core-CPI, which excludes food and energy costs, showed a 3.7% increase in prices. The Fed prefers the Core-CPI metric since volatile energy costs can cause wild swings, making the Core-CPI metric a better indicator of long-term trends.

Wages increased only 0.2%, down from 0.3% in September. Combined with the inflation rate in September, that means real wages dropped in that month and will likely show a drop in October. Still, inflation did slow slightly in September compared to August.

The Fed, which primarily tackles inflation by raising interest rates, surprised some by declining to raise interest rates in its last two meetings. Market watchers now predict another raise is even less likely following the jobs report.

However, some economists disagree. Oliver Rust, head of product at independent inflation data aggregator Truflation, told Sputnik in an email that there may still be an interest rate hike in December.

"With data still sending mixed signals, the next unemployment release on December 8 will be pivotal, since it precedes the Fed's last interest rate decision of 2023. If unemployment remains low and the next two inflation readings disappoint on the upside, the Central Bank may see this as sufficient justification for another interest rate hike," Rust said. "However, policymakers would do well to keep in mind that the full effect of interest rate hikes on the labor market may not come through until 2024."

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Inflation is also still affecting the American people. “Just because the rate of inflation is stable for now doesn’t mean its weight isn’t increasing every month on family budgets,” Robert Frick, corporate economist with Navy Federal Credit Union, told US media following September’s CPI report. “That shelter and food costs rose particularly is especially painful.”

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Fraudulent Drawings - Cartoon

The son of former US President Donald Trump, Donald Trump Jr. reportedly asked the courtroom sketch artist to make him “look sexy” after his testimony on Thursday, according to the artist.
Jane Rosenberg, who is working as the courtroom artist in the lawsuit brought by New York Attorney General Letitia James against the Trump family’s businesses for alleged fraud, described the encounter to US media.
Rosenberg has alleged the eldest son of the former president pointed to fake courtroom sketches that had circulated online which claimed to be of collapsed cryptocurrency exchange founder Sam Bankman-Fried, asking her to make him “look sexy” in a similar fashion.
“I said, ‘That’s fake,’” Rosenberg said, recounting the conversation. “It doesn’t look anything like him, doesn’t look anything like Sam Bankman-Fried … and there’s no one in the courtroom drawing that.”
Bankman-Fried was convicted of seven counts of fraud and related charges on Thursday; he presently faces 110 years in federal prison.
Both Donald Jr. and his brother Eric Trump denied any involvement in their father’s financial statements during recent testimonies.
Prosecutors are seeking to recover $250 million in allegedly ill-gotten gains from the Trump Organization, as well as implement a ban on Donald Trump and the Trump Organization from entering into any real estate deals in New York, or applying for loans in the state for the next five years.

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Report: Amazon Used Secret Technology to Manipulate Prices, Undermine Competition

E-commerce giant Amazon touts the convenience and wide selection it offers to customers, but beneath the surface of its carefully cultivated image was secret technology that inflated prices across the web, according to the FTC.
The online retail giant Amazon used an algorithm called “Project Nessie” to maximize profits to the detriment of consumers, according to newly revealed claims from the US Federal Trade Commission.

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That's according to newly unredacted claims in a lawsuit filed by the US Federal Trade Commission against the company this week.

A secret algorithm, called "Project Nessie," was used to inflate prices of goods offered on Amazon when price hikes were likely to be replicated by other online retailers, according to FTC claims. The technology, used between 2015 and 2019, is thought to have generated over $1 billion in excess profits for the retailer. In addition, the regulatory agency argued that customers spent far more than that when the money lost from higher prices elsewhere is considered.

"The sole purpose of Project Nessie was to further hike consumer prices by manipulating other online stores into raising their prices," read part of the FTC's filing.

"The additional profit Amazon attributed to Project Nessie is money that Amazon shoppers would have kept in their pockets if not for Amazon's use of Project Nessie."

The government consumer regulatory agency said Amazon switched the algorithm off during the holiday shopping season and its highly-publicized "Prime Day" events, then turned it back on afterward to continue maximizing profits.

Amazon spokesperson Tim Doyle disputed the FTC's claims.

"Nessie was used to try to stop our price matching from resulting in unusual outcomes where prices became so low that they were unsustainable," said Doyle in a statement released by the company. "The project ran for a few years on a subset of products, but didn't work as intended, so we scrapped it several years ago."

Amazon generated $35.36 billion in profits in 2015, a figure which grew to $114.99 billion in 2019.

The revelation comes amidst ongoing action by the FTC against the online retailer. The agency sued the company in September along with 17 state attorneys general from Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Nevada, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Wisconsin.

At the time the agency called Amazon a "monopoly power."

In addition to claims of anti-competitive behavior, Amazon has been embroiled in a series of other controversies. The company has been accused of surveilling its employees on the shop floor as well as via monitoring of social media in order to undermine organizing efforts. Earlier this year a judge found the company violated labor law ahead of unionization elections.

Last year the retailer was sued after accusations that company policy led to the deaths of several employees who were instructed to continue working before a tornado struck a warehouse in Illinois in 2021.

Amazon founder Jeff Bezos regularly competes with tech magnate Elon Musk for the title of world's wealthiest person. Currently media outlets rank Bezos as the third-wealthiest person, behind Musk and Louis Vuitton CEO Bernard Arnault.

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Turkiye Joins Growing Number of Governments Condemning Israel's Netanyahu, Who Do They Join?

Countries around the world have denounced Israel's actions in the besieged Gaza Strip. Turkiye became the latest country to reduce diplomatic contact with Israel Saturday as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced he would be withdrawing his country's ambassador to Tel Aviv.

The Turkish foreign ministry said Sakir Ozkan Torunlar would be withdrawn from Israel "in view of the unfolding humanitarian tragedy in Gaza caused by the continuing attacks by Israel against civilians, and Israel's refusal [to accept] a ceasefire."

The announcement marks the latest development amidst a deteriorating diplomatic environment between the two countries. Late last week, Erdogan referred to Israel as a "war criminal" during a rally in solidarity with Palestinians in Istanbul, without elaborating on what kind of concrete measures the characterization might entail.

Türkiye has significant economic ties to Israel, even resuming discussions about a natural gas pipeline running through the two countries recently, although Erdogan has been compelled to rhetorically oppose Netanyahu amidst strong opposition from Türkiye's overwhelmingly Muslim population.

Israeli foreign ministry spokesperson Lior Haiat claimed Erdogan's announcement was "another step by the Turkish president that sides with the Hamas terrorist organization."

Israel cut access to food, running water and electricity in Gaza last month, and has also periodically suspended Internet access as Gazans attempt to share news from the besieged enclave. "We are fighting human animals and we act accordingly," said Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant at the time.

The United Nations and various human rights organizations have warned of a severe humanitarian crisis unfolding in the territory amidst continuing Israeli attacks which have killed large numbers of civilians, among them at least 3,500 children.

A number of countries throughout the region and the world have strongly criticized Israel as the death toll in Gaza has surpassed 9,000 during the country's military operation in the Palestinian enclave. Here, Sputnik offers a recap of measures taken by various world powers in opposition to Israel's actions.

Bolivia

The Plurinational State of Bolivia has had a complex relationship with Israel over the last several years. The country's domestic politics have been dominated by the left-wing Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) party since the election of indigenous labor leader Evo Morales to the presidency in 2005. Like other progressive-led countries in the region, Bolivia has consistently taken the side of the Palestinians amidst ongoing conflict in Israel and the occupied territories.

Bolivia first suspended relations with Israel in 2009 during Israeli military action in the Gaza Strip resulting in the death of more than 1,300 Palestinians and around a dozen Israelis. Morales expelled Israeli ambassador Shlomo Cohen at the time, following similar action by then-Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez.

Relations between the two countries remained tense over the following years, with President Morales calling Israel a "terror state" during renewed military action in Gaza in 2014. Morales

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suspended the country's visa waiver with Israel that year, requiring Israelis to apply for a visa before being allowed entry into Bolivia.

Interim president Jeanine Áñez reestablished diplomatic relations with Israel in 2019 after a coup removed Morales from the presidency late that year. But relations were once again suspended on Tuesday under Morales ally President Luis Arce after Israel's attack on the Jabalia refugee camp in Gaza. Bolivia called for a ceasefire at the time and joined regional ally Venezuela in sending aid to the besieged Gaza Strip.

Many indigenous activists have drawn parallels between the Palestinian cause and the efforts of Bolivia's indigenous-led government, which has touted efforts to "decolonialize" and "depatriarchalize" Bolivian society after centuries of domination by descendants of Europeans.

Jordan

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Amman on Saturday to discuss the ongoing crisis in Gaza with Arab leaders in the region, but the meeting took place in the context of Jordan's recalling of their ambassador to Israel this week.

Jordanian foreign minister Ayman Safadi made the announcement on Wednesday, saying the ambassador would only return to Tel Aviv if Israel took steps to resolve the "humanitarian crisis it has caused."

Jordan was in a state of war with Israel for decades after the country's official founding in 1948. Hostilities only officially ended with a peace treaty in 1994 but tensions have persisted, especially as Israel has pursued military action in illegally-occupied Palestinian territory.

Jordanian King Abdullah II has joined Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in denouncing Israel's actions in Gaza as "collective punishment" of Palestinian civilians.

Some 3 million Palestinians reside in Jordan. They're joined by hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees in neighboring Lebanon, some of whom help make up the armed group Hezbollah. Protests have rocked Lebanon for almost a month as people there have urged the government to break relations with Israel.

Egypt

Elsewhere in the Middle East, Egypt intensified its criticism of Israel on Saturday.

"There is no justification for the deaths of Gaza civilians," said Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry. "We will not accept attempts to justify these actions as a legitimate right to self-defense."

The Egyptian foreign ministry stated they would release a joint statement on the situation in Gaza along with their counterparts in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Palestine, and the United Arab Emirates. The declaration would represent a unified stance of Arab countries meeting with the US Secretary of State on Saturday, according to the ministry.

Shoukry also stated the country's continued opposition to the forced displacement of Palestinians in Gaza. In recent days Egypt has allowed some Palestinians to enter the country to receive medical care amidst Israel's bombing of hospitals in the enclave. But the country has opposed Israel's attempts to encourage large-scale "humanitarian evacuations" into the neighboring country, reiterating Palestinians' rights to remain in territory guaranteed to them under international law.

Recently an Israeli think tank associated with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu noted a "rare opportunity" for the country to formally annex the Gaza Strip while displacing Palestinians in the

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territory into Egypt's Sinai Desert. Leaked documents from Israeli intelligence agencies also suggested the move is being considered at high levels within the Israeli government.

The proposal provoked outrage in the Arab world, forcing Israel to publicly downplay the idea in the days since. US President Joe Biden stated earlier this week that he and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi discussed "ensuring that Palestinians in Gaza are not displaced to Egypt or any other nation." Palestinians in Gaza, many of whom are already refugees from other parts of historic Palestine, have stated their opposition to being forced out of the country.

Colombia

Colombian President Gustavo Petro is considered the country's first leftist leader, and he's made waves in recent weeks with his strong criticism of Israel.

The former guerrilla fighter refused to criticize Hamas' surprise attack in Israel last month. When goaded by Israeli ambassador Gali Dagan to criticize the armed raid on the X social media platform, Petro instead responded with a message saying "terrorism is killing innocent children in Palestine." He also accused Israel of transforming the Gaza Strip into a "concentration camp." Petro persisted in his criticism, accusing Israel of committing "genocide" and threatening to sever diplomatic relations with the country after continued rebukes from Dagan.

"If we must suspend diplomatic relations with Israel, then that is what we will do," said Petro. "You cannot insult the president of Colombia."

The rhetoric resulted in Israel suspending military exports to Colombia. Colombia made good on their promise to downgrade relations with Israel, announcing they would recall their ambassador to the country on Tuesday.

Petro has been joined in his criticism by Chilean President Gabriel Boric, who has often made human rights a cornerstone of his political rhetoric in a country where the legacy of dictator Augusto Pinochet looms large. Boric joined Petro in recalling the country's diplomatic envoy to Israel. Progressive Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has also strongly criticized Israel in recent weeks, calling the country's actions "genocide," but has stopped short of recalling the country's ambassador.

Petro has criticized Israel in recent weeks for its historical role in helping to drive violence in Colombia and throughout the region. For decades, Israel has sold military equipment to repressive and dictatorial regimes in Latin America, even arming and training brutal death squads. Notorious Colombian paramilitary leader Carlos Castaño received more than a year of military training in Israel. He has claimed that the strategy of paramilitaries in Latin America was "copied from the Israelis; every citizen of that country is a potential soldier."

In addition to benefiting from Israel's experience in suppressing restive indigenous populations, armed groups in Latin America also received funding via Israel when the Reagan Administration funneled money through the country to bypass Congressional restrictions against sending aid to Contra forces in Nicaragua. Israel continues to receive criticism for its role in training police departments throughout the United States, with Amnesty International calling the country a "chronic human rights violator."

Spain and Europe

The left-wing Podemos party has maintained a fractious coalition with Spain's center-left Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) under PSOE Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez. Recently, members of Podemos have distinguished themselves with fierce criticism of Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip.

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Last month, Social Rights Minister and Podemos party member Ione Belarra called for Spain to break relations with Israel, impose sanctions on the country, and try Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu at the International Criminal Court for alleged war crimes in Gaza. Podemos leaders have repeatedly accused Israel of "genocide" against Palestinians in the besieged enclave and have encouraged protests against the country in Spain, even attending such demonstrations themselves.

The comments drew harsh rebuke from the Israeli embassy in Madrid via a communiqué that accused Spanish politicians of siding with Hamas and "endangering the security of the Jewish communities in Spain." The embassy called on the country's prime minister to "unequivocally denounce and condemn" Belarra's comments.

The government refused to comply with the request, with the country's foreign ministry, run by PSOE member José Manuel Albares, instead defending the left-wing politicians.

"The Government of Spain categorically rejects the falsehoods expressed in the Israeli Embassy's communiqué about some of its members and does not accept unfounded insinuations about them," read a statement from the foreign ministry. "Any political official can freely express positions as a representative of a political party in a full democracy such as Spain."

Government officials aligned with Sánchez's party have otherwise been more moderate in tone when addressing the issue in the aftermath of Hamas' surprise attack last month. "Israel has the right to defend itself but always within the limits of international humanitarian law," said Sánchez last month. Sánchez has gone a step beyond most European leaders by consistently calling for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas and advocating for a peace summit.

Left-wing politicians throughout Europe have accused the European Union of "double standards" in refusing to condemn alleged Israeli human rights violations in recent weeks. Some football clubs throughout the continent have sided with Palestinians, with fans of the Celtic team in Scotland recently defying the club's orders against displaying Palestinian flags at matches.

Criticism of Israel is a mainstream position across the political spectrum in Ireland, where politicians have long drawn parallels between the Palestinian cause and Irish people's centuries-long resistance to British colonialism. But Israel typically enjoys warm relations with most European countries, in keeping with Zionist movement founder Theodor Herzl's conception of the country as a "garrison state" for European interests in the Arab world.

EU president Ursula von der Leyen has defended herself against claims of bias in favor of Israel, with some characterizing her support of the country as "unconditional" after the German politician visited Tel Aviv last month. Von der Leyen was forced to abandon plans to cut all EU aid to Palestinians in the immediate aftermath of last month's Hamas attack.

Germany has perhaps been Israel's most important ally in Europe, where support for the country is widely viewed as penitence for Nazi-era crimes against Jews. Strong provisions against antisemitic speech in the country have been used as a pretense to ban some pro-Palestine protests there.

Some pro-Palestine protests have also been banned in the United Kingdom on similar grounds. French President Emmanual Macron briefly outlawed pro-Palestine protests entirely before the measure was struck down by a court last month. Regardless, large pro-Palestinian protests continued in London, Paris and Berlin on Saturday.

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Meanwhile, in the United States, more than 100,000 protesters turned out in the nation's capital and other major cities Saturday to call for a ceasefire in Gaza. The protests signaled increased pressure from Democrats on US President Joe Biden to call for a humanitarian pause in Israel's military campaign.

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Yellen to Host Meetings With China's Vice Premier on November 9-10 – Treasury

WASHINGTON, November 6 (Sputnik) – US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen will hold bilateral meetings with China's Vice Premier He Lifeng on November 9-10 in San Francisco, the Treasury Department said on Monday.

"Secretary Yellen's meetings with Vice Premier He will be held immediately before Secretary Yellen hosts the APEC Finance Ministers Meeting in San Francisco," the statement said.

The meetings will take place at a time when both the US and China are making intensive diplomatic efforts to stabilize the bilateral economic relationship and make progress on key economic issues, the statement said.

"The meetings with Vice Premier He follow on the significant strides Secretary Yellen has made in deepening resilient channels of economic communication between our two countries, after President [Joe] Biden's directive to his Administration following his meeting with President Xi [Jinping] last November," it said.

During the upcoming meetings, the US side plans to focus on seeking healthy economic competition as well as targeted actions to advance its national security, and cooperating on climate change and other global challenges, the Treasury said.

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US Allocates $485Mln in Humanitarian Assistance to Western Hemisphere – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 6 (Sputnik) – The US has allocated nearly $485 million in additional humanitarian assistance for the Western Hemisphere at the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity (APEP) Summit, the State Department said on Monday.

"President Biden announced at the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity Leaders' Summit nearly $485 million in additional humanitarian assistance to respond to the needs of refugees, migrants and other vulnerable populations across the Western Hemisphere," the statement said.

Individuals who are currently displaced across Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as those who left political and economic hardships in Venezuela, will also be recipients of the assistance, the statement added.

Out of the total amount, $310 million will be delivered through the State Department's Bureau of

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Population, Refugees and Migration, the statement said. The United States Agency for International Development will manage the other $174 million worth of funds.

The US is proud of being the largest donor of humanitarian assistance in the hemisphere, the statement said, noting that over the past two years, Washington has allocated over $2.1 billion in aid to the region.

The APEP Summit was held on November 3rd in Washington D.C. The US government hosted its 12 member states which include among others Canada, Chile, Mexico and Uruguay.

Collectively, APEP member states account for nearly 90% of the Western-Hemisphere's GDP, and two thirds of its population.

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RPT - Palestinians Deserve 'Nation of Their Own,' US Must Respect Permanent Borders - Ex-Senator

WASHINGTON, November 5 (Sputnik) - The United States should support permanent borders of Palestine and allow Palestinians to have their own nation, former Virginia State Senator Richard Black told Sputnik.

"The US should support precisely defined, permanent borders for Palestine. Suffocating sanctions and blockades should be lifted, so that healing and rebuilding can take place once the destruction of Gaza has ended," Black said. "We cannot go on pretending that Palestinians will simply disappear from the Earth; they must have a nation of their own."

Black believes that the United States has lost its power and prestige because of the unnecessary war in Ukraine and the violence in Gaza.

"America must avoid another war in the Middle East. [Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu would like nothing better than to see American troops fighting Hezbollah's superb, battle-hardened army," he stated.

The wars, Black added, have depleted the treasury and tarnished the reputation of the United States.

"The US cannot afford another war," he said. "We should facilitate a transition of power that ends Netanyahu's rule. Netanyahu facilitated the slaughter of Israelis by removing two battalions of troops from the Gaza border. That left it practically undefended. Netanyahu's reckless decision cost many lives. America can ill afford to be drawn into conflicts simply because of one man's foolishness."

Black concluded by saying that Washington must insist that Israel stop the settlers' interminable violence against Palestinians on the West Bank.

"Their unending land grabs constantly expand Israel's borders at Palestinian expense," he said. "This prevents anyone from delineating permanent borders for Israel or for Palestine. The unjust taking of Palestinian lands perpetuates bitter generational conflicts; it must stop."

The UN this week said 9,000 Palestinians have been killed since Israel launched its military campaign in Gaza in response to the October 7 Hamas terror attack. On Friday, media reported that the Biden administration asked Israel to explain a strike on the Jabalia refugee camp in

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Gaza that local authorities said killed or injured some 400 Palestinians.

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Trump Says Hungary's Viktor Orban 'One of Strongest' Leaders He Knows

UNITED NATIONS, November 5 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said on Sunday that Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban is one of the strongest heads of states he knows.

"One of the strongest of all is Viktor Orban and Viktor Orban, you know, that of Hungary," Trump said at the Republican Party's annual Freedom Summit in Florida.

Trump added that Orban knows well what is needed to bring peace as he has the "privilege to border with Ukraine and Russia." Trump also pointed out Orban's recent interview, in which the Hungarian prime minister suggested that US President Joe Biden should be replaced by Trump in order to stop the world blowing up.

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Biden Says Progress Reached on Humanitarian Pause in Gaza

WASHINGTON, November 5 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said progress was reached on getting a humanitarian pause in Gaza.

"Yes," Biden responded to a corresponding question by the White House press pool reporters and offered a thumbs up.

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Pro-Palestinian Rally Around White House Starts in Washington

WASHINGTON, November 4 (Sputnik) - Thousands of protesters have started marching down the central streets of the US capital of Washington, DC to protest against the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip and the US support for Israel, a Sputnik correspondent reported from the scene on Saturday.

The protesters are expected to walk around the White House and return to the Freedom Plaza, where the rally has been ongoing since 2 p.m. EST (18:00 GMT).

The rally, dubbed "National March on Washington. Free Palestine," has become the largest pro-Palestinian rally in the United States since protests began in the country after Israel launched a military operation in response to the October 7 attack by Hamas.

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Cities across the US have seen multiple mass protests since the start of hostilities between Israel and Hamas. Every day activists approach congresspeople with calls to address the situation and urge a ceasefire. Almost every day, mass rallies, often with dozens and even hundreds arrested, are held across the country.

The Saturday rally in Washington DC has become the largest pro-Palestinian demonstration of all, the Sputnik correspondent reported. People continued showing up an hour into the rally. Large groups of people carrying Palestinian flags and pro-Palestinian banners were seen moving down Pennsylvania Avenue toward the main location of the rally.

The organizers said they expected some 30,000 people to take part in the pro-Palestine rally.

At around 3 p.m. EST, the rally grew way beyond its gathering point at Freedom Plazz. Several closed adjacent streets were flooded with the participants, and more people were arriving.

The participants were holding banners reading, "Resistance against the occupation is a human right," "Stop the Palestinian genocide," "Israel bombs hospitals, Biden funds it," "Biden, we will remember in November [of 2024)]," "Stop the war."

The crowd included representatives of dozens of American activist groups, including renowned Jewish Voice For Peace and ANSWER Coalition and Code Pink, among others, as well as regular residents of the area and other US states. Many held flags and wore Palestine's traditional pieces of clothing.

Many local residents brought with them small children who were asking parents questions about the event, and the Sputnik correspondent overheard the adults explaining why people were frustrated with the US government's support for Israel’s military operation.

The protest was peaceful; however, there was an increased police presence. The central streets where the protesters were expected to march were shut to the traffic. The local authorities advised the residents about street closures days before the rally. Trucks were parked in some streets to ensure the blockage of the roads.

Several large screens were installed along Pennsylvania Avenue for people to watch and listen to the rally. People who could not attend the rally could watch the live broadcast online via links posted by activist groups. Multiple international media were covering the protest. Many participants carried flags of their own countries that also oppose the fighting in Gaza, including Turkey, Tunisia and Egypt.

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UPDATE - Thousands Protesting in Washington Against Israeli Activities in Gaza, US Support for It

(Updates with more information from the scene in paras 13-14)

WASHINGTON, November 4 (Sputnik) - Thousands of protesters have taken to the streets of the US capital of Washington D.C. to protest against Israeli military activities in the Gaza Strip and the US support for Israel, a Sputnik correspondent reported from the scene on Saturday.

The rally dubbed "National March on Washington. Free Palestine" kicked off at 2 p.m. EST (18:00 GMT), while people started to arrive at the Freedom Plaza, located just a couple of

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blocks away from the White House, hours before.

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The crowd includes representatives of dozens of American activist groups, including renowned Jewish Voice For Peace and ANSWER Coalition and Code Pink, among others, as well as just regular residents of the area and other US states. Many hold flags and wear Palestine's traditional pieces of clothing.

Several large screens are installed along Pennsylvania Avenue for people to watch and listen to the rally. Multiple international media are covering the protest. Many participants carry the flags of their own countries who also oppose the current events in Gaza, including Turkey, Tunisia and Egypt.

Many locals brought with them small children who were asking parents questions about the matter of the event, and the Sputnik correspondent could hear how the adults were explaining why the people are frustrated with the US government's support for Israel's military operation and activities.

People who can't attend the rally can watch the live broadcast online via links posted by the activist groups.

The protest is peaceful; however, there is an increased law enforcement presence. The central streets where the rally is expected to march are shut to the traffic. The local authorities were advising the residents about street closures days before the rally. At some streets the trucks are placed to ensure the blockage of the roads.

The rally will be moving down the streets around the White House and expected to last for some 2 hours.

At the moment of the writing various speakers were taking the stage.

From 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. (20:00-00:00 GMT) organizers are also planning to hold a vigil in Lafayette Park and rally along the White House sidewalk.

Cities across the United States have seen multiple mass protests since the start of hostilities between Israel and Hamas in early October. Every day activists approach congresspeople with calls to address the situation and urge a ceasefire. Almost every day, mass rallies, often with dozens and even hundreds arrested, are held across the country.

The ongoing rally in Washington D.C. has become the largest pro-Palestinian demonstration of all, the Sputnik correspondent reported. About an hour since the start of the rally people were continuing to show up, the correspondent said. Large groups of people with Palestinian flags and pro-Palestinian banners are currently moving down Pennsylvania Avenue toward the main location of the rally.

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. On October 27, Israel launched a large scale ground incursion inside the Gaza Strip to eliminate Hamas fighters and rescue the hostages.

The escalation of the conflict has resulted in the deaths of around 1,400 people in Israel and

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over 9,000 in the Gaza Strip, and raised the risk of a wider regional conflagration due to concerns about Iran or Lebanese militant group Hezbollah joining the fray.

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Thousands Protesting in Washington Against Israeli Activities in Gaza, US Support for It

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The organizers expect some 30,000 people to take part in the pro-Palestine rally.

The participants are holding banners reading, "Resistance against the occupation is a human right," "Stop the Palestinian genocide," "Israel bombs hospitals, Biden funds it," "Biden, we will remember in November [of 2024)]," "Stop the war."

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The escalation of the conflict has resulted in the deaths of around 1,400 people in Israel and over 9,000 in the Gaza Strip, and raised the risk of a wider regional conflagration due to concerns about Iran or Lebanese militant group Hezbollah joining the fray.

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Palestinians Deserve 'Nation of Their Own,' US Must Respect Permanent Borders - Ex-Senator

WASHINGTON, November 4 (Sputnik) - The United States should support permanent borders of Palestine and allow Palestinians to have their own nation, former Virginia State Senator Richard Black told Sputnik.

"The US should support precisely defined, permanent borders for Palestine. Suffocating sanctions and blockades should be lifted, so that healing and rebuilding can take place once the destruction of Gaza has ended," Black said. "We cannot go on pretending that Palestinians will simply disappear from the Earth; they must have a nation of their own."

Black believes that the United States has lost its power and prestige because of the unnecessary war in Ukraine and the violence in Gaza.

"America must avoid another war in the Middle East. [Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu would like nothing better than to see American troops fighting Hezbollah's superb, battle-hardened army," he stated.

The wars, Black added, have depleted the treasury and tarnished the reputation of the United States.

"The US cannot afford another war," he said. "We should facilitate a transition of power that ends Netanyahu's rule. Netanyahu facilitated the slaughter of Israelis by removing two battalions of troops from the Gaza border. That left it practically undefended. Netanyahu's reckless decision cost many lives. America can ill afford to be drawn into conflicts simply because of one man's foolishness."

Black concluded by saying that Washington must insist that Israel stop the settlers' interminable violence against Palestinians on the West Bank.

"Their unending land grabs constantly expand Israel's borders at Palestinian expense," he said. "This prevents anyone from delineating permanent borders for Israel or for Palestine. The unjust taking of Palestinian lands perpetuates bitter generational conflicts; it must stop."

The UN this week said 9,000 Palestinians have been killed since Israel launched its military campaign in Gaza in response to the October 7 Hamas terror attack. On Friday, media reported that the Biden administration asked Israel to explain a strike on the Jabalia refugee camp in Gaza that local authorities said killed or injured some 400 Palestinians.

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Biden's Disregard for Arab Suffering May Cost Him Presidency - Ex-US Senator

WASHINGTON, November 4 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden's ignoring of the suffering of the Arabs in the Middle East may cost him the presidency, former Virginia State Senator Richard Black told Sputnik.

Over 9,000 Palestinians have been killed since Israel launched its military campaign in Gaza in response to the October 7 Hamas terror attack, according to the most recent UN update. On Friday, media reported that the Biden administration asked Israel to explain a strike on the Jabalia refugee camp in Gaza that left 400 hundred dead or injured.

"President Biden's disregard for Arab suffering may cost him the presidency," Black said. "The Associated Press reports that Michigan's large Muslim community has turned against him; if Biden loses Michigan, he may lose the election."

Black believes that the violence in Gaza has split the Democrat Party, causing a vexing dilemma for Biden.

"Democrats cannot function without Jewish political contributions," he said. "According to the Jerusalem Post, their contributions constitute over half of all donations to the Democrat Party. Wealthy Jewish donors insist that Biden allow Israel to continue its unconstrained bombing campaign in the Gaza Strip. If he does not support the bombing, they may not contribute to his 2024 campaign."

The former lawmaker went on to say that, meanwhile, two of the Democrats' most crucial voting blocks are "bitterly at odds over the war."

"In 2020, Jews voted 75% Democrat, and 65% of Muslim-Americans did likewise. On October 31st, Reuters reported that Arab American support for Biden and the Democrats had plunged to 17% in recent polls," he noted.

Black thinks that even before the latest events in the Gaza Strip, Democrats had already suffered an erosion of Muslim support.

The ensuing disorder in public schools, Black continued to say, has caused a dramatic decline in student test scores, including the steep fall in math and reading scores.

"Biden's failed school policies had already cost him some Muslim support, but the merciless bombing of Gaza was the final straw for many Muslims," he stated. "Their anger poses a major challenge for Biden in his race for reelection."

Black concluded by saying that while most Americans feel that Israelis were justified in fighting back after the attack by Hamas on October 7, the question is: How much is enough?

"Americans worry that the Israeli response has become excessive, even if some latitude for reprisal was initially warranted," he said. "This week, a single bombing attack killed 400 Palestinians, further dampening global support for the Israeli attack. US Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin has called for an immediate cease fire."

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Ukraine Is 'Yesterday's News' in US, But War Hawks Will Keep Profiting - Ex-Lawmaker

WASHINGTON, November 4 (Sputnik) - While the Ukraine conflict is yesterday's news for the public in the United States, the profiting from war hawks will likely continue, former Virginia State Senator Richard Black told Sputnik.

The US House this week passed a $14.3 billion aid bill for Israel but left out billions President Joe Biden requested for Ukraine amid stiff resistance from Republicans over funding Kiev. The bill goes to the Senate where it is unlikely to pass, with leaders from both parties expressing opposition and in the face of a White House veto threat.

"Public attention faded once Ukraine's counteroffensive failed. Now, all eyes have shifted to Gaza; Ukraine is yesterday's news," Black said. "Nonetheless, war hawks profit handsomely from the war and intend to keep on spending until every Ukrainian is dead. They care nothing for men's suffering when there are still fortunes to be made."

Black believes that House Speaker Mike Johnson wisely separated Israeli aid from Ukrainian War spending.

"The Israeli aid bill passed the House yesterday. However, the Senate seems poised to vote it down. They intend to layer on additional billions in wasteful spending for Ukraine," he said. "Both parties support aid for Israel, but aid for Ukraine is highly contentious. Americans ask why our borders are undefended while politicians spend fortunes abroad."

Since many Republicans and even some Democrats oppose Ukraine War spending, it is not clear how much money will eventually be approved," he added.

"Severing the spending packages gives Congress the ability to demonstrate a modest degree of fiscal restraint at a time when the public is skeptical of Ukraine's corruption and the merits of the war itself," he said.

Ukraine's budget has been running a deficit of about $5 billion a month since the beginning of Russia's special operation, with two-thirds of the money coming from foreign loans and grants, and three-quarters spent on military needs, Ukrainian Finance Minister Sergii Marchenko said earlier in the year.

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Biden Extends Emergency to Restrict Investments in Chinese Tech Sector - Notice

WASHINGTON, November 4 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden said he is extending for another year a national emergency related to the threat posed by securities investments that benefit certain Chinese companies including those involved in the development of surveillance technology.

"The threat from securities investments that finance certain companies of the PRC and certain

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uses and development of Chinese surveillance technology continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States," Biden said in a notice issued on Friday.

Therefore, Biden added, he is continuing for one year the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13959 and expanded in Executive Order 14032 over the threat posed by investments in China's surveillance technology industry.

Beijing has previously expressed disappointment in such measures, saying that they will only hurt both US and Chinese businesses and reduce investor confidence.

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Israel, Egypt Oppose Including Hamas Fighters on Palestinian Wounded List - US Official

WASHINGTON, November 4 (Sputnik) - Israel and Egypt are against including Hamas militants on the wounded Palestinians list, a senior US official told reporters.

"But the list that was provided, once it was vetted, had about a third of the wounded Palestinians on the list... they're members of Hamas. It was just unacceptable to Egypt, to Israel," a senior administration official said on Friday.

The UN this week said over 9,000 Palestinians have been killed since Israel launched its military campaign in Gaza in response to the October 7 Hamas terror attack.

On Friday, media reported that the Biden administration asked Israel to explain a strike on a refugee camp that Gaza authorities said left 400 Palestinians dead or injured.

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Hezbollah Leader’s Speech Matched US Expectations, Northern Front Not Expected - Official

WASHINGTON, November 4 (Sputnik) - A speech delivered by Secretary General of Hezbollah Hassan Nasrallah matched the United States expectations, a senior Biden administration official said.

“On Nasrallah’s speech… I think the speech, from what I understand, was basically kind of what I think we expected,” the senior administration official said on Friday. “I do not think it signaled the beginning of a northern front or anything like that.”

Nasrallah delivered a speech, in which he said that forces in Lebanon are ready for any changes to the situation with Israel.

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NSC Official Anticipates Increase in Daily Truck Movements in Israel-Gaza Region - NSC

WASHINGTON, November 4 (Sputnik) - A National Security Council senior administration official revealed that approximately 100 trucks per day are currently operating in the Israel-Gaza region, with expectations of a significant increase in the coming days.

"We are now at the point of about 100 trucks a day, and we look to see that significantly ramp up over the coming days," a senior administration official said on Friday during NSC Background Call Regarding Israel and Gaza.

On October 7, 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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Effort to Free Gaza Hostages Would Require Pause in Fighting - Senior Admin. Official

WASHINGTON, November 4 (Sputnik) - Any effort by the United States to free hostages held in Gaza would require a pause in fighting between Israel and Palestinian Hamas militants, a senior administration official said.

“The numbers we’re talking about are extremely difficult… it would take a very significant pause in the conflict, in the fighting, to be able to do this,” the senior administration official said on Friday. “It is something that is under very serious and active discussion.”

However, there are no guarantees or timeframe estimates for the hostage recovery efforts, the official said.

The exact number of hostages is unknown, although there may be more than 200 of them, the official said. Any arrangement to remove that many hostages from Gaza would require a cessation of hostilities, which is included in the framework under discussion, the official said.

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US Ready for ‘Whatever May Come’ From Possible Expansion of Israel Conflict - US Official

WASHINGTON, November 4 (Sputnik) - The United States is prepared for any possible expansion of the conflict between Israel and Palestinian Hamas militants, a senior administration official said.

"I think working to contain this conflict… has been an overriding priority of ours," the senior

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administration official said on Friday. "I'll just say that we are ready and prepared for whatever may come."

However, the US has taken a number of steps, including deterrence posture changes, in an effort to contain the conflict, the official added.

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Russia Disappointed Over Canada's Vote Against UNGA Resolution on Combating Nazism

UNITED NATIONS, November 4 (Sputnik) - Russia is concerned by Canada's rejection of the United Nations General Assembly resolution advocating against the glorification of Nazism, the Russian Embassy in Canada published on its Telegram site on Friday.

"We are deeply concerned that consecutive Canadian Cabinets for decades have been harboring Nazi henchmen, Yaroslaw Hunka among them, and turning a blind eye on continued praising their memory in Canada," the Embassy posted.

By these actions the Trudeau regime violates international laws including the decisions of the Nuremberg Tribunal, it added.

Earlier today, the United Nations Third Committee on Friday adopted a Russian-drafted resolution on combating the glorification of Nazism and neo-Nazism.

This action by Canada follows a recent mistake by the Canadian Parliament in celebrating former Nazi officer Yaroslav Hunka and applauding him.

The Russia-drafted document, titled "Combating glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and other practices that contribute to fueling contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance," was co-sponsored by Belarus and Syria. The resolution was adopted by 112 votes for, with 50 against and 14 abstaining. Ukraine, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany and other EU countries were among those that voted against.

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Former President Obama Highlights Ongoing Struggle for Israeli-Palestinian Peace - Forum

WASHINGTON, November 4 (Sputnik) - Former President Barack Obama emphasized the decades-long challenges in achieving a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

"...All of this is taking place against the backdrop of decades of failure to achieve a durable peace for both Israelis and Palestinians, one that is based on genuine security for Israel, a recognition of its right to exist and a peace that is based on an end of the occupation and the creation of a viable state and self determination for the Palestinian people," Obama said on Friday during the Obama Foundation Democracy Forum.

On Friday, the Obama Foundation hosted its Democracy Forum, where Former President

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Obama, alongside activists, thought leaders, and changemakers, engaged in discussions about the issues presented by technological innovations such as AI concerning economic and social inclusion.

Furthermore, Former President Obama also conveyed his acknowledgment that it was impossible to remain dispassionate in the face of the ongoing carnage, noting the difficulty in feeling hopeful.

"We've had to sort through our anguish, our outrage our fears and our differences on the issues. Not so much differences in the outcome we wish for... And the issue is not a wish for different outcomes. An end to the killing, a peaceful coexistence between two sovereign and free peoples, but rather different assessments of the path that we need to take in order to get there," Obama added.

On October 7, 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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Pentagon Chief Restricts Visits by Senior Defense Leaders to Israel Amid Escalation - Memo

WASHINGTON, November 4 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin restricted senior defense leaders to travel to Israel until further notice amid an unsafe environment in the country as Tel Aviv continues its military operation against Hamas.

"I hereby restrict visits by DoD [the Department of Defense] senior leaders to Israel effective immediately and until further notice," the memorandum from October 31 and published on Friday said.

Austin also discouraged congressional visits to Israel that require Pentagon participation and directed an Assistant Secretary to inform the appropriate congressional leadership about that but noted that such support can be provided only with his personal approval, according to the text of the memorandum.

At the same time, the Pentagon will continue to support any future visit by the President and Vice President of the United States, as well as by the Secretary of Defense, Deputy Secretary of Defense, Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Secretaries of the Military Departments, or Service Chiefs.

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Biden Voices Concerns Over Growing Demand for Pangolin Scales - White House

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden expressed concerns about the increasing demand for pangolin scales despite assurances from China regarding their anti-trafficking efforts.

"My Administration therefore remains concerned that, despite assurances from the PRC regarding its anti-trafficking efforts, demand for pangolin scales appears to be growing," Biden said in message to the US Congress.

According to the message, pangolins, the world's only scaly mammals, are in dire jeopardy due to rampant capture and trafficking, surpassing rhinos, elephants, and tigers combined, driven by consumer demand for their scales in traditional medicine, endangering all eight pangolin species from Africa and Asia.

Furthermore, Biden indicated that he had directed the Department of State and the Department of the Interior to persist in their current initiatives and to provide him with updates on the results of the ongoing discussions at the CITES Standing Committee meeting scheduled in Geneva from November 6 to 10, 2023.

"If significant commitments by the PRC to implement CITES-directed measures to protect pangolin species have not been made by December 31, 2023, I plan to direct certain prohibitions on the importation of, and impose trade measures on, certain products from the PRC," Biden added.

Moreover, Biden stressed the China's responsibility to close domestic markets facilitating illegal pangolin trade, warning that without such actions, pangolin populations could decline further, pushing them closer to extinction, and reiterated the US commitment to combat illegal trade, aiming to protect pangolins and demonstrate progress by year-end.

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US Envoy to UN Says Lives of UNRWA, Humanitarian Workers in Gaza Must Be Protected

WASHINGTON, November 4 (Sputnik) - Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield said in an X post that the lives of humanitarian workers on the ground in Gaza, and those of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in particular, must be protected as they provide essential services to thousands of affected civilians amid the resurgence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“UNRWA staff are bravely delivering assistance and providing essential services and shelter to hundreds of thousands of civilians, but they are doing this work at great peril – having already lost more than 70 staff since the conflict began. The lives of UNRWA staff and all humanitarian workers must be protected. Full stop,” the post said on Friday.

Earlier this week, UNRWA said that when Commissioner General Philippe Lazzarini visited Gaza on Wednesday, he emphasized that the UN agency's personnel will remain in Gaza, despite the fact that 70 of its staff have been killed in the territory since the October 7 outbreak of hostilities.

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On October 7, 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 later began ground operations in Gaza. It also ordered a complete blockade of the territory, cutting off supplies of water, food, and fuel.

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Biden Warns China of Trade Measures Over Pangolin Species Protection - White House

WASHINGTON, November 4 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden issued an ultimatum, warning of potential trade measures on Chinese products if the protection of pangolin species remains unaddressed by December 31, 2023.

"If significant commitments by the PRC to implement CITES-directed measures to protect pangolin species have not been made by December 31, 2023, I plan to direct certain prohibitions on the importation of, and impose trade measures on, certain products from the PRC [People's Republic of China]," President Joe Biden said on Friday in message to the US Congress.

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US Congress Vote to Prioritize Israel Aid Likely to Doom Ukraine War Strategy - Experts

WASHINGTON, November 4 (Sputnik) - The House of Representatives vote to approve a massive additional $4.3 billion aid package for Israel but without including similar billions of dollars of extra funding for Kiev threatens to destroy Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's entire war strategy, experts told Sputnik.

President Joe Biden sought to exploit the major escalation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on October 7 to leverage an extra $60 billion-worth of weaponry for his proxy conflict with Russia in Ukraine. His administration has packaged both into an omnibus emergency spending bill including $14 billion for Israel, which his aides are lobbying for on Capitol Hill.

But new Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson, voted in after radicals in his party opposed to more Ukraine spending ousted Kevin McCarthy, has insisted that the two requests must be voted on separately.

"So, yes, it will affect Zelenskyy's conduct of the war - bigly," US constitutional historian and political commentator Dan Lazare said on Thursday. "If Biden can't peel away a few Republicans so that Ukrainian aid slips through, the spigot will run dry and the Ukrainian war effort will stop."

Such a move would trigger immediate catastrophe for the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) and Zelenskyy's ragged, corrupt and increasingly widely criticized regime in Kiev, Lazare said.

"The result will be a military debacle on the scale of Afghanistan, if not bigger," he said.

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"Republicans are playing a high-stakes game in which the aim is to cause the administration to collapse under the impact. They may well succeed."

International consultant and retired US Army Lieutenant Colonel Earl Rasmussen said splitting the funding would be a body blow to Ukraine though he expected the Biden administration to continue getting significant financing to Kiev.

In order to pass legislation, which is Johnson's primary responsibility, there will need to be some compromise, Rasmussen said.

"Hence, I think we will see reduced funding for Ukraine but perhaps increased for Israel depending how the conflict evolves. That is why I think we will see an increase in funding for Israel," he said.

Politically, low or non-funding for Israel would mean a quick end to Johnson's speakership, Rasmussen observed.

"The Israeli lobby owns the Congress - both sides. Moreover, Israel is very important from a strategic geopolitical perspective to ensure or support their existence and independence," he said.

Media critic and political analyst Bryce Greene pointed out that even before Johnson split the aid packages for Israel and Ukraine there had been clear signs that support for Kiev and Zelenskyy was waning on Capitol Hill.

"However even before this Speaker nonsense, there were indications that the establishment support for Ukraine was waning. The Palestine situation has of course directed attention away from Eastern Europe," he said.

Trends Journal Publisher and former hedge fund manager Gerald Celente said Johnson would bow to changing political realities and cut back on funding for the Zelenskyy regime and its armed forces.

"Unless there is a major event that brings Kiev back into the headline news which they have not been in since the Israel War began, there will be a lot less money flowing into Ukraine," he said.

The far more powerful pro-Israel lobby would override supporters for Ukraine in its drive for priority funding, Celente stressed.

"AIPAC, the powerful Jewish congressional leaders and the Jewish Washington power brokers will make a major push for more money to Israel, and there will be a downplay in support for Ukraine as it fades from the headline news," he said.

Biden would also be forced to rein in his enthusiasm for supporting Zelenskyy because of the rapidly increasing financial pressures on the US economy and the dollar, Lazare pointed out.

"Biden can't continue paying for a growing number of wars with borrowed money. With interest rates rising, both sides are aware that federal finances are in serious trouble. Mike Johnson is God's way of letting Democrats know that this nonsense can't continue," he said.

Meanwhile, Senate leaders from both parties have said they are still working on a bipartisan bill to include aid for both Israel and Ukraine.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, November 4 (Sputnik) –

MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

* Israel struck a school that shelters displaced persons in the Gaza Strip on Friday evening, and the attack killed dozens of people, Palestinian news agency WAFA reported.

* The Israeli military has killed 10 senior field commanders of the Hamas movement since the escalation of the ongoing conflict, Israel Defense Forces (IDF) spokesman Daniel Hagari said.

* The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said on Friday that it struck a military post and anti-tank missile launch posts of the Hezbollah movement in Lebanon.

* Ensuring the victory of the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian movement Hamas is in the interests of all neighboring countries today, Secretary General of Hezbollah Hassan Nasrallah said.

* The Al-Aqsa operation conducted by the Hamas movement against Israel has spread to more than one front, Secretary General of Hezbollah Hassan Nasrallah said on Friday during his first speech since the October 7 attack.

* Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that he discussed with Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al Jaber Al-Sabah the escalation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and that the efforts for resuming the talks on a peaceful settlement should be accelerated.

WESTERN MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO UKRAINE

* The latest security assistance package has exhausted the remaining USAI (Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative) funds currently available for Kiev, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters on Friday.

* The US Department of Defense announced a new $300 million military assistance package for Ukraine on Friday in addition to a $125 million drawdown, according to a release.

* The United States will provide Ukraine with an additional military aid package of arms and equipment worth $125 million, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said.

BELARUS-POLAND BORDER ISSUES

* The Belarusian Foreign Ministry on Friday summoned summoned Polish Charge d'Affaires, Marcin Wojciechowski, to hand him a note of protest over another violation of Belarus' airspace by a Polish aircraft.

* The Polish Defense Ministry denied a statement made by Belarus regarding a violation of the Belarusian airspace by a Polish aircraft.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* A Ukrainian strike at the social foundation building in the Chaplynka settlement of the Kherson Region on Friday killed seven people and injured seven more, according to preliminary data, Russian lawmaker Konstantin Basyuk said.

* Ukraine has lost more than 1,340 soldiers in the Donetsk direction over the past week, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

* The credibility of the report by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the October 5 attack on a funeral reception in the Ukrainian village of Hroza, which accuses the Russian armed forces of violating international humanitarian law, raises serious doubts, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.

SITUATION IN SYRIA

* Israel no longer informs Russia about its attacks on Syria, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister

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Mikhail Bogdanov said on Friday.
* The Wagner Group private military company de facto does not exist, so any media reports about the actions of the group are groundless, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.
* Attacks on the United States military bases in Syria and Iraq happen due to the fact that Washington is responsible for the situation in these countries and in Palestine, Secretary General of Hezbollah Hassan Nasrallah said.

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Pentagon Says China Firing Flares at Canadian Helicopter 'Coercive, Risky'

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - China has engaged in risky coercive behavior in firing flares in front of a Canadian helicopter operating in international waters earlier this week, two senior Department of Defense officials said on Friday.
"The PLA [People's Liberation Army] continues to engage in coercive and risky behavior against lawfully operating aircraft - including by firing flares in front of a Canadian helicopter this week," Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs Eli Ratner said in a statement on Twitter.
A Canadian military helicopter operating in the South China Sea had a close encounter of the unfriendly kind with Chinese fighter jets, Ottawa's Department of National Defense (DND) confirmed, according to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.
"The DoD [Department of Defense] will continue to call out what the recently released China Military Power Report described as a centralized, concerted campaign by the PLA to engage in coercive and risky behavior against aircraft operating lawfully in international airspace," Pentagon spokesman Brigadier General Patrick Tyler said in another statement on Twitter.
The CH-148 Cyclone, which is attached to HMCS Ottawa, was buzzed by two People's Liberation Army Air Force J-11s on Sunday and in its statement on Friday, the DND said the helicopter was conducting a routine training exercise when it was intercepted.

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US Authorities Arrest Jordanian Man for Gun Charges, Possibly Planning Attack - Filing

(Update: adds details in paras 3-4 & 8, edits throughout)
WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - Law enforcement in the United States arrested a Jordanian national living in the state of Texas for allegedly possessing a firearm illegally and possibly planning to conduct an attack, according to a criminal complaint filed last month.
The criminal complaint alleges that the man, Sohaib Abuayyash, committed “unlawful possession of a firearm by an alien” living in the US on a nonimmigrant visa, the filing said.
Investigators accuse Abuayyash, who also holds Palestinian citizenship, of maintaining direct

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contact with other people who share a “radical mindset” and training to possibly commit an attack, the filing said.

Abuayyash initially entered the US from Jordan in June 2016 on a tourist visa and left in August of that year, the filing said. Abuayyash then returned to the US in June 2019 on another tourist visa and did not leave after the visa expired that August, the filing said. Abuayyash reentered the US using a Palestinian passport.

Abuayyash has a pending asylum application and had an application for employment authorization approved in August 2023, the filing said. None of Abuayyash’s statuses permitted him to possess a firearm or ammunition, the filing added.

The criminal complaint alleges that Abuayyash posted videos on social media that appear to show him shooting firearms, although the videos label them as airsoft guns.

FBI Director Christopher Wray said this week during a congressional hearing that law enforcement arrested a man in Houston who was “studying how to build bombs” and expressing support for killing Jewish people. US media has since reportedly confirmed that the man referenced by Wray was Abuayyash.

Court notices in Abuayyash’s case confirm his arrest last month. Abuayyash is set to appear for arraignment on November 13. Abuayyash faces up to 15 years in prison and a $250,000 fine if convicted, the Justice Department said in a statement.

The US District Court for the Southern District of Texas filed an indictment against Abuayyash on Thursday, charging him with possession of a firearm by a prohibited person. Neither the indictment nor the criminal complaint reference bombmaking activities or anti-Semitic statements, although some of the latter document is redacted.

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US Supreme Court to Hear Gun Lobby Free Speech Case Against Ex-NY Official - Filing

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - The US Supreme Court on Friday agreed to hear a National Rifle Association (NRA) complaint against a former New York state official who tried to press banks and insurance companies to cut ties with the gun lobby over mass shootings.

The NRA in the petition said former New York Financial Services Superintendent Maria Vullo violated the group's First Amendment free speech rights by calling on banks to stop doing business with the gun lobby in the wake of the massing shooting in Florida in 2018.

Vullo had warned financial institutions face a "reputational risk" by serving the NRA, the petition said. The NRA also alleged Vullo infringed upon the Second Amendment right to bear arms.

The NRA sued Vullo but a lower federal court rejected the lawsuit, claiming the former official's actions were permissible under the rationale of enhanced corporate social responsibility.

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The criminal complaint alleges that the man, Sohaib Abuayyash, committed "unlawful possession of a firearm by an alien" living in the US on a nonimmigrant visa, the filing said.

Investigators accuse Abuayyash of maintaining direct contact with other people who share a "radical mindset" and training to possibly commit an attack, the filing said.

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US Asks Israel to Provide Explanations on Attacks Against Civilians in Gaza- Reports

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – The United States asked its Israeli partners to provide explanations regarding the recent strike on a heavily populated Jabalia refugee camp in Gaza, Politico reported on Friday, citing officials from both sides.

"The US asked for an explanation of the first [attack] on Jabalia," the US official said, according to the report. He also emphasized that Washington asked Israel to try to avoid civilian casualties.

The official added that the White House urged Israel to conduct precision strikes and protect civilians.

A Pentagon official revealed that in private conversations, the US is asking its partners to "think through their operations" and focus on not harming innocent people.

On Tuesday, the Israeli military said it had hit the Jabalia camp in the Gaza Strip, adding that the death of civilians was a consequence of the "tragedy of war." The Gaza Interior Ministry said

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that at least 400 people had been killed or injured after Israeli air attacks against the refugee camp. On Wednesday, Israel launched another air attack against the camp, killing dozens more people, Palestinian news agency WAFA reported.

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Two US Strike Groups Conduct Joint Three-Day Exercise Near Israel – Sixth Fleet

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – Two US aircraft carrier strike groups dispatched to the Eastern Mediterranean conducted a three-day joint exercise aimed at practicing how to repel ballistic missile attacks and conduct cross-deck flight and maritime operations, the US Sixth Fleet said on Friday.

"The ships and aircraft of two US Navy aircraft carrier strike groups conducted joint exercises over the last three days," the fleet said in a press release. "Sailors and naval aviators from the USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) Carrier Strike Group (CSG 12) and those of the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69) Carrier Strike Group (CSG 2) trained on high-value unit defense, ballistic missile defense, replenishments-at-sea, cross-deck flight operations, and maritime security operations."

A total of 11,000 US personnel took part in the exercise while the Italian ships Fasan and Margottini joined the two carrier strike groups to exercise NATO alliance integration, the release said.

Earlier in October, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced that Washington decided to deploy its two major carriers strike groups, USS Dwight D. Eisenhower and USS Gerald R. Ford, to the Middle East deploying additional air defenses throughout the region, saying it anticipates a continued escalation of attacks against US forces in the region by Iran-backed groups.

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US China Coordinator Meets PRC Official, Raises Need to Resume Mil-to-Mil Contacts

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - US Department of State China Coordinator and Deputy Assistant Secretary for China and Taiwan Mark Lambert met with Chinese Director-General for Boundary and Ocean Affairs Hong Liang and raised the need to revive military-to-military contacts, the State Department said on Friday.

The two met in Beijing.

"These consultations are part of ongoing efforts to maintain open lines of communication and responsibly manage the U.S.-China relationship," the press release said. "The United States reiterated the need to resume military-military channels, including between operators, to avoid miscommunication and miscalculation."

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The State Department said that the discussions were substantive, constructive, and candid and addressed a number of maritime issues, including the situation in the South China Sea and East China Sea.

"The United States underscored concerns with the PRC's dangerous and unlawful actions in the South China Sea, including the PRC's obstruction of an October 22 Philippine resupply mission at Second Thomas Shoal and its unsafe intercept of a U.S. aircraft on October 24," the release added.

The two sides agreed on the importance of maintaining open channels of communication, the State Department said.

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No New Carbon Tax Exemptions for Home Heating in Canada - Freeland

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – Canadian Minister of Finance Chrystia Freeland said on Friday that there would be no new tax exemptions on home heating for Canadians and the government will ensure that legislation is enforced nationwide.

"No," Freeland said, when asked whether the government would allow for further exemptions from carbon tax applied to home heating.

Freeland said that the government would ensure that carbon-tax legislation is enforced nationwide as Canadians have the common expectation that laws are to be followed across the country.

"That's our expectation," she added.

Freeland's remarks were in relation to Saskatchewan's decision not to collect federal carbon tax on home heating starting January 1 if the federal government does not offer an exemption for natural gas.

Last week, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said his government would give a three-year carbon tax break on home-heating oil. The measure mainly benefited the Atlantic provinces — a Liberal stronghold — where the highest percentage of households use oil for home heating.

However, the decision was seen by many as Trudeau backtracking from his carbon tax policy and his climate change commitments as well as a pre-electoral political move considering that some Canadians are increasingly feeling the weight of financial strains.

Trudeau's announcement was poorly received by several provincial leaders and opposition lawmakers. The premiers of Saskatchewan and Alberta have since requested an extension of the pause to all sources of home heating.

The leader of Canada's official opposition, Pierre Poilievre, tabled a motion at the House of Commons on Thursday requesting that the tax break apply to all home heating.

Shortly after the motion was introduced, the New Democratic Party (NDP) House leader Peter Julian said the party would support the Conservative motion. The NDP is in a coalition with the Liberal government.

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Biden Likely to Skip Conference of the Parties Climate Summit, Africa Trip Too - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden is anticipated to forego attendance at the upcoming Conference of the Parties (COP) global climate conference in Dubai, as well as likely not fulfilling his commitment to visit Africa by the end of 2023, Politico reported on Friday.

According to the report, the White House had not officially confirmed the trips to Dubai and Africa, there have been ongoing internal deliberations and initial preparations for the President to undertake both journeys.

Furthermore, one official mentioned that the ongoing war is one of the factors influencing the President's forthcoming schedule. However, it's worth noting that Biden traveled to Tel Aviv just last month in response to the Hamas attacks on Israel that triggered the conflict, the report said.

Moreover, later in the year, a potential conflict may arise concerning government expenditures, which could necessitate Biden's presence in Washington, according to one of the officials, the report said.

The existing short-term government funding arrangement is slated to lapse on November 17, and the approach that the new Republican House speaker, Mike Johnson, will adopt in negotiations that might lead to a government shutdown remains uncertain, the report added.

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New York Judge Imposes Supplemental Gag Order in Trump Civil Fraud Case - Filing

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - New York state supreme court judge Arthur Engoron imposed a supplemental gag order on all attorneys involved in former US President Donald Trump's civil fraud case, according to an order filed Friday.

"Over the past week, defendants' principal attorneys… have made, on the record, repeated, inappropriate remarks about my Principal Law Clerk, falsely accusing her of bias against them and improperly influencing the ongoing bench trial," the order said. "Thus, for the reasons stated, I hereby order that all counsel are prohibited from making any public statements, in or out of court, that refer to any confidential communications, in any form, between my staff and me."

The supplemental gag order adds to a gag order imposed on Trump and other parties, which banned them from making public statements about court staff. Engoron has twice fined Trump for violating the order.

The gag order has been narrowly tailored to protect the safety of court staff and the orderly progression of the trial, Engoron said, dismissing arguments that the gag orders violate Trump's First Amendment rights under the US Constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech among

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other rights.

Failure to abide by the gag orders could result in “serious sanctions,” Engoron added.

The civil fraud case against Trump was brought by New York Attorney General Letitia James for allegedly lying about the value of Trump properties.

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Congressman Comer Says Will Subpoena Bidens in Coming Days Amid Corruption Probe

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - US House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer said on Friday that he will soon subpoena members of the Biden family as part of the ongoing probe of their alleged financial schemes and corruption.

“We are very close to bringing in the Bidens. I would say it's a matter of days before they get served [subpoenaed],” Comer said for a Lou Dobbs podcast.

The fact that President Joe Biden's son, Hunter Biden, has a shell company with a dozen of bank accounts shows that this is not a legitimate business, but rather a financial scheme, a scam, Comer pointed out.

In September, Comer issued subpoenas for Hunter Biden and his brother James Biden seeking to obtain their personal and business records.

The Oversight Committee has disclosed since January that the Bidens and their associates had established more than 20 shell companies, amassing more than $24 million from sources in China and other countries.

Earlier this week, Comer said that Joe Biden received a personal check for $40,000 in allegedly laundered money from China involving Hunter Biden’s companies.

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US Extradites Serbian Man for Alleged Cryptocurrency, Binary Options Fraud - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - The United States extradited a Serbian man to face criminal charges for alleged cryptocurrency and binary options fraud, the US Justice Department said on Friday.

“A Serbian man has been extradited to the United States, where he faces charges in two separate federal indictments in the Northern District of Texas and Eastern District of New York for his alleged participation in coordinated cryptocurrency and binary options schemes,” the Justice Department said in a statement.

Law enforcement in the country of Georgia arrested the man, Kristijan Krstic, and the US Marshals Service completed his removal to the state of Texas, the statement said. Krstic will face charges in Texas and later be transferred to New York to face the charges there, the statement said.

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Krstic was indicted in March 2020 for allegedly defrauding investors out of more than $70 million through more than 20 fraudulent cryptocurrency and binary options investment platforms, the statement said.

The Northern District of Texas charged Krstic with crimes including conspiracy to commit wire fraud and conspiracy to commit money laundering, the statement said. The Eastern District of New York charged Krstic with crimes including conspiracy to commit securities fraud, as well as additional counts of conspiracy to commit wire fraud and money laundering, the statement said.

Krstic faces a maximum sentence of up to 20 years in prison for each count for which he is convicted in Texas, as well as 20 years if convicted on the charges in New York, the statement said.

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Trump State Department Appointee Gets Nearly 6-Year Sentence for Capitol Attack - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - A former State Department appointee from the Trump administration, Federico Klein, has received a nearly six-year prison sentence for his involvement in the January 6 attack on the US Capitol, ABC News reported on Friday.

According to the report, Klein faced charges on eight felony counts, which encompassed six assault charges, civil disorder, and obstruction of an official proceeding. Prosecutors accuse Klein of launching an unrelenting assault on law enforcement officers while attempting to breach the Capitol alongside a sizable group of rioters.

Stanley Woodward, Klein's defense attorney, contended that his client deserved a substantially reduced sentence, asserting that the prosecution's aggressive pursuit was influenced by Klein's previous political appointment.

Klein will also undergo two years of supervised release following his prison term, the report said.

Former Capitol Police Sgt. Aquilino Gonell, who was among the officers reporting assault by Klein and the rioting mob, said that he continues to battle post-traumatic stress disorder stemming from the events of January 6, with Klein's actions playing a role in the termination of his law enforcement career, the report added.

On January 6, 2021, after then-US President Donald Trump's election defeat, a mob of his supporters breached the US Capitol in an attempt to halt Congress's Electoral College vote count, resulting in charges against over 1,100 individuals, with around 140 police officers assaulted on that day.

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Hundreds of US Officials Urge Biden Admin. to Consider Israel-Gaza Ceasefire - Reports

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WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - Hundreds of officials at the US Agency for International Development (USAID) are anonymously urging the Biden administration to push for a ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian Hamas militants in Gaza, Foreign Policy reported on Friday.

At least 370 USAID officials have signed the letter so far, with the identities of the signatories kept anonymous due to safety and career concerns, the report said, citing a copy of the letter.

The letter calls for the Biden administration to pursue an immediate ceasefire, the report said. The letter also urged the United States to help hold all parties, including the Israeli government, to international law by ending the "illegal occupation" of territories claimed by Palestinians, the report said.

The letter comes following the Biden administration's increased support to Israel in the wake of a surprise attack on the country by Hamas last month. The letter does not mention the attack, the report noted.

Former USAID West Bank and Gaza mission director Dave Harden reportedly said that the letter was unlikely to influence the Biden administration's approach to the conflict. The letter is "unpersuasive and undisciplined," Harden is quoted as having said.

The letter is not the only form of pushback from US government officials on the Biden administration's handling of the conflict. Last month, Josh Paul, a former director at the State Department's Bureau of Political-Military affairs, left the position in protest of the US providing increased military support to Israel in the wake of Hamas' attack.

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Another 'Large' Group of US Nationals Expected to Depart Gaza on Friday – White House

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – A large group of American nationals is expected to depart from besieged Gaza later in the day through the Rafah crossing into Egypt as the United States continues to work with partners in the region to evacuate its citizens, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Friday.

"Another large group of Americans are expected to depart Gaza today via the Rafah crossing," Jean-Pierre said during a press briefing.

The US embassy in Cairo on Thursday assisted more than 100 US citizens and their family members who had departed Gaza earlier this week, while additional US citizens did not seek assistance from the embassy, Jean-Pierre said.

US President Joe Biden said on Thursday that 74 dual US citizens were able to evacuate from the Gaza Strip.

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Biden, Americas Leaders Urge to Improve Trade, Investment in Region - Statement

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WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden and the leaders of eleven other countries urged in a joint statement on Friday to accelerate trade and investment in the region and address climate change issues.

"We recognize the need to accelerate inclusive and sustainable trade and investment in the region, address the climate crisis, and expand social and economic opportunities that leave no one behind," the leaders said after the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity (APEP) summit in Washington.

They reaffirmed their collective commitment to shared values, including democracy, the rule of law, diversity, and inclusion. Leaders also expressed the necessity for a more open, fair, inclusive, sustainable, and prosperous hemisphere.

The APEP partners intended to cooperate on such key areas as strengthening regional competitiveness and integration, fostering shared prosperity and good governance, building sustainable infrastructure, protecting the climate and environment, and promoting healthy communities.

"To advance these priorities, we will identify a set of specific actions that we intend to collectively implement to achieve concrete results through a newly created and enduring structure for the Americas Partnership," the statement said.

The parties will establish three tracks to meet annually on the ministerial level to address foreign affairs, trade and financial matters, it added.

"Taken together, the work we carry out in these three tracks will build on our foundation of economic ties and strengthen our hemispheric resilience. Recognizing the lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic, the risks and adverse impacts of climate change, and other potential sources of disruption to global supply chains, we intend to establish the Americas as the home of the world's most competitive, inclusive, sustainable, and resilient regional value and supply chains," the statement said.

The parties promised to focus their efforts on clean energy, medical supplies, and semiconductors, adding that these measures require coordination among governments and public and private stakeholders, according to the statement.

APEP members who participate in the Washington summit include Barbados, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Peru, the United States, and Uruguay.

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Today's Security Package Exhausts USAI Funds Available to Support Ukraine - White House

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - The latest security assistance package has exhausted the remaining USAI (Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative) funds currently available for Kiev, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters on Friday.

"Today's announcements exhausts the remaining USAI funds currently available to support Ukraine," Jean-Pierre said. "While we do have remaining PDA authorities to continue to fulfill Ukraine's immediate battlefield needs, we are beginning to provide Ukraine with smaller PDA

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packages in order to stretch out our ability to support Ukraine for as long as possible"
The US Department of Defense announced a new $300 million military assistance package for Ukraine on Friday in addition to a $125 million drawdown.

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Biden's Israel Aid Ask Includes 'Unprecedented' Secrecy Measure - Ex-State Dept. Official

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration's $106 billion supplemental request for aid to Israel and other funding also features a measure that could keep secret up to $3.5 billion in foreign military financing (FMF) to the country, former US State Department official Josh Paul reportedly said.
The request includes a provision that would waive the need for congressional notification upon the application of FMF funds in extraordinary circumstances that could impact the United States' security.
"A proposal in a legislative request to Congress to waive Congressional notification entirely for FMF-funded Foreign Military Sales or Direct Commercial Contracts is unprecedented in my experience," Paul was quoted as saying by In These Times.
The White House is already authorized to approve foreign military sales in emergencies, although it must notify lawmakers with justification for the action, Paul said. The measure does not serve to hasten security actions, but rather, to reduce oversight, Paul said, characterizing the request as an "insult" to congressional oversight duties.
The language was included in a standalone Israel aid bill passed by the House of Representatives on Thursday.
Paul resigned from his role as director of the State Department's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs last month, citing the Biden administration's increased provision of military aid to Israel in the wake of a surprise attack on the country by Hamas.

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Russia Thanks All Countries Who Backed Anti-Nazism Resolution Despite 'Provocations'

UNITED NATIONS, November 3 (Sputnik) - Russia appreciates all nations who voted in favor of a Russian-drafted resolution on combating Nazism regardless of the "blatant" provocations from certain countries, the director of the Russian foreign ministry's department for humanitarian cooperation and human rights said on Friday.
"I would like to express my gratitude to all of those delegations who co-sponsored this important resolution and also voted in favor of its adoption despite all the procedural provocations that were blatant," Grigory Lukyantsev said.
Historic truth must be upheld, including at the United Nations, he added.

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Earlier in the day, the United Nations Third Committee adopted the resolution, which was co-sponsored by Belarus and Syria.

The resolution was adopted by 112 votes for, with 50 against and 14 abstaining. Ukraine, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany and other EU countries were among those that voted against.

The committee had also approved an amendment to the resolution proposed by Albania, Australia, Japan, Guatemala, Liberia, the Marshall Islands and North Macedonia. The amendment accuses Russia of "justifying" its "aggression against Ukraine" on "the purported basis of eliminating neo-Nazism." It was adopted in a 66-26 vote, with 67 abstaining.

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US Congressmen Urge Blinken Not to Renew Iran Sanctions Waiver - Letter

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - US congressmen Blaine Luetkemeyer and Bill Huizenga said on Friday that they are urging Secretary of State Antony Blinken not to renew sanctions waivers on Iranian electricity sales, which are set to expire later this month.

"We are extremely concerned by the potential that Iran may use funds received through sanctions relief to continue its long-standing support of terrorism. Therefore, we urge you not to renew the sanctions waiver… until a thorough review is conducted to determine whether such relief is still warranted," Luetkemeyer and Huizenga said in a letter to Blinken.

The waiver allows covered transactions to be conducted in euros, as well as authorizes funds to be kept offshore in France, Germany or Oman, the letter said. Previous waivers have only allowed Iraq to purchase electricity from Iran in Iraqi dinars, the letter said.

Moreover, the need for a waiver may be reduced as electricity demands drop heading into winter, the letter said.

"Granting another unnecessary waiver to Iran as it continues to finance terrorism would be irresponsible and unforgivable," Luetkemeyer said in a statement.

The Biden administration must return to a policy of "maximum pressure" on Iran's ability to fund instability in the Middle East, Huizenga also said in the statement.

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UPDATE: US Announces $425 Million Military Assistance Package for Ukraine – Pentagon

(Updates with the total amount in the head, provides additional details, background in paras 3-5)

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – The US Department of Defense announced a new $300 million military assistance package for Ukraine on Friday in addition to a $125 million drawdown, according to a release.

"Today, the Department of Defense announced additional security assistance to meet Ukraine's

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critical security and defense needs. This includes the drawdown of security assistance from DoD inventories valued at up to $125 million to meet Ukraine's immediate battlefield needs, as well as $300 million in Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI) funds to strengthen Ukraine's air defenses over the long term," the release stated.

The new package includes additional munitions for National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems (NASAMS), High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS), 155mm and 105 mm artillery rounds, Javelin and AT-4 anti-armor systems, the release said.

The United States will also send Ukraine cold weather gear, 12 trucks to transport heavy equipment and spare parts, maintenance, and more than 3 million rounds of small arms ammunition and grenades, according to the release.

The new security aid announcement comes as Washington is struggling to keep up with growing demands to support its ally Israel in its fight against Hamas and Kiev amid its ongoing conflict with Russia. On Thursday, Pentagon press secretary Pat Ryder reiterated that the United States can handle both as well as continue to protect the homeland from all kinds of threats.

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US Protesters Rally at Senators' Offices to Call for Gaza Ceasefire - Activist

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - American activists are in US Congress again on Friday going from office to office to protest Washington's support for Israeli military activities in Gaza, co-founder of a women-led peace group CODEPINK Medea Benjamin said via her X account.

"We are going from office to office telling Senators that they must call for a ceasefire in Gaza now!!," Benjamin said in a statement.

In a separate post, Code Pink shared photos of the activists with banners at the offices of Senators Shageen and Cardin.

"NOW: We're in @SenatorShaheen's office for a ceasefire and end to US support for the occupation. Staffers say they're receiving hundreds of calls, but we have yet to see her call for a ceasefire," Code Pink said.

Another pro-Palestine group of protesters called DefendMasaferYatta USCPR is seen in the corridors of the Congress.

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. On October 27, Israel launched a large-scale ground incursion inside the Gaza Strip to eliminate Hamas fighters and rescue the hostages. The escalation of the conflict has resulted in the deaths of around 1,400 people in Israel and over 9,000 in the Gaza Strip.

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Ottawa to Invest C$35.5Mln in Canadian Foodgrains Bank Over 3 Years – Global Affairs

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – Canada will invest C$35.5 million (US$26 million) in the Canadian Foodgrains Bank over 3 Years to support low-carbon and climate-resilient economies in several African countries, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) said on Friday.

"Today, the Honourable Ahmed Hussen, Minister of International Development, announced $35.5 million in funding over the next 3 years to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank to support its project Nature-Positive Food Systems for Climate Change Adaptation," GAC statement said.

Funded through the Partnering for Climate initiative, the project will help improve low-carbon and climate-resilient economies in rural areas of Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique ad Zimbabwe, the statement said. This will strengthen communities' well-being, notably those of woman and marginalized groups.

The project will use nature-based solutions jointly with landscape-level restorations to address food security and curb the increasing threats to the livelihoods of communities in those countries.

"It also aims to increase the ability of targeted landscapes to absorb biophysical shocks and stresses caused by the increasingly disruptive effects of climate change," the statement continued.

Canada pledged C$315 million to the Partnering for Climate fund out of its C$5.3 billion climate finance commitment for the 2021-2026 fiscal years.

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US Announces $300 Million Military Assistance Package for Ukraine – Pentagon

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – The US Department of Defense announced a new $300 million military assistance package for Ukraine on Friday in addition to a $125 million drawdown, according to a release.

"Today, the Department of Defense announced additional security assistance to meet Ukraine's critical security and defense needs. This includes the drawdown of security assistance from DoD inventories valued at up to $125 million to meet Ukraine's immediate battlefield needs, as well as $300 million in Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI) funds to strengthen Ukraine's air defenses over the long term," the release stated.

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US Announces New $125 Million Military Package for Ukraine - Blinken

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – The United States will provide Ukraine with an additional military aid package of arms and equipment worth $125 million, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Friday.

"Today, the United States is announcing a new package of weapons and equipment to support the people of Ukraine as they defend their country and their freedom against Russia's aggression. This package provides up to $125 million of arms and equipment authorized under previously directed drawdowns for Ukraine," Blinken said in a statement.

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Canadian Defense Chief Accuses China of 2 'Unsafe' Passes Near Copter Over South China Sea

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – Canadian National Defense Minister Bill Blair said on Friday that Chinese jets made two "unsafe" maneuvers close to Canada's Sikorsky Cyclone helicopter over the South China Sea on October 29.

"Though the initial encounter was safe, two subsequent encounters between that aircraft and our Cyclone helicopter were deemed unsafe," Blair said from Parliament Hill. "With successive passes, one jet eventually conducted a pass over the Cyclone helicopter with little separation causing the helicopter to experience significant turbulence and take appropriate actions in order to remain safe."

Blair added that later during the day as the helicopter was conducting a second flight, a J-11 fighter jet launched flares directly in front of it.

"The helicopter pilot had to maneuver to avoid the flares and reduce the risks of ingesting a flare into the helicopter's rotor intakes," Blair said.

The encounters occurred in international airspace and outside any zone of territorial claim, according to Blair.

Blair said that the PLA's manoeuvres endangered the safety of Canadian military personnel and noted that Ottawa expects all interceptions to be carried out in a safe and professional way. The minister added that the aircraft was not damaged, the crew remained safe, and the mission was fulfilled.

Canada will continue to operate and increase its presence in the Indo-Pacific as it aims to uphold the "international rules-based order" and ensure the safety of navigation in the area, the minister stated.

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US Court to Sentence Russia's Natalia Semenova on November 16 – Lawyer to Sputnik

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – The US court will sentence Russian national Natalia Semenova, imprisoned in the United States on drug-related charges, on November 16, Semenova's lawyer Alexey Tarasov told Sputnik on Friday.

"For Natalia Semenova, federal sentencing has been scheduled for November 16 at 10.30 a.m. (11.30 EST) at the federal courthouse in Tyler, Texas," Tarasov said.

Semenova was detained in February 2023 after authorities conducted a search near the residence she shares with her husband, Russell Rothe, who is a US citizen.

Tarasov expressed the hope that the court will sentence her for a time-served term and she would not have to spend additional time in incarceration.

The lawyer pointed out that the parties must file sentencing memoranda and all related documents by November 9.

"If after the sentencing Natalia is given a time-served sentence, then she would likely be transferred to US Immigration and Customs for subsequent removal from the US to her home country of Russia," he said.

According to local media, the authorities in Texas also detained six other people during the February raid, three of them Russian citizens and three Bolivian citizens. Law enforcement reportedly seized 1,600 pounds of marijuana during the raid.

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UN Adopts Russian-Drafted Resolution on Combating Glorification of Nazism - Correspondent

UNITED NATIONS, November 3 (Sputnik) - The United Nations Third Committee on Friday adopted a Russian-drafted resolution on combating the glorification of Nazism and neo-Nazism, a Sputnik correspondent reported.

The resolution was adopted by 112 votes for, with 50 against and 14 abstaining. Ukraine, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany and other EU countries were among those that voted against.

The document, titled "Combating glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and other practices that contribute to fueling contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance," was co-sponsored by Belarus and Syria.

Earlier in the day, the committee had approved an amendment to the resolution proposed by Albania, Australia, Japan, Guatemala, Liberia, the Marshall Islands and North Macedonia. The amendment accuses Russia of "justifying" its "aggression against Ukraine" on "the purported basis of eliminating neo-Nazism" and states that it "seriously undermines genuine attempts to combat neo-Nazism." It was adopted in a 66-26 vote, with 67 abstaining.

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US House Speaker Johnson Possibly Sleeping in Capitol Office Without DC Home - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - US House Speaker Mike Johnson, whom lawmakers elected to the leadership position last month, possibly sleeps in his Capitol office due to his apparent lack of residence in Washington, Business Insider reported on Friday.

Johnson most likely resides in his congressional office in the Cannon House Office Building when working in Washington, the report said, citing several lawmakers and a friend of Johnson.

Johnson's security detail has been spotted lingering around the office both early and late in the day, the report said. Johnson has also been seen using the House gym early in the morning, which is common among lawmakers who sleep in their offices, the report said.

Louisiana businessman and friend of Johnson, Ross Barrett, reportedly said that Johnson does not have an apartment near the Capitol. Public databases also lack any indication that Johnson maintains an address in the Washington area, the report said.

The practice of US lawmakers sleeping in their offices has been the subject of criticism, characterized by some members of Congress as an abuse of government resources, inappropriate and unsanitary, according to the report.

However, other lawmakers, particularly Republicans, have hailed the practice as a sign of frugality, the report said. Former House Speaker Paul Ryan said in 2015 that sleeping in his office made him more efficient at his job.

Johnson's staff initially did not deny that he sleeps in his office, but failed to respond to several follow-up inquiries on the matter, the report noted.

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UPDATE - US House Passes Bill Imposing Further Sanctions on Iranian Oil Industry

(Updates with details in para 4-7)

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives on Friday passed legislation to impose further sanctions on Iran's oil industry amid its alleged support for Palestinian organization Hamas and other proxy groups in the region.

House lawmakers passed the bill, dubbed the Stop Harboring Iranian Petroleum (SHIP) Act, in a vote of 342-69, with 68 Democrats and one Republican voting against the legislation.

The SHIP Act requires US President Joe Biden to impose visa- and property-blocking sanctions on foreign persons engaged in the transportation, refinement or other business activities related to Iranian petroleum products.

"Iran has made $80 billion selling oil since Biden took office — as they bankroll Hamas's terror," House Majority Leader Steve Scalise said in a statement. "The House Republican Majority will take strong action to sanction their oil exports. Biden must be with us."

The legislation comes following a surprise attack on Israel by Hamas last month, for which some US lawmakers have accused Iran of providing support. However, the Biden administration

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has said it lacks direct evidence tying Iran to the attack on Israel.
Nevertheless, US forces in Iraq and Syria have been attacked more than 20 times in recent weeks by “Iranian-backed militia groups,” US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said.
The SHIP Act is intended to counter Iran’s ability to finance and facilitate the participation of terrorist organizations as proxy groups in ongoing conflicts, according to the bill text. Such actions pose a threat to “vital national interests” of the United States, the bill’s statement of policy said.

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Qatar Urges UNSC to Agree on Resolution Calling for Ceasefire in Gaza

UNITED NATIONS, November 3 (Sputnik) - Qatar calls on the UN Security Council to negotiate a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war and immediate provision of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, a Qatari diplomat to the United Nations said on Friday.
"We call on the UN Security Council to take up its responsibility to reach an agreement on a Security Council resolution that goes for an immediate ceasefire and the immediate entry of humanitarian assistance," the diplomat said during a meeting on Gaza at the United Nations.
Earlier this week, Qatar mediated an agreement between Egypt, Israel and Hamas that will allow people with foreign passports and those seriously injured to leave the Gaza Strip.
There have been four attempts by the UN Security Council to come to an agreement on a resolution regarding Gaza, but all of them have failed.

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US Sanctions Russian National for Alleged Money Laundering Operations – Treasury

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – The United States imposed sanctions on Russian national Ekaterina Zhdanova for allegedly providing money laundering services for Russian elites and cybercriminals in circumvention of sanctions amid the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, the US Treasury Department said on Friday.

"Today, the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned Ekaterina Zhdanova, a Russian national, for her role in laundering and moving funds using virtual currency on behalf of Russian elites," the department said in a press release.

It is alleged by the Treasury that over the past several years Zhdanova used a wide array of financial instruments, including cryptocurrencies, to move funds internationally for the benefit of Russian elites and ransomware actors, the release said.

In March 2022, Zhdanova helped a Russian client to obfuscate their source of wealth in order to transfer more than $2.3 million into Western Europe through a fraudulently opened investment account and real estate purchases, according to the release.

The Department of the Treasury also claims that Zhdanova assisted a Russian businessman to transfer over $100 million to the United Arab Emirates and also facilitated a UAE tax residency service for Russian clients, the release added.

On Thursday, the United States imposed new Russia-related sanctions on 37 individuals and 192 entities for their alleged role in "harmful activities" of the Russian government.

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US Conducting Unarmed UAV Flights Over Gaza in Support of Hostage Recovery – Pentagon

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – The United States is conducting unarmed UAV flights over Gaza to assist Israel's hostage recovery efforts, Pentagon press secretary Pat Ryder said on Friday.

"In support of hostage recovery efforts, the U.S. is conducting unarmed UAV flights over Gaza, as well as providing advice and assistance to support our Israeli partner as they work on their hostage recovery efforts. These UAV flights began after the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas on Israel," Ryder said in a statement.

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Bolstering Economic Cooperation With Africa Top US Priority – Commerce Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – The United States views enhancing economic cooperation with African countries as its top priority, Deputy Secretary of Commerce Don Graves said on Friday.

"Bolstering new economic engagement with African countries is a top priority for the

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Biden-Harris administration," Graves told reporters.

Supporting inclusive and economic growth on the continent was also a major goal of the US-Africa Leaders' Summit last December.

"Since that summit, the US has established 75 new commercial trade deals with African countries for a total estimated value of $5.7 billion in two-way trade investment," he said.

Graves recalled that the Department of Commerce launched earlier this year its Africa strategy to create more economic opportunities for business on both sides of the Atlantic.

"The goals of that strategy are clear: we aim to strengthen and expand bilateral relationships across the continent, particularly democracies, through memorandums of understanding and commercial investment dialogues," he said.

Graves emphasized that Washington has a deep commitment to making sure that Africa can build and grow a more stable and long-lasting economy. The US wants to be Africa's true partner to help develop the continent, he added.

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Not Enough Humanitarian Aid for 2.2 Million People in Gaza Strip - UN Official

UNITED NATIONS, November 3 (Sputnik) - The current level of humanitarian aid for the Gaza Strip is not enough to support the 2.2 million people in in the territory, the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Lynn Hastings said on Friday.

"I have to highlight that the humanitarian assistance is not enough to sustain a population of 2.2 million people," Hastings said during a humanitarian briefing.

The UN must be able to scale up deliveries, and it is also important to open crossings, she added.

At the same briefing, UN Humanitarian Coordinator Martin Griffiths said that over 60% the people in Gaza have been displaced.

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.

On October 27, Israel launched a large-scale ground incursion inside the Gaza Strip to eliminate Hamas fighters and rescue the hostages. The escalation of the conflict has resulted in the deaths of around 1,400 people in Israel and over 9,000 in the Gaza Strip.

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Blinken Says 'Clear Commitment' from Israel to Prevent West Bank Settler Violence

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WASHINGTON, November 3 – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Friday that Israel's government indicated to him a "clear commitment" to crack down on extremist settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank.

"I don't want to speak for the Israeli government; it's not appropriate. But I think it's fair to say that what I heard today was a clear commitment from the government to deal with extremist violence in the West Bank – to condemn it, to take action to prevent it, to take action against those who perpetrated [it]," Blinken said at a press briefing in Tel Aviv.

He added that the US "will be looking closely to ensure that our friends make good on that commitment."

Palestinians in the West Bank have been subjected to increased violence, particularly through attacks by settlers and raids by Israeli military forces, since Hamas' October 7 attack on Israel. As of Thursday, 133 Palestinians have been killed and more than 1,800 arrested in the West Bank, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry.

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Humanitarian Aid to Gaza Must Increase, Foreigners Must Be Allowed to Leave - Blinken

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Friday that the continued flow of humanitarian assistance to Gaza must increase and foreign nationals should be allowed to leave.

"I spoke to Israeli leaders about tangible steps that can be taken to increase the sustained delivery of food, water, medicine, fuel, and other essential needs, while putting in place measures to prevent diversion by Hamas and other terrorist groups," Blinken said at a press conference in Tel Aviv. "We need to substantially and immediately increase the sustained flow of humanitarian assistance into Gaza and get American citizens and other foreign nationals out of Gaza."

Blinken added that he was confident, based on his conversations with Israeli officials, that further increases in the assistance to Gaza would be observed.

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Israel Should Proceed in Gaza with 'Highest Regard' for Protecting Journalists - Blinken

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Friday that Israel should proceed in Gaza with the "highest regard" for the protection of journalists.

"As we stand strongly for Israel's right and obligation to defend itself, we also believe that it's vitally important how Israel does this, including with the highest regard for the protection of civilians, and that of course includes journalists," Blinken said at a press briefing in Tel Aviv in

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response to a question about Israel's strike on AFP's bureau in Gaza.

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UN Says Over 60% of Gaza Population Displaced

UNITED NATIONS, November 3 (Sputnik) - Over 60% of the Gaza population has been displaced amid the ongoing Israel-Hamas war, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths said on Friday.

"Over 60% of the people in Gaza, that's 1.4 million people, are displaced," Griffiths told a briefing.

He also called for all the hostages to be released immediately.

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.

On October 27, Israel launched a large-scale ground incursion inside the Gaza Strip to eliminate Hamas fighters and rescue the hostages. The escalation of the conflict has killed over 1,400 in Israel and more than 9,000 in the Gaza Strip.

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Blinken Says Return to Pre-October 7 Status Quo Impossible

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – There cannot and must not be return to the pre-October 7 status quo when Hamas was in charge of governing Gaza, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Friday.

"There cannot and must not be return to the pre-October 7 status quo. That's unacceptable. It's not tolerable for Israel. It shouldn't be acceptable or tolerable by anyone else," Blinken said at a press conference in Tel Aviv. "That means that the idea of Hamas remaining responsible for governance such as it was ... , posing an ongoing and enduring threat to Israel and its citizens is unacceptable."

Blinken added that Israel cannot resume its control over the Gaza Strip, and it must make clear it has no intentions to do that.

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Canada's Unemployment Rate Grows by 0.2% Reaching 5.7% in October – StatCan

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – Canadian unemployment rates rose by 0.2 percentage points to 5.7% during the month of October, marking the fourth increase since April, Statistics Canada (StatCan) said on Friday.

"The unemployment rate rose 0.2 percentage points to reach 5.7% in October, marking the fourth monthly increase in the past six months. Since April, the rate has increased by 0.7 percentage points, after holding steady at a near record-low 5.0% from December 2022 to April 2023," the StatCan October labor force survey said.

Accordingly, there were 1.2 million unemployed Canadians in October, a 16.2% increase from April. Moreover, 60.1% of those who were jobless in September remained without work last month.

This indicates that job seekers are faced with more challenges when it comes to finding employment, than a year ago, when data showed that 55% of those unemployed the previous month were still jobless in October, the survey found.

On the other hand, employment remained nearly unchanged in October, the survey said - "Employment was little changed in October (+18,000; +0.1%) and the employment rate fell 0.1 percentage points to 61.9%."

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Blinken Says Humanitarian Pauses to Facilitate Efforts to Secure Release of Hostages

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Friday that the United States is focused on securing the release of the hostages held by Hamas and believes that such efforts would be facilitated by humanitarian pauses.

"We remain relentlessly focused on securing the release of hostages, including American citizens. We discussed these ongoing efforts today," Blinken said at a press conference in Israel. "We believe that each of these efforts would be facilitated by humanitarian pauses, by arrangements on the ground that increase security for civilians and permit more effective and sustained delivery of humanitarian assistance."

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Blinken Says Spoke With Netanyahu About Steps to Protect Palestinian Civilians

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) -US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Friday that he discussed with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu specific steps to protect Palestinian civilians and minimize casualties amid the Israeli ground operation in the Gaza Strip.

"We need to do more to protect Palestinian civilians. We've been clear that as Israel conducts

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its campaign to defeat Hamas, how it does so matters," Blinken said. "Civilians should not suffer the consequences for its inhumanity and its brutality. We provided Israel advice that only the best of friends can offer on how to minimize civilian deaths, while still achieving its objectives of finding and finishing Hamas terrorists and their infrastructure of violence. Today I spoke with Prime Minister Netanyahu and other senior officials about concrete steps to do that."

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Blinken Says US Will Try to Prevent Spread of Israel-Palestine Conflict

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Friday that the US will continue to try to prevent escalation of the Israel-Palestine conflict from spreading.
"We need to continue to prevent escalation of this conflict, its spread to other areas and other theaters. The United States has and we will continue to respond to attacks by Iran's proxies to defend our personnel in the region, personnel who are here in Iraq and in Syria to help prevent the resurgence of ISIS [the Islamic State, a terrorist group banned in Russia]," he said at a press briefing in Tel Aviv.

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Biden to Announce Economic Tools to Support Western Hemisphere's Response to Migration

WASHINGTON, November 3 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden will announce economic measures to support countries in the Western Hemisphere in dealing with migration during a meeting with the region's leaders on Friday, a senior administration official said.
"Economic tools President Biden will announce today alongside the IDB [Inter-American Development Bank], private sector, and other donors, seek to reinforce this welcoming spirit," the official told reporters. "They seek to reward and further support countries in our hemisphere that have been impacted by migration."
The official pointed to the progress some countries have made in adopting migration policies since the Summit of the Americas last summer.
"Countries like Costa Rica, Ecuador, Columbia, Peru, Chile, Panama, they have stepped up in big ways, and we are stepping up for them," the official said.
The US credits them with an effective response to migration issues, such as providing migrants a legal status and giving them jobs, the official added.
"The bottom line is that President Biden believes that targeted economic investment into refugee and migrant host countries is critical to stabilizing migration flows," the official said.
On Friday, Washington will host the inaugural Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity summit. Representatives from 12 member countries are set to attend. Collectively, APEP member states account for nearly 90% of the Western Hemisphere's GDP, and two-thirds of its

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population.

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