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Photos: ESA's Euclid Telescope Sends Back First Images From Hunt for Dark Matter

Physicist Albert Einstein demonstrated how gravity affects light, and astronomers have used that phenomenon to study the subtle effects of gravity on an intergalactic scale, looking at how the mass of whole galaxies can bend light. However, they found a strange situation: their light bends a lot more than it should.

Roughly four months after being launched into a distant Earth orbit, the European Space Agency's Euclid space telescope has sent back its first photographs of distant galaxies.

The ESA published the photos on Tuesday, which show a cluster of galaxies, close-ups of several galaxies and globular clusters, and a stunning view of the horsehead nebula.

The probe has been given a six-year mission to look for signs of the existence of dark matter, a type of matter theorized to exist due to the unexplained behavior of visible matter, but which has never before been directly observed.

"Euclid, our dark universe detective, has a difficult task: to investigate how dark matter and dark energy have made our universe look like it does today," the ESA said in a news release, noting that "95% of our cosmos appears to be made of these mysterious 'dark' entities. But we don't understand what they are because their presence causes only very subtle changes in the appearance and motions of the things we can see."

By the time its mission is complete, Euclid will have created the largest cosmic 3D map ever made, covering billions of galaxies out to 10 billion light-years away, the ESA said. It will do so using a network of what are effectively 36 high-powered digital cameras able to record the entire visible light spectrum up to near-infrared light and compose it into a single massive image.

"The images released today showcase this special capacity: from bright stars to faint galaxies, the observations show the entirety of these celestial objects, while remaining extremely sharp, even when zooming in on distant galaxies," the ESA said.

Nicola Fox, the associate administrator at NASA's Science Mission Directorate in Washington, DC, hailed the Euclid probe as an observatory that will "uncover a treasure trove of scientific discoveries that will be used across the world, including by US scientists, for years to come."

The US space agency provided the ESA, its companion organization in the European Union, with vital hardware for its instruments and has a separate science data center that will study Euclid's findings alongside similar centers around the world.

NASA plans to launch a similar probe, the Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope (NGRST), by 2027 to study another mysterious force dubbed "dark energy." Like dark matter, dark energy has never been directly observed, but is hypothesized to exist due to unexplained movements by interstellar objects, such as the continued expansion of the universe.

Fox said the NGRST would "build upon what Euclid learns and will additionally survey objects on the outskirts of our solar system, discover thousands of new planets, explore nearby galaxies, and more."

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US Acknowledges 'Critical Dependence' on Russian Nuclear Fuel Imports

As the United States continues to push its decoupling from the economies of countries it considers adversaries, the next target is its imports of fuel for its nuclear power plants, some of which it purchases from the Russian state-owned corporation Rosatom.

American imports of enriched uranium from Rosatom doubled in the first half of 2023, reaching roughly one-quarter of the US' nuclear fuel imports, despite Washington's push to end purchases of Russian energy exports around the globe.

Kathryn Huff, the US assistant secretary for nuclear energy, told a British newspaper on Tuesday that the US sourcing so much nuclear fuel from Russia was "gravely concerning."

"It's really critical that we get off of our dependence, especially from Russia," Huff said. "Without action Russia will continue to hold on to this market,' she added. "This is really important for national security, for climate, for our energy independence."

A bill banning US imports from Rosatom by 2028 was approved by a House subcommittee in May, but has failed to make any progress in Congress since.

Uranium naturally occurs in the soil, mostly in the form of U-238, but deposits also contain smaller amounts of U-235, a much more reactive isotope. Through a complex refining process, the U-235 is separated from the U-238 and concentrated, then formed into fuel rods that can be placed in nuclear reactors, where a nuclear reaction is induced to generate electricity. The same process, when extended to incredibly high levels of refinement, can also produce a form of uranium suitable for manufacturing a nuclear weapon.

The US began buying large amounts of enriched uranium from Russiaafter the end of the Cold War under the Megatons to Megawatts program, which took 500 tons of Russian weapons-grade uranium once intended to be put in missiles aimed at American cities, and converted it into a form usable in American nuclear power plants.

After the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster in 2011, many nations paused nuclear power plant construction, which sent many private companies, such as Westinghouse and Areva SA, into bankruptcy, disrupting the supply chain. However, Russia's state-owned Rosatom not only weathered the storm, but moved into those markets as the new enriched uranium supplier.

The result is that today, the US lacks an adequate industry for mining, refining, and manufacturing U-235 nuclear fuel rods that's able to meet the needs of its growing nuclear power sector, so it has turned to Rosatom to fill the gap. According to US government data, Rosatom supplied about 25% of its enriched uranium imports in the first half of 2023 and about 14% of nuclear fuel imports in 2022. It imports about 90% of its nuclear fuel, with other prominent customers being Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Canada, and Australia.

Europe similarly gets large amounts of nuclear fuel from Russia - about 17% of its nuclear fuel imports last year - alongside much of its coal and liquified natural gas. As a result, sanctions on Russia have caused energy prices to spike in the European Union, driving businesses to flee and residents to protest.

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The US' nuclear power sector is among the world's largest, with a 29% global share in 2021, although it has been slowly decreasing since it peaked in the 1990s. In July, the US opened its first nuclear reactor in seven years at the Alvin W. Vogtle Electric Generating Plant in Georgia, bringing its total to 93 operating commercial reactors at 54 nuclear power plants, according to US Energy Information Agency statistics.

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Israel Forced to Consider Gaza 'Tactical Pause' Due to 'Intensity' of Global Protests

A military expert told Sputnik that while there was a great deal of uncertainty regarding talks of a humanitarian pause in the fighting in Gaza, including how well such a pause might be respected, the mass pressure around the globe to end the Palestinian suffering in Gaza was making such a pause increasingly necessary.

During a call with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday, US President Joe Biden discussed what he called a "tactical pause" in Israel's month-long assault on the Gaza Strip. Biden has opposed a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas since the Hamas attack on Israeli settlements on October 7, saying Israel has a right to defend itself.

Asked about such a pause in an interview with US media later on Monday, Netanyahu didn't dismiss the idea, but offered "an hour here, an hour there … in order to enable goods, humanitarian goods to come in, or our hostages, individual hostages to leave."

"There'll be no ceasefire, general ceasefire, in Gaza without the release of our hostages," Netanyahu said. Confusingly, Hamas has for more than three weeks offered to release allof the more than 240 Israeli hostages captured on October 7 in exchange for an end to Israeli bombing.

With the White House behind his position, Netanyahu has said the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) will not stop their attack on Gaza until Hamas is destroyed and no longer the governing power in Gaza, where the Palestinian militant group won elections in 2006. More than 10,000 people have been killed in Gaza by the Israeli bombardment and ground invasion.

Michael Maloof, former senior security policy analyst in the Office of the US Secretary of Defense, told Sputnik that for an effective tactical pause, "you need it in terms of a few days. What's one hour?"

"There's very serious talk now of a 48-hour pause to allow humanitarian aid to go in. I think that the goal will be to try and get an idea of where the hostages are actually located. They are in relatively safe areas, according to the Israelis, otherwise, they wouldn't be going ahead with their offense the way that they are, because they have to go into these tunnels. So they probably have an idea where the hostages are actually located. But for the majority of the Palestinian people who are not Hamas, critical aid is essential."

"So there is talk and there appears to be an interest by Netanyahu to accommodate that," he said. "It's something that is due to pressure, outside pressure, international pressure. Look at the demonstrations occurring in the United States right now: the pressure is building. I haven't seen anything like that since the demonstrations against the Vietnam War. I mean, it's getting to

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that level of intensity in the United States. That speaks volumes. It will only increase over time if nothing is done."

Maloof explained that a tactical pause is not a ceasefire, but is "meant to have a 48-hour cessation of hostilities long enough to allow essential goods to get in to the affected population."

"There's nowhere [for the civilians] to go. I mean, the Egyptians are allowing very limited numbers" to cross the border, Maloof explained. "People are afraid to even leave Gaza because they're being killed on the way. They're being targeted. I've seen videos of bodies strewn on the corridor roads trying to lead out, whole families wiped out. And it goes unreported, basically, in the mainstream media, but it's happening, and people are deathly afraid, they don't know where to turn. They've no house. But on the other hand, if they take off, there's a high probability of getting killed anyway. So what do you do under those circumstances? It's a real dilemma for people. And I feel very, very badly for them, it's not a position [you want] to be in."

Maloof said that a major Israeli concern was just how reliable such a pause might be in terms of security.

"You don't know unless you try," he said.

"What does this mean when they say a tactical pause: is that throughout all of Gaza or just portions of it? That's unclear. I think that, where they think that there's a heavy concentration of fighting - you know, to have a pause, you need both sides to agree. Will the [Hamas] commanders on the ground agree to what the leadership might agree to politically in Qatar? Unknown. So we need to see what the reaction will be on both sides. And you may have local commanders that may disagree, who are so involved in this thing that they don't care what the leadership says. So we have to see how it works out, whether it can hold, whether a pause can hold for a certain period of time," Maloof said.

"If that doesn't work, well, then that tells the Israelis, and even Hamas, the direction they need to proceed. This thing is not going to be over anytime soon. This effort could go on for months. And if that happens, it's only going to escalate and bring other forces to bear on this. I would watch what Turkiye has in mind, I would watch what Iran has in mind, and especially the militias in Iraq, that's an unknown as well. They have missiles as well that could create a lot of havoc and especially on existing US forces. The answer is, none of this would be happening if US forces weren't there, as far as I'm personally concerned, because we basically have all these self-fulfilling prophecies that come about just like with Ukraine," he said.

"Something's got to be done. If we can get the normalization process underway that Saudi Arabia and UAE want, they can help tamp down things, agree to a deal. And the fact that Iran and Saudi Arabia have reestablished diplomatic relations I think is an important development. And I think over time, this can help to smooth things out, so that the Israelis can feel that they can still live there. But they've got to do something about the Palestinian issue and that is not to drive them out of their own lands. This is where things really - this is the nub of the problem, how do you reconcile that is something else."

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Top Prosecutor in Hunter Biden Case Claims Politics 'Played No Part' in Charges

Hunter Biden has been accused by critics of using his father's name to open doors in the business world and conclude lucrative deals that the president may have provided cover for and may even have benefited from. However, no probe of either man has yielded charges for such alleged crimes.

In a closed-door hearing by the House Judiciary Committee on Tuesday, the top federal prosecutor in the Hunter Biden case denied that politics influenced his decision to charge the US president's son with crimes.

The committee, now controlled by the Republicans after winning the November 2022 elections, has sought further clarity on the DOJ's investigations of Hunter Biden, including its eventual decision earlier this year to charge the businessman with several financial-related crimes.

Despite the secrecy of the hearing due to it being about an ongoing investigation, a copy of US Attorney David Weiss' opening statement was given to the press by the DOJ.

"I am, and have been, the decision-maker on this case," Weiss said.

"At no time was I blocked, or otherwise prevented from pursuing charges or taking the steps necessary in the investigation by other United States Attorneys, the Tax Division or anyone else at the Department of Justice," he said.

Earlier this year, two whistleblowers from the US Internal Revenue Service (IRS) claimed before a different congressional committee that the investigation into Biden had been "slow-walked" by Ziegler, delaying a search warrant until after the November 2020 election and then quietly burying it.

Biden is charged with crimes related to possessing a handgun while still considered a drug user, and for an alleged failure to pay federal income taxes. However, Republicans have claimed that Weiss buried far more serious corruption charges against Biden.

Democrats have called the effort a "waste of time" and an attempt to sour the Biden name ahead of the coming 2024 elections, when US President Joe Biden is expected to once again appear on the ballot.

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Scientists Discover Florida's First Migrant Vertebrates From the Caribbean: Frogs

A working theory suggests that the particular cold-blooded vertebras managed to make their way toward the US mainland millions of years ago through a potential land bridge that connected to what is now known as the Caribbean region.

A team of researchers have revealed how frogs from the Eleutherodactylus genus are considered the oldest Caribbean vertebrates to be found in the US state of Florida after officials unearthed a collection of frog fossils in the Sunshine State.

In explaining the migration shift, researchers cited factors associated with "temporal changes in climate and ecology that operated at different geographic scales."

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The fossils, referred to as Eleutherodactylus genus, were believed to have originated in the Caribbean in the Oligocene Epoch - 33.9 to 23 million years ago, and then colonized Central America in the Middle Miocene Epoch - 16 to 11 million years ago.

But researchers say the Eleutherodactylus (rain frogs or robber frogs) was established in North America by the Late Oligocene, before colonizing Central America in the Miocene Epoch - several million years before their first recorded dispersal in Central America, making them - geologically - the oldest Caribbean vertebrates to be found in Florida.

The oldest-known fossil from this genus belongs to the coquí frog, which has been in the Caribbean forests for a minimum of 29 million years.

Researchers at the Florida Museum have long suspected that some North American frogs first originated in the Caribbean but they weren't exactly sure how.

"There was a gap in knowledge, but the answer was under our noses the whole time," said María Vallejo-Pareja, first author of the paper. "We already had the fossils, which were collected from the 1970s through the 1990s. We just hadn't worked on them."

Comparing the fossils discovered across northern Florida to the specimen collections of both extinct and living frogs, Vallejo-Pareja found that most of their fossils belonged to the genus Eleutherodactylus, known for having a history of migration.

The genus first originated in the Caribbean from an ancestor that dispersed from South America as early as 47 million years ago during the Eocene Epoch. Then, they diversified on the island through a process called adaptive radiation.

"These fossils are millimeters big," Vallejo-Pareja said, with the smallest fossil measuring just 16 millimeters in length. "So getting to work with them, without breaking or losing them, was a breathtaking moment. And I mean that literally, because if I'm sitting at the microscope with my fossil and I sneeze or breathe too hard, it's gone."

But in order to discover how these frogs traveled a vast expanse of ocean, researchers will have to conduct further studies with more fossils in Central America. However, one theory suggests Florida's landmass was once connected to the Caribbean, and that a land bridge allowed for these migrations.

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Astronomers Discover Oldest Black Hole Yet

One aspect of the black hole has never been seen before: it is at a growth stage that is so early, its mass is similar to its host galaxy.

Using data from NASA's Chandra X-ray Observatory and NASA's James Webb Space Telescope, a team of researchers have discovered a growing black hole that is inside a galaxy located 13.2 billion light-years from Earth.

The blackhole, researchers deduced, was formed just 470 million years after the big bang, making it the oldest black hole to be discovered yet.

"We needed Webb to find this remarkably distant galaxy and Chandra to find its supermassive black hole," said Akos Bogdan from the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, who led

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the paper. “We also took advantage of a cosmic magnifying glass that boosted the amount of light we detected.”

The galaxy that Bogdan and his team found is named UHZ1 and is in the direction of the galaxy cluster Abell 2744. After discovering the galaxy, two weeks of observations with Chandra revealed an intense X-ray emitting gas in the galaxy: a clear sign of a growing supermassive black hole.

The black hole, which is estimated to be 10 to 100 million times more massive than our sun, may help astronomers understand how black holes can reach colossal masses in such a short amount of time.

“There are physical limits on how quickly black holes can grow once they’ve formed, but ones that are born more massive have a head start. It’s like planting a sapling, which takes less time to grow into a full-size tree than if you started with only a seed,” said Andy Goulding, of Princeton University and a co-author of the paper.

Bogdan and his team have found evidence that the black hole was, indeed, born massive. Its mass is similar to that of all the stars in its galaxy where it resides, which is very different from other, nearby black holes that typically contain just 1/10th of a percent of the mass of their galaxy’s stars.

Most likely, the black hole was formed from the collapse of a huge cloud of gas. The phenomenon is referred to as an ‘Outside Black Hole,’ and this particular black hole may be the first detection of such a phenomenon. Either way, the discovery is not only a first in terms of learning more about black holes - it will also help researchers paint a wider, and more detailed picture of what the universe first looked like following its creation.

“This is one of the most dramatic discoveries to come out of the James Webb Space Telescope” and the discovery of the most distant growing supermassive black hole known, said Michael Strauss, a professor and chair of astrophysical sciences at Princeton, who discussed the findings with the researchers but was not part of the research team, has said that the new find is "one of the most dramatic discoveries to come out of the James Webb Space Telescope." “Indeed, it completely smashes the old record," he added.

The team's findings were published in the journal Nature Astronomy.

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New Evidence Suggests Buried Indonesian Structure is World's Oldest Known Pyramid

The structure, which is located in Indonesia's West Java Province, carries a name that translates to “Mountain of Enlightenment.” So far, new findings hint it's living up to its name for scientists.

A new study involving the collaborative efforts of archaeologists, geophysicists, geologists, and paleontologists alongside institutions in Indonesia, has suggested the structure known as Gunung Padang may be the oldest known pyramid across the globe.

Using seismic tomography, electrical resistivity tomography and ground-penetrating radar, the team’s data showed that older parts of the pyramid were constructed some 25,000 years ago.

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The timeline offered by researchers would put the pyramid's initial construction in the last Ice Age: imagine cave paintings, spears, and the extinct species of the Neanderthals roaming what is now Europe, while Denisovans were found across Siberia and Asia.

"Radiocarbon dating of organic soils from the structures uncovered multiple construction stages dating back thousands of years BCE, with the initial phase dating to the Palaeolithic era," officials noted in their study.

The site, which has long been treated as sacred by its locals, was declared a cultural heritage site in 1998. For a long time the structure was believed to have been a naturally occurring hill, but through extensive research that first began in 2011, researchers determined the megalith was built in complex, sophisticated stages by human hands. However, it's of note that it wasn't until 2018 when researchers suggested the structure may be man-made.

"This study strongly suggests that Gunung Padang is not a natural hill but a pyramid-like construction," the authors write.

Not only was the structure built by human hands during the Ice Age, its continued construction also spanned thousands of years of progress. The study's authors detailed the pyramid was built in four distinct stages over thousands of years.

Officials found that the deepest part of the Gunung Padang lay 30 meters (nearly 100 feet) beneath its peak, and believe the form (which they refer to as Unit 4) most likely originated as a natural lava hill that was then "meticulously sculpted" into its present form.

After this initial form was constructed, the next area, referred to by the researchers as Unit 3, was built using columnar blocks and was "arranged like bricks in a building," and was constructed some time between 6,000 and 5,500 BCE. The final piece, Unit 1, was built between 2,000 and 1,100 BCE.

The discovery also dramatically opposes the assumption that sophisticated building techniques were first developed alongside the emergence of agriculture, which occurred about 11,000 years ago.

"The builders of Unit 3 and Unit 2 at Gunung Padang must have possessed remarkable masonry capabilities, which do not align with the traditional hunter-gatherer cultures," write the team of researchers.

The team also found that the entire structure had been deliberately buried several times in order to "possibly conceal its true identity for preservation purposes," perhaps explaining why it had been mistaken for a naturally occurring hill. The team also discovered "hidden cavities or chambers within the site," one of which was estimated to be 10 meters high (32 feet), 10 meters long, and 15 meters wide (50 feet).

Danny Hilman, a geologist of Indonesia's National Research and Innovation Agency who led the study, is advocating for further excavations to include these chambers so researchers may discover their hidden secrets. The future studies may help researchers discover who built the pyramid and how, as the answer to that question currently remains unknown.

"Gunung Padang stands as a remarkable testament, potentially being the oldest pyramid in the world," Hilman writes. "Further investigation and interdisciplinary research will uncover its hidden secrets and shed more light on the ancient civilizations that thrived in this enigmatic site."

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NASA's Curiosity Rover Hits Milestone After Driving 4,000 Days on Mars

According to NASA, the car-size rover is about the height of a basketball player and uses its 7 foot-long arm, a kit of 10 science instruments, 17 cameras, and a laser to collect its rock samples.

After 11 years roaming the dry, desolate planet of Mars, NASA's Curiosity rover has reached the milestone of 4,000 Martian days since it first landed on the planet in August of 2012. The rover also recently collected its 39th sample of the planet's surface.

According to NASA, Curiosity is studying whether or not Mars has ever had the capabilities to support microbial life. To do so, the rover is making its way up the base of the 3-mile-tall Mount Sharp, where the layers of the planet can tell scientists how its climate has changed over time.

Scientists are hoping the latest sample collected by Curiosity will reveal more about the climate and habitability of Mars. The region which the sample was collected from - named "Sequoia" - changed over time as the area became more rich in sulfates, which are minerals likely formed from evaporated salt water. The sample may help scientists discover how the planet's climate changed as it dried up.

"The types of sulfate and carbonate minerals that Curiosity's instruments have identified in the last year help us understand what Mars was like so long ago. We've been anticipating these results for decades, and now Sequoia will tell us even more," said Ashwin Vasavada, Curiosity's project scientist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Southern California, which leads the mission.

NASA has indicated that Curiosity "remains strong" even after having to drive 20 miles (32 kilometers) through the cold, dust and radiation of the red planet. Curiosity's energy source - nuclear power - has been monitored by engineers, and is reported to be at a capacity in which the rover can perform for many more years.

One of the rover's "eyes," a 34-millimeter focal length camera on its left side, will have to be repaired by engineers before Curiosity is back in pristine condition.

For now, the team that manages Curiosity is planning to take a break for several weeks in November, as Mars is about to disappear behind the sun during a phenomenon known as "solar conjunction." The plasma, according to NASA, can "interact with radio waves, potentially interfering with commands."

As such, engineers are leaving the rover with a "to-do list" for their break this month. Hopefully, the rover will complete its homework by the time the scientists get back to work.

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Growing Evidence Shows How Artillery Fire in Syria, Iraq Left US Troops With Brain Damage

Service members often suffer debilitating mental health problems that shatter lives and relationships. Reporting suggests the US military is aware of the problem but has done little to address it.

Reporting in US media is drawing a link between mental health issues suffered by returning soldiers and the US military's unprecedented reliance on long-range heavy arms fire in Iraq and Syria.

Renewed attention to the issue comes amidst studies in recent yearsexamining the effect of shockwaves from heavy weapons fire on the human brain.

Military guidelines once assumed there were no long-term effects from the strong blasts emitted when firing cannons, mortars, and shoulder-fired rockets. But an emerging consensus suggests microscopic damage to the brain caused by the frequent use of such weapons may have lasting deleterious consequences for mental and physical health.

The phenomenon is likened to the emerging understanding of the traumatic brain injuries caused by repeated hits in American football.

Reporting over the weekend profiled returning US service members from Iraq and Syria who suffer numerous maladies, including headaches, nightmares, memory loss, depression, anxiety, hallucinations, and suicidal ideation.

Many soldiers cope with homelessness and chronic unemployment as a result of their conditions. One member of a Marine Corps gun crew committed suicide after suffering from years of headaches and depression. His team fired 7,188 artillery rounds in just a few months in Iraq.

Another coped with bouts of psychosis after returning from Syria, hearing voices and suffering from hallucinations. He was ruled not guilty by reason of insanity after he broke into a stranger's home and killed a man. He's currently committed to a locked ward of a mental hospital in Minnesota.

Compounding the issue is the military's lack of experience and knowledge in responding to such brain injuries. Service members suffering from more serious conditions are often misdiagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, attention-deficit disorder, or depression.

Those who violate behavioral codes are sometimes given an other-than-honorable discharge, which can deny them access to medical help or disability payments. For many, this can be the beginning of a steady downward spiral.

Key to the problem is the recent US strategy of relying on long-distance heavy arms fire in combat, especially during their intervention in the Syrian Civil War. The US military was sensitive to domestic opposition after unpopular campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, and US politicians never sold intervention in Syria to the public as they did with those conflicts.

Military planners sought to achieve their objectives in Syria through heavy reliance on the use of artillery, which requires fewer soldiers than other forms of combat and risks fewer casualties from direct confrontation.

Troops fired tens of thousands of shells there, numbers not seen since the Vietnam War. The artillery blasts are capable of lobbing 100-pound shells as far as 15 miles away, producing strong shockwaves in the process that affected entire military crews.

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The US Marine Corps undertook a study examining the issue, concluding in 2019 that US service members are indeed being harmed by the weapons, but interviews with soldiers suggest no safeguards have been enacted since.

"I gave the Marine Corps everything," said one retired service member. "And they spit me out with nothing. Damaged, damaged, very damaged."

The US military invaded Iraq in 2003 amidst unfounded claims that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction. Some sources estimated the invasion resulted in more than 1 million excess deaths in the country.

Meanwhile, the US has intervened in the Syrian Civil War since 2014, seeking to help overthrow the country's leader Bashar al-Assad. The US Central Intelligence Agency committed over $1 billion to help train Syrian rebels, one of the most expensive known operations ever undertaken by the agency.

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'Control Him If You Can': Judge Threatens to Eject Trump From Witness Stand

Judge Arthur Engoron warned Donald Trump's lawyer of potential consequences over the former president's conduct in answering questions Monday.

Former President Donald Trump continued to demonstrate disdain for the judge and staff presiding over his New York civil fraud trial, with the judge threatening to remove Trump from the witness stand for uncooperative behavior on Monday.

The conflict arose during questioning of the former president. Trump was accused of providing long, rambling answers to the prosecution's inquiries, failing to answer questions and instead using the opportunity to attack prosecutors and pursue unrelated tangents.

"Mr. Kise, can you control your client?" asked Judge Engoron to Trump's lawyer Christopher Kise at one point. "This is not a political rally. This is a courtroom."

"I beseech you to control him if you can… If you can't, I will. I will excuse him and draw every negative inference that I can."

Trump has expressed contempt for New York state's legal process against him since the trial began last month. He's accused New York Attorney General Letitia James, a Democrat, of conducting a "political witch hunt" in a trial that sees the former president accused of massively inflating the value of his properties to secure loans and benefits.

Last month, Judge Engoron imposed a gag order on Trump after he attacked one of his clerks on social media. Engoron expressed concern that the post on Trump's Truth Social platform, which included a photo of the clerk, may subject them to violent reprisal.

Trump's rhetoric Monday continued to target Judge Engoron specifically, someone the former president in the past has called a "Trump hater" and "rogue judge."

"I'm sure the judge [Engoron] will rule against me because he always rules against me," said Trump of the judge during one exchange.

"You can attack me, you can do whatever you want, but answer the question," instructed Engoron in response.

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Current polling shows Americans' approval of the former president stands at around 41% while President Biden's approval rating has slipped to 37%, meaning the United States is headed toward another presidential election with two unpopular major party candidates. Meanwhile, approval of the US Congress stands at around 17%.

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Researchers: Saturn's Iconic Rings Will Disappear Soon

The planet's rings will become invisible in March of 2025, meaning amateur astronomers wishing to see them may want to take advantage of the opportunity soon.
Generations of children have been taught to distinguish the planet Saturn as the one in our solar system with large characteristic rings, but astronomers say they will become invisible from Earth in 2025.
The event, called the Saturnian equinox, occurs once about every 15 years when the planet's angle of tilt reaches zero degrees. This means the edge of the rings will be facing us.
The rings' typical height of about 300 feet is miniscule compared to other celestial distances, meaning the rings will disappear in visibility entirely (compare the phenomenon to viewing the edge of a thin sheet of paper).
The disappearance will only be temporary however as the angle of tilt continues to change, and the rings will soon become visible again. In fact, Saturn will reach its maximum inclination of 27 degrees in 2032, giving us the best possible view of the rings. The planet's Southern Pole will be highly visible during this time as well.
Saturn's iconic rings are made up of dust, ice, asteroids, comets, and pieces of shattered moons that orbit the planet. They were first discovered by the Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei in 1610.
The planet is also distinguished by its 146 moons, the most of any planet in our solar system.
The "gas giant" is mostly made up of hydrogen and helium, making it unsuitable for human life.
Although Saturn's rings will only visibly disappear in 2025, scientists speculate they will eventually no longer exist at all as the planet's gravity pulls them inward. "Saturn is losing its rings at [a] 'worst-case-scenario' rate," said NASA in 2018.
However, most people probably won't have to worry about their complete dissipation occurring during their lifetimes. Scientists believe the rings will only fully cease to exist in about 300 million years.

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British Researchers Say Cockney and King's English Accents Disappearing

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A study found that the well-known dialects of the English language are becoming less common, being replaced by emerging accents in southeast England.

The United Kingdom is home to some 40 different dialects of the English language, but researchers have discovered that some of its most distinctive ones are rapidly becoming less common.

Cockney and King's English were found to be in decline in a study of 18 to 33-year-olds in the South East of England.

Cockney is a dialect associated with urban working class English people, especially in the East-End of London. The accent is known for its extensive rhyming slang; music fans may recognize it if they recall the voice of Joe Strummer of the punk rock group The Clash. Its modest roots have caused some to perceive it with a certain amount of stigma, while for others it may be seen as a symbol of pride and authenticity.

King's English, meanwhile, is perhaps viewed as its complete opposite. Called by some "proper English," it's the refined form of the language long associated with the British ruling class – Kings, Dukes, Duchesses. Its first citation dates all the way back to 1553.

King's English appears to be truly fading away, but Cockney lives on in its influence on more modern English dialects. One of the dialects identified by researchers in the study is estuary English, spoken by celebrities such as Adele. Researchers say this dialect could be considered similar to Cockney, but less extreme.

Meanwhile, multicultural London English combines working-class London accents with influences from Black British and Asian British communities. British rapper Stormzy is provided as an example of this form of dialect.

Researchers say the drift towards new dialects "occurs as a result of the increased movement of people resulting in greater contact between dialects, the growth of universal education and literacy, and people buying into the idea that there is a 'correct' or 'standard' way of speaking."

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US Lawmaker Slams Pro-Israel Lobby: 'I Don't Give a F*** About AIPAC'

A congressional lawmaker from Wisconsin recently took the gloves off in an interview with US media about the influence of the Zionist group in Washington politics.

US Rep. Mark Pocan (D-WI) sharply criticized the influence of the pro-Israel lobby in US politics on Monday, singling out the role of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC).

"It's time to call them out for what they are – a front group for conservative policy here in the US – instead of being afraid of them," said Pocan in an interview with US media.

"I don't give a f*** about AIPAC – period. I think they're a cancerous presence on our democracy and politics in general, and if I can be a surgeon, that's great."

The statement represents the latest salvo in an ongoing feud between Pocan and the historically influential lobbying group. Last month, AIPAC accused Pocan and several

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Democratic members of the US House of "trying to keep Hamas in power" in a post on the X social media platform.

The accusation came after several lawmakers voted against a billexpressing unconditional support for Israel's military action in Gaza (Pocan was not among them). Nine Democratic lawmakers were joined by US Rep. Thomas Massie (R-KY) in opposing the bill, with Massie stating opposition to the bill's support for sanctions and implied future commitment of US troops in the conflict.

Pocan responded on the platform, posting "AIPAC is good at not telling the truth… We just don't support killing kids, which it seems you do."

At least 4,100 minors and 10,022 people in total have been killed in Israel's ongoing attacks on the besieged Gaza Strip over the last month, according to latest figures provided by officials. Additionally, Israeli soldiers and settlers have killed 155 people in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, territory illegally occupied by Israel under international law since 1967.

Pro-Israel lobbying groups like AIPAC have helped make Israel the single largest recipient of US foreign aid since World War II, procuring as much as $3.9 billion in yearly assistance for the country.

Criticizing Israel and the influence of the pro-Israel lobby has proven taboo in US politics. US Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN), one of only three Muslim members of US Congress, was denounced as antisemitic after criticizing the influence of Zionist lobbyists in 2019. The incident saw her attract criticism from prominent members of her own party, including Rep. Jerry Nadler (D-NY) and Chelsea Clinton, daughter of former US President Bill Clinton.

Omar was again castigated after a post on social media criticizing Israel in 2021. Omar shared recordings of threatening voicemail she received in response to public criticism against her at the time, including threatening messages such as "Muslims are terrorists" and one caller saying he hopes her campaign volunteers "get what's f***ing coming to you." Public treatment of Muslim officials such as Omar and fellow Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), the only Palestinian member of US Congress, has prompted discussion of the role of Islamophobia and Orientalism in public life.

Orientalism is prejudice against people from the Middle East and Middle Eastern culture. The term was popularized by Palestinian scholar Edward Said in his 1978 book "Orientalism," which argued that domination of the region is fueled by Western contempt and stereotypical assumptions about the Arab world.

A recent study by researchers at Brown University found that as many as 3.8 million people have been killed amidst US-backed military action in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, and other countries in the 20th century. US interference in the region has been ongoing for decades, and includes a CIA-backed coup in Iran in 1953, US funding of Mujahideen forces in Afghanistan since the late 1970s, and continued US military support for Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territories.

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Lawmakers Introduce Section 702 Bill Renewing Spying Powers for US Intel Agencies

Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act has repeatedly been condemned, with critics highlighting how its broad provisions allow warrantless surveillance of foreign nationals.
A bipartisan group of US lawmakers introduced a bill to reauthorize Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act on Tuesday, touting new provisions they claim address longstanding concerns.
“Americans understand that it's possible to confront our countries' adversaries ferociously without throwing our constitutional rights into the garbage can,” said Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR), one of the bill’s co-sponsors, at a news conference.
“Our Founding Fathers made it clear that if government agencies want to read an American's private communications, they should get a warrant.”
Section 702 was a provision of the US Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act first enacted in 2008 to ostensibly enhance counterterrorism operations. The legislation codified the collection of electronic data from around the globe by US intelligence agencies.
The storing of communications involving American citizens enabled by the legislation has long attracted controversy, with dissident Daniel Ellsberg comparing US data gathering efforts to the actions of the East German Stasi secret police.
Earlier this year, it was revealed the FBI illegally searched Section 702 databases to uncover information about a US senator, state senator, and a state judge.
Wyden’s bill places warrant requirements on searches of US citizens’ data and introduces other protections. In the absence of a warrant, searches of 702 data would need to be justified by a risk of death or serious physical harm or a legal granting of consent.
The bill would also require intelligence agencies to receive approval from the US attorney general for searches of data from or about a US citizen. Such searches would be permitted in cases related to drug trafficking, terrorism, cyberattacks, and attacks on infrastructure or government officials.
The Electronic Freedom Foundation, a US-based civil libertarian group, supported the legislation in a statement released Tuesday while advocating for additional protections to be passed.
“While Section 702 was first sold as a tool necessary to stop foreign terrorists, it has since become clear that the government uses the communications it collects under this law as a domestic intelligence source,” the group said in a statement.
“Because we live in an increasingly globalized world, the government retains a massive trove of communications between people overseas on US persons.”
Meanwhile, a spokesperson for US President Joe Biden criticized the bill, though they confessed they haven’t yet read its full text. The senior official claimed the legislation is “both the wrong fit for what we're doing and operationally unworkable.”
Surveillance efforts by the United States have attracted significant attention and criticism in recent decades.
Former intelligence consultant and whistleblower Edward Snowden has been living in Russia since leaking classified information about US data gathering operations in 2013. Australian citizen Julian Assange is currently being held in Belmarsh Prison in the United Kingdom while

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the US seeks his extradition for leaking information about US surveillance programs and other state secrets.

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Scientists Revise Forecasted Collision With Renegade Star 29,000 Years From Now

People expecting to be alive in the year 31023 will be pleased to know that predictions of planetary destruction were greatly exaggerated.
Astronomers are revising predictions a renegade star may end life as we know it 29,000 years from now.
The findings were published earlier this year in a journal of astrophysics research and relate to the star WD 0810–353, a white dwarf. Previous research based on observations from the European Space Agency's Gaia telescope suggested the star could be moving in our direction. While it may not directly hit Earth, researchers speculated the heavenly body could pass close enough to our solar system to disrupt the Oort cloud, sending some of its comets and icy debris hurtling our way.
Scientists are now rethinking that conclusion after taking into account the star's magnetic field. Closer examination of the white dwarf has revealed it has an unusually large magnetic field. This was determined while viewing the star through the Very Large Telescope (VLT) located in northern Chile's remote Atacama Desert.
Researchers there combined data gathered from the telescope with findings from the Focal Reducer and Low Dispersion Spectrograph 2 (FORS2), an instrument that examines the color spectra of celestial light.
The researchers determined the findings based on observations from the Gaia telescope were inaccurate, with the light emitted from the star distorted by its magnetic field. This led the scientists to conclude the star likely isn't headed toward our solar system at all.
The findings suggest a reprieve for our planet, at least for another 5 billion years. At that point astronomers say our sun will run out of hydrogen, swelling into a red giant that engulfs Earth and the other planets of our solar system.
Humanity's survival at that point may depend on whether we've been able to colonize other planets---and if, of course, we survive long enough to overcome more immediate threats such as climate change.

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Poll Position - Cartoon

A series of unflattering polling results for President Joe Biden is raising concerns among Democratic strategists about his viability in next year's election.

A new Siena College poll released this week shows President Joe Biden trailing Donald Trump in five competitive battleground states in a hypothetical matchup in next year's presidential election. The sole state showing Biden with a lead – Wisconsin – only has him up a mere two percent.

The results are causing heartburn for a number of prominent Democratic consultants, among them former Obama campaign member Jim Messina and Black Voters Matter Fund co-founder Cliff Albright. Some of these consultants went public with their concerns in a recent article in US media. Among their critiques were their dismay over the president's "Bidenomics" message not catching fire as was hoped.

"People fundamentally misunderstood what Black voters said in 2020," said Albright, co-founder of the Black Voters Matter Fund. "The depth of support was never there. The enthusiasm was never there for Biden. We were very pragmatic. We knew he was the best chance to beat Trump."

While Trump is embroiled in legal troubles, polls show that Americans appear to be more so disillusioned by Biden's current policies: including his recent responses to Ukraine and Israel, as well as his actions regarding student debt. In addition, Biden is seen as too old by at least three-quarters of Americans, according to an August poll.

"There's a distance between Biden and younger voters that we're going to have to overcome. This is a weakness that we're going to have to address. I think it is doable," said Simon Rosenberg, a Democratic strategist.

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Three Pandas Leave US National Zoo to Return to China - Sputnik Correspondent

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) - Three giant pandas have left the Smithsonian's National Zoo in Washington DC to fly back to their homeland, China, a Sputnik correspondent reported on Wednesday.

While the departure was announced to take place at around 9:00 a.m. EST (14:00 GMT), people came to the gates of the now former home of the White and Black bears at 7:00 a.m.

A sign attached to the zoo gates said "Closed until mid-morning" amid the transfer of the beloved pandas. Along with an increased police and press presence, there were many regular members of the public with children. Some were holding toy pandas, some were crying, many had come from other towns just to say goodbye to the departing animals.

The Smithsonian's National Zoo in Washington and China's Wildlife and Conservation Society have a three-year agreement to keep the three panda bears in the US capital through 2023. The agreement is set to expire in December.

Chinese Embassy in Washington spokesperson Liu Pengyu told Sputnik in October the China

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Wildlife Conservation Association and the National Zoo in Washington had announced that the three giant pandas — Mei Xiang, Tian Tian and Xiao Qi Ji — would return to China at the end of the year as previously scheduled.

Liu also said that US and Chinese technical cooperation units are communicating on future collaboration on giant panda research and conservation.

The giant panda is an unofficial symbol of China. In July 2021, the Chinese authorities announced that giant pandas are no longer an endangered species in the country, as their population has grown to more than 1,800 individuals in the wild over the past decade.

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Mayorkas Says Additional Funding Needed to Ensure Safety of Faith-Based Communities

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) – The US government needs additional funding to ensure the safety and security of faith-based communities across the country, Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas said on Wednesday.

"Additional funding is critical to ensuring the safety and security of faith-based communities currently facing an elevated threat environment," Mayorkas said at a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing.

He stressed the need to provide those communities with resources that would help them to be ready for possible threats amid the ongoing war in Gaza.

"The supplemental funding request would provide an additional $200 million for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program, which would allow more nonprofit organizations across the nation to protect themselves against potential violent extremist or terrorist attacks," Mayorkas said.

The secretary also pointed to the importance of supporting communities receiving migrants, adding that the Biden administration has requested $1.4 billion for additional grants to local governments and non-profits for temporary food, shelter, and other services.

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US Transportation Secretary Visits Ukraine - Transportation Department

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) – US Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg is meeting with Ukrainian leaders in Kiev to discuss the country's economic recovery, according to a release on Wednesday.

"The discussions will focus on advancing Ukraine's economic recovery and efforts to return Ukraine to economic self-sufficiency, including via supporting investments in transportation infrastructure and reforms that will support a return to private-sector led growth," the release stated.

Buttigieg will also announce the appointment of a senior-level advisor, Robert Mariner, who will

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be located in Kiev in order to provide technical assistance and share best practices on infrastructure project delivery.

Mariner previously served as an advisor to the transportation counselor at the US Embassy in Kabul.

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One in Five Canadians Relies on Charitable Services to Meet Essential Needs - Poll

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) – High inflationary levels are still being felt in Canada as one in five reports using charitable services to meet their essential needs, while nearly a quarter expects to need them in the next six months, an Ipsos poll revealed on Wednesday.

"Two in 10 (20%) Canadians are currently using charitable services to meet their essential needs (e.g. food, shelter, clothing), while a slightly larger proportion (24%) expect to need charitable services in the near future (six months) to meet their essential needs," the poll said.

Future anticipated need is even higher in Quebec (24%) and for Canadians under the age of 35 (42%).

Among those who have reached out to charitable organizations to meet their needs, almost 70% said it was the first year they have sought help of charitable services to meet their essential needs.

Fifty-four percent of them said they have done it due to the rising cost of living. Other reasons include a mental or physical health issue, unemployment, providing caregiver support, domestic violence, and battling addiction.

In a separate Ipsos poll released on Wednesday, 78% of those surveyed said that high inflation and rising interest rates have had a significant impact on their holiday spending budget.

Nearly 30% are set to spend less on gifts during the coming holiday season and half (49%) are afraid they might be unable to purchase presents for their family or loved ones. Some 48% are concerned about spending more that they can afford, the poll said.

Among the reasons for tighter holiday budget, 51% said they were being more careful with their finances than in previous years, 1 in 2 pointed to the increased spending on everyday necessities, while 28% said it was because they were making less money than before.

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Ohio Votes to Protect Abortion Rights, Legalize Recreational Marijuana - State Results

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) – Ohio voters approved two ballot measures on Tuesday, enshrining the right to reproductive care, including abortions, in the state constitution, as well as the legalization of recreational marijuana use, preliminary results showed.

The Ohio Secretary of State's office said 58.62% of voters approved a ballot measure to amend

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the constitution to enshrine the right to "abortion and other reproductive decisions," while 43.38% voted against it.

Meanwhile, early results showed that 66.97% of voters approved a measure to "commercialize, regulate, legalize and tax the adult use of cannabis," while 43.03% opposed it.

The closely watched referendum in the Republican-dominated state made Ohio the seventh state to protect abortion access after the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade's federal abortion standard, and the 24th state to legalize recreational marijuana.

Abortion remains legal up to 22 weeks of pregnancy before the fetus is viable outside the uterus. Activists pushed to get the constitutional amendment on the ballot after a six-week ban went into effect last year. The ban is on hold amid litigation.

Ohioans over 21 will to able to possess up to 2.5 ounces of marijuana and grow up to six plants. A Division of Cannabis Control will be created to set up and regulate the adult-use cannabis market.

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US Conservatives Call for House Judiciary Hearing on Google, TikTok Partnership – Letter

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) – US conservative groups have called for House Judiciary Chairman Jim Jordan to convene a hearing on a potential partnership between Google and TikTok, according to a copy of the letter obtained by Fox News.

"This partnership between Google and TikTok is deeply concerning as it threatens core principles of the free market and the individual freedom and privacy of everyday Americans. If unchecked, Google will consolidate more market share and TikTok could potentially tap into a wealth of data about its users' search and browsing habits," the letter stated.

The two tech companies are testing a search partnership, whereby some searches within TikTok display an option to carry out the search in Google.

"Given the potential consequences of this development, we urgently request that you convene a hearing to examine this new partnership between TikTok and Google, as well as other ways that Big Tech companies are undermining Americans' privacy, national security, and the free market," the letter said.

The letter was signed by representatives of the Heritage Foundation, Internet Accountability Project, American Principles Project, and Bull Moose Project.

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PREVIEW - Republican Candidates for US President Hold 3rd Debate, Trump Again Set to Skip Event

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WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) - Five Republican presidential hopefuls will take the stage on Wednesday for the third primary debate of the 2024 US election cycle, although former US President Donald Trump is again set to skip the event amid his lead in the polls.

The handful of remaining candidates — Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, businessman Vivek Ramaswamy, former US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley, US Sen. Tim Scott and former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie — will attend the debate in Miami.

Thresholds required to make the debate stage increased from the previous debates, cutting out candidates with poor fundraising and poll performances.

However, Trump declined to attend the debate despite leading in primary polls. Trump maintains 55.8% support, DeSantis 13.8%, Haley 8.8%, Ramaswamy 4.9%, Christie 3% and Scott 2%, according to FiveThirtyEight primary poll averages released Tuesday.

Trump leads incumbent US President Joe Biden in five out of six so-called "battleground" states, a Siena College Research Institute poll released earlier this week said.

Trump has dismissed the previous debates as wastes of time due to purportedly poor viewership.

Trump faces lawsuits in the states of Colorado and Minnesota that seek to prevent him from appearing on election ballots due to his alleged role in the January 6, 2021 US Capitol riot. Trump is also involved in several other criminal and civil court cases.

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US House Passes Resolution to Censure Congresswoman Tlaib for Statements on Palestine

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives on Tuesday passed a resolution to censure Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib for spreading "false narratives" about the conflict between Israel and Palestinian movement Hamas.

House lawmakers passed the resolution, introduced by Congressman Rich McCormick, in a 234-to-188 vote.

McCormick's resolution condemns Tlaib for "promoting false narratives" about Hamas' October 7 surprise attack on Israel and "calling for the destruction of the state of Israel," according to the bill text.

The resolution follows a similar attempt by Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene to censure Tlaib for her pro-Palestine stances; the House of Representatives blocked Greene's resolution last week after nearly two dozen House Republicans joined Democrats to prevent its consideration on the floor.

Greene also introduced an updated resolution to condemn Tlaib for allegedly inciting an "illegal occupation" at the US Capitol, whereas the initial resolution referred to the incident as an "insurrection" — a term frequently associated with the breach of the US Capitol by protesters on January 6, 2021.

Tlaib has characterized the censure efforts as "deeply Islamophobic" and reaffirmed her commitment to working with peace advocates and calling for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. Tlaib accused her fellow lawmakers of "distorting" her positions in resolutions.

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Greene has also called for Tlaib's expulsion from Congress, which was echoed by US Senator Marsha Blackburn.

"Rashida Tlaib is a sitting member of Congress with alleged ties to Hamas terrorists. This should be investigated immediately, and if true, the House should move to expel her," Blackburn said in a statement on X (formerly known as Twitter).

Censure in the US House of Representatives is a largely symbolic condemnation of a lawmaker's actions and involves formal rebuking by the House Speaker.

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

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IMF Warns Inflation, Stagnant Growth Could Undermine Europe's Financial Stability - Report

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) warned that inflation and stagnant growth could undermine financial stability and debt sustainability in Europe.

"A stagflation scenario with higher inflation and stagnant growth is a key risk that could lead to adverse macro-financial spillovers to financial stability and debt sustainability," the IMF said in its new Regional Economic Outlook (REO) for Europe.

The fund pointed out that downside risks to growth are currently dominating.

The IMF also expressed concerns over additional commodity price shocks and more persistent core inflation. Those potential risks could force central banks to tighten monetary policy more than expected, thus lowering growth, it added.

The report did not rule out that more backward-looking wage settings and tighter labor markets could increase inflation in some countries.

The regional economy also faces high risks to financial stability, the report said.
Larger-than-expected interest rate hikes and weakening of the region's property market could cause systemic financial instability, the IMF added.

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Escalation in Ukraine, Sanctions Would Disrupt Trade, Financial Flows in Europe – IMF

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) – An escalation of the conflict in Ukraine and related sanctions would negatively affect trade, remittances and financial flows in Europe, the

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International Monetary Fund (IMF) said.
"An escalation of Russia's war in Ukraine and associated sanctions would disrupt trade, remittances, foreign direct investment, and financial flows, threatening recovery prospects," the IMF said in its new Regional Economic Outlook for Europe.
The fund warned that geopolitical risks in the continent remain substantial.
The IMF also stressed that weakened international cooperation, protectionism and shortages of metals could lead to supply disruptions, rising input costs and financial instability.
Meanwhile, a greater-than-expected weakening of growth in China could affect global capital and funding markets, it added.

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IMF Says Russian Economy Recovered Steadily But Expresses Concerns Over Medium-Term

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) - The Russian economy has recovered steadily after the Western governments imposed comprehensive sanctions but the medium-term prospects are less encouraging, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said in a report.
"The economy has recovered steadily and has returned to its prewar level in the second quarter of this year," the IMF said in its Regional Economic Outlook.
As a result of the positive economic developments, the IMF revised its GDP growth forecast for Russia in 2023 to 2.2% from 0.7% in April, the report said.
"The turnaround was initially achieved by improved terms of trade related to high energy prices, followed by a substantial increase in military spending later last year and earlier this year that boosted aggregate demand, supported consumption, and encouraged investment," the report said.
However, the IMF decreased its GDP growth forecast for 2024 to 1.1% from 1.3% in April, while maintaining its outlook for 2025 unchanged at 1%, the report said.
"Medium-term prospects are less encouraging. Higher fiscal spending will generally allow for a temporary and not a sustained pickup in growth, given its composition," the report said.
The IMF found that the record-low rate of unemployment, the depreciation of the ruble, the rise in inflation and the Bank of Russia's sizable interest rate hike of 350 basis points in August indicate that the Russian economy reached the edge of its potential, the report added.

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IMF Expects Inflation in Europe to Recede Gradually - Regional Outlook

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said that inflation in Europe is expected to recede gradually in the foreseeable future.
"Inflation is expected to recede only gradually over the forecast period. While subdued

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domestic demand in 2023 and lower commodity prices will be passed through to core inflation, the projected recovery in real incomes and still-strong labor markets will slow the pace of disinflation," the IMF said in its new Regional Economic Outlook (REO) for Europe.

The fund warned that most countries in the continent likely will not reach their inflation targets before 2025. The report also pointed out that many economies, particularly emerging markets, may find themselves in a situation where sustained nominal wage growth exceeds inflation and productivity growth rates.

"Inflation could become entrenched, requiring additional policy tightening and potentially leading to stagflation," the report warned.

The IMF also said that Europe faces structural shifts from geopolitical fragmentation and climate change, adding that they are compounding already-existing long-term growth problems. Weakening productivity growth remains a key factor clouding medium-term growth prospects, the report added.

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IMF to Undertake Second Review of Ukraine Program in Fall 2023 - Report

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) announced that it will provide a second review of its program for Ukraine by the end of the fall.

"IMF staff will undertake the second review together with the Article IV consultation in the fall of 2023," the IMF said in its new Regional Economic Outlook for Europe.

The first review under the four-year Extended Fund Facility (EEF), which enabled the disbursement of about $890 million, was approved by the IMF Executive Board in late June.

Ukraine had met all the necessary criteria, but different reforms, including in governance and anticorruption frameworks, must be undertaken, the report said.

"With spending pressures growing, developing and executing a 2024 budget consistent with fiscal and debt sustainability will be critical," the report said.

On Monday, the Ukrainian government said that the IMF mission had started the second review of the EEF program.

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Virgin Galactic to Announce Layoffs Due to Production of Delta Class Spaceships - Memo

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) - Virgin Galactic said in a press release that it will announce layoffs this week that are a result of the company streamlining production of its Delta class spaceships.

"Virgin Galactic Holdings, Inc. notified all employees today, Tuesday, November 7 of a strategic realignment of the Company's resources and a related workforce reduction to support the

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production of its Delta Class spaceships," the release said on Tuesday.
The company will provide additional details during an earnings call on Wednesday afternoon, the release said.
Virgin Galactic completed its fourth commercial spaceflight on October 6 using the Delta class spaceship.
Overall, Virgin Galactic has had seven launches to space on the Delta class spaceship since 2018.
The Delta class spacecraft is carried by a larger aircraft from Spaceport America in southern New Mexico and then launched mid-flight.

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Former CIA Employee Pleads Guilty to Sex Crimes in Multiple Countries - US Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) - Former CIA employee Brian Jeffrey Raymond pleaded guilty to sex crimes involving numerous women in multiple countries, the US Justice Department said in a statement.
"Raymond admitted to drugging and sexually assaulting several women in his embassy-leased housing and elsewhere between 2006 and 2020. Additionally, Raymond admitted that, over 14 years, he photographed or video recorded 28 victims while they were nude or partially nude," the statement said on Tuesday.
Raymond, who worked for the CIA and the US Embassy in Mexico City, faces between 24 and 30 years in prison, as well as supervised release for life, the statement said.
Sentencing hearings in Raymond's case are set for September 2024, the statement said.
Footage of Raymond's crimes depict him touching and manipulating the bodies of his unconscious victims, many of whom he met through dating applications, in his embassy-leased housing, the statement said.
Raymond will also be required to pay restitution to his victims as part of the plea agreement, the statement said.
Raymond pleaded guilty to similar charges in July 2021. However, he attempted to delete evidence of the crimes after learning about the criminal investigation into his actions, the statement added.

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US Officials Visiting Australia This Week to Advance AUKUS Submarine Deal - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) - A US interagency delegation will visit Australia for trilateral meetings to advance commitments under the so-called Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) security pact, a Defense Department spokesperson said.

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"Performing the Duties of Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Dr. Mara Karlin will lead a senior interagency delegation to Australia this week for a series of high-level trilateral engagements to advance the AUKUS defense and security partnership to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific region," the spokesperson said in a press release on Tuesday.

The US delegation will consist of officials from the departments of Defense, State and Energy as well as the White House National Security Council, the release said.

The officials from the three allied nations will review the progress made regarding Australia acquiring a sovereign nuclear-powered submarine capability, the release said.

The trio will also work on efforts to bolster cooperation and development on emerging technology areas, including artificial intelligence, quantum, cyber, and electronic warfare, the release added.

Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom announced the new trilateral defense partnership in September 2021. Under AUKUS, the United States plans to sell between three to five Virginia-class submarines to Australia as an interim capability in the early 2030s.

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US Defense Department UFO Chief Will Leave Post in December - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) - The head of the US Defense Department's All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office (AARO), Sean Kirkpatrick, will step down from the position next month, Politico reported, citing an interview with Kirkpatrick.

"I'm ready to move on. I have accomplished everything I said I was going to do," Kirkpatrick reportedly said on Tuesday.

Kirkpatrick delayed his plans to retire from the federal government last year in order to lead AARO, which spearheads the Pentagon's probe into unidentified anomalous phenomena (UAP, also known as UFOs). Kirkpatrick previously worked in a variety of scientific positions for the US military.

AARO deputy chief Tim Phillips will run the office in an acting position until the Pentagon taps a permanent replacement, the report said.

Kirkpatrick leaves a legacy of commitment to transparency that the Pentagon will carry forward in his absence, Deputy US Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks reportedly said.

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US Imposes Export Restrictions on 3 Companies, 7 Individuals Over Sales to Russia

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) - The US Commerce Department announced that it has temporarily denied export privileges to three companies and seven individuals for a period of 180 days over their sales to Russia.

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The targeted individuals include Nikolay Goltsev, Salimdzhon Nasriddinov and Kristina Puzyreva, who were already charged by the US Justice Department last month for allegedly being involved in an evasion of the sanctions regime and in an export control scheme.
The targeted companies include SN Electronis Inc. and SH Brothers Group, Inc., both registered in the United States, and Suntronic F.Z.E., registered in the United Arab Emirates.
The Commerce Department said its decision is based on the authority to act in response to a significant risk of export regulation violations.
The Commerce Department has said it aims to curtail Russia's access to critical technologies and items required for its military.
Specifically, the sanctions focus is on Russia's defense, aerospace, and maritime sectors with the aim of reducing their capacity to maintain military strength and exert global influence, it added.

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US House Committee Advances Bill to Freeze Funds in Biden-Iran Prisoner Swap Deal

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) - The US House Foreign Affairs Committee advanced legislation to freeze certain funds involved in a prisoner swap deal between the Biden administration and Iran.
The House panel passed the bill, dubbed the No Funds for Iranian Terrorism Act, in a vote of 29-15 during a markup meeting on Tuesday.
The legislation directs the US president to impose sanctions on financial institutions that process or facilitate transactions involving covered Iranian funds.
The bill authorizes the termination of such sanctions only when the president certifies that Iran no longer provides support for international terrorism and dismantles its weapons and missile programs.
Earlier this year, the Biden administration reached a prisoner swap deal with Iran, which involved unfreezing $6 billion in Iranian funds. However, the United States and Qatar refroze the funds following an attack on Israel by Palestinian Hamas militants.
The Biden administration has said that it lacks direct evidence linking Iran to the surprise attack on Israel, but that Iran broadly backs destabilizing proxy groups in the region.

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US House Panel Advances Bill to Authorize Transfer of Confiscated Russian Funds to Ukraine

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) - The US House Foreign Affairs Committee advanced legislation to authorize the US Secretary of State to transfer confiscated Russian funds to Ukraine.

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The House panel advanced the bill, dubbed the Rebuilding Economic Prosperity and Opportunity (REPO) for Ukrainians Act, in a vote of 40-2 on Tuesday during a markup meeting.
The legislation blocks the US Treasury Department from releasing Russian assets until the US President certifies that hostilities between Russia and Ukraine have ceased and full compensation provided to Ukrainians.
The bill authorizes the President to transfer confiscated Russian funds to a Ukraine Support Fund, which the Secretary of State can give to Ukraine for reconstruction and humanitarian efforts.
The legislation also directs the US government to lead a coordinated international sanctions regime to freeze sovereign Russian assets with partners including the European Union and Group of Seven.

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Biden Says Extending US National Emergency Regarding Iran

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said in a notice to Congress that he approved an extension of a national emergency regarding threats posed by Iran, amid an uptick in attack on US troops in the Middle East by Iran-backed groups.
"Our relations with Iran have not yet normalized," the notice said on Tuesday. "Therefore… I am continuing for 1 year the national emergency with respect to Iran declared in Executive Order 12170."
The Executive Order is intended to address national security, foreign policy and economic threats to the United States by Iran.
Iran-backed groups in Iraq and Syria have upped the frequency of attacks on US forces in the region in recent weeks, according to the Pentagon.
The uptick in attacks coincides with the emergence of a conflict between Israel and Palestinian Hamas militants. However, the Biden administration has said that it lacks direct evidence tying Iran to Hamas' October 7 surprise attack on Israel.

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US State Dept. Says Assisted With Departure of 400 American Citizens, Others From Gaza

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) – The United States has helped more than 400 American citizens, lawful permanent residents and other individuals depart Gaza amid the Israeli military campaign against Hamas, State Department Principal Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel said during a press briefing.
"We have assisted more than 400 US citizens, lawful permanent residents, and other individuals to be able to depart Gaza," Patel said on Tuesday.

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The United States continues to work in partnership with the government of Egypt and Israel towards safe passage for more US citizens, their immediate family members and US lawful permanent residents out of Gaza, Patel added.

Regarding the flow of humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip to date, approximately 526 trucks carrying humanitarian supplies have entered Gaza through the Rafah crossing, Patel added.

Later on Tuesday, Axios reported that US President Joe Biden told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that a three-day fighting pause could facilitate the release of some hostages by Hamas.

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PREVIEW - Blinken Will Visit South Korea to Discuss Indo-Pacific Security, Russia

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will be visiting Seoul on November 8-9 as part of his nearly 10-day trip across eight countries that commenced in Israel last week.

Blinken will arrive in Seoul from Tokyo after taking part in the second G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting and high-level talks with Japanese officials, including Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa.

Before Tokyo, the top US diplomat had already visited Tel Aviv, Amman, Ramallah, Baghdad, and Ankara, where he primarily dealt with the Israel-Hamas war, which has already claimed the lives of over 10,000 people.

While in Seoul, the secretary is expected to meet with President Yoon Suk Yeol, Foreign Minister Park Jin, and National Security Advisor Cho Tae-Yong to discuss ways in which the two allies can respond to global challenges, including Russia's growing cooperation with North Korea and instability in the Middle East, according to the US State Department.

The United States, Japan, and South Korea recently strongly condemned North Korea's alleged supply of weapons to aid Moscow in its conflict with Ukraine.

Moscow and Pyongyang nevertheless continue to deny that any arms transfer took place, and say that Washington has not yet been able to provide convincing proof that DPRK artillery shells were used on the battlefield in Ukraine.

The visit will also be an opportunity for Blinken to discuss mutual efforts to support bilateral investment and economic security and underscore Washington's ironclad commitment to the trilateral defense alliance with Japan and South Korea, the State Department said.

Cybersecurity is likely to be a topic of discussion for Blinken and his ROK counterparts as South Korea, Japan, and the United States agreed earlier this week to establish a high-level consultative group to block North Korea's alleged cyber activities and jointly address global cyber challenges. This is building on the agreement reached during a trilateral meeting between US President Joe Biden, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida at Camp David in August.

In Seoul, Blinken will be joined by Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, who is scheduled to

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depart Washington later in the day for his ninth trip to the region with stops in South Korea, Indonesia, and India.

The two officials' visit to Seoul will coincide with the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the security alliance between the countries.

From South Korea, Blinken and Austin will travel to New Delhi to attend the 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue. The US delegation will meet there with Minister for External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Minister of Defense Rajnath Singh, and other senior Indian officials to discuss both bilateral and global issues as well as developments in the Indo-Pacific.

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Passing Aid to Israel Without Ukraine Package is 'Non-Starter' - Senate Leader Schumer

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) - The Republican Senate proposal to follow the House of Representatives in separating aid to Israel from aid for Ukraine and other issues is a "non-starter" in the Senate, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer told a Capitol Hill press conference on Tuesday.

"A group of Senate Republicans [have] released a radical border security proposal [tied to the multi billion dollar aid package to Israel]," Schumer told reporters. "That is a non-starter... Every day the Republicans delay is another victory for [Russian President Vladimir] Putin."

Majorities of both Republican and Democratic senators still supported maintaining aid to Ukraine, Schumer said.

Senator Patty Murray said it was vital that the proposed extended supplemental aid package for Ukraine be passed as quickly as possible. "Ukraine is at a critical point in its bloody war. We must not give Putin a win and throw Ukraine to the wolves. ...We cannot kick the can down the road," she said.

Ukraine was already critically low on artillery weapons and ammunition for them and "the bottom of the barrel" would soon be visible and would soon face the prospect of empty rifles with no ammunition for them, Senator Chris Murphy told the press conference.

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Biden Urges Netanyahu to Consider 3-Day Ceasefire to Allow Release of Hostages - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) - President Biden during a phone call with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu urged him to agree to a three-day ceasefire to facilitate the potential release of some hostages held by Hamas in Gaza, Axios reported on Tuesday.

According to the report, the US, Israel, Qatar and Hamas are discussing the proposal, which would see the Palestinian group release 10-15 hostages during the pause, verify the identities of others in its custody and deliver a list of names of all the people it is holding.

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However, Netanyahu has expressed doubts about Hamas' intentions and willingness to engage in negotiations concerning the hostages, the report said.

Furthermore, Netanyahu also raised concerns about the possibility of losing international support for Israel's ongoing operation if a three-day ceasefire were to occur, the report 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.

On October 27, Israel launched a large-scale ground incursion into Gaza with the declared goal of eliminating Hamas and rescuing the hostages. The escalation of the conflict has resulted in thousands of people killed and injured on both sides.

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US, Indonesia Presidents To Discuss ASEAN, Indo-Pacific, Stability – White House

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden will host his Indonesia counterpart Joko Widodo on November 13 to discuss ASEAN, Indo-Pacific, clean energy, regional stability and other issues, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday.

"The two leaders will coordinate our efforts to reinforce ASEAN centrality and uphold international law and promote a free and open Indo-Pacific," Jean-Pierre told reporters.

She pointed out that Biden and Widodo will discuss opportunities to enhance cooperation on clean energy transition and advance economic prosperity. They will explore prospects of bolstering peace and stability in the region, she added.

During the meeting at the White House, Biden plans to reaffirm US commitment to deepening partnership with Indonesia and improving people-to-people ties between the two countries, Jean-Pierre said.

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PREVIEW - Chinese Vice Premier Begins 5-Day Visit in US for High-Level Trade Talks

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) - Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng is starting his five-day visit in the United States on Wednesday for week-long meetings on trade talks.

He will meet with Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen in San Francisco on Thursday and Friday, just days ahead of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leaders' summit set for November 15-17.

The Treasury Department has said US officials will seek to further stabilize the bilateral economic relationship and make progress on key economic issues during the meetings with He.

The Biden administration has repeatedly said it wants to deepen trade and investment ties

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across the Indo-Pacific region, including developing more resilient supply chains.
Yellen will organize a press conference on November 10 upon finishing her meetings with He.
Some analysts have said the meetings between He and Yellen may be laying the groundwork ahead of the potential meeting between US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping in San Francisco next week.
US media reported that Xi will take part in a dinner with top US business executives on the margins of the APEC leaders' summit.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, November 8 (Sputnik) -

US-CHINA RELATIONS
* Chinese President Xi Jinping's forthcoming visit to San Francisco for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit includes a dinner engagement with top US business executives, Bloomberg reported on Tuesday.
* Senior US officials during arms control talks with Chinese counterparts this week emphasized the importance of Beijing increasing nuclear transparency and engaging in measures to reduce risks, the State Department said.

ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT
* Israel will not cease fire, will not allow workers to enter from the Gaza Strip and will not allow fuel to enter the enclave without the release of hostages, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Tuesday.
* The United States is in the process of providing Iron Dome systems to Israel, Defense Department Deputy Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said.
* The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said that its convoy of five trucks with humanitarian aid and two vehicles came under fire in Gaza City.
* The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) said that one of its schools Gaza was shelled as a result of which one person was killed and nine others injured.

MIDDLE EAST TENSIONS
* The Islamic Resistance in Iraq, which includes Shia militia groups, said on Tuesday that they shelled the US base at the Koniko gas field in the province of Deir ez-Zur in eastern Syria.
* The United States has seen no indication that there are specific threats to US installations in the Middle East, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said.
* The United States asserts a flexible response to an increase in attacks on US troops in the Middle East and retaliation does not have to be tit-for-tat in every instance, Defense Department deputy spokesperson Sabrina Singh said.

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* Russia's Aerospace Forces in struck militants in the Idlib de-escalation zone in Syria who were involved in the shelling of Syrian governmental troops and an underground terrorist shelter, Rear Adm. Vadim Kulit, deputy head of the Russian Defense Ministry's Center for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in Syria, said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* Six people have been killed as a result of Ukraine's shelling of the Voroshilovsky district in the city of Donetsk, Mayor Alexey Kulemzin said on Tuesday.
* Ukrainian presidential advisor Serhiy Leshchenko said the reports that Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov allegedly proposed dismissing Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief Valerii Zaluzhnyi are not true, Strana.ua reported.
* The US secretaries of the treasury, defense and state have urged Congress to approve a $11.8 billion in direct budget support to Ukraine, the Treasury Department said.
* The Russian military has repelled seven Ukrainian attacks in the Donetsk direction in the past 24 hours, and Kiev lost up to 245 soldiers, the Russian Defense Ministry said.
* Russia has requested an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council over Ukraine's deadly shelling of Donetsk, Russian First Deputy Representative to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy said.

CFE TREATY

* The United Kingdom and its allies have decided to suspend participation in the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) after Russia's withdrawal from the accord, the Foreign Office said on Tuesday.
* NATO supports the decision of its members to suspend participation in the CFE treaty, the alliance said in a statement.
* Russia's pullout from the CFE treaty may require US force posture changes, but Washington is not commenting on that now, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said.

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Austin, Egyptian Counterpart Discuss Civilian Protection in Gaza - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) - US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin had a call with his Egyptian counterpart Mohamed Zaki to discuss civilian protection in Gaza and efforts to bolster security in the Middle East, Pentagon Deputy Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said on Tuesday.
"Today the secretary [Austin] convened a call with Egyptian Minister of Defense Gen. Zaki to discuss efforts to bolster security in the Middle East. These calls are part of his ongoing outreach and keeping in close contact with allies and partners in the region," Singh said during a press briefing.
Austin during the call expressed appreciation for Egypt's efforts to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and the safe evacuation of US citizens from Gaza, Singh said.

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"They also discussed the importance of civilian protection," she added.
On October 7, Hamas carried out 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, ordered a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip and later began ground operations in the exclave. The escalation of the conflict has killed more than 1,400 in Israel and over 10,000 in the Gaza Strip.

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Postponement of Presidential Elections in Ukraine Constitutional – US State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) - The United States does not see any problem in the fact that the next presidential election will not take place in Ukraine and considers this state of affairs to be in accordance with the constitution amid the ongoing military conflict with Russia, State Department deputy principal spokesperson Vedant Patel said on Tuesday.
"My understanding is that this is consistent with their [the Ukrainian] constitution," Patel said during a press briefing.
At the same time, the United States will continue to support Kiev's democratic aspirations even as it continues to fight with Russia, Patel added.
In a recorded address published on Telegram on Monday, Volodymyr Zelenskyy expressed his belief that it was not the right time for any elections in the country and proposed extending martial law until February 14, 2024. Later on Monday, the Ukrainian Parliament's Committee on National Security, Defense, and Intelligence approved the extension of martial law.
A presidential election was supposed to take place in Ukraine in March 2024 in accordance with the country's legislation. However, the Ukrainian Constitution prohibits holding elections under martial law, which has been in effect in the country since the beginning of Russia's military operation in February 2022.
In August 2023, Zelenskyy extended martial law by another 90 days, until November 15. The parliamentary elections, which were supposed to take place in Ukraine on October 29, were also postponed due to martial law.

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Russia Requests Urgent UNSC Meeting Over Ukrainian Shelling of Donetsk – Mission to UN

(Updates to say "the attacks killed and injured over 20 people," adds details in paras 3-4)
UNITED NATIONS, November 7 (Sputnik) - Russia has requested an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council over Ukraine's deadly shelling of Donetsk, Russian First Deputy Representative to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy said on Tuesday.

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"We have requested an urgent open meeting of the UN Security Council in connection with today's attacks by the Kiev regime on Donetsk," Polyanskiy said via Telegram. "We expect it to be scheduled for 23:00 Moscow time on November 8 [20:00 GMT]."

Earlier in the day, Ukrainian forces shelled Donetsk several times. One of the attacks hit a facility of the Department of Labor and Social Protection of the Population in the Voroshilovskiy city district, while another hit a bus. Six people were killed and 11 sustained injuries, Mayor Alexey Kulemzin said.

According to the latest data from the Donetsk people's republic, the attacks killed and injured over 20 people.

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IMF Approves Plan to Fast-Track Lending to Needy Economies

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund has approved a 50% increase in quota resources to be contributed by member countries in proportion to their current IMF shareholdings, an IMF news release said Tuesday.

The increase in quota funding, which raises an approximate of $314 billion at current exchange rates, will not increase the IMF's overall lending firepower of about $1 trillion but rather shift the composition to more permanent resources.

The move, approved by the fund's executive board, would be in line with a US-backed plan to enhance IMF lending resources, without impact from any shareholding increases for China, India, Brazil and other fast-growing emerging market economies.

The IMF said its board had asked for an accelerated timetable for developing options to guide realignment of the Fund's quota formula by June 2025.

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Zelenskyy Follows US Example in Cynically Ignoring Elections, Democracy - Ex-US Diplomat

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has revealed himself as utterly cynical in his claimed commitment to democracy and free and fair elections by ruling them out for the foreseeable future, former State Department official James Carden told Sputnik.

In a recorded address published on Telegram on Monday, Zelenskyy expressed his belief that it was not the right time for any elections in the country.

"The short answer is I suppose Zelenskyy is proving to be as 'serious' about democratic processes as his patrons in Washington and Brussels who show blithe unconcern for them when it suits their purposes," Carden said.

In fact, Carden added, Zelenskyy's move is totally consistent with the US and the EU-backed

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violent Maidan coup that toppled democratically-elected President Viktor Yanukovych in 2014.
"Why should Zelenskyy be held to a standard we ourselves only fitfully abide by?" Carden asked.
CovertAction Magazine Managing Editor and military analyst Jeremy Kuzmarov believes Zelenskyy could be overthrown or even face assassination if he does not allow for elections.
"Ukrainians have begun to reach their breaking point as a society and cannot survive Zelenskyy's misrule much longer and need to negotiate an end to the war with Russia," Kuzmarov told Sputnik.
Zelenskyy, he added, provoked an un-winnable war with Russia and spent most of his time courting foreign military support, instead of being out there on the front lines with his people. Tens of thousands of Ukrainians have died and now the long-touted counteroffensive has completely stalled, Kuzmarov pointed out.
And his economic policies are leading to deindustrialization and the takeover of Ukraine's economy by Western multinational corporations, Kuzmarov said.

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Russia Requests Urgent UNSC Meeting Over Ukrainian Shelling of Donetsk – Mission to UN

UNITED NATIONS, November 7 (Sputnik) - Russia has requested an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council over Ukraine's deadly shelling of Donetsk, Russian First Deputy Representative to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy said on Tuesday.
"We have requested an urgent open meeting of the UN Security Council in connection with today's attacks by the Kiev regime on Donetsk," Polyanskiy said via Telegram. "We expect it to be scheduled for 23:00 Moscow time on November 8 [20:00 GMT]."
Earlier in the day, Ukrainian forces shelled Donetsk several times. According to the latest data from the Donetsk people's republic, the attacks killed 20 people.

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Pentagon Says No New Details on Force Posture Changes in Europe Amid CFE Suspension

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) - The Pentagon provided no new details on the potential force posture changes in Europe following the suspension of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, Deputy Pentagon Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said on Tuesday.
"But in terms of actual presence or forced posture, or what this means for our forces in Europe, I just don't have more to provide at this time," Singh said during Pentagon press briefing.
Furthermore, Singh said that the Pentagon has been in communication with NATO partners and allies, many of whom are CFE treaty states and parties.
Russia suspended its participation in the CFE Treaty back in 2007 in protest of NATO countries

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refusing to ratify the 1999 Adapted CFE Treaty. At the same time, Russia remained a party to the treaty. Earlier this year, the Russian Foreign Ministry said that Finland's NATO accession and Sweden's membership bid were "the last straw" that made Russia's exit from the treaty inevitable.

The CFE Treaty was signed in Paris in 1990 by representatives of 16 NATO member states and six Warsaw Pact members, and entered into force on November 9, 1992. The treaty introduced limits on major types of conventional military equipment in Europe and provided for the destruction of surplus weapons.

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US Not Engaging in Any Plans to Lease Egyptian Land for Displaced Gazans - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) – The United States is not going to take part in any policy in which Egyptian land would be leased to house displaced Gazans, State Department principal deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel said on Tuesday.

"We are not engaging in any situation in which Egyptian land would be leased," Patel said during a press briefing. "[F]orced relocation [of Palestinians] is not something that we are looking at or is on the table or a policy that we support."

In October, Israeli news site Sicha Mekomit published a leaked document that was allegedly drafted by an Israeli government ministry on October 13. The document recommended forcefully transferring the entire population of the Gaza Strip to tent camps in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula permanently. Moreover, the document also suggested organizing a special public campaign to persuade the international community and the Gazans themselves to support the move.

Upon the news that such a plan exists, Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN), a non-profit organization founded in 2020 by Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, sent a letter to Congress urging US lawmakers to vote "no" on the Biden administration's supplemental request that among other things asks for logistical, infrastructure, and other material support that would enable the housing of displaced Palestinians from Gaza in neighboring countries.

According to DAWN, the funding is nothing other than the financing of Israel's plan to resettle the entire civilian population of Gaza in Egypt.

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Kirby Says Russia's CFE Withdrawal Could Require Force Posture Changes But Cannot Tell Now

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) - Russia's pullout from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) may require US force posture changes, but Washington is not

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commenting on that now, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"As for future force posture, I certainly wont talk about that from this podium," Kirby said in a press briefing. "We'll do what we need to do to make sure we can meet Article V commitments to our NATO allies, and that could require force posture changes, but I am not prepared to speak to that today."

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Trudeau Condemns Attempted Arson At Montreal's Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) - Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau condemned on Tuesday the attempted arson at the Center for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CJIA) in Montreal.

"The attempted arson at @FederationCJA West Island and Congregation Beth Tikvah in Montreal is deeply disturbing. Antisemitism is completely unacceptable and must always be condemned – our government will continue to work with Jewish communities to combat this hatred," Trudeau said via X (formerly Twitter).

Canada's Minister of Public Safety Dominic Leblanc characterized the reports of firebombing at the Congregation Beth Tikvah as deeply disturbing and noted that there was no place for hate crimes in the country. - "our government will continue to denounce it unequivocally," he said.

Earlier today, CIJA announced it became aware of an attempted firebombing at its West Island & Congregation Beth Tikvah in Montreal. The Center said the building and its premises were empty when the attack happened, and no one was hurt.

CIJA noted that Montreal law enforcement services were aware of the incident and were investigating the matter. – "At this moment there is no indication of an increased threat level to the Montreal Jewish Community," it said via X.

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Kirby Says No Indications of Specific Threats to US Installations in Middle East

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) - The United States has seen no indication that there are specific threats to US installations in the Middle East, White House Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"There's no indication right now, that there's specific threats to specific installations throughout the region," Kirby said during a press briefing.

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

Russian Embassy Says Glad Dmirty Ukrainskiy Returned Home After Release From US Prison

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) - The Russian Embassy in Washington is glad that Dmitry Ukrainskiy, who was extradited earlier from the United States to Russia, has finally returned to his homeland, Consular Department chief Nadezhda Shumova told Sputnik on Tuesday.

"Since his extradition to the United States, the embassy has been closely monitoring Ukrainskiy's fate. I was in constant contact with him by phone," Shumova said. "Ambassador Antonov personally visited Dmitry Vitalievich several times in the Brooklyn prison in New York. Our compatriot endured a lot. We are glad that he has finally returned to his homeland."

Earlier on Tuesday, the Russian branch of the International Committee for the Defense of Human Rights said that Ukrainskiy was deported from the United States to Russia.

The Russian branch's chief Ivan Melnikov said Ukrainskiy had arrived in Russia and will meet with his family in the near future.

In June 2022, Ukrainsky was extradited to the United States from Thailand. The Thai authorities arrested Ukrainskiy in Pattaya in July 2016 on an FBI arrest warrant.

Ukrainsky was charged by the US authorities with credit card fraud and theft of more than $300,000 from the banking accounts of US citizens.

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Pentagon Says US Not Placing Conditions on Israeli Use of US Weapons, Expects Lawful Use

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) - The United States is not placing additional conditions on Israel's use of US-provided weapons but expects the country to utilize the arms in accordance with international law, Pentagon Deputy Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said on Tuesday.

"We don't put conditions on weapons that we're sending or that Israel is using," Singh said during a press briefing. "I wouldn't say it's an end-use monitoring, but we expect them to be used in accordance with the laws."

The Biden administration has been and will continue to be clear with Israel about the need to consider humanitarian law and proportionality when conducting operations in Gaza, Singh said.

The US does not hesitate to raise concerns about the use of its weapons if it observes inappropriate activity, Singh added.

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US Discusses With China Importance of Nuclear Transparency, Reducing Risks - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) - Senior US officials during arms control talks with Chinese counterparts this week emphasized the importance of Beijing increasing nuclear transparency and engaging on measures to reduce risks, the State Department said in a press release on Tuesday.

"The United States emphasized the importance of increased PRC nuclear transparency and substantive engagement on practical measures to manage and reduce strategic risks across multiple domains, including nuclear and outer space," the release said. "The United States highlighted the need to promote stability, help avert an unconstrained arms race, and manage competition so that it does not veer into conflict."

The two sides had a "candid and in-depth discussion" on issues related to arms control and nonproliferation, according to the release.

US Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance Mallory Stewart met with Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Director-General of Arms Control Sun Xiaobo in Washington on Monday. The US delegation included senior officials from the Departments of State, Defense, and Energy, and the National Security Council.

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US Capitol Police Arrest Man Carrying Gun Near Washington's Union Station - Statement

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) - A man carrying a gun has been arrested near Washington's Union Station, the US Capitol Police (USCP) Department said in a statement on Tuesday.

"USCP officers just arrested a man with a gun in the park across from Union Station. At this time, we have no reason to believe there is an ongoing threat," the statement said.

Out of an abundance of caution, the USCP has searched the individual's belongings, the statement said.

The Columbus Circle and D Street area between Louisiana and Delaware Avenues are closed until further notice, the statement added.

The individual is in custody and the investigation into the incident is ongoing, according to the statement.

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KSrelief Team Arrives in Egypt to Find Ways to Deliver Urgent Aid to Gaza

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) - The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSrelief) said on Tuesday that its team is working in Egypt to explore ways of getting urgent

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humanitarian assistance to the population of the Gaza Strip.

"In accordance with the directives of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and HRH Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, to launch a Saudi National Campaign to support the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, a specialized team from KSrelief has arrived in Cairo, Egypt, to find ways forward in delivering urgent humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza," the release said.

The relief center said that Saudi Arabia's ongoing donation campaign dubbed "Sahem" is supporting the team's response to save lives and alleviate the suffering inside the enclave.

KSrelief shared that its team has met with Saudi Ambassador to Egypt Osama Ahmed Nugali to discuss ways to facilitate and expedite the transfer and delivery of the multisector aid, which includes shelter materials, food baskets and medical supplies, through the Rafah border crossing.

"They stressed that the aid should be delivered as quickly as possible and should be prioritized according to the most urgent and pressing humanitarian needs," the release stated.

A month into the Israel-Hamas war, the conflict has killed more than 1,400 in Israel and over 10,000 in the Gaza Strip. Earlier on Tuesday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reaffirmed that Israel will not cease fire and will not allow fuel into the enclave until Hamas releases the hostages held since October 7.

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Pentagon Says Responds at Time, Place of Choosing to Attacks on US Bases in Mideast

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) - The United States asserts a flexible response to an increase in attacks on US troops in the Middle East and retaliation does not have to be tit-for-tat in every instance, Pentagon Deputy Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said on Tuesday.

"I wouldn't say there's hesitancy, we decide to respond at a time and place of our choosing. We don't necessarily have to be tit-for-tat every single time," Singh said during a Pentagon press briefing.

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US in Process of Providing Iron Dome Equipment to Israel - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) - The United States is in the process of providing Iron Dome systems to Israel, Pentagon Deputy Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said on Tuesday.

"About the Iron Dome systems, we're in the process of providing those systems to Israel," Singh said during a press briefing.

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UN Chief Reiterates Condemnation of Hamas, Call for Ceasefire in Gaza - Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, November 7 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has reiterated his "total condemnation" of the Palestinian movement Hamas' attack on Israel a month ago, United Nations spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Tuesday.

"One month after the horrific events of 7 October, the Secretary-General reiterates his total condemnation of the acts of terror committed by Hamas in Israel for which there can be no justification," Dujarric told a briefing.

Guterres also has reiterated his call for Hamas to release all detainees it currently holds, Dujarric said.

The UN chief has called again for establishing an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, Dujarric added.

Earlier on Tuesday, the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov discussed by telephone with Palestinian National Authority Civil Affairs Minister Hussein al-Sheikh the need for a ceasefire and the evacuation of Russian citizens from the Gaza Strip.

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US Trade Deficit Widens by 5% in September - Commerce Dept

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) - The US trade deficit widened by 5% in September as imports accelerated more than exports, latest data from the Commerce Department showed Tuesday.

The trade deficit stood at $61.5 billion at the close of September, compared with a revised $58.7 billion for August, which marked a low since September 2020, the data showed. Wall Street economists, polled by US media, forecast a deficit of just under $60 billion for September.

Exports of goods and services rose by 2.2% to $261.1 billion while shipments of goods alone grew 3.1% to $176.7 billion. At $84.4 billion, exports of services were the highest on record.

Imports of goods and services climbed 2.7% to $322.7 billion, while goods imports in itself expanded by 2.7% to $263 billion.

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US Working With Partners on Interim Governance in Gaza Once Crisis Recedes – State Dept.

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WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) – The United States is working with partners in the region on various scenarios on interim governance and security parameters for the Gaza Strip after the Israel-Hamas war ends, State Department principal deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel said on Tuesday.

"We are working with partners on various scenarios on interim governance, on security parameters, on security situations in Gaza for once this crisis recedes," Patel said during a press briefing.

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China's Xi to Meet With Top US Business Executives for Dinner in San Francisco - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) - Chinese President Xi Jinping's forthcoming visit to San Francisco for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit includes a dinner engagement with top US business executives, Bloomberg reported on Tuesday, citing people familiar with the matter.

A CEO summit will be held from November 14-16 before the APEC leaders' meeting, the report said.

The summit will feature ExxonMobil chief Darren Woods, Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla and Microsoft chief Satya Nadella. A gala reception is scheduled for November 15, the report added.

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Democrats Concerned as Polls Show Trump Leading Biden in Potential Matchup - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden's reelection campaign is causing increasing apprehension among Democrats due to perceived neglect of warning signs within the campaigns progress, The Washington Post reported on Tuesday.

According to the report, concerns have arisen due to recent polls, conducted by The New York Times-Siena College, that indicate former President Donald Trump leading President Biden both at the national level and in critical swing states. The polls indicated that in five out of the six highly contested battleground states, President Biden was trailing former President Trump.

Furthermore, Trump held a 10-percentage-point lead in Nevada, a six-point lead in Georgia, a five-point lead in Arizona and Michigan, and a four-point lead in Pennsylvania. In contrast, Biden maintained a two-point lead over Trump in Wisconsin, the report said.

However, the Biden campaign attempted to address these concerns by pointing out that polls frequently present a challenging outlook for current presidents a year ahead of the election. They emphasized that these poll results may not necessarily mirror voter behavior on Election Day, the report said.

Moreover, they noted that, at this stage in the election cycle, the majority of voters are not

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deeply engaged in political matters, and they anticipated an improved political landscape for President Biden once he formally faces a clear Republican opponent, which they think will be Trump, the report added.

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Trump Finds Himself Wealthier While Mounting White House Comeback

NEW YORK, November 7 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump appears to have gotten wealthier since leaving the White House, with an estimated half a billion dollars added to his name amid accusations that he had artificially inflated his wealth, Bloomberg reported on Tuesday based on data from its Billionaires Index.

With Trump running again for the presidency and being on trial at the same time for allegedly lying about his fortune, the question of his worth is as relevant as ever, the report said.

Trump's fortune is valued at $3.1 billion, up from $2.6 billion in 2021, the report said.

Trump's businesses are proving resilient in the face of a gloomy real estate market and his move to Florida after leaving the White House coincided with a property boom that bolstered the finances of his best-known addresses - the Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach and the Doral resort in Miami, the report said.

Meanwhile, revenues at the rest of his golf courses have surged more than 50% since 2019, the report said.

After selling his hotel in Washington and paying down loans, Trump is sitting on more cash and less leverage than at any point in the past decade, the report added.

Trump, who faces a civil fraud lawsuit brought by New York Attorney General Letitia James that could result in hundreds of millions of dollars in penalties and the loss of some of his most iconic properties, says he is a victim of political persecution to prevent him from putting his name on the ballot in the 2024 presidential election.

While the civil lawsuit will not land him in jail on conviction, Trump could serve time for other criminal cases brought against him. It is not known yet if any of those convictions would block his return to the White House, as US constitutional law is unclear on what it takes to disqualify a candidate from contesting the presidency.

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Three Persons Extradited to US Over Alleged Russian Cyberfraud Charges - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) - Three individuals have been extradited to the United States from Germany, Morocco and Romania to face charges over an alleged Russian cyberfraud scheme, the US Justice Department said in a release on Tuesday.

"As alleged in the indictment, from approximately 2013 to 2018, individuals located primarily in

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Russia and countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Eastern Europe operated reshipping schemes to defraud merchants, banks and individuals in the United States," the release said. "[Ruslan] Nurullin, [Aleksandr] Popan and [Nikolaj] Sofinskij resided in Russia during the schemes, and they were arrested in their respective countries pursuant to INTERPOL Red Notices based on arrest warrants issued from the Eastern District of New York."

The Justice Department said in the release that Sofinskij will be arraigned at a federal courthouse in Brooklyn, New York, later on Tuesday.

Sofinskij - and the others - are charged with three counts each of conspiracy to commit wire and mail fraud and money laundering conspiracy as well as one count of aggravated identity theft, the release said.

Sofinskij was extradited to the United States on Monday following his arrest in Romania, while Nurullin was extradited from Morocco in September and Popan was extradited from Germany in October.

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Advisers Brief Biden on Beijing's Plans to Build Military Facility in Oman – Reports

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden has been briefed by his advisers on China's plans to build a military facility in Oman as part of Beijing's efforts to increase its diplomatic and defense presence in the Middle East, Bloomberg reported on Tuesday citing people in the know.

The advisers told Biden that a group of Chinese military officials discussed the matter with their Omani counterparts last month, the report said. The talks resulted in the two sides agreeing to continue discussions in the coming weeks.

The precise location of the military facility in Oman, and what exactly this facility will be, remains unknown, the report said.

A new military facility in Oman would complement the only Chinese foreign military base in Djibouti that has been in use since 2017.

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Treasury Sanctions Sinaloa Cartel Network for Trafficking Illicit Fentanyl in US

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) - The United States has imposed sanctions on 13 members of the Sinaloa cartel and on four entities based in Sonora, Mexico, the Department of the Treasury said in a statement on Tuesday.

"The US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned 13 Sinaloa cartel members - several of whom are fugitives - and four Sonora, Mexico-based entities," the statement said.

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OFAC closely coordinated the move with the Mexican government, including with the country's financial intelligence unit, the statement said.

The Treasury Department explained that one of the fugitives is Juan Carlos Morgan Huerta, who serves as the "plaza boss" for the Sinaloa cartel.

Huerta is responsible for coordinating and supervising the transportation of cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, illicit fentanyl and other drugs across the United States border with Mexico, the statement said.

In April 2021, Morgan Huerta was indicted in the Us District Court for the District of Columbia on various drug trafficking charges linked to fentanyl, cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine, the statement added.

Huerta remains at large and is a fugitive, according to the statement.

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US House Speaker Says Considering 'Laddered' Government Funding Measure to Avoid Shutdown

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives is considering a laddered continuing resolution (CR) that would temporarily extend federal government funding to avoid a government shutdown, House Speaker Mike Johnson said on Tuesday.

"With regard to the laddered CR or maybe a two-tiered CR, it's one of the ideas that has been discussed," Johnson said during a press conference. "It would just be effectively two phases: you would do one part, a subset of the bills, by a December date and the rest of it by a January date."

Alternatively, House Republicans are considering a CR that would extend into January with "stipulations," Johnson said.

House Republicans had a constructive conversation about the options on the table during their conference meeting on Tuesday, Johnson said.

Earlier this year, lawmakers passed a CR that extended government funding through November 17, after which point the government may shut down.

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Canada to Halt Participation in European Armed Forces Treaty in February - Global Affairs

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) - Canada will suspend its participation in the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) effective February 7, 2024, Global Affairs Canada said in a statement on Tuesday.

Earlier in the day, Russia formally withdrew from the treaty and the United Kingdom announced it was suspending participation in the accord and would work to implement voluntary stabilizing

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measures.

"Russia's withdrawal of the CFE Treaty erodes the very basis on which it was built and creates an unacceptable imbalance in the European security framework. As a result, and in coordination with our allies, Canada today notified the Depository of the CFE Treaty that, in accordance with international law, we will suspend our operation of the CFE Treaty effective February 7, 2024," Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly said in the statement.

Canada stands with its NATO allies in condemning Russia over its withdrawal, which is the culmination of that country's disregard for its obligations under the CFE, the statement said.

Russia's move is another example of its intention to undermine Euro-Atlantic security and the so-called rules-based international order, the statement said.

"Canada remains committed to effective conventional arms control, to ensuring Euro-Atlantic security," the statement added.

Russia suspended its participation in the CFE Treaty in 2007 in protest of NATO countries refusing to ratify the 1999 Adapted CFE Treaty. However, Russia did remain a party to the treaty.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said earlier this year that Finland's NATO accession and Sweden's membership bid were "the last straw" that made Russia's exit from the treaty inevitable.

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Biden's Approval Rating Falls to 39% - Poll

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden's approval rating fell a single percentage point from last month to 39%, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll released Monday.

Conducted over the weekend, the poll found that for 8% of respondents, "war and foreign conflicts" ranked as their top concern, likely reflecting Israel's war on Gaza. This marked a doubling of the 4% measured last month and the highest figure since the 9% measured during the early months of the Russia-Ukraine conflict last year.

Twenty percent of respondents said the economy was their top concern.

Since August 2021, Biden's approval rating has remained below 50%, reaching its lowest level of 36% in mid-2022.

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State Dept. Accuses Russia of Waging Disinformation Campaign Across Latin America

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) - The State Department on Tuesday accused Russia of conducting a well-organized and well-funded disinformation campaign in Latin America to create a negative image of the United States and NATO and undercut support for Ukraine.

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"The Russian government is currently financing an ongoing, well-funded disinformation campaign across Latin America. The Kremlin's campaign plans to leverage developed media contacts in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay, among other countries in Latin America…," the State Department said in a press release. "The Kremlin's ultimate goal appears to … undermine support for Ukraine and propagate anti-U.S. and anti-NATO sentiment."

The press release names The Social Design Agency (SDA), the Institute for Internet Development, and Structura as key structures involved in the campaign to promote Russia's strategic interests and further Moscow's foreign influence objectives in the region "at the expense of other countries."

The release accuses SDA Director Ilya Gambashidze, SDA Project Director Andrey Perla, Structura CEO Nikolay Tupikin, and journalist Oleg Yasinskiy of playing a key role in the effort.

According to the State Department, the campaign is directed from Russia and is leveraging an array of Spanish-speaking journalists and editors to localize and disseminate pro-Kremlin content across the region. The "operations" are primarily done in concert with Spanish-language outlets Pressenza and El Ciudadano, but a broader network of media resources is involved, the release stated.

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Neuralink Progresses on Vision Chip Development, Awaiting Approval for Human Trials - Musk

WASHINGTON, November 7 (Sputnik) - Tesla Motors CEO and owner of Neuralink Elon Musk said on Tuesday that Neuralink is in the process of developing a vision chip, which is expected to be ready in a few years.

"This is not much consolation, but Neuralink is working on a vision chip, which will be ready in a few years," Musk said in a social media post.

Furthermore, Musk mentioned that the development of a vision chip is the next focus of the company, following their efforts to enable phone/computer telepathy for individuals who have lost their "mind-body connection."

"We [are] waiting for regulatory approval for our first human," Musk added.

Elon Musk has said in the past that Neuralink's primary objective is to develop a comprehensive brain interface incorporating a generalized input and output device, enabling interaction with all aspects of the brain.

In addition, Neuralink has been conducting experiments with a monkey that has had the company's brain implant for approximately six months without any observed side effects.

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