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11/15/23 Wednesday

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What Did Biden, Xi Say in Opening Remarks of Highly-Anticipated California Summit?

US President Joe Biden welcomed Chinese President Xi Jinping to the US city of San Francisco on Wednesday, where the two met for a summit on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leaders' summit.

The two leaders met and shook hands at the Filoli estate, a venue south of the city, along with their retinues of diplomats and advisers.

"Mr. President, it's good to see you again," Biden told Xi. "We spent many hours together over the last 10 to 12 years and to host you in the United States is a great honor and a pleasure."

Tensions between the two nations have become sharper in recent years as the US has pursued a strategy of "great power confrontation," positioning itself against the rise of China, which it claims intends to destroy the US-led postwar global order. However, Biden has denied claims he seeks to "contain" China, despite the language of American strategy documents.

"There is no substitute to face-to-face discussions," Biden told Xi. "I value our conversation because I think it's paramount that you and I understand each other clearly, leader to leader, with no misconceptions or miscommunication."

"We have to ensure that competition does not veer into conflict," he said.

"For two large countries like China and the United States, turning their back on each other is not an option. It is unrealistic for one side to remodel the other, and conflict and confrontation have unbearable consequences for both sides," Xi told Biden in his opening remarks.

"[The] China-US relationship, which is the most important bilateral relationship in the world, should be perceived and envisioned in a broad context of the accelerated global transformations," Xi noted.

The Chinese leader said that the two nuclear superpowers, with the world's two largest economies, can coexist in peace despite their differences. "Planet Earth is big enough for two countries to succeed - one country's success is an opportunity for the other," he said.

"It is an objective fact that China and the United States are different in history, culture, social system, and development paths. However, as long as they respect each other, coexist in peace, and pursue win-win cooperation, they will be fully capable of rising above differences and find the right way for the two major countries to get along with each other," Xi told Biden.

"I look forward to an in-depth exchange of views and to reach new understandings with you on strategic and overarching issues critical to the direction of Chinese[-US] relations and our major issues affecting world peace and development," Xi added.

The Wednesday meeting is expected to touch on a variety of topics, including the use of artificial intelligence and US restrictions placed on chip exports to China, among other hot-button issues. Both nations moments earlier reaffirmed a commitment to cooperate on climate matters.

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Xi's initial arrival in the US on Tuesday marked his first trip state-side since 2017, when the Chinese president met with then-US President Donald Trump in Florida. Xi last held an in-person meeting with Biden in Indonesia in 2022.

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Hunter Biden Asks Judge for Trump, Barr Subpoenas Amid Claim FBI Probe Was 'Vindictive'

Lawyers for Hunter Biden asked a federal judge on Wednesday to issue subpoenas for several federal law enforcement officials, including former Attorney General Bill Barr and former US President Donald Trump, in the case against the first son.

According to the recent filing, Biden is seeking the testimony of Trump, Barr, and two other Justice Department officials in an effort to prove that the federal investigation of him was politically motivated.

"Mr. Biden seeks specific information from three former DOJ officials and the former President that goes to the heart of his defense that this is, possibly, a vindictive or selective prosecution arising from an unrelenting pressure campaign beginning in the last administration, in violation of Mr. Biden's Fifth Amendment rights under the Constitution," Biden's lawyer, Abbe Lowell, wrote in the request to US District Judge Maryellen Noreika.

Hunter, who is the son of US President Joe Biden, is facing a trio of federal gun charges after a plea deal collapsed over the summer that also included misdemeanor tax fraud charges. While it was Hunter's lawyer who scuttled the deal, he has since tried to argue that the filing of new gun charges since then is part of a political campaign against him and his father, who is standing for reelection next November.

"In the lead up to the 2020 election, IRS case files show certain investigative decisions were made 'as a result of guidance provided' by, among others, 'the Deputy Attorney General's office,'" Lowell's filing said.

Lowell also specifically pointed to a comment by Barr published in his 2022 memoir "One Damn Thing After Another," in which he said he told Trump in October 2020: "Dammit, Mr. President, I am not going to talk to you about Hunter Biden. Period!"

"These confirmations of communications give more than a mere appearance that President Trump improperly and unrelentingly pressured DOJ to pursue an investigation and prosecution of Mr. Biden to advance President Trump's partisan ambitions," Lowell's note to the judge said.

Lowell also claimed that Republican pressure on special counsel David Weiss compelled the attorney into "changing course" to file the indictment against Hunter Biden in September, "charging three felony counts for the same gun and same facts that just a few months prior Mr. Weiss had agreed to divert under a pre-trial diversion agreement."

Ironically, Republicans have criticized Weiss for allegedly "slow-walking" the probe against Hunter, using a term introduced by an IRS whistleblower earlier this year. Last week, Weiss told a closed-door hearing by the House Judiciary Committee that "I am, and have been, the decision-maker on this case," denying that he was ever pressured against charging Hunter by figures in the Biden administration.

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Hunter has been accused in the press of a wide array of misdeeds, including related to activities described in the laptop he abandoned at a Delaware repair shop in 2019, as well as related to his business ventures in Ukraine, China, and elsewhere, which he has been accused of pushing ahead by using his connection to his father. Prior to becoming US president in 2021, Joe Biden also served as US vice president from 2009 to 2017, and before that spent decades in the US Senate.

A separate impeachment probe was opened by the US House of Representatives in September aimed at President Biden, but also concerning his relations with Hunter.

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Haley's Proposed Ban on Anonymity on Social Media is 'Threat to Internet Freedom'

Two whistleblowers on tech giant information policing have told Sputnik that propositions for compulsory ID verification on social media is both terrifying from the standpoint of civil liberties and also par for the course for the burgeoning national security state from which Haley comes.

US Republican presidential hopeful Nikki Haley aroused fury on Tuesday when she called for a tough crackdown on anonymity on social media sites, claiming it was enabling bots that posed a "national security threat."

"Every person on social media should be verified by their name. It's a national security threat. When you do that, people have to stand by what they say. It gets rid of the Russian bots, and China and Iranian bots," Haley told a US media outlet.

The former South Carolina governor and former US ambassador to the United Nations is one of several candidates seeking the Republican Party's nomination for the 2024 US presidential elections. Some polls place her in second place behind former US President Donald Trump, who is by far the leading candidate of the pack.

The comment provoked responses from some of her rivals, including Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, who noted that the authors of the Federalist Papers, a collection of political essays from the late 18th-century debates between prominent American thinkers about the shape the then-new US government should take, were originally published under anonymous pseudonyms. Vivek Ramaswamy, a New York businessman also seeking the GOP nomination, called Haley's comments "disgusting" and suggested they should disqualify her from the presidency.

In response to the criticism, Haley told another US news outlet on Wednesday "We all know that America's enemies use anonymous bots to spread anti-American lies and sow chaos and division within our borders. Nikki believes social media companies need to do a better job of verifying users so we can crack down on Chinese, Iranian, and Russian bots. That's common sense."

Such claims of "bots" being used to manipulate American politics date to the 2016 presidential elections, when Donald Trump's unexpected victory was explained away by liberals as the work of supposed Russian social media manipulation. Since then, the cast has expanded to include

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essentially every nation the US considers to be an adversary and the concept has been welcomed by conservatives as well.

Zach Vorhies, a former senior software engineer at YouTube and Google-turned-whistleblower, told Sputnik that Haley's proposal makes sense from the point of view of intelligence agencies and other so-called "deep state" actors assigned to engage in information warfare.

"Nikki Haley, who is widely believed to work for this 'deep state', is showing her allegiance and introducing the narrative of de-anonymizing the internet so that the US population can start normalizing the coming surveillance state," Vorhies said.

"Do Nikki Haley's words represent a threat to democracy? Yes. We saw in the last election that Google and the other big social media companies blocked the information about the corruption of President Biden's son, Hunter, that was retrieved from his laptop from a repair shop. This information included drug use, sex with girls of questionable age, massive payouts from Ukraine energy companies as well as money inflows from Chinese shell companies for reasons that are still unclear," he pointed out. "The hiding of this information from the American electorate was likely a huge deciding factor of the last election. This will likely be employed again in the elections in the future."

"As much as I am a civil rights activist, I have to say that from the state security standpoint, what Nikki Haley says makes a lot of sense and her viewpoint of eliminating anonymity is more or less going to be the agenda of every sovereign country around the world," Vorhies said.

"The problem facing society right now is the AI question, and few people comprehend how much better it's going to get in the next year, and the year after that," he said. "Right now, countries around the world are going to face the question of who is real, who is an AI, and who is real but using an AI to generate answers as sort of a Human-AI arbitrage."

"The CIA and US military psyops division employs personnel to manipulate the media around the world to further the agenda of state policy. With AI, this effort will drastically reduce in cost so that hobbyists and volunteers will be able to extremely effectively influence and counter influence operations from their own computers at a fraction of the cost. These operations will target other sovereign countries like Russia, as well as being used against the United States."

Vorhies said the only answer to this problem "is to either tightly control speech through censorship and/or de-mask anonymous posters" so that intelligence agencies can monitor them.

"Part of the vulnerability of the US is how thoroughly indoctrinated the populace is with our fake news and fake history. An effective psyops campaign in the United States does not need to push misinformation - in fact, I will speculate that the most effective influence campaign will be to push true historical information of the United States and who is really running it."

Ryan Hartwig, Facebook whistleblower, co-author of "Behind the Mask of Facebook: A Whistleblower's Shocking Story of Big Tech Bias and Censorship" and one of the Facebook insiders with Project Veritas, concurred, saying Haley's allegations "are typical of someone who is a part of the US military industrial complex, and someone who does not value free speech."

"Her ideas pose a threat to internet freedom and civil liberties," he said. "She is not trustworthy as someone who can help liberate us from the crimes being committed against us by Facebook and Google."

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"As Dr. Robert Epstein has proven, Google has influenced our elections very easily, shifting at least 6 million votes in 2020," Hartwig pointed out. "Dr. Robert Epstein is a registered Democrat, but has proven that Google was influencing votes to help Democrats win the election."
"Facebook also influenced the 2018 and 2020 elections and I witnessed that firsthand, through targeting Trump and other right-wing influencers. It is now obvious that the US government colluded with social media companies in 2020 to influence the election. The current court case of Missouri vs. Biden is showing irrefutable evidence of this collusion."
"This is even more clear with the Hunter Biden laptop story, which was suppressed by the government telling Facebook that it was Russian disinformation. Basically you have the FBI and government officials telling social media companies what to do, but the social media companies are also complicit," he pointed out.

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Astronomers Spot Planet Where Sand Could Form Clouds & Rain

An exoplanet that astronomers previously described as "puffy" has a new potential explanation for its unique atmospheric characteristics: it might have clouds made of sand instead of water, and "rain" sand back down on the surface.
The planet WASP-107b is 212 light-years away, a little bit smaller than Jupiter, but far less dense, almost the density of Neptune. It also orbits very close to its host star, completing an orbit in just 5.7 Earth days, and with an atmosphere cooked up to 900 degrees Fahrenheit by the star's heat.
With such unique characteristics, WASP-107b has been described as "puffy" or "cotton candy" since it was discovered in 2017, although at the time, analysis methods were limited to perceiving the planet's uppermost cloud layers. However, a group of scientists have pointed the new James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) at the planet, which is the most powerful telescope humans have ever built, and made some startling discoveries.
Leen Decin, director of the Institute of Astronomy at KU Leuven in Belgium and one of the lead authors of the study, explained that "this is a very fluffy planet. And so the fact that it's so fluffy implies that we can really look very deep inside its atmosphere," because more starlight can pass into and out of its deeper layers.
The scientists said they had anticipated finding lots of gases like methane, which are seen in the gas giants in our solar system, but instead found compounds like sulfur dioxide and silicates - that is, sand.
The sand, which is likely much finer than the kind found on Earth beaches, behaves on WASP-107b in the same way water does on Earth, condensing into clouds that rain sand down into the lower atmosphere, which then rises again to form new clouds.
"We are sure that these sand clouds can form," Decin said.
"The discovery of clouds of sand, water, and sulfur dioxide on this fluffy exoplanet … is a pivotal milestone. It reshapes our understanding of planetary formation and evolution, shedding new light on our own solar system," he added.

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According to Dr. Michiel Min, the senior scientist at the SRON Netherlands Institute for Space Research and lead author of the study, "the fact that we see these sand clouds high up in the atmosphere must mean that the sand rain droplets evaporate in deeper, very hot layers and the resulting silicate vapor is efficiently moved back up, where they recondense to form silicate clouds once more. This is very similar to the water vapor and cloud cycle on our own Earth but with droplets made of sand."
Their work was printed in Nature in an article published on Wednesday.

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Jewish Advocacy Group Shuts Down Boston University Bridge to Call for Ceasefire

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) – Dozens of protesters from Jewish advocacy group IfNotNow have shut down traffic on the Boston University Bridge, lobbying Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren to call for an immediate ceasefire in Israel's war on Gaza.
"#JewsForCeasefire in Boston are sitting-in on the BU Bridge, begging our politicians to demand a ceasefire NOW," the group stated in a social media post on Thursday.
The group also directly called on Warren: "So many of us voted for you, organized for you, even worked for you. We know that you know, in your heart, that more violence and death is not the answer. Please, we beg you: call for a ceasefire."
The Boston Police Department also advised on social media that "BU Bridge at Commonwealth Ave is shut down due to protesters. Please seek an alternative route."

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US Removes China's Institute of Forensic Science From Entity List - Commerce Department

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - The United States has lifted export restrictions on the Chinese Ministry of Public Security's Institute of Forensic Science, the Commerce Department said in a notice in the Federal Register on Thursday.
"In this rule, the Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) amends the Export Administration Regulations (EAR) by removing one entity under the destination of the People's Republic of China (China)," the notice said, adding that the rule is effective on November 16, 2023.
The Commerce Department had earlier imposed export restrictions on the Institute of Forensic Science due to what it said was complicity in human rights abuses against Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other Muslim minority groups in China's Xinjiang Province.
The decision to remove the Chinese entity from the US entity list came after a review by the End-User Review Committee (ERC), which is comprised of representatives from the Departments of Commerce, State, Defense, Energy and Treasury, the notice said.
The Commerce Department's announcement also coincides with a visit to the US by China's

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President Xi Jinping, who on Wednesday met with President Joe Biden and other senior US officials.

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US Deeply Concerned That Jordanian Medics Wounded in Attack Near Gaza Hospital - Sullivan

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - The United States is deeply concerned that Jordanian medical personnel were injured in shelling near their field hospital in Gaza, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Thursday.

"We are deeply concerned that Jordanian medical personnel in Gaza were wounded in an attack near their field hospital," Sullivan said on X.

He expressed gratitude to medical professionals for their critical work in Gaza.

"Their essential role in conflict must be protected," Sullivan said, adding that Jordan is a critical ally of the US.

Seven medical professionals from the Jordanian field hospital in northern Gaza were injured in what the Jordanian foreign ministry says was an Israeli airstrike. Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi told CNN that the staff were injured while providing aid to wounded Palestinians at the entrance of the hospital's emergency department.

Safadi said that many Palestinians were killed and injured in the attack.

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 and ordered a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, cutting off supplies of water, food, and fuel. On October 27, Israel began a large-scale ground incursion inside the Gaza Strip.

The escalation of the conflict has killed around 1,200 people in Israel and over 11,000 in the Gaza Strip.

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Record High 63% of Americans View Crime as Very Serious National Problem – Poll

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) – A record high 63% of Americans say crime is either an "extremely serious" or "very serious" national problem, according to a Gallup poll released Thursday.

This represented the highest level ever recorded by Gallup and also marked a significant increase from the 54% last measured in 2021.

On the other hand, just 17% of respondents said that local crime was extremely or very serious, although this figure was also a record high.

Their perceptions corresponded with an increase in the percentage who reported that crime

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had personally affected them – 28% said that they or someone in their household had been victimized in the past year by one of seven crimes surveyed, including vandalism, car theft, burglary, robbery, armed robbery, sexual assault, and battery. The highest crime victimization rate recorded by Gallup was 29% in 2016.

The annual poll was conducted on October 2-23.

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Biden Says US, China Agreed to Pursue High-Level Diplomacy

SAN FRANCISCO, November 16 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden said Washington and Beijing will pursue high level diplomacy and agreed with his Chinese counterpart to enhance direct communication.

"We're going to continue to preserve and pursue high level diplomacy [with] the PRC in both directions. Keep the lines of communication open including between President Xi [Jinping] and me. He [Xi] and I agreed that each one has to pick up the phone call directly and will be heard immediately," Biden said on Wednesday during a press briefing following the meeting with Xi.

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US Senate Passes Temporary Funding Bill to Avert Government Shutdown, Sends to Biden

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - The US Senate on Wednesday passed legislation to temporarily fund the federal government into next year to avoid a government shutdown, sending the bill to US President Joe Biden for final approval.

Senators passed the legislation on Wednesday in a 87-to-11 vote. The House of Representatives passed the continuing resolution earlier this week with bipartisan support.

The legislation, which funds separate portions of the government through January 19 and February 2 in a so-called "laddered" approach, now heads to Biden's desk to be signed into law.

The US Congress had until the end of the week to pass a government funding measure, lest a government shutdown would have begun. The two-step continuing resolution gives lawmakers until after the winter holiday season to complete the appropriations process.

The legislation, championed by House Speaker Mike Johnson, did not feature spending cuts or other policy riders to win the support of the White House and Democratic-majority Senate.

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Jacob ‘Shaman’ Chansley Says Life Still Impacted by Participation in US Capitol Breach

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik), Lenka White - Jacob Chansley, the self-described "shaman" of the Trump movement, told Sputnik he is still facing consequences from taking part in the breach of the US Capitol in January of 2021.

Chansley became the most recognized participant in the January 6 Capitol breach due to the extravagant outfit he wore that day, which included a bull-horned fur headdress, and face painted red, white and blue. Chansley, sentenced in November 2021 to 41 months in prison after pleading guilty to obstructing official proceedings, was released to a halfway house in Arizona in March. He was permitted to leave the halfway house two months later.

"Yes, absolutely," Chansley said during a video conference call when asked if his life is still being impacted by the fallout from events on January 6. "Well, for example, I had merchandise I was selling on Printful and they refused to sell my merchandise because they had my face on it. And they said it's because it was associated with QAnon, which is associated with white supremacy, violence and hatred... which I never advocated."

Chansley has also been unable to open a bank account since January 6 2021, although he is not sure whether that is connected with the Capitol riot or credit issues.

Some people online, he added, have gone so far as to call him a "traitor."

"There's people that say I belong in prison, that I should be still be in jail. People say that I was trying to overthrow democracy. So there's a lot of programmed minds out there that don't understand the truth and the totality of the situation," he said.

On January 6, Trump supporters stormed Capitol Hill in a bid to prevent Congress from certifying President Joe Biden's victory. More than 1,200 defendants have been charged and over 700 sentenced in connection with the Capitol breach.

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January 6 'Shaman' Says Musk, Carlson Never Reached Out After January 6 as Promised

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - Jacob "Shaman" Chansley told Sputnik Elon Musk and Tucker Carlson, despite their vocal support, have not reached out to him as he struggles with the consequences from his role in the incidents on January 6, 2021.

"Elon Musk said he was my biggest advocate - or besides Tucker Carlson - for freedom for me after the [January 6] footage was released. He also said that he would pay my legal fees. He has not reached out to my lawyer," Chansley said. "He hasn't reached out to me to congratulate me on freedom."

Musk and Carlson were both advocating for the "little guy," he added, but they did not follow through.

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Biden Says Reached No Agreement With Xi on Releasing Individuals Detained in China

SAN FRANCISCO, November 16 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden said he did not reach an agreement during talks with Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping on releasing individuals detained in China.

"I gave them names of individuals we think are being held and hopefully we can get them released as well. No agreement on that," Biden said during a press briefing on Wednesday following his meeting with Xi.

Biden and Xi earlier in the day held a bilateral meeting in an expanded format with the participation of top officials and advisers from both sides at the historic Filola estate in northern California on the sidelines of the APEC Leaders' summit taking place in San Francisco this week.

Biden said the two leaders made "important" progress during the talks. The meeting touched no several bilateral, regional and global issues including military-to-military contacts, Taiwan, the war in Gaza, Ukraine, Russia and boosting US-Chinese diplomacy, Biden added.

Xi told the meeting that China and the United States should jointly bear the responsibility of major powers and strengthen coordination on international and regional issues.

China Central Television quoted Xi as saying that the US should support the peaceful reunification of China and stop arming Taiwan.

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Biden Says Told Xi US Does Not Expect Chinese Interfere in Elections

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden told reporters he discussed with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping that the US does not expect any Chinese interference in elections.

Biden said that he made it clear to Xi that Washington did not expect any interference "at all" by China.

"We had that discussion as he was leaving," Biden said after meeting Xi in northern California on the sidelines of the APEC Leaders' summit taking place in San Francisco this week.

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"We're going to continue to preserve and pursue high level diplomacy [with] the PRC in both directions. Keep the lines of communication open including between President Xi [Jinping] and me. He [Xi] and I agreed that each one has to pick up the phone call directly and will be heard immediately," Biden said on Wednesday during a press briefing following the meeting with Xi.

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Biden Says Working on Getting Hostages Freed in Gaza

SAN FRANCISCO, November 16 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden told reporters he is working on ways to help release hostages taken by Hamas.
"I'm working on how I can be helpful in getting the hostages released and have a period of time where there's a pause," Biden said on Wednesday during a press briefing.

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Biden Says He Doesn't Know How Long Gaza Conflict Will Last

SAN FRANCISCO, November 16 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said he was not sure how long the conflict in Gaza will last.
"How long this war is going to last, I don't know," Biden during a press conference on Wednesday.

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Biden When Asked If Xi is A Dictator Says 'He Is'

SAN FRANCISCO, November 16 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden when asked if Chinese Leader Xi Jinping is a dictator said "he is."
"He is," Biden said on Wednesday when asked whether after today's meeting in northern

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California on the sidelines of the APEC Leaders' summit he would still refer to Xi as a dictator.

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Biden Says US to Continue Competing 'Vigorously' With China

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said Washington will continue to relentlessly compete with China but in a responsible manner.
"The United States will continue to compete vigorously with the PRC, but we'll manage that competition responsibly," Biden told the press following his meeting with the Chinese President Xi Jinping in San Francisco on Wednesday.

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Biden Says He Told Israel 'It's Wrong to Occupy Gaza'

SAN FRANCISCO, November 16 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said he told Israel that it would be wrong to occupy Gaza.
"I told Israel it's wrong to occupy Gaza, that they should not," said Biden during a press conference Wednesday.

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Biden Says US Will Responsibly Compete With China, Steer Away From Accidental Conflict

SAN FRANCISCO, November 16 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said the United States will continue to responsibly compete with China, but will steer away from accidental conflict.
"The United States will continue to compete vigorously with the PRC, but will manage that competition responsibly, so it doesn't veer into conflict or accidental conflict," said Biden during a press conference following his bilateral meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

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Biden Says US, China to Get Experts Together to Discuss A.I. Risk, Safety Issues

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SAN FRANCISCO, November 16 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said the US and China are going to get experts together to discuss the risk and safety issues associated with artificial intelligence.

"We're gonna get our experts together to discuss risk and safety issues associated with artificial intelligence," Biden said after talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

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Biden Says US, China to Resume Direct Military-to-Military Contacts

SAN FRANCISCO, November 16 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden after talks with his Chinese counterpart said Beijing and the US are going to restart direct military-to-military contacts.

"This is critically important - we're resuming military to military contacts, direct contacts," Biden told the press following his meeting with the Chinese President Xi Jinping in San Francisco on Wednesday.

Biden and Xi earlier held a 2.5 bilateral meeting in an expanded format with the participation of top officials and advisers from both sides at the historic Filola estate in northern California on the sidelines of the APEC Leaders' summit taking place in San Francisco this week.

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Biden Says Progress Made in Xi Talks, Agreed to Restart US-China Anti-Drug Cooperation

SAN FRANCISCO, November 16 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said he and Chinese President Xi Jinping made important progress during their bilateral talks.

"We made some important progress," Biden during a press conference Wednesday.

Biden added that China and the United States are restarting cooperation around counternarcotics, among other things.

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Pentagon Says Shot Down Drone From Yemen Headed Toward US Ship, No Casualties Involved

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - A US guided-missile destroyer in the Red Sea shot down a drone launched from Yemen in the direction of the warship, a US Defense Department spokesperson said in a statement to Sputnik.

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"On November 15th and while transiting the international waters of the Red Sea, the crew of the USS Thomas Hudner engaged a drone that originated from Yemen and was heading in the direction of the ship," the statement said on Wednesday.

The ship successfully downed the drone and sustained neither damage nor casualties as a result of the incident, the statement said.

Last month, another US Navy warship shot down three cruise missiles and several drones launched by Houthi forces in Yemen.

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Two Dozen US Lawmakers Urge Biden to Redouble Efforts to Deescalate in Gaza Via Ceasefire

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - Two dozen US lawmakers in a letter called on the Biden administration to redouble efforts to deescalate in the Gaza Strip through a ceasefire.

"We thank the President for calling for a humanitarian pause so that humanitarian aid may flow and diplomacy may take place," the letter sent to US President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken said. "However, given the present lack of an apparent and clear strategic plan, we encourage a redoubling of efforts to achieve rapid de-escalation through a ceasefire and robust, regional engagement that includes international humanitarian organizations. We understand that the Administration has serious concerns regarding the objectives and consequences of a large-scale ground offensive, and we urge you to press this case directly."

The letter was signed by 24 Members of the Congress, including representatives Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib, Mark Pocan, Cori Bush, James McGovern, Ilhan Omar and Barbara Lee among others, who expressed deep concern about the intensifying war in Gaza and grave violations against children.

"Further, we write urging clarity on your strategic objectives for achieving de-escalation and stability in the region," the lawmakers said. "International norms require that all parties to an armed conflict protect children and prevent the commission of grave violations against them, including killing and maiming, attacks on schools and hospitals, recruitment and use of children, abduction of children, and denial of humanitarian access."

The group said they commend the administration's goal of expanding humanitarian supplies to Gaza but more is needed.

"While we greatly welcome your work, it has had limited impact on the -ground so far and, we believe, risks undermining the United States' own credibility in the region." We urge an immediate cessation of hostilities in order to stop the bombing and provide much-needed relief to Palestinian civilians," the letter said.

On October 7, Palestinian movement 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, cutting off supplies of water, food, and fuel.

On October 27, Israel launched a large-scale ground incursion inside the Gaza Strip with the declared goal of eliminating Hamas fighters and rescuing the hostages. The escalation of the

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conflict has resulted in the deaths of around 1,200 people in Israel and over 11,500 in the Gaza Strip.

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Malta Envoy Says Disappointing That Israel Rejected Newly Adopted UNSC Resolution on Gaza

UNITED NATIONS, November 16 (Sputnik) - Maltese Ambassador to the United Nations Vanessa Frazier said that it is very disappointing by Israel rejecting the just-passed resolution on Gaza at the UN Security Council.

"The resolutions of the [UN Security] Council are immediately binding for all members," Frazier said on Wednesday. "So, it is very disappointing that this would be the initial reaction of Israel."

Earlier on Wednesday, the UN Security Council finally passed a resolution calling for humanitarian pauses in the Gaza Strip amid Israel's invasion that has resulted in the death of some 12,000 Palestinians.

However, the Israeli envoy to the United Nations announced that Israel rejects the newly adopted UN Security Council resolution on Gaza.

Frazier said as far as she knows, Israel had also said it is complying with the UN Security Council resolutions.

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January 6 'Shaman' Says Running for Office Because 'Nobody in US Congress Doing Their Job'

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik), Lenka White - Jacob "Shaman" Chansley told Sputnik he is running for US political office because he feels no lawmakers are fulfilling their duties properly in terms of representing Americans.

Chansley became the most recognized participant in the January 6, 2021 Capitol breach due to the extravagant outfit he wore that day, which included a bull-horned fur headdress, and face painted red, white and blue.

"Nobody in Congress is doing their freakin' job of representing the American people," Chansley said when asked why he is running to become a member of the US Congress.

Chansley said he supports an amendment for term limits, criminalizing lobbying, and more prosecutions for insider trading.

He said he plans on running for Congress as a Libertarian Party candidate. Chansley also mentioned that several people haves offered to volunteer to work on his campaign.

Chansley, sentenced in November 2021 to 41 months in prison after pleading guilty to obstructing official proceedings, was released to a halfway house in Arizona in March. He was permitted to leave the halfway house two months later.

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On January 6, 2021, supporters of then-President Donald Trump stormed Capitol Hill in a bid to prevent Congress from certifying President Joe Biden's victory. More than 1,200 defendants have been charged and over 700 sentenced in connection with the Capitol breach.

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Palestine Grateful for Countries' Support in Passing UN Resolution on Gaza - Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, November 16 (Sputnik) - Palestinian Ambassador to the United Nations Riyad Mansour said he is grateful for the UN members' support.

"I am grateful, as I said to the unity of everyone in the group that allowed us to keep inching forward towards this objective. And also I'm grateful to the unity of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, who are also with us, and we work together, whether in the General Assembly, or in other components of the United Nations," Mansour told journalists.

The Palestinian Ambassador was talking to journalists together with other ambassadors of the Arab League and the Ambassador of China Zhang Jun who is the President of the UN Security Council for November.

On Wednesday, the UN Security Council finally passed a resolution calling for humanitarian pauses in Gaza.

The Security Council has been trying for over a month to find an agreement. The biggest disagreement was over whether to condemn Hamas in the document - the United States Mission wanted to see its condemnation. Countries such as Russia and China wanted purely humanitarian resolution without condemnations.

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Biden Says Talks With Xi Going 'Well,' Gives Two Thumbs Up

SAN FRANCISCO, November 16 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden during a walk with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping shown thumbs up on both hands when asked by a reporter how the talks were ongoing.

The two leaders walked along a brick path, standing close to one another, and appeared to be talking but it was out of the press pool's earshot.

"Well," Biden replied to the pool when asked how talks are going.

The bilateral meeting between Biden and Xi ended at 1:35 p.m. PST (21:35 GMT) and lasted nearly two and a half hours.

The landmark bilateral meeting was held in an expanded format with the participation of top officials and advisers from both sides at the historic Filola estate in northern California on the sidelines of the APEC Leaders' summit taking place in San Francisco this week.

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House Speaker Calls for Key Witnesses to Be Placed Under Oath in Biden Impeachment Inquiry

UNITED NATIONS, November 16 (Sputnik) - US House Speaker Mike Johnson said placing key witnesses under oath to address gaps in the record in the impeachment inquiry into President Joe Biden is an appropriate step.

"Now, the appropriate step is to place key witnesses under oath and question them under the penalty of perjury, to fill gaps in the record," Johnson said a statement on Wednesday.

At this stage, the impeachment inquiry had revealed the corrupt conduct of the president's family whereby President Biden and White House officials had consistently lied about his knowledge and involvement in his family's corrupt business activities, the statement said.

"It has also exposed the tens of millions of dollars from foreign adversaries being paid to shell companies controlled by the president's son, brother and their business associates," the statement added.

In September, then-House Speaker Kevin McCarthy launched an impeachment inquiry into Biden, following probes into alleged criminal activity by the president and his son, Hunter Biden. The Biden family is alleged to have enriched themselves through foreign bribery and influence peddling.

Biden has dismissed the accusations against him, claiming to have never discussed foreign business deals with his son.

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Police Respond to Bomb Threat in San Francisco Mall, Suspect Detained with Lighter - SFPD

SAN FRANCISCO, November 16 (Sputnik) - The San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) responded to a reported bomb threat at a SF Mall, resulting in the evacuation of a commercial building, Public Information Officer Robert Rueca told Sputnik.

"On 11/15/23 at approximately 12:17 pm officers responded to a commercial building located on the 800 block of Market St. regarding a person with a suspicious device. An area of the building was evacuated by building employees," Rueca said on Wednesday.

Furthermore, Rueca said that officers had arrived on the scene, detained an individual matching the suspect description, and discovered a suspicious device, later identified as a lighter.

"Officers searched the building and deemed the public areas safe," Rueca said.

Rueca added that there was no information regarding any stated threat, emphasizing that the incident appeared to be isolated and unrelated to Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit.

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Russian Delegation to APEC Summit Arrives in San Francisco - Embassy

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - The Russian delegation to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit led by Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk arrived in San Francisco and said they hope the host nation - the United States - will ensure a constructive and pragmatic dialogue, the Russian Embassy in Washington said in a statement.

"The Russian delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation A.L. Overchuk arrived in San Francisco to participate in the APEC summit and leaders' week," the statement said on Wednesday. "We count on the United States as a host country to ensure a constructive and pragmatic dialogue within the framework of this economic forum."

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Biden, Xi's Bilateral Meeting Ends After Nearly 2.5 Hours - White House

SAN FRANCISCO, November 16 (Sputnik) - The bilateral meeting between US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping ended at 1:35 p.m. PST (21:35 GMT) and lasted nearly two and a half hours, according to the White House pool.

The landmark bilateral meeting was held in an expanded format with the participation of top officials and advisers from both sides at the historic Filola estate in northern California on the sidelines of the APEC Leaders' summit taking place in San Francisco this week.

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UN Security Council Resolution on Gaza 1st Step Based on Minimum Consensus - Chinese Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, November 16 (Sputnik) - The adoption of the resolution on Gaza by the UN Security Council represents merely a first step based on a minimum consensus, which was obstructed by a permanent member state, Chinese Ambassador to the United Nations Zhang Jun said.

"In particular, the repeated and persistent obstruction of a permanent member of the [UN Security] Council. This resolution, at present, can only serve as a first step based on a minimum consensus," Zhang Jun said during a meeting of the UN Security Council on Wednesday.

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China Urges UNSC Support for Diplomacy in Israel-Gaza Hostage Crisis - Chinese Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, November 16 (Sputnik) - China has renewed its plea to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for robust support in fostering active diplomatic initiatives aimed at securing the early release of hostages, China's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Zhang Jun said.

"We would like to reiterate that we are strongly against the arbitrary displacement of the Palestinian people. The resolution just adopted also makes a clear call on the issue related to [the] hostages. We reiterate our call to guarantee the personal security and humanitarian needs of the hostages and to support active diplomatic efforts to facilitate the early release of the persons concerned," Zhang Jun said on Wednesday during the United Nations Security Council.

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Russia Expects UN Chief to Report on Gaza Resolution, Seeks Monitoring Mechanism-Nebenzia

UNITED NATIONS, November 16 (Sputnik) - Russia expects UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to report on the adopted resolution on Gaza and also wants to propose the launching of an international monitoring mechanism, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said.

"We expect that the Secretary General at the next meeting of the Security Council on the Middle East during the peace process will report on the implementation of this resolution and we'll provide as soon as possible to the council options as we're creating a mechanism of international monitoring over this process," Nebenzia said during a meeting of the UN Security Council on Wednesday.

The UN Security Council will also need to make a decision on the steps ahead, Nebenzia added.

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Russia Regrets UN Gaza Resolution Does Not Demand Ceasefire Due to US Pressure - Nebenzia

UNITED NATIONS, November 16 (Sputnik) - Russia regrets the language of adopted UNSC resolution on Gaza has been watered down due to the pressure from the US and does not

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include a demand for a ceasefire, the Russian Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia said at a Security Council meeting.

"We regret them under pressure from Washington. The language of the resolution, the resolution has been hollowed out," Nebenzia said on Wednesday.

The UNSC, Nebenzia added, does not even demand the parties introduce humanitarian pauses, which is a "mockery" of the prerogatives of the council.

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US FAA Approves Second Launch of Starship Super Heavy Vehicle

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) – The US Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) said in an X post that it issued a license authorizing the second launch of SpaceX' Starship super heavy vehicle.

"The FAA has given license authorization for the second launch of the SpaceX Starship Super Heavy vehicle. The FAA determined SpaceX met all safety, environmental, policy, and financial responsibility requirements," the post said on Wednesday.

The second flight test of Starship will take place at 8:00 a.m. (13:00 GMT) on Friday from the Boca Chica Launch Site in Cameron County, Texas.

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Nikki Haley Campaign Walks Back Stance on Internet Anonymity After Backlash - Statement

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - The campaign of 2024 Republican presidential hopeful Nikki Haley issued a statement clarifying the candidate's stance on internet anonymity, after receiving backlash for proposing identity verification on social media platforms.

Earlier this week, Haley said in an interview that every person on social media should be verified by name for national security purposes. Haley's stance received criticism from fellow Republican presidential candidates, including Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and businessman Vivek Ramaswamy.

"Americans have a right to free speech, including having anonymous accounts on social media," Haley's campaign said in a statement to US media. "What Nikki doesn't support is letting the Chinese and Iranians create anonymous accounts to spread chaos and anti-American filth among our people."

DeSantis called Haley's proposal unconstitutional and pointed toward the anonymous writings of some of the United States' founding figures, such as the Federalist Papers. Ramaswamy called Haley's proposal "disgusting" and likewise cited the Federalist Papers in defense of internet anonymity.

Haley's proposal also drew criticism from businessman Elon Musk, who has defended

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anonymity on social media platform X.
"Super messed up," Musk said, adding that Haley should end her presidential campaign.
Social media companies must do a better job of policing foreign entities using anonymous accounts, the Haley campaign statement said.
Haley maintains 9% support in the Republican Party primary, trailing former US President Donald Trump's 64% support and DeSantis' 16% support, according to a Quinnipiac University poll released Wednesday.

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Austin Tells Israeli Counterpart to Protect Civilians in Gaza - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) - US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke by telephone with his Israeli counterpart Yoav Gallant and emphasized the necessity to protect civilians in the Gaza Strip and the importance of allowing humanitarian aid there, Defense Department spokesperson Pat Ryder said.
"The Secretary reiterated his steadfast support for Israel's defense and emphasized the need to protect civilians, increase humanitarian aid delivery, and ensure military operations comply with international humanitarian law," Ryder said on Wednesday.
The two officials discussed Israel's military operations against Hamas, Ryder said.
On October 7, the Palestinian movement Hamas launched a surprise attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip. Israel declared war on Hamas and launched retaliatory strikes as well as imposed a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, cutting off supplies of water, food, medicines, electricity and fuel.
Israel then launched a ground invasion of Gaza with the declared goal of eliminating Hamas and rescuing some 300 hostages. The escalation of the conflict has resulted in the death of 1,200 Israeli soldiers and civilians and some 12,000 Palestinian civilians.

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UPDATE -Two Individuals Detained at 'Ceasefire Now' Protest Targeting Trudeau - Vancouver Police

(Modifies headline, adds details in para 1-2, 5-6)
WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) – Two individuals were arrested for assaulting and obstructing law enforcement elements deployed to protect Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau after protesters surrounded a restaurant where he was dining to demand a ceasefire in Gaza, the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) said on Wednesday.
On Tuesday night, the VPD deployed close to a hundred police officers to a restaurant located in Vancouvers Main Street to safely escort Trudeau out after nearly 250 protesters had gathered

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to confront him over his stance on the Israel-Gaza war.

The protesters were chanting: "Ceasefire Now." The crowd also yelled "Shame on You" and "You Have Blood on Your Hands," accusing Trudeau of "genocide" and "killing" Palestinian children.

"#VPDscanner: A 27 y/o man has been arrested for punching VPD officer in the face & gouging her eyes last night near a Chinatown restaurant where Prime Minister [Trudeau] was dining. She was one of nearly a hundred officers deployed to deal with protestor," Vancouver Police said via X (formerly Twitter).

The officer has received medical attention for her injuries, the VPD said in a separate statement. It has been recommended that criminal charges be laid against the assailant.

Police further noted that a 34-year-old man was also detained, in this occasion for obstructing police duties. The individual has since been released pending further investigation, the statement continued.

The protest took place on the same day that Trudeau urged the Israeli government to exercise maximum restraint in its ongoing war in the Gaza Strip and called on Hamas to release all hostages and stop using civilians as "human shields."

Trudeau has continuously supported Israel's right to self-defense "in accordance with international law."

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, cutting off supplies of water, food, and fuel.

On October 27, Israel launched a large-scale ground incursion inside the Gaza Strip with the declared goal of eliminating Hamas fighters and rescuing the hostages. The conflict has killed around 1,200 people in Israel and over 11,000 in the Gaza Strip.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, November 16 (Sputnik) –

ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN WAR IN GAZA

* The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said on Wednesday that it is continuing its operation against the Palestinian movement Hamas in the Al Shifa Hospital.

* The Israeli military has urged the residents of several areas in the southern Gaza Strip to immediately leave their homes and find shelter.

* The United States did not green light Israel's military operations in and around the Al Shifa hospital in the Gaza Strip, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said.

RESTRICTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA

* Russia will not be able to dispose of its real estate in the Czech Republic, nor use its accounts after the freezing of its state property in the country, Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala

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said on Wednesday.
* The Finnish government plans to close border crossings with Russia on November 16, the Helsingin Sanomat newspaper reported, citing sources.
* The government of the Czech Republic approved the "freezing of the Russian state property" in the country, Czech Foreign Minister Jan Lipavsky said.
* EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security policy Joseph Borrell proposed to introduce restrictions against over 120 Russian individuals and entities as a part of the new EU sanctions package against Russia, the European External Action Service (EEAS) said.
* Russia considers the new EU sanctions package as an example of the "aggressive policy of the West" and a violation of the international law, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* The US ability to continue supporting Ukraine is increasingly at jeopardy and the Biden administration is already making “tough decisions” about security assistance for Kiev, Coordinator for Strategic Communications at the National Security Council in the White House John Kirby said on Wednesday.
* A lapse in US funding for Ukraine will have a deleterious effect on the country's ability to defend itself and the United States has no other recourse but to secure supplemental funding, Kirby said.
* Russia has asked that a UN Security Council meeting be held on November 17 to discuss the Kiev regime's persecution of members of the Ukraine Orthodox Church (UOC), Russian Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy said.
* The Ukrainian military lost up to 220 soldiers as killed or injured in the Donetsk direction in the past 24 hours, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

US-CHINA CONVERSATIONS

* US National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said that the US is expecting that US President Biden and Chinese President Xi's upcoming meeting will lead to “much more communication and dialogue” moving forward.
* Washington and Beijing are building bilateral relations, it is their right, but Russia will be monitoring reports regarding contacts between Biden and Xi Jinping, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.
* Kirby said that the White House does not anticipate any readout of the bilateral meeting between Biden and Xi Jinping before the press conference.
* Xi Jinping told Biden that he hopes to reach an understanding with the United States on strategic issues.
* Xi Jinping said that the United States and China can coexist in peace and pursue win-win cooperation despite the socio-cultural differences between them.
* Biden told Xi Jinping that it is an "honor and pleasure" to host him again in the United States for bilateral talks.

RUSSIAN ECONOMY

* Russia’s GDP has increased by 2.9% from the previous estimate of 2.8% over the past nine months, the Russian Economic Development Ministry said on Wednesday.
* Russia's GDP growth in the third quarter of 2023 accelerated to 5.5% from 4.9% in the second quarter, according to the Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat) report.

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* The average price of Russian oil brand Urals amounted to $79.23 per barrel from October 15 to November 14, while the Brent benchmark was trading at $88.62 per barrel, bringing the Russian oil's discount to $9.39 per barrel, the Russian Finance Ministry said.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION ECONOMIC FORECAST

* The European Commission has upgraded the forecast for Russia's GDP in 2023 and now expects an increase of 2% instead of a 0.9% decline, according to its Autumn 2023 Economic Forecast released on Wednesday.

* The European Commission has upgraded the forecast for the global economic growth in 2023 to 3.1% from the previously expected 2.8%, according to its Autumn 2023 Economic Forecast.

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UN Security Council Passes Resolution on Gaza Calling for Extended Humanitarian Pauses

UNITED NATIONS, November 15 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council (UNSC) has approved a resolution on Gaza, Chinese Ambassador to the United Nations Zhang Jun, who presides over the UNSC during the month of November, said on Wednesday.

The resolution calls for "urgent and extended humanitarian pauses and corridors throughout the Gaza Strip for a sufficient number of days to enable, consistent with international humanitarian law, the full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access for United Nations humanitarian agencies."

In addition, the resolution calls for the unconditional release of hostages by the Palestinian group Hamas as well as other groups.

It further demands that all parties comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, including with regard to protecting civilians, especially children.

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US Blocks Russia's Bid to Amend Draft UNSC Resolution to Call for Gaza Humanitarian Truce

UNITED NATIONS, November 15 (Sputnik) - The United States on Wednesday voted against Russia’s amendment to a Malta-drafted UNSC resolution on Gaza that would have included a call for a humanitarian truce, a Sputnik correspondent reported.

The amendment was rejected in a 1-5 vote, with nine abstentions.

The amendment would call for an immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce, leading to a cessation of hostilities.

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US OKs Possible $52.1Mln Sale of Sidewinder Missiles, Equipment to South Korea - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - The United States approved a potential $52.1 million sale of Sidewinder missiles and related equipment to South Korea, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) said on Wednesday.

"The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Republic of Korea of AIM-9X Block II and Block II+ (Plus) Sidewinder Missiles and related equipment for an estimated cost of $52.1 million," DSCA said in a press release.

South Korea requested the US State Department provide permission to buy 42 AIM-9X Sidewinder Block II+ Tactical Missiles, 10 AIM-9X Sidewinder Captive Air Training Missiles, five AIM-9X Block II+ Sidewinder Tactical Guidance Units, and three AIM-9X Sidewinder CATM Guidance Units, the release said.

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Xi Tells Biden He Hopes to Reach Understanding on Strategic Issues

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - China's President Xi Jinping told US President Biden on Wednesday that he hopes to reach an understanding with the United States on strategic issues.

"I look forward to an in-depth exchange of views and to reach new understandings with you on strategic and overarching issues critical to the direction of Chinese[-US] relations and our major issues affecting world peace and development," Xi said during a bilateral meeting with President Biden in San Francisco.

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Biden Tells Xi Important to Ensure Competition Does Not Veer Into Conflict

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden during a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday stressed the need to ensure that competition between the two countries does not veer into conflict.

"We have to ensure that competition does not veer into conflict," Biden said ahead of the meeting in San Francisco.

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

Space Operations Chief Says US Would Rather Be in Competition With China Than in Conflict

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - US Chief of Space Operations Gen. Chance Saltzman said on Wednesday that the United States Space Force would rather be in a state of competition with China than in a state of conflict.
"I would much rather be in a state of competition with China than in conflict or crisis," Saltzman said.
Saltzman's comments come amid the meeting between US President Joe Biden and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinpinon on the sidelines of the ongoing Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in San Francisco.

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Biden Tells Xi 'Paramount' They Understand Each Other Clearly With No Misconceptions

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) -US President Joe Biden in the beginning of the meeting with his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, stressed that he values their talk and believes that it is paramount to understand each other clearly without any misconceptions.
"There is no substitute to face-to-face discussions," Biden said as the meeting began on the sidelines of the ongoing Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in San Francisco .
"I value our conversation because I think it's paramount that you and I understand each other clearly, leader to leader, with no misconceptions or miscommunication."

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Xi Tells Biden US, China Can Pursue Win-Win Cooperation Despite Differences

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - China's President Xi Jinping said on Wednesday that the United States and China can coexist in peace and pursue win-win cooperation despite the the socio-cultural differences between them.
"It is an objective fact that China and the United States are different in history, culture, social system, and development paths. However, as long as they respect each other coexist in peace, and pursue Win-Win cooperation, they will be fully capable of rising above differences and find the right way for the two major countries to get along with each other," Xi said during a joint press conference with US President Joe Biden.

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Xi Tells Biden That US, China Turning Back on Each Other Not Option

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) – Chinese President Xi Jinping told US President Joe Biden on Wednesday that Washington and Beijing turning their back on each other is not an option.

"For two large countries like China and the United States, turning their back on each other is not an option. It is unrealistic for one side to remodel the other, and conflict and confrontation have unbearable consequences for both sides," Xi told Biden at the beginning of their bilateral meeting in San Francisco.

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Biden, Xi's Talks at Filoli Estate Heighten Security Measures - Correspondent

SAN FRANCISCO, November 15 (Sputnik) - Heightened security measures encircle the Filoli Estate, where US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping are expected to have a tete-a-tete meeting during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in San Francisco, Sputnik correspondent reported on Wednesday.

US Special Services have implemented enhanced security protocols, blocking the road leading to the Filoli Estate at a distance of 6 miles, with an additional 3 miles detour also restricted. Notably, sporadic groups of individuals carrying flags have been observed in the vicinity of the meeting place of Joe Biden and Xi Jinping.

According to the White House Press Pool, Bidens motorcade arrived at the Filoli estate at 10:50 am.

"Protestors lined the streets for the early part of our trip, many with pro President Xi signs and Chinese flags hung up on security fences. Demonstrators were then gathered with Chinese flags right where the motorcade got off the highway. And, one handwritten sign read, 'lost my vote'," said the White House Press Pool.

Originally a private residence in 1917, Filoli stands as one of the 20th century's finest country estates. Dedicated to preserving history and fostering a connection between past and future, Filoli invites people to appreciate nature, unique experiences, and everyday beauty, according to their website.

APEC is a trade and economic forum of 21 countries in the Asia-Pacific region. This year's summit in San Francisco is taking place from November 11-17.

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Biden Says ‘Honor, Pleasure’ to Host Xi Again in US

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden told Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday that it is an "honor and pleasure" to host him again in the United States for bilateral talks.

"Mr. President, it's good to see you again. We spent many hours together over the last 10 to 12 years and to host you in the United States is a great honor and a pleasure," Biden told Xi at the beginning of their bilateral meeting in San Francisco.

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China's Xi Says 'Firmly' Believes in Promising Future of Bilateral Relationship with US

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - Chinese President Xi Jinping said on Wednesday that he strongly believes in the promising future of the bilateral relationship with the United States.

"I firmly believe in a promising future of the bilateral relationship," Xi said ahead of his meeting with US President Joe Biden in San Francisco.

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Trump Maintains Narrow Lead Over Biden in Hypothetical 2024 US Election Matchups - Poll

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump maintains a narrow lead over incumbent Joe Biden in a variety of hypothetical matchups for the 2024 US presidential election, a new Quinnipiac University poll revealed on Wednesday.

"Trump on top for the first time, at least numerically, and Biden in a slow slide," Quinnipiac University polling analyst Tim Malloy said in a report on the poll.

In a two-way matchup between Trump and Biden, the former president received 48% support and the incumbent, 46% support, the poll report said. However, the figures make the race too close to call one way or the other, the report said.

When expanded to a three-way matchup including independent candidate Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Trump received 38% support, Biden 37% and Kennedy 21%, the report said.

If Green Party candidate Jill Stein and independent candidate Cornel West are also added to the matchup, Trump receives 38% support and Biden receives 35%, the report also said.

A majority of voters, 52%, would like to see more candidates added to the presidential race, the report added.

Trump maintains a larger lead in the Republican Party primary race, where he holds 64% support, trailed by Florida Governor Ron DeSantis in second place with 16% support, according to the report.

The poll surveyed 1,574 registered voters in the United States, with a margin of error of

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plus-or-minus 2.5 percentage points.

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Xi Arrives for Bilateral Meeting With Biden in San Francisco

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) – Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived for a bilateral meeting with US President Joe Biden in Woodside, California to discuss an array of bilateral and international issues on the sidelines of the APEC Leaders' summit taking place in San Francisco this week.

After Biden greeted and shook hands with Xi, the two leaders proceeded inside the Filoli estate, a private residence in the northern part of California, for a bilateral meeting with the participation of top officials from both countries

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Most US Voters Disapprove of Biden's Response to Ukraine, Israel Conflicts - Poll

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - Most voters in the United States disapprove of US President Joe Biden's handling of the conflicts in Ukraine and Israel, according to a Quinnipiac University poll released Wednesday.

A plurality of respondents, 49%, disapprove of Biden's handling of the conflict in Ukraine, while 47% approve of it, the poll report said.

A majority of respondents, 54%, also disapprove of Biden's response to the conflict between Israel and Hamas, while 37% approve of it, the report said.

"President Biden's foreign policy numbers languish, with voter discontent for his dealing with the Israel-Hamas war jumping in just two weeks' time," Quinnipiac University Polling analyst Tim Malloy said in the report.

Sixty-one percent of respondents generally disapprove of Biden's approach to foreign policy in general, the report said.

Ahead of the 2024 US presidential election, 48% of respondents said that former US President Donald Trump would best represent the US on the world stage, while 44% said the same of Biden, the report said.

The poll surveyed 1,574 registered voters in the US from November 9-13. The poll maintains a margin of error of plus-or-minus 2.5 percentage points.

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Unclear if APEC Can Fulfill Mandate for Inclusive, Sustainable Trade Policies - Tai

SAN FRANCISCO, November 15 (Sputnik) - US Trade Representative Katherine Tai said on Wednesday that it is unclear whether the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) can fulfill the mandate of integrating inclusivity and sustainability into trade and investment policies.

"The outcome of that work is the San Francisco principles on integrating inclusivity and sustainability into trade and investment policy, which is supported by all economies and as such, we're still unclear whether APEC will be able to fulfill this mandate," Tai said during the the APEC ministerial meeting in San Francisco.

Tai said that trade has the potential and responsibility to serve as a positive influence, bringing more individuals into the economic growth to enhance greater fairness and opportunities.

"But we must remember that the decisions that we make today, they have real impacts on real people and those people are our people," Tai added.

APEC is a trade and economic forum for 21 countries in the Asia-Pacific region. This year's APEC summit in San Francisco is taking place from November 11-17.

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Hospitals Cannot be Used as Battlegrounds Under International Law - UN Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, November 15 (Sputnik) - Hospitals cannot be used as battlegrounds under the terms of international law as well as based on humanity, United Nations spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Wednesday.

"Based on international law and based on humanity - hospitals should not be a battleground," Dujarric said during a press briefing.

In fact, hospitals cannot be used in any combat situation, Dujarric said.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Israeli Defense Forces said that they were carrying out a precise and targeted military operation against the Palestinian movement Hamas in the Al-Shifa hospital. The hospital is the largest medical facility in the Gaza Strip.

Also on Wednesday, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths said that he was appalled by reports of Israel's military raids in and around the Al-Shifa hospital, also reiterating that hospitals are not battlegrounds.

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Man Arrested for Assaulting Officer Protecting Trudeau From 'Ceasefire Now' Protesters

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - One individual was arrested for assaulting a law enforcement officer deployed to protect Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau after protesters surrounded a Vancouver restaurant where he was dining to demand a ceasefire in Gaza, the

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Vancouver police said on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, protesters confronted Trudeau at a Vancouver restaurant where he was dining late at night. The police had to deploy nearly a hundred officers to control the crowd and allow Trudeau to exit the place.

The protesters were chanting: "Ceasefire Now." The crowd also yelled "Shame on You" and "You Have Blood on Your Hands," accusing Trudeau of "genocide" and "killing" Palestinian children.

"A 27 y/o man has been arrested for punching VPD officer in the face & gouging her eyes last night near a Chinatown restaurant where Prime Minister [Trudeau] was dining. She was one of nearly a hundred officers deployed to deal with protestors," the Vancouver police said via X (formerly Twitter).

The protest took place on the same day that Trudeau urged the Israeli government to exercise maximum restraint in its ongoing war in the Gaza Strip and called on Hamas to release all hostages and stop using civilians as "human shields."

Trudeau has continuously supported Israel's right to self-defense "in accordance with international law."

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, cutting off supplies of water, food, and fuel.

On October 27, Israel launched a large-scale ground incursion inside the Gaza Strip with the declared goal of eliminating Hamas fighters and rescuing the hostages. The conflict has killed around 1,200 people in Israel and over 11,000 in the Gaza Strip.

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IMF, Pakistan Reach Staff-Level Deal to Unlock $700Mln Disbursement - Official

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Pakistan reached a staff-level agreement on the first review for stand-by arrangement (SBA), which would allow the country to receive around $700 million, the IMF delegation head Nathan Porter said on Wednesday.

"The IMF team has reached a staff-level agreement (SLA) with the Pakistani authorities on the first review of their stabilization program supported by the IMF's US$3 billion (SDR2,250 million) SBA," Porter said after discussions in Islamabad.

The agreement is subject to the approval of the IMF's Executive Board, after which Pakistan will be able to receive around US$700 million. That would bring total disbursements under the program to almost US$1.9 billion, Porter added.

He acknowledged that Pakistan remains susceptible to significant external risks despite the steadfast execution of the FY24 budget, continued adjustment of energy prices, and lower inflation. Those risks include intensifying geopolitical tensions, resurgent commodity prices, and further tightening global financial conditions.

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Porter urged the government to continue making efforts to build resilience.

"In this regard, strengthening macroeconomic sustainability and laying the conditions for balanced growth are key priorities under the SBA," he said.

Pakistan's priorities should include continued fiscal consolidation, which allows to reduce debt. The government also has to strengthen social safety net to better protect the vulnerable population, and maintain further reforms to reduce costs in the energy sector, Porter added.

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US Lawmakers Request Info From Biden Administration on Hamas Digital Financing - Letter

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - A bipartisan group of US House lawmakers sent a letter to President Joe Biden and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on Wednesday to request information on the digital financing of Palestinian organization Hamas.

"We write today to raise serious concerns about Hamas, a designated terrorist organization by the United States, and its ability to utilize digital assets to finance its operations. As Congress seeks to eliminate the pathways for terrorist financing to protect both our interests at home and abroad and those of our allies, we need greater context around Hamas's operations," the letter said.

The letter was signed by lawmakers including House Majority Whip Tom Emmer and House Financial Services Committee Chairman Patrick McHenry.

The letter cites reports of Hamas-linked digital asset wallets receiving approximately $41 million between August 2021 and June 2023. Palestinian Islamic Jihad-linked wallets also reportedly received approximately $93 million in the same time period.

However, it remains unclear how much of the funds remain available to the groups, after Israel seized some of the assets, the letter said.

The letter requests info from Biden and Yellen regarding the number of digital wallets the United States has identified as linked to Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah, as well as the amount of assets contained in such wallets.

Lawmakers are also seeking information on whether the US has blocked or seized any of the groups' digital or non-digital assets, the letter said.

The letter requests an answer to the lawmakers' questions by November 29. The Biden administration can request a classified briefing if answers to their questions cannot be answered publicly, the letter added.

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US Finds Ukraine's Accession to NATO Without Donbas, Crimea 'Problematic' – State Dept.

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WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) – The accession of Ukraine to NATO without Crimea and Donbas is problematic and can potentially lead to a conflict with Russia, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs in the US Department of State Douglas Jones said on Wednesday.

Last week, former NATO chief Anders Fogh Rasmussen proposed to admit Ukraine to NATO without the territories controlled by Russia, including Donbas and Crimea, The Guardian reported.

"I think under that plan, you very quickly see NATO pulled into the conflict, and the United States pulled into the conflict [between Russia and Ukraine]. And I think that's a problematic part of this proposal," Jones said during a panel discussion hosted by the Atlantic Council.

Rasmussen, who was NATO's secretary general between 2009 and 2014, did not propose, however, to cede Donbas and Crime to Russia, but instead use Ukraine's membership in the military alliance as a means to "deter Moscow from mounting attacks inside the Ukrainian territory inside NATO and so free up Ukrainian forces to go to the frontline."

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US PPI and Retail Sales Tumble, Suggesting Fewer Reasons for Pre-New Year Rate Hike

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - US producer prices fell by the most in nearly four years while retail sales saw the first monthly drop in seven, according to data on Wednesday that showed a deeper inflation retreat in the world's largest economy that suggested fewer reasons for a rate hike before the year-end.

The so-called Producer Price Index, or PPI, declined 0.5% in October, the largest decrease since April 2020, after rising 0.4% in September, Labor Department data showed.

Wall Street economists polled by US media had forecast the PPI would edge up 0.1%. In the 12 months through October, the PPI increased 1.3% after rising 2.2% in September.

The drop in the PPI came as goods prices dropped 1.4%, with a 15.3% plunge in gasoline prices accounting for more than 80% of the decline. Goods prices gained 0.8% in September. Food prices slid 0.2%.

Retail sales slipped 0.1% last month, the Commerce Department reported. Data for September was revised upwards to show sales gaining 0.9% instead of the previously reported 0.7% rise. Economists had forecast retail sales would fall by 0.3%.

Retail sales, which are mostly goods not adjusted for inflation, were led by sales of motor vehicles and parts, which fell 1.1%. Economists attributed some of the decrease to the recently ended United Auto Workers strike.

The PPI and retail sales came on the back of a flat US inflation number on October, via the Consumer Price Index, or CPI, which showed an unchanged reading — its first in more than a year — after a 0.4% rise in September.

In the 12 months through October, the CPI gained 3.2% after rising 3.7% in September. Economists forecast a 3.3% increase year-on-year.

Inflation hit a four-decade high of 9.1% in the 12 months to June 2022.

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To fight inflation, the Fed hiked interest rates 11 times between March 2022 and August 2023, raising them by 5.25% from a base rate of just 0.25%.
The central bank is scheduled to decide on rates again at a policy meeting in December.

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US Air Force Bases to Face 'Unimaginably Worse' Attacks Than During Cold War - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - US Air Force bases around the world will face "unimaginably worse" attacks in the future than during the Cold War, Air Force Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff Thomas Lawhead said on Wednesday.
"The scale and the capability of attacks that the force will see in the near- to mid-term future are unimaginably worse than what we experienced during the Cold War," Lawhead said during a virtual Aerospace Nation event on Air Force Futures.
Lawhead noted that the US military had learned how to prevent such attacks against its bases, but emphasized the importance of base defense, logistics under attack and agile combat employment.
Those measures would allow the United States to generate combat resources that the military needs, Lawhead added.
The number of attacks on US airbases increased significantly between October 17 and November 6, with Islamic militia groups attacking US bases in Syria and Iraq 38 times, resulting in 46 soldiers being injured, according to the Defense Department.

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US Ship Defended Itself Against UAV While Transiting Through Red Sea – Pentagon

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) – USS Thomas Hudner, a US destroyer ship, was able to defend itself against an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) while transiting through the Red Sea earlier in the day, a US Department of Defense spokesperson told Sputnik in a statement on Wednesday.
"We're aware of an incident involving the USS Thomas Hudner successfully defending itself against a UAV while transiting through the Red Sea. We do not have additional details to provide at this time," the statement said.
According to media reports, the drone was allegedly launched from the territory of Yemen.

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RPT - US Ability to Continue Supporting Ukraine Increasingly at Jeopardy – Kirby

]WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) – The US ability to continue supporting Ukraine is increasingly at jeopardy and the Biden administration is already making “tough decisions” about security assistance for Kiev, Coordinator for Strategic Communications at the National Security Council in the White House John Kirby said on Wednesday.

“We are having to make tough decisions right now about the security assistance packages that we are providing to Ukraine, because we are coming near the end of the rope,” Kirby said during a press briefing. “Our ability to continue to support Ukraine is increasingly at jeopardy here.”

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UN Security Council to Meet Wednesday Afternoon to Vote on Gaza Resolution - Program

UNITED NATIONS, November 15 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council will hold a meeting on the Middle East at 3:00 p.m. ET on Wednesday, according to the UN Program of Work.

The UN Security Council members are expected to vote during the meeting on a draft resolution on the Gaza Strip.

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Lapse in US Funding to Have Negative Effect on Ukraine's Ability to Defend Itself - Kirby

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - A lapse in US funding for Ukraine will have a deleterious effect on the country's ability to defend itself and the United States has no other recourse but to secure supplemental funding, National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Wednesday.

"There is no other recourse, we must have supplemental funding for Ukraine to allow them to continue to fight back against Russian aggression," Kirby said.

The spokesperson also said that a lapse in US funding would have a deleterious effect on Ukraine's ability to continue to defend itself.

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US Air Force, Army Work On Integrated Missile Defense Study, Other Analyses - Pentagon

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WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) – The US Air Force and Army are working on the integrated missile defense study and other military analyses, Air Force Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff Thomas Lawhead said on Wednesday.

"We are currently working with the Army on the integrated missile defense mix study," Lawhead said at a virtual Aerospace Nation event on Air Force Futures.

He also mentioned that the Air Force is cooperating with the Army and the Northern Command on issues related to homeland missile defense opportunities.

"We are looking at this holistically, at what is the best way to protect not just the Air Force, but the joined deployed force in that environment that we are going to face, which is unlike anything we have ever seen," Lawhead said.

He also noted that the Air Force has a lot of conversations with the Army about protecting US military bases both in the US and worldwide.

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Runway Getting Shorter for US Ability to Support Ukraine, Funding 'Drying Up' - Kirby

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - The ability of the United States to support Ukraine in the manned it has been doing it thus far is diminishing amid decreasing funding, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Wednesday.

"The runway is getting shorter and shorter for our ability to support Ukraine in the manner in which we have been. That funding is drying up," Kirby said.

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UPDATE Ottawa Appoints Sarah Taylor as New Ambassador to Russia – Global Affairs Canada

(adds details in para 3, background in para 5)

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) – The Canadian government has appointed Sarah Taylor as its new ambassador to Russia, in replacement of outgoing Alison Leclair, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) said on Wednesday.

"Diplomats are our eyes and ears on the ground and at a time when Russia's illegal and unjustifiable invasion of Ukraine continues to have major impacts around the globe, Canada must maintain and strengthen its diplomatic network in the region. I offer my most sincere thanks to Alison LeClaire, who has done a tremendous job in representing Canada in the region, and I congratulate Sarah Taylor, who will continue this important work over the coming years." GAC said quoting Minister of Foreign Affairs Melanie Joly.

Taylor joined the department of External Affairs in 1990. She has served in a multitude of roles including as deputy head of mission to in Beijing from 2011-2015, and most recently between

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2020-2023 as Canadian Ambassador to Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia

The newly appointed Ambassador will be tasked with continuing Canada's work with allies and partners in holding "Russia to account" for its ongoing special military operation in Ukraine, the statement added.

Since the onset of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, Canada ceased its bilateral cooperation with Moscow. Ottawa currently maintains a limited diplomatic engagement with their Russian counterparts, in multilateral encounters.

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US Ability to Continue Supporting Ukraine Increasingly at Jeopardy – Kirby

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) – The US ability to continue supporting Ukraine is increasingly at jeopardy and the Biden administration is already making "tough decisions" about security assistance for Kiev, Coordinator for Strategic Communications at the National Security Council in the White House John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"We are having to make tough decisions right now about the security assistance packages that we are providing to Ukraine, because we are coming near the end of the rope," Kirby said during a press briefing. "Our ability to continue to support Ukraine is increasingly at jeopardy here."

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US Did Not Give Okay to Israel for Military Operations Around Gaza Hospital - Kirby

(Updates with more details, background in paras 3-7)

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - The United States did not green light Israel's military operations in and around the Al Shifa hospital in the Gaza Strip, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Wednesday.

"We did not give an okay to their military operations around the hospital," Kirby said. "These are Israeli military operations that they plan and they execute in accordance with their own established procedures. The United States is not involved in those procedures."

Kirby pointed out that Washington does not expect Israel to advise or inform the United States before conducting tactical military operations.

"There's no expectation by the United States that they're gonna map it all out for us," he said.

Kirby also emphasized that US officials are in touch with their Israeli counterparts and talk to them daily.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Israeli Defense Forces said that they were carrying out a "precise and targeted" operation against the Palestinian movement Hamas in the Al Shifa hospital, which is the largest medical facility in the Gaza Strip.

Also on Wednesday, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths said

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that he was appalled by reports of Israel's military raids in the hospital, adding that hospitals are not battlegrounds.

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White House Does not Expect Readout of Biden-Xi Bilateral Meeting Before Press Conference

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Wednesday that the White House does not anticipate any readout of the bilateral meeting between US President Joe Biden and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping before the press conference.

"I would not expect the readout of the bilateral before the press conference," Kirby said

Kirby added that Biden's opening statement this afternoon will serve as a pretty comprehensive readout of the meeting.

US President Joe Biden and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, are expected to have a meeting on the sidelines of the ongoing Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in San Francisco later in the day.

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US Hopes Biden, Xi Meeting Leads to More Communication – Kirby

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) – US National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said that the US is expecting that US President Biden and Chinese President Xi's upcoming meeting will lead to “much more communication and dialogue” moving forward.

“I think we're all expecting that this will be a productive discussion today, and hopefully, a precursor to much more communication and dialogue between our two teams going forward,” Kirby said at a press briefing.

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US Did Not Give Okay to Israel for Military Operations Around Gaza Hospital - Kirby

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Ottawa Appoints Sarah Taylor as New Ambassador to Russia – Global Affairs Canada

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) – The Canadian government has appointed Sarah Taylor as its new ambassador to Russia, in replacement of outgoing Alison Leclair, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) said on Wednesday.

"Diplomats are our eyes and ears on the ground and at a time when Russia's illegal and unjustifiable invasion of Ukraine continues to have major impacts around the globe, Canada must maintain and strengthen its diplomatic network in the region. I offer my most sincere thanks to Alison LeClaire, who has done a tremendous job in representing Canada in the region, and I congratulate Sarah Taylor, who will continue this important work over the coming years." GAC said quoting Minister of Foreign Affairs Melanie Joly.

The newly appointed Ambassador will be tasked with continuing Canada's work with allies and partners in holding "Russia to account" for its ongoing special military operation in Ukraine, the statement added.

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Russia Asks for UNSC Meeting on November 17 on Kiev Regime's Persecution of UOC - Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, November 15 (Sputnik) - Russia has asked that a UN Security Council meeting be held on November 17 to discuss the Kiev regime's persecution of members of the Ukraine Orthodox Church (UOC), Russian Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy said on Wednesday.

"We asked for a 17 November opened meeting of the [UN Security] Council on the persecution of the Kiev regime against the UOC. The meeting is scheduled for 19:00 New York time/18:00 Moscow time," Polyanskiy said via Telegram.

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US Involvement in Armenia, Azerbaijan Peace Deal Counters Russian Influence– State Dept

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) – The US must be deeply engaged in designing the peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan in order to ensure Russian peacekeepers leave at the end of their term, a State Department official testified at a Senate Foreign Affairs

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Committee hearing on Wednesday.

"The point…that we need to find a more stable way for Armenia to govern itself and to have the Russian peacekeepers leave when their five-year term is up in another year and a half – we can do that only if we are deeply engaged in the terms of the peace agreement that emerge. If we stay out, then Russia continues to control the border," said James O'Brien, assistant secretary at the State Department's Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs.

O'Brien noted that under the 2020 ceasefire agreement, Russian troops controlled two key border crossings.

He suggested that it was one way in which Russia was using its influence with former Soviet states to circumvent US and European sanctions.

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US, Azerbaijan Relationship 'Cannot Be Business as Usual' - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - The United States has indicated to Azerbaijan that their bilateral relationship "cannot be business as usual" amid the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, a US State Department official testified at a Senate Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on Wednesday.

"Azerbaijan's use of force in Nagorno-Karabakh has eroded trust and raised doubts regarding Baku's commitment to a comprehensive peace with Armenia. Given this new reality, the Department has made it clear to Azerbaijan that there cannot be 'business as usual' in our bilateral relationship," Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs James O'Brien said.

O'Brien noted that the United States had condemned Azerbaijan's actions in Nagorno-Karabakh, canceled high-level bilateral meetings and engagements and suspended plans for future events.

O'Brien also said that the United States was pushing Azerbaijan and Armenia to negotiate a peace agreement.

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US Senate Will Work on Biden's Supplemental Funding Request in Coming Weeks - Schumer

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - The US Senate will work on reaching a compromise to pass a $106 billion supplemental funding request from the Biden administration, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said on Wednesday.

"We intend to move on the president's supplemental package sometime in the coming weeks," Schumer said during remarks on the Senate floor.

The Biden administration's request includes billions in aid for Israel and Ukraine, as well as

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funding for US border security.

The Senate will seek a "reasonable, realistic" compromise between Democrats and Republicans, Schumer said.

The US House of Representatives passed a standalone Israel aid package in order to consider Ukraine aid separately, but Schumer and US President Joe Biden have rejected the legislation.

Earlier this week, a group of Republican US Senators likewise called for the upper chamber of Congress to consider Ukraine aid separately from assistance for Israel.

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Hunter Biden Lawyers Issue Subpoenas for Trump, Ex-US Attorney General Barr - Court Filing

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - The lawyers for Hunter Biden, the son of US President Joe Biden, have requested that former President Donald Trump and former US Attorney Bill Barr be subpoenaed in the case in which Biden is facing federal gun charges, according to a court filing on Wednesday.

"Defendant Robert Hunter Biden, through his counsel, respectfully moves this Court to enter an order directing that subpoenas duces tecum be issued to the following individuals - Donald John Trump ("Mr. Trump"); William P. Barr ("Mr. Barr"); Richard Donoghue ("Mr. Donoghue"); and Jeffrey A. Rosen ("Mr. Rosen")," the court filing said.

The request was issued pursuant to the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure and that each subpoena recipient should be required to provide any responsive documents and materials by December 1 to allow Biden sufficient time to review the material in advance of any necessary pre-trial motion, evidentiary hearing and/or trial, the court filing said.

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FBI Chief Says Multiple Investigations Opened Into Hamas-Affiliated Individuals

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - The FBI has opened multiple investigations into individuals affiliated with Hamas amid the ongoing Israel-Gaza conflict and increased threats of attacks on the United States, the agency's director Christopher Wray said on Wednesday.

"We cannot and do not discount the possibility that Hamas or another foreign terrorist organization may exploit the current conflict to conduct attacks here, on our soil. We have kept our sights on Hamas and have multiple investigations into individuals affiliated with that foreign terrorist organization," Wray said during a House hearing.

Calls by Hamas and other organizations for attacks on US soil have raised concerns that individuals or small groups might be inspired by the ongoing war in the Middle East to carry out domestic terrorism, Wray said.

The FBI has been aggressively countering violence by extremists who cite the ongoing conflict

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as inspiration, he stated.

The FBI has observed a surge in reported threats to Jewish and Muslim as well as Arab American communities, Wray said in his written testimony.

However there is still no information pointing to Hamas' intent to conduct attacks in the US, according to the testimony.

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US Senate Could Vote on Government Funding Bill As Soon As Today - Schumer

WASHINGTON, November 15 (Sputnik) - The US Senate could vote on passage of a two-step government funding bill as soon as later on Wednesday, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said during remarks on the Senate floor.

"Today my Democratic colleagues and I will work with Republicans — I will work with Leader [Mitch] McConnell — to see if we can come to an agreement to accelerate this bill's passage. If both sides cooperate, there's no reason we can't finish this bill even as soon as today," Schumer said.

Schumer filed cloture on the motion to proceed on the legislation earlier on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, the US House of Representatives passed the bill, which was backed by House Speaker Mike Johnson, with bipartisan support. The legislation funds one portion of the federal government through January 19 and the other through February 2.

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