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11/22/23 Wednesday

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Zelensky Weighing Trump Peace Plan Could Be Acceptance It's 'Time to Wrap This Conflict Up'

Zelensky's sudden shift toward considering a negotiated peace with Russia proposed by former US President Donald Trump could be belated acceptance that the conflict is unwinnable for Kiev, or it could be a dangerous gambit rooting in courting a White House rival, an expert told Sputnik.

In a recent interview with US media, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky signaled a belated interest in a peace proposal pitched earlier this year by former US President Donald Trump. In June, before a failed Ukrainian counteroffensive and a renewed Russian offensive, Zelensky had appeared incredulous at the suggestion of a negotiated settlement.

In May, Trump claimed he "would have that war settled in one day, 24 hours" if he were president, saying he would sit down with both Zelensky and Russian President Vladimir Putin, both of whom "have their weaknesses."

The following month, as Ukraine was preparing to launch a highly anticipated counter-offensive, Zelensky told a US newspaper he "couldn't understand" Trump's statement, noting that in the four years Trump was in the White House, he didn't secure the return of Crimea - by then part of the Russian Federation following its secession from Ukraine - or the Donbass - then governed by the autonomous People's Republics that had not yet been recognized by Moscow - to Ukrainian control.

However, the Ukrainian counteroffensive fell flat on its face, failing to secure all but the most meager of territorial gains for Ukraine at an appalling human and materiel cost, and now Russian forces have launched their own operations aimed at pushing Ukrainian forces out of claimed Russian territories.

Speaking with a US television news outlet on Tuesday, Zelensky said he was "ready" to hear Trump's proposal.

"Let's speak with him and give him this possibility to show what steps [are] of his peace formula," Zelensky said.

"He can share it with me," the Ukrainian leader said. "Yes, we can stop this war if we will give Russia Donbass and Crimea, to my mind that our country will not be ready for that such [a] peace plan. That is not [a] peace plan."

However, earlier this month, Zelensky told another US news outlet that he would only need "24 minutes" to explain to Trump "that he can't manage this war … he can't bring peace because of Putin."

The US has already funneled more than $113 billion in aid to Kiev since Russia's special operation began in February 2022, according to US government statistics, and Biden has called on Congress to approve a massive $61.4 billion aid bill. On Monday, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin traveled to Kiev and declared the US would "continue to stand with Ukraine" and

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"will continue to support Ukraine's urgent battlefield needs and long-term defense requirements."

Michael Shannon, a political commentator and Newsmax columnist, told Sputnik on Wednesday that Zelensky's shift toward Trump was a risky intervention into US domestic politics that could seriously backfire.

"It's beginning to look like Zelensky's blank check for US financial and military support has been returned for insufficient funds. The attitude on the part of the Biden administration and the left has been changing from 'fighting to the last Ukrainian' to 'maybe it's time to wrap this conflict up,'" Shannon told Sputnik.

"You can see evidence of this change in the coverage of the diplomatic portion of the conflict," he noted.

"The Regime Media is discussing negotiations without the previous preconditions. Zelensky can read the room and may be thinking that listening to Trump will signal an openness to alternative outcomes for the war."

However, Shannon also floated the opposite possibility: that Zelensky sees this maneuver as a ploy to provoke the White House into doubling down on support for Ukraine.

"Or, it could be that Zelensky knows Trump is absolutely toxic to the Biden administration and he hopes that by meeting with Trump it will make a negotiated peace at this time anathema to the administration," he explained. "Call it a 'diplomatic bank shot' if you will. A very risky bank shot. Zelensky would have been smarter to continue to ignore Trump."

"Buying a ticket to the Trump Circus could really backfire for Zelensky," Shannon said, noting it had the potential for "completely souring Biden and causing support for Ukraine to begin drying up. He would have been better served by saying he didn't want to interfere in internal US politics."

"Trump is going to milk this meeting or discussion for all its worth. He will trumpet Zelensky's change as another victory for Trump foreign policy while condemning Biden's incompetence," he added.

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Dramatic Footage Captures Moment Car Exploded on US-Canada Border Bridge

According to US authorities, on Wednesday an automobile exploded and caught fire on the Rainbow Bridge that spans the Niagara River, separating the US from Canada. The explosion killed two people in the car and injured a US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer.

Video footage posted on social media purported to show the moment the car exploded and the fireball that resulted.

Photos from the scene showed strewn wreckage around one of the security stations on the American side of the bridge.

Neither US or Canadian authorities have yet announced any kind of explanation for the incident, names of those involved, or potential motive if it was an attack. However, Canadian Prime

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Minister Justin Trudeau said officials were “taking this extraordinarily seriously,” and the US FBI field office in nearby Buffalo, New York, was investigating the situation.
The White House also said US President Joe Biden had been briefed and was closely monitoring the situation.
New York Governor Kathy Hochul has confirmed that “there is no indication of a terrorist attack."
At nearby Buffalo International Airport, media reports indicated security officials were searching all vehicles for explosives, and that they feared “more terrorists on the loose,” as one reporter phrased it. The airport has been temporarily closed to international flights.
According to eyewitnesses who spoke with US media, the car accelerated after passing a security checkpoint on the US side of the bridge, swerved to miss other cars, and was launched airborne after striking a concrete barrier. It reportedly exploded upon impact with a concrete pillar holding up the pavilion over the second security checkpoint.
US law enforcement officials said no explosives had been detected among the wreckage so far.
The incident has resulted in the closing of all four border crossings along the Niagara River, which connects Lake Erie and Lake Ontario.

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Zelensky’s Office Says Chances ‘High’ for Nationalizing Internationally-Owned Telecom Giant Kyivstar

Shortly after the eruption of hostilities with Russia in early 2022, Kiev created a legal framework for seizing the assets of people it considered to be “enemies of the state,” including numerous Russian businessmen who had invested in the Ukrainian market in recent decades, as well as dissident Ukrainians.
In a recent interview, a figure from the office of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said the Ukrainian government is still considering nationalizing Kyivstar, the country’s largest telecom provider, which is now owned by a Dutch company.
Rostislav Shurma, the deputy head of Zelensky’s office and the administration’s chief economic adviser, told Ukrainian media on Monday there was a “high probability” Kyivstar would be seized.
“The relevant services are studying the legal situation. I think there is a high probability of sanctions with subsequent confiscation of this company,” Shurma said.
Last month, the Ukrainian Prosecutor General’s Office ordered 99.9% of Kyivstar’s assets seized, although a Kiev court later scaled this back to 47.85% and claimed there had been a “typo” in the order. CEO Oleksandr Komarov later said he found out about the seizure from a Telegram post by the Ukrainian SBU security service.
The court order facilitated the seizure of all “corporate rights” of three Russian businessmen: Peter Aven, Andrey Kosogov, and Mikhail Fridman, the lattermost of whom is the founder of LetterOne, a company that holds the largest stake in VEON, the Dutch parent company of Kyivstar.

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"Kyivstar is an international entity, 100% owned by the VEON company," Komarov told Ukrainian media at the time. "VEON is a public international entity that is operating in six countries, including Ukraine and is listed on NASDAQ and Euronext, and [VEON] is partially owned by the Letter One company that is actually partially owned by Mr. Fridman."
Komarov added that Fridman has "no role" in Kyivstar. "He's one of the minority investors into the VEON business."
Last November, VEON disinvested from the Russian market by selling its Russian company, Vimpelcom, for $2.2 billion. It still has business interests in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, in addition to Kyivstar in Ukraine.
Komarov added that Kiev's behavior posted "a kind of big reputational risk" that could affect its attractiveness to foreign investment, which Kiev has already struggled to attract.
"Mainly in the area of the investment climate, because we desperately need huge international support and investments in order to rebuild and recover our country, not just after but during the war," he said.
In an interesting development, last week VEON announced it was bringing on Mike Pompeo, the former US Secretary of State and former CIA director, as an "independent non-executive director" for Kyivstar.
"Secretary Pompeo joins in his capacity as a Partner of Impact Investments, a newly established US-based strategic and financial advisory and investment firm which seeks to develop long-term partnerships with the world's leading companies across a range of industries and geographies," VEON said, noting that Pompeo had been tapped due to being a partner in Impact Investments, "a newly established US-based strategic and financial advisory and investment firm."

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Study: Living in Zero-G Could Cause Erectile Dysfunction

Astronauts who go up into space may have a tougher time getting it up in the bedroom for years after returning to Earth, a new study has found.
The data was gathered by simulating a zero-gravity environment in lab rats for four weeks at a time. Their legs were elevated at a 30-degree angle, and some were exposed to varying amounts of a cosmic radiation simulation.
A year later, the rats who experienced the zero-g environment had low blood levels of chemicals whose absence is associated with erectile dysfunction, including antioxidants, exhibiting what is called oxidative stress. Endothelial dysfunction, a condition in which the blood vessels narrow, has also been linked to the condition.
"[T]his work indicates that sexual health should be closely monitored in astronauts upon their return to Earth," study co-author Dr. Justin D. La Favor of Florida State University said in a statement.
"While the negative impacts of galactic cosmic radiation were long-lasting, functional improvements induced by acutely targeting the redox and nitric oxide pathways in the tissues suggest that the erectile dysfunction may be treatable."

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Humans have been spending progressively longer periods in space since the first astronauts and cosmonauts were launched into orbit in the 1960s.
Chinese taikonauts deploy to the Tiangong space station on missions lasting up to six months at a time, and American astronaut Frank Rubio returned in August from a 371-day stint aboard the International Space Station. However, the record for longest continuous time in space was set by Russian cosmonaut Valeri Polyakov in 1994 and 1995, when he spent 437 days aboard the Mir space station.
Other complications observed in astronauts after returning to Earth's gravity from space have included loss of bone mass and muscle deterioration and harm to their eyesight resulting from distortions in the structure of their eyes.
Their work was published in the FASEB Journal on Wednesday.

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Millions of Americans Experiencing Winter Weather Alerts During Post-Holiday Travel

The winter storm is forecasted to bring with it freezing temperatures, snow, rain, and flooding.
Almost 14 million Americans were under various winter weather alerts on Sunday following the Thanksgiving holiday. The storm system stretched from the Great Plains to the Great Lakes on Sunday. A snowstorm was expected to stretch over the Rockies and Central Plains, as a single-day record of 2.9 million Americans flew home on Sunday following Thanksgiving.
The weather system is bringing with it below-normal temperatures which are expected between New Mexico and Kansas and from Oklahoma to the Upper Midwest beginning this week. Moderate to heavy snowfall is also expected to affect portions of these areas, including much of Kansas where on Sunday, a majority of roadways across the state were packed with snow and ice.
The state of Kansas could also experience winds as intense as 40 miles per hour (MPH). The change in temperature may come as a shock to those who experienced record-breaking heat just last month—the fifth straight month during which Earth's temperatures hit a heat record measured above preindustrial levels.
According to one weather report, state police in Nebraska investigated at least two fatal car crashes in which three people died due to poor weather conditions. Meanwhile, the Wyoming State Highway Patrol responded to 125 car crashes in just 48 hours in the Western US state.
A large stretch of California experienced a Freeze Warning from Shasta Dam to Taft, while the San Francisco Bay Shoreline experienced a Coastal Flood Advisory, and Southern California, near Oxnard (just north of Los Angeles) was placed under a Wind Advisory according to the National Weather Service (NWS). Southwest Oregon and parts of Northern California were also placed under an Air Stagnation Advisory as well as Beach Hazards.
By Sunday morning, parts of Iowa had received up to four inches of snow, while areas of Missouri had received as much as 5.3 inches according to one report. Nebraska was also reported to have received 10 inches, while parts of Colorado were dumped with 10.5 to 23 inches.

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Winter Storm Warnings were also in effect on Sunday for parts of the upper peninsula of Michigan, with other weather advisories in effect for parts of the Midwest and the Great Lakes, according to a report from the National Center for Environmental Prediction (NCEP). Parts of the upper peninsula of Michigan were also placed under a Gale Warning, Winter Weather Advisory, and a Hazardous Weather Outlook.

The NWS released a Special Weather Statement for Marquette, Michigan, warning that lake effect snow is expected to develop on Sunday night and continue until Tuesday, which could result in moderate accumulating snow. The Grand Rapids stretching north to Sault St. Marie were placed under a Winter Weather Advisory. Snow was also expected for Southeastern Michigan.

The NWS also placed Northern Ohio, Central Pennsylvania, and Western and Eastern New York under a Lake Effect Snow Warning. Parts of New York may also experience heavy snows with wind gusts as high as 35 miles per hour from Monday until Wednesday. Northern New Hampshire and Western Maine were placed under a Winter Weather Advisory, while the coast of Portsmouth, Portland, and Rockland were placed under a Coastal Flood Advisory for Monday from 8 AM to noon EST.

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Political Scientist: Kennedy Assassination Led to US Imperialist Domination

On the 60th anniversary of the assassination of US President John F. Kennedy Jr in Dallas, Texas, political scientist, podcast host and the author of American Exception: Empire and the Deep State, Aaron Good, joined Sputnik's Political Misfits to discuss the assassination and its impact on the world.

Good said that the assassination of Kennedy changed not only America but the world for the worse by allowing the Vietnam War to continue and setting up a system that enabled American imperialism to thrive for decades.

"The case that he was pulling out of Vietnam is very strong, really all the principals around him in the highest positions pretty much are in agreement about it," Good said. "The Vietnam war is what wrecked the Bretton Woods system and that was a system that sort of restrained Wall Street and the American military machine to some extent because you couldn't run huge balance of payment deficits or it would drain the treasury gold," he added.

"As horrible as Vietnam was, it led to an increase in American power but in a really imperialist and exploitive, predatory way with this new dollar regime and that is what we are seeing fall apart right now," Good argued, noting that it allowed the US to continue regime change operations that he does not believe Kennedy would have approved, including in The Republic of Congo, Brazil and Indonesia.

Good was then asked by host John Kiriakou about Paul Landis' recently release memoir. Landis is one of two surviving Secret Service members who worked on Kennedy's security detail the day he was murdered.

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He claims that he was the one who found a pristine bullet and placed it on Kennedy's gurney. That bullet had long been the subject of conspiracies following the assassination.
However, Good has doubts about Landis' story, noting that while it contradicts the official story on the assassination, it seems less likely to him than the explanation that the bullet was placed there to frame Lee Harvey Oswald, the man accused of killing Kennedy before he was murdered by Jack Ruby, a mob-connected nightclub owner. Good says that if the bullet was planted, that "would point unmistakably back to the state."
"So does Landis' confession muddy the waters, or did it really happen? I don't know," Good concluded.
The conversation also touched on the war in Gaza and X's lawsuit against Media Matters for fraud. Good told Kiriakou and co-host Michelle Witte that he believes X CEO Elon Musk has a legitimate gripe and that elites in this country are trying to impose a "censorship regime" on social media.
"It is putting them on blast in a way they haven't been so I think [that's why] they are all trying to censor everyone and dox college kids."

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Video: Massive Brawl Breaks Out at Argentina-Brazil World Cup Qualifier

Fights between fans and even players are a common sight when the two South American rivals face off, with the decadeslong rivalry extending from the league level to the international level. The debate of who is the best player in football history, Argentina's Lionel Messi or Brazil's Pelé only adds to the rivalry.
A massive brawl in the stands of a World Cup Qualifier match between Argentina and Brazil delayed the match's kickoff for nearly half an hour on Tuesday as police attacked fans with batons in an attempt to calm the situation.
Argentine captain Lionel Messi and other players attempted to quell the unrest, including the team's goalkeeper Emi Martinez who can be seen jumping over the barrier in an apparent attempt to stop a police officer from hitting a fan. Messi eventually led his team off the field while waiting for hostilities to cease.
The fight between fans broke out shortly after the two teams' national anthems had played. One Argentine fan was seen with a bloody face while being removed from the stadium on a stretcher. Others can be seen jumping onto the pitch in an attempt to flee the violence and crowding.
After the match, Messi accused the police of brutality.
"It was bad because we saw how they were beating people," the world-famous football star said. "The police, as it already happened in the Libertadores final, were once again repressing the people with nightsticks, there were players who had families over there."
The Copa Libertadores finals is the premier continental football competition in South America that occurred earlier this month.

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That match, between Brazil's Fluminense and Argentine's Boca Juniors was marred by several massive fights between fans before the game and officials considered playing the game without fans to avoid further incidents.

Col. Vagner Ferreira, who was the highest-ranking officer in the stadium during the World Cup Qualifier, told Brazilian media that their actions were justified.

"Every action demands a reaction. There is a history of confrontation here. At first we spoke to them. Then, we had to use our batons. There was no lethal force involved, no rubber bullets, no tear gas. This was a very technical approach," Ferreira said.

After play resumed, Argentina won the match 1-0. It was Brazil's third straight loss and their first-ever home loss in a World Cup Qualifier, but that historic moment was overshadowed by the violence that preceded it.

"There was family of the players [in that section]. We were more worried about that than playing the match," Messi said. "We [went back to the locker room] because that was the way to make it all calm. From below, we couldn't do much, we saw how [the police] hit people."

Argentina players later celebrated with fans near the area where the fight broke out after the match.

Players for Brazil, including goalkeeper Dibu Martinezx and captain Marquinhos, also attempted to ease the situation before the start of the match was delayed.

"We were worried about the families, women and children, that we were seeing in panic up there in the stands," Marquinhos said after the match. "Down on the pitch it was hard for us to understand what was going on, it was a very scary situation."

Still, Messi said he was happy that his squad got the win in Rio de Janeiro.

"After that, winning this game like this I think is one of the most important wins that this group has achieved. It is something very nice to be able to win here in Brazil, after how strong they have been at home throughout their history," Messi said.

Argentina currently leads the CONMEBOL standings, with 15 points through six games played. Brazil has been dealing with significant injuries and is currently sixth in the standings. The top six teams will qualify for the World Cup.

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Resurfaced Audio Captures House Speaker Johnson Blasting Humans as 'Inherently Evil'

US Rep. Mike Johnson (R-LA) was elected as speaker of the House in late October, following a protracted election that included two different GOP nominations for the post before the caucus eventually settled on Johnson.

House Speaker Mike Johnson, who was elected to the position by the lower congressional chamber in October, referred to abortion as an "American holocaust" and said that the health care group Planned Parenthood sees people living in cities as "easy prey."

The comments and others that have recently garnered attention come from interview segments Johnson gave over the years.

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“It is truly an American holocaust,” Johnson said while speaking about abortion in May of last year. “I mean, the reality is that Planned Parenthood and all these big abortion, they set up their clinics in inner cities. They are, you know, they regard these people as easy prey. I mean it’s true. This is what’s happening across the country now.”

In one clip, Johnson asserted that humans are “inherently evil” and said it is the government’s responsibility to restrain their behavior.

“One of the primary purposes of the law in civil government is to restrain evil,” Johnson said in 2010.

“We have to acknowledge collectively that man is inherently evil and needs to be restrained. That’s– see, that’s the problem with the radical left. They don’t acknowledge a God.”

According to US media, which played some clips and described others, Johnson also highlighted his opposition to same-sex couples adopting children and argued that homosexuality was a "behavior" which made it not protected under anti-discrimination laws.

One clip showed Johnson defending Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas’ suggestion that the Supreme Court reconsider several landmark cases the same day the high court overturned Roe v. Wade, ending federal abortion protections.

At the time, Thomas wrote a concurring opinion in the case that stated the court should reconsider Griswold v. Connecticut, which established the right to contraception; Lawrence v. Texas, which legalized same-sex intercourse; and Obergefell v. Hodges, which legalized same-sex marriage.

Johnson said that Thomas’ opinion “is not radical,” calling it “the opposite of that.” However, his office has since clarified that he believes those cases to be “settled law.”

In one clip, Johnson asserts that humans are “inherently evil” and said it is the government’s responsibility to restrain their behavior.

“One of the primary purposes of the law in civil government is to restrain evil,” Johnson said in 2010. “We have to acknowledge collectively that man is inherently evil and needs to be restrained. That’s– see, that’s the problem with the radical left. They don’t acknowledge a God.”

The various clips gained renewed attention after being compiled for an investigative piece intended to highlight Johnson's beliefs and past remarks in the face of his quick rise to the House leadership.

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Grandpa Needs a Win - Cartoon

After a surprise ceasefire between Hamas and Israel was brokered by the Qatari government, US media outlets started praising US President Joe Biden’s “secret role” in brokering the deal. However, outside of a few anonymous officials and aides speaking to US media, there is scant evidence that Biden played a significant role in the negotiations.

While outlets pointed to Biden’s recent calls for a humanitarian pause as evidence that he was pressuring Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu to show more restraint, Biden and White House officials always couched the calls for a pause in the conflict with assurances that there

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were no red lines the Israeli government could cross that would result in them pulling aid. The Biden administration also claimed a ceasefire would "benefit Hamas."
"A ceasefire, right now, really only benefits Hamas," White House spokesman John Kirby said in late October. "It is ugly and it's going to be messy, and innocent civilians are going to be hurt going forward," he said of Israel's operation.
Furthermore, it has been reported that Biden administrations were worried that a ceasefire would give journalists an opportunity to enter Gaza and document the destruction there which could "turn public opinion on Israel."
The ceasefire deal, which includes a four day pause in the fighting and the release of 150 women and children prisoners held by Israel in exchange for 50 of the women and children taken by Hamas during their surprise attack on October 7. The deal may be extended with the release of more hostages, but Netanyahu has made clear that he plans to continue military actions in Gaza once the ceasefire ends.
Since the attack, which killed 1,200 people and resulted in another 240 being abducted, more than 12,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli strikes.

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NYC Mayor Adams Denies Sexual Assault Accusation

Eric Adams was sworn in as Mayor of New York City last year after a landslide victory over his Republican opponent. A former police officer, he served as Brooklyn borough president from 2014 to 2021.
New York City Mayor Eric Adams denied accusations that he sexually assaulted a colleague in 1993.
The accusations come from a lawsuit filed in Manhattan on Wednesday night. It claims that Adams sexually assaulted the plaintiff in 1993 when both worked for the city government. Adams was a police officer at that time, according to US media.
The lawsuit also lists the New York Police Department's transit bureau, the Guardians Association of the NYPD and three "unknown" entities as defendants. The three-page summons does not provide any details about the alleged assault.
The summons accuses the defendants of "sexual assault, battery and employment discrimination on the basis of the plaintiff's gender and sex, retaliation, hostile work environment and intentional infliction of emotional distress[.]" The lawsuit is seeking at least $5 million in damages.
Under New York law, plaintiffs can file a summons to begin a legal lawsuit and then follow that up with a full complaint laying out the accusations. The lawsuit was filed under New York's Adult Survivors Act, a law signed by Governor Kathy Hochul in 2022 that opened a one-year window for sexual assault victims to sue their alleged abusers regardless if the assault occurred beyond the statute of limitations. That window closes on Thursday at midnight.

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More than 2,500 lawsuits have been filed using the Adult Survivors Act since the window opened. Several celebrities have been accused under the act recently, including Sean Combs, Jamie Foxx and Bill Cosby.

Speaking to reporters on Thursday, Adams vehemently denied the accusations.

"It absolutely did not happen. I do not recall meeting this person and I will never harm anyone in that magnitude," the mayor said. "That is not who I am and that is not who I have ever been in my professional life… I have been in public life for almost forty years. People know my character, they see how I am, how I carry myself."

The lawsuit comes at a difficult time for the largest city in the nation's mayor, who had his electronic devices seized by the FBI last week as part of an ongoing investigation into alleged illegal donations made to his campaign by the Turkish government.

Adams, who has not been charged in that case, denies any wrongdoing. It appears to be unrelated to the sexual assault lawsuit.

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Train Derailment in Kentucky Forces Residents to Evacuate Homes on Thanksgiving

According to the Federal Railroad Administration, as of October, 742 train derailments have occurred in the United States this year. Most accidents are minor however and do not require nearby residents to evacuate.

A CSX freight train carrying chemicals derailed and caught fire in Livingston, Kentucky Wednesday night, forcing residents to flee their homes during the Thanksgiving holiday.

Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear (D) issued an executive order on Thursday declaring a state of emergency.

At least 16 of the train's cars derailed, with two of them containing molten sulfur which caught fire. Two additional cars were carrying magnesium hydroxide, but are not believed to have been breached. The remaining derailed cars were empty or carrying non-hazardous materials like plastic, according to CSX.

The train company has pledged to pay for hotel rooms, Thanksgiving meals and other expenses incurred by those forced to flee their homes.

Crews worked through the night to put the fire out, working into Thursday afternoon. Late Thursday night, officials announced that the fire had been put out and families could return to their homes but earlier in the day, when Thanksgiving festivities typically begin, the fire was still burning.

US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) officials say they tested the air quality in the surrounding areas on Wednesday night and saw an uptick in sulfur dioxide in the air, but that it decreased to acceptable levels after the fire was extinguished.

Sulfur dioxide is released when molten sulfur is burned. According to the EPA, short-term exposure can cause difficulty breathing, especially among children and asthmatics. Chronic exposure can cause significant health problems.

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"The cause of the incident is still under investigation," CSX said in a statement. "CSX is still supplying food, lodging and other necessities to affected community members."
The accident also shut down Highway US 25 in both directions. Officials have not provided a timeline on when it will reopen.
In February, a Norfolk Southern train carrying hazardous materials derailed and caught fire in East Palestine, Ohio, and was eventually destroyed in a controlled explosion that released chemicals in the air and water. Six months later, residents were still complaining about health issues they believed to be related to the accident.

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Pro-Palestinian Protesters Shut Down Macy's Thanksgiving Parade

The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade started in 1924 as a Christmas parade, being renamed to the Thanksgiving Parade three years later. It has run every year since, except for three years during World War III. In 2020 during the COVID pandemic, it ran without onlookers.
Pro-Palestinian protesters glued themselves to 6th Avenue in New York City on Thursday, temporarily blocking the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. The parade's floats were reportedly stopped for about 20 minutes.
The protesters, wearing white jumpsuits with words including "colonialism," "militarism," and "ethnic cleansing."
The protesters were calling for a ceasefire in Gaza and chanted slogans including "Not another nickel, not another dime, no more money for Israel's crimes." Protesters also laid on the street while others poured fake blood on them.
The New York Police Department says several of the protesters were taken into custody. The number of protesters who blocked the parade numbered around 30, but dozens more could be seen standing in the parade crowd holding Palestinian flags.
US media reported that parade watchers heavily booed the protesters, but that is not apparent in videos of the event posted on social media. They show a mixed reaction from the crowd, followed by somewhat louder boos as the protesters are being carried away by police.
After the parade concluded, at least 400 protesters also gathered inside Madison Square Park, before marching towards Macy's in Herald Square, shutting down traffic, US media reported.
Protest group Seven Circles Alliance took credit for the action.
"Seven Circles Alliance, a coalition of climate, social justice and political activists, disrupted the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade to bring attention to the ongoing ethnic cleansing and genocide of Palestinians," an Instagram post by the group reads. "Seven Circles demands that the United States cease its support for Israel's occupation of Palestine and calls for both the United States and Israel to recognize the ICC (International Criminal Court)."
A member of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe of Massachusetts also held up a Palestinian flag from a float during the parade.
Israel has been bombing Gaza since a surprise attack by Hamas on October 7 killed roughly 1,200 people according to the Israeli government. Twenty days later, Israel began a ground

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invasion of Gaza. At least 12,000 Palestinians, including more than 6,000 children have been killed in Israeli airstrikes and their ground operation.
On Friday morning, a ceasefire lasting four days is scheduled to begin and will include a prisoner exchange.

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'Push Him Left' No More, Democrats Demand Progressives Stop 'Whining'

Progressives were concerned about US President Joe Biden's conservative history, which included multiple attempts to cut Social Security and Medicare, but were told that once he was in office, he could be pushed to enact progressive policies.
Democratic politicians and strategists are imploring progressives to get behind US President Joe Biden's reelection campaign, telling them to stop "moaning and groaning" about the lack of progressive policies coming out of the White House.
"We gotta pipe down the moaning and groaning and all the whining. There's too much of that," said former Rep. Joe Crowley (D-NY) who lost his seat to Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in 2018 while she was running a progressive campaign.
"I think that leaches into the psyche of the voters as well. That's got to stop and I think at that point, you'll start to see Biden's number improve, certainly amongst Democrats, but I think voter-wide they'll start to improve," Crowley argued.
The comments come after former Obama strategist David Axelrod said that Biden had a "50-50" chance of beating Donald Trump in the 2024 election and suggested that the party consider nominating someone else.
Biden has lost significant support from his party, particularly younger voters, for his support of Israel's massive military operation in Gaza which has been compared to a genocide by several world leaders and UN officials as well as his administration's public opposition to a ceasefire until nearly the point one was announced.
But, former Rep. Tom Daschle (D-SD), who now runs a lobbying firm that has lobbied on behalf of weapon manufacturers, says that it is critical progressives coalesce behind Biden.
"In spite of the debate we've had for several months about age and about options, I think we have to acknowledge that it's absolutely critical that we come together and be as cohesive as possible over the next 12 months."
Biden's conservative stances as a Senator and Vice President hurt him with Democratic progressives during the 2020 Democratic primaries. In an attempt to court Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) voters, democratic personalities, including Ocasio-Cortez, told voters that Biden could be pushed left by the progressive wing of the party.
"You know, the primaries are over and right now what is most important is to make sure that we ensure a Democratic victory in November and that we continue to push Vice President Biden on issues from Marijuana to climate change to foreign policy," The representative who endorsed Sanders during the 2020 primary said in the run-up to the 2020 general election.

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Despite funding Ukraine to fight against Russia and demanding billions of dollars to fund Israel's actions in Gaza, as well as authorizing more oil permits than former President Donald Trump, Ocasio-Cortez endorsed Biden in July, an unusual move to make so early in the election cycle.
As part of their effort to court progressive voters, the DNC invited Bernie Sanders, Ocasio-Cortez and other nominally progressive Democrats to help shape the 2020 Democratic platform. Some of the policies added to the platform the appease discontented progressives included free treatment for testing, vaccines and treatment for COVID-19, free college for families making less than $125,000 a year in addition to student debt relief, universal free Pre-K education, lowering the Medicare eligibility to 60, ending mass incarceration and ending cash bail.
The US Prison population has increased under Biden, there has been no movement on lowering the age for Medicare, free college has not been seriously pursued and his student loan forgiveness plan was struck down by the Supreme Court and the Biden administration ended free testing and vaccines for COVID-19 while kicking an estimated 15 million off of Medicaid.
The administration also seemingly has no plans to pursue the end of cash bail. "I don't have anything specifically on what our efforts are on cash bail," White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters in July.
Still, some of the politicians who said progressives could push Biden left are now saying progressives have to vote for him again, despite the long list of failed or ignored progressive promises from the administration.
Sanders said he is "in to do what I can to make sure that the president is reelected," while Ocasio-Cortez said when she endorsed Biden that, "I think he's done quite well, given the limitations that we have."
Meanwhile, a recent poll shows that removing Biden from the top of the ticket could swing the Democrats' fortunes. It found that Trump was leading Biden by four points nationally, while an "Unnamed Democrat" led Trump by eight points.

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If Trump Wins These Three States, The Primary is Over

Former US President Trump has been the presumptive GOP nominee even before he officially launched his campaign. That hasn't stopped a large field of Republicans from challenging him. Already several Republicans have launched and suspended their campaign after making little headway, including Trump's former Vice President, Mike Pence.
Florida Governor Ron DeSantis remains in the race and is nationallyTrump's closest competition. However, former South Carolina governor Nikki Haley has overtaken DeSantis in critical primary states, including two of the first three contests.
Former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie has also said he is sticking around despite polling under 3% nationally. Political outsider Vivek Ramaswamy is polling around 5% nationally and says he still has a path to victory. Meanwhile, North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum and former Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson are both still running despite polling under 1% nationally.

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But that doesn't mean Trump has the nomination wrapped up. He still needs to win the primaries and the first three states in particular are known for upending primary campaigns and flipping the political landscape.

The Republican primary will kick off on January 15 with the Iowa Caucus, then on January 23, New Hampshire will hold its primary, followed by Nevada on February 8.

No Republican has won the party's nomination without winning at least one of those states since the party started holding primaries or caucuses in every state and Washington DC in 1976 and no candidate who won all three has lost.

The states have a history of knocking down presumptive nominees as well, as happened in 2004 when Democratic frontrunner Howard Dean (VT) unexpectedly lost Iowa and then gave his infamous "Dean Scream" campaign speech that received mass ridicule. Dean's campaign would never recover and then-Senator John Kerry (MA) became the nominee, eventually losing to President George W. Bush.

Iowa

Current Polls:

Trump: 44.7%

DeSantis: 17.5%

Haley: 15.5%

Ramaswamy: 4.7%

Christie: 4%

Burgum: 1.7%

Hutchinson: 0.2%

With a large lead, Trump is expected to win Iowa, despite his loss to Ted Cruz there in 2016. But if another candidate performs better than expected, it could provide momentum going into New Hampshire and change the race there, breaking Trump's aura of invincibility.

While DeSantis remains in second place, Haley has been climbing rapidly, seemingly peeling voters primarily from Trump; in October Haley was polling around 10% while Trump commanded 49%.

Despite polling under 5% Vivek Ramaswamy's campaign has expressed optimism about his chances in the state, saying that they believe he can win the state.

The state looks to be most critical to DeSantis because he is polling very poorly in New Hampshire. He'll need to prove that he is the most viable challenger to Trump if he wants a shot at changing the landscape in New Hampshire and beyond.

New Hampshire

Current Polls:

Trump: 44.7%

Haley: 18.9%

Christie: 11.6%

DeSantis: 7.7%

Ramaswamy: 6.7%

Burgum: 1.9%

Hutchinson: 0.5%

New Hampshire is notoriously difficult to predict, especially for the Republican nomination. The state has a unique makeup of voters, including a relatively large percentage of

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libertarian-leaning Republicans. That has resulted in the state becoming critical for dark horse candidates to build momentum, with its voters often bucking the trend of the party.

New Hampshire's 22 delegates are also distributed proportionately to candidates receiving more than 10% of the vote, allowing strong contenders to make headway in the primary without winning the state.

Things went from bad to worse for DeSantis in New Hampshire over the past two weeks. He had already lost his grip on the number two position as far back as August, but starting on November 13, the day after South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott dropped out of the race, he saw an additional drop of 3 points while his opponents seemingly picked up Scott's voters. He now sits below Christie and only 1 point above Ramaswamy.

It has been quite the fall from this April, when DeSantis was the clear runner-up in the state, polling more than 20% for most of the month.

If Haley performs well and receives enough campaign delegates to portray her performance in the state as essentially a tie, then she would enter her home state of South Carolina with significant momentum.

South Carolina

Current Polls:

Trump: 49%

Haley: 19.5%

DeSantis: 12.1%

Ramaswamy: 2.9%

Christie: 1.7%

Burgum: 0.3%

Hutchinson: 0.2%

Having served in the state, Haley is the strongest contender to Trump in the field, though whichever candidate performed best against Trump in Iowa and New Hampshire will likely have the best chance.

This was the state where Joe Biden won his first primary on his way to the White House, which led US Media to call it "the biggest, fastest and most unexpected comeback in modern political history."

Hyperbole aside, it was a historic comeback and that is what Haley and the other contenders will be trying to emulate in South Carolina.

Typically, the first states largely set the stage for Super Tuesday on March 5, when more than a dozen states will hold their primary contests. The first three states (along with Michigan, Idaho, Missouri, District of Columbia and North Dakota which also vote before Super Tuesday) are usually when the weaker candidates drop out and Super Tuesday and beyond serve as the battleground for the real contenders.

But with Trump's massive lead, that likely won't be the case this year. If anyone is going to beat Trump, history shows they need to win one of the first three states, and then coalesce behind that candidate before Trump's momentum feels inevitable and donors start drying up.Otherwise, and with the Democratic party seemingly refusing to run a primary this election cycle, America will get the election rematch seemingly no one wants.

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Source of Egyptian Artifacts Found in Scotland Seven Decades Ago Finally Revealed

Ancient Egyptian relics and sculptures that were found in the yard of a school in Scotland 71 years ago were a source of mystery until recently. Archeologists had little difficulty identifying their origin and meaning, but what puzzled them was when they were brought there and by whom.

The first discovery at the Melville House was made by a schoolboy in 1952 who was digging in the yard for potatoes as a form of punishment. It was an Egyptian statue carved out of red sandstone. Another artifact, a bronze statuette of the Apis bull was unearthed in 1966. But in 1984, a group of boys found an Egyptian bronze figurine in the yard and brought it to a museum leading to an excavation that unearthed more artifacts, bringing the total to 18.

Among them are part of a statuette of the Egyptian Goddess Isis suckling her son Horus and a ceramic plaque with the eye of Horus.

Scientists were able to date the artifacts from 1069 B.C. to 30 B.C. but how they ended up in Scotland and buried in the yard remained a mystery.

At least part of that mystery has been solved, researchers say.

The Melville house has served many roles. It was built in 1697 and served as the residence for George Melville, the first Earl of Melville. In the 1940s it served as a base to house soldiers during World War II and then after the war, it was purchased by a boarding school.

Researchers believe the artifacts came to the yard while it was still in the Melville family. They believe that Alexander Leslie-Melville, Lord Balgonie, who was the son of David-Leslie Melville, the 7th Earl of Melville (and the 8th Earl of Leven) and the heir to the Melville House, likely brought the artifacts there, after he visited Egypt in 1856, a year before his death from tuberculosis.

During that time period, it was common for artifacts to be sold to foreigners traveling in Egypt. Researchers believe family members may have forgotten about them after moving the objects to an outbuilding, which was later demolished.

"Excavating and researching these finds at Melville House has been the most unusual project in my archaeological career, and I'm delighted to now be telling the story in full," Elizabeth Goring, a former curator at the Royal Scottish Museum in Edinburgh, who led the excavation and was the one the boys brought the bronze figurine to, said in a statement.

The objects remain the only Egyptian artifacts to be officially found and identified in Scotland.

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Only a Third of Voters Believe in the American Dream

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The American dream, that if someone works hard they will be able to get ahead in life, is typically visualized with the stereotypical house with a white picket fence and a two-car garage. But the number of Americans who think that dream is attainable is rapidly declining according to a new poll.

Only a little more than a third of Americans, 36%, say they believe the American dream holds true today, compared to 45% who say it no longer exists and 18% who say it never existed at all.

The survey, conducted by US media and released on Friday, polled 1,163 registered voters. It asked "Do you think the American dream--that if you work hard you'll get ahead--still holds, never held true, or once held true but does not anymore?"

Last year, a poll by the same outlet showed that 68% of respondents said that people who work hard will likely get ahead in the US.

The pessimism was most pronounced among women, with only 28% saying they believe the American dream still holds, while 46% of men feel that way. Unsurprisingly, respondents over 65, those most likely to be retired and out of the workforce, were the most likely to think that hard work still gets you ahead in America, with 48% saying they feel that way, compared to just 28% of people under 50.

Americans are also distrustful of the American system in general. Half of respondents said they believe the economic and political systems in the US are "stacked against people" like themselves. Only 39% of voters disagreed with that statement. That sentiment was most prominent among black voters, with 68% feeling that the systems in the US are stacked against them.

Less than a third, 30%, of voters believe that life in America is better than it was 50 years ago, compared to 50% who believe it has gotten worse and 20% who say it's about the same.

Despite the growing pessimism about life in the US, more Americans are optimistic about the economy compared to last year, according to the poll. While the number of people who ranked the economy as excellent or good was still low, only 35%, that is a marked improvement from March when that number was only 20% and in May 2022 when it was 17%. Sixty-five percent rated the economy as "Not so good" or "Poor."

Still, it would be difficult to call those numbers robust. Of note, only 2% of respondents rated the economy as "Excellent."

The pessimism in the United States is understandable since in 2022, inflation outpaced wages for the second year in a row. When adjusted for inflation, real wages only grew $0.18 from 1973 to February 2022.

Meanwhile, the cost of owning a house has also exploded in price, far outpacing inflation. According to a real estate research group, if the price of housing tracked with inflation, the median home price in the US would be $177,788 instead of the $408,100 it is in 2023.

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More Than 2,500 NYPD Officers Have Left the Department in 2023

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The exodus combined with recruiting struggles comes as embattled New York City Mayor Eric Adams announced city-wide budget cuts, including a $132 million cut to the NYPD budget.
More cops are leaving the New York City Police Department (NYPD) in 2023, with 2,516 cops having quit the force in 2023 alone, an increase of 43% from the number that left in 2018. The number of cops who are choosing to leave before their 20-year mark – when they would be guaranteed their full pension that can be as high as 50% of their salary – has also increased.
The cops complain that they are overworked and underpaid, and many are leaving for other cities that provide better benefits and a better work-life balance. One recruiter who entices NYPD cops to leave for police forces in Florida told US media that he is busier than he has ever been.
“The cops who left can’t believe they ever worked there,” he said.
The police union says they are working “inhumane” overtime hours, which it blames on recruiting shortages. The union has suggested more flexible hours, allowing officers to work longer shifts but fewer days.
Officers have also complained about anti-cop sentiment that has risen over the years, particularly after Minnesota cop Derek Chauvin murdered George Floyd in 2020, which, along with several other high-profile instances of unarmed black people being killed or murdered by police that year led to nationwide protests.
A planned budget cut to the police force, which has not yet gone into effect, is also being blamed.
“When you look at the number of resignations, you need to ask yourself why would the mayor even consider making cuts to hiring in the NYPD?” said Joseph Giacalone, a retired NYPD sergeant and adjunct professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice told US media. “As the numbers continue to dwindle, things will take a dramatic turn for the worse.”
However, the NYPD is reportedly the world’s largest and most expensive police force, though some American cities spend more as a percentage of their budget. If the NYPD were a military force, it would be the 36th most expensive in the world.
The planned budget cuts, which Mayor Eric Adams blames on the migrant crisis, will cut the NYPD budget by $132 million, a roughly 2.5% drop from its 2023 budget and puts it in line with the department’s 2018 budget. New York City is planning $4 billion in budget cuts citywide, the cuts to the NYPD represent 3.3% of the city’s total cuts.
The official NYPD budget does not include pensions, other benefits, or debt payments. If included, those budget expenditures nearly double the size of the NYPD’s budget.
The NYPD is the city’s third largest expense, after the Department of Education and the Department of Social Services.
Crime in 2022 paled in comparison to the 1990s, when New York City was considered one of America’s most dangerous.
In 1990, 2,245 homicides were reported in New York City, compared to 434 in 2022.
The increase in 2022 compared to 2021 has also been declining this year, according to NYPD’s numbers. Shooting incidents are down 25.7% year to date in 2023 compared to 2022, while murder, rape, burglary, and grand larceny are also all down.
There has been an 11% increase in car thefts and slight increases in robbery and felony assaults. Transit crimes are also up in 2023.

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In Rhetorical Shift, Two Democratic Senators Say US Shouldn't Give Israel Blank Check

Some Democrats are beginning to respond to constituents' anger over the high civilian death toll in Gaza, insisting aid to Israel must be contingent on the country's compliance with humanitarian law. But President Biden remains firmly supportive of the US ally.

Two Democratic Senators have said US aid to Israel must be conditioned on greater efforts to avoid civilian casualties, marking a shift in rhetoric from the party since the early days of Israel's military campaign in Gaza.

"We regularly condition our aid to allies based upon compliance with U.S. law and international law," said Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT) in an interview with US media on Sunday. "And that will be a conversation we will all be engaged in when we get back to Washington on Monday."

Sen. Murphy sits on the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, perhaps suggesting a broader institutional shift within the Democratic Party.

"I do believe that the level of civilian harm inside Gaza has been unacceptable and is unsustainable," added Murphy.

"I think there's both a moral cost to this many civilians, innocent civilians, children often, losing their life, but I think there's a strategic cost. Ultimately, Hamas will get stronger, not weaker, in the long run if all of this civilian death allows them to recruit more effectively and ably inside Gaza."

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT), a political independent who caucuses with Democrats, expressed similar sentiments in an op-ed on Thursday, saying the US' "blank check approach" to funding for Israel should end.

"The United States must make clear that while we are friends of Israel, there are conditions to that friendship and that we cannot be complicit in actions that violate international law and our own sense of decency," wrote Sanders.

Although Sanders is typically considered a representative of the left wing of the Democratic Party, the Vermont senator and former presidential candidate has resisted calls for a long-term ceasefire in Gaza. Earlier this month, dozens of protesters were arrested while demonstrating at the Senate offices of Sanders and others over US policy in regard to Israel.

Sanders has a mixed track record regarding military policy; the progressive politician famously opposed the Iraq War but strongly supported NATO's 1999 bombing of Yugoslavia that resulted in hundreds of civilian deaths.

White House national security advisor Jake Sullivan acknowledged calls for the conditioning of aid Sunday but confirmed President Biden wouldn't seek any restrictions at this time. Sullivan suggested that an ongoing four-day ceasefire allowing Israel and Hamas to exchange captives represented a victory for the president's diplomatic approach.

"He is going to continue to engage in exactly that kind of diplomacy," said Sullivan in an interview with US media.

The temporary ceasefire has resulted in the release of dozens of Palestinians imprisoned in Israel, with most of them reportedly being minors. Some 39 Israelis held captive by Hamas,

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which rules the Gaza Strip, have been released as well, including a four-year-old American-Israeli girl and a nine-year-old Irish-Israeli girl.
Irish lawmakers had cited ongoing negotiations to achieve the girl's release as they resisted calls to expel Israel's ambassador in Dublin; opposition to Israel is high among the Irish public.
Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said the country's military incursion in Gaza will "continue full power" after the current ceasefire ends, but the head of state suggested the suspension of hostilities may be extended if a further release of hostages is negotiated.
Tensions remain high over the issue in the United States with dueling protests from supporters and opponents of Israel's military operation in Gaza. Three Palestinian college students were recently wounded after being shot Saturday evening in Burlington, Vermont. The young men were reportedly speaking Arabic at the time and wearing the keffiyeh, a black-and-white scarf that serves as a symbol of Palestinian culture.

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Three Palestinian College Students Shot in Vermont

Bias attacks in the United States have been on the rise amid the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, although authorities in Burlington have not yet confirmed a motive for the shooting. The young men were reportedly speaking Arabic at the time and wearing the Palestinian keffiyeh.
Local authorities are investigating a possible hate crime after three Palestinian college students were shot Saturday evening in Burlington, Vermont.
The attack occurred around 6:25 PM local time near the campus of the University of Vermont as the friends, all 20 years old, were on their way to a family dinner. According to police a white male with a handgun appeared, firing at least four shots at the young men. The victims are recovering at a nearby hospital, with one of them reportedly suffering "serious injuries."
The men were identified on the X social media platform by Husam Zomlot, Palestine's head ambassador to the United Kingdom.
"Three young Palestinian men, Hisham Awartani, Tahseen Ali and Kenan Abdulhamid, students at Brown and other US universities, were shot last night on their way to a family dinner in Burlington, USA," wrote Zomlot. "Their crime? Wearing the Palestinian keffiyeh."
The keffiyeh is a black-and-white scarf considered a symbol of Palestinian culture.
The attack shocked residents of Burlington, a liberal-leaning college town of less than 45,000.
Police have not yet apprehended a suspect in the shooting or confirmed a motive, but the possibility of a hate crime is being investigated.
"In this charged moment, no one can look at this incident and not suspect that it may have been a hate-motivated crime," said local police chief Jon Murad. "I have already been in touch with federal investigatory and prosecutorial partners to prepare for that if it's proven."
The US Federal Bureau of Investigation is reportedly investigating the incident and has an agent on the scene in Burlington.

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Meanwhile the Ramallah Friends School, where the three men reportedly attended high school in the occupied West Bank, posted a statement on social media.

"While we are relieved to know that they are alive, we remain uncertain about their condition and hold them in the light," read the post. "We extend our thoughts and prayers to them and their families for a full recovery, especially considering the severity of injuries – as Hisham has been shot in the back, Tahseen in the chest, and Kinnan with minor injuries."

Bias attacks in the US have been on the rise since Hamas' October 7 surprise attack in Israel, which spurred the country to respond militarily in the Gaza Strip. The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) reports a 216% increase in reported incidents of bias against Arab-Americans compared to 2022.

There's evidence that public demonstrations of antisemitism are on the rise as well, with police in New York City reporting a 214% increase in reported hate crimes against Jewish people in October.

The shooting in Vermont comes just a week after a Muslim man was shot and wounded outside of a mosque in Providence, Rhode Island, although police are still uncertain of a motive in that crime as well. In October, a six-year-old Palestinian boy in Illinois was stabbed to death by his landlord, who was reportedly radicalized by anti-Muslim talk radio programs.

In another highly-visible incident of Islamophobia, Stuart Seldowitz, a former US State Department employee and advisor to President Barack Obama, was charged with stalking and aggravated harassment last week after a video of him berating a New York City food cart vendor went viral online.

Earlier this month a 69-year-old Jewish man in Ventura County, California, died after an altercation with a pro-Palestine counter-protester. The local sheriff's office says they haven't ruled out the possibility of hate crime charges.

Some Jewish students have reported incidents of harassment during pro-Palestine demonstrations at US colleges. The issue has prompted a debate over free speech after Florida Governor Ron DeSantis moved to ban chapters of a pro-Palestine group from university campuses across the state. George Washington University in Washington, DC and Columbia University in New York have also banned pro-Palestine groups in recent weeks.

The move at Columbia was particularly controversial as one of the groups that was banned, Jewish Voice for Peace, is composed primarily of Jewish activists. Students and professors have demonstrated against the suspension of the groups while alumni of the university protested last week by throwing away their caps and gowns.

Israel has been engaged in military action against Hamas since the Palestinian movement launched a surprise October 7 attack that killed some 1,200 Israelis. Since then Israel has reportedly killed more than 15,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, including about 10,000 women and children. US media has reported that "the rate of death during Israel's assault has few precedents in this century."

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'Beaver Moon' Appears in Night Sky Across North America

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The celestial phenomenon can be viewed at dusk on Monday and Tuesday. The planet Jupiter, which just reached its bright annual opposition, will also be highly visible.

Stargazers are in for a treat this week, as they will be able to see a bright, full “Beaver Moon” at sunset on Monday evening.

A Beaver Moon is actually a full moon that occurs during the month of November. Atmospheric conditions during moonrise and moonset cause the celestial body to appear in shades of orange, yellow and pink, meaning viewers may want to observe the phenomenon early in the evening or morning.

Pleiades, the cluster of stars nearest to our solar system, will also be observable nearby. The planet Jupitar will also be highly visible; people viewing the sky through binoculars or a telescope will catch the best glimpse.

This particular type of full moon is named for the time of the year when beavers retreat to their lodges according to the Old Farmer’s Almanac, which has been published annually in the United States since 1792. The animals take shelter after having gathered food for the coming winter. Historically, beavers would be trapped during this time in North America for their thick pelts.

November’s full moon has other traditional names as well, with most of them referring to actions taken by animals during this time of the year.

The Tlingit people of the Pacific Northwest call it the “Digging (or Scratching) Moon” after animals foraging for food and bears preparing their winter dens. The Dakota and Lakota people call it the “Deer Rutting Moon,” and the Algonquin people of Eastern Canada call it the “Whitefish Moon” after the fish that spawn during this time.

Other Native peoples call it the “Frost Moon” or the “Freezing Moon.”

Elsewhere in the night sky, the Geminids meteor shower remains visible until December 24.

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State Dept. Denies Reports of US, Germany Pushing Ukraine Into Talks With Russia

WASHINGTON, November 27 (Sputnik) - Media reports alleging that the United States and Germany are pushing Ukraine into negotiations with Russia are "intriguing" but not true, US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs James O’Brien said on Monday.

"The Bild story was intriguing, and no, there's no US policy. We have always said that this is a matter for Ukraine to decide. We decide nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine," O’Brien said during a briefing.

On Friday, Bild reported, citing a source in the German government, that Washington and Berlin intend to push Ukraine to negotiate with Russia through limiting the quantity and quality of weapons supplied to Kiev.

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

State Dept. Says Will Not Comment on Prospects of Blinken-Lavrov Talks at OSCE Meeting

WASHINGTON, November 27 (Sputnik) – US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs James O'Brien on Monday declined to comment on the prospects of talks between Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov during an Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) meeting.

"I do not know what Minister Lavrov's plans are for attending on Thursday, so I won't comment on that," O'Brien told reporters.

Blinken will lead the US delegation and engage in a "good discussion" with his OSCE counterparts regarding support for Ukraine, O'Brien said.

The OSCE ministerial meeting will take place in Skopje, North Macedonia, from November 30 to December 1.

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US Expects Sweden to Join NATO Soon, No Reason for Delays From Turkey – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 27 (Sputnik) – The United States expects Sweden to join NATO "very soon" and sees no reasons for Turkey to delay the Nordic country's accession, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs James O'Brien said on Monday.

"We think Sweden's fully capable now of contributing to the alliance. We think it will be a great NATO ally and we expect it to be an ally very soon," O'Brien said during a briefing. "Our point to our Turkish allies has been that there's no reason to delay any further, and we anticipate seeing positive action very soon."

The US also expects that Hungary will soon move forward on ratifying Sweden's accession to NATO, the official added.

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US Hopes Hamas Will Release 2 American Women on Monday - Kirby

WASHINGTON, November 27 (Sputnik) – The United States expects Hamas to release two American women on Monday, White House National Security Council Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby told CNN.

"We hope those two American women can get released today," Kirby said.

He expressed the hope that Hamas and Israel would agree to extend the truce, allowing the release of additional hostages in the coming days.

On Sunday, Hamas released the first US citizen held hostage as part of a four-day ceasefire

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deal with the Israeli government. The US-Israeli dual national, whose parents were killed during the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel, was one of the 17 hostages released Sunday.

Earlier on Monday, the Financial Times newspaper reported, citing Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, that the four-day ceasefire between Israel and Hamas could be extended if the Palestinian group manages to locate over 40 women and children in the Gaza Strip who are believed to be held hostage by other armed factions or civilians.

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US Expects Hamas to Release More Israeli Hostages in Next Few Days - Biden

WASHINGTON, November 24 (Sputnik) - The United States expects Palestinian movement Hamas to release more Israeli hostages in the new few days, US President Joe Biden said on Friday.

"As I said, today's releases are the start of a process, we expect more hostages to be released tomorrow, more the day after and more the day after that. Over the next few days, we expect that dozens of hostages will be returned to their families. We also remember all those who are still being held and renew our commitment to work for their release as well," Biden said during a press conference.

The US president also said that fresh efforts are needed to resolve the conflict between Israel and Palestine within the framework of a "two-state solution".

When asked if there is a chance that the humanitarian pause between Israel and Hamas can be extended, Biden said that "the chances are real."

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Ex-Obama Aide Arrested for Harassing Muslim Vendor, Police Open Hate Crime Probe - Reports

NEW YORK, November 23 (Sputnik) - New York police have taken former Obama administration adviser Stuart Seldowitz into custody after video circulated online showing him verbally abusing a halal food vendor over his Muslim faith, ABC News reported.

The police, according to the report, also opened a hate crime probe into the 64-year-old Seldowitz who was caught on video asking the vendor if he raped his daughter "like Muhammad did." Seldowitz also said, referring to Israel's military operation in Gaza, that the death of 4,000 Palestinian children "wasn't enough."

After filing a complaint of aggravated harassment over the incident, the report added, Mohammed Hussein, 24, went back to work at the cart.

There were several confrontations at the cart, located on the Upper East side of Manhattan, over the last two weeks amid the Mideast conflict, the report said.

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Earlier in the day, Manhattan-based lobbying firm Gotham Government Relations said it cut all ties with Seldowitz due to the incident, which the firm called "vile and racist."

Seldowitz expressed regret for his comments in a call with ABC, but said there were no threats or intimidation.

The halal cart workers say if Seldowitz is truly sorry, they await a face-to-face apology, the report added.

Seldowitz began his public service career in 1999 at the Department of State where he was dealing with Israeli and Palestinian affairs until 2003. During the Obama administration, he served as the Director of the National Security Council.

According to UNICEF, more than 5,300 Palestinian children were killed as a result of massive Israeli bombardments of Gaza while over 850,000 were displaced.

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Buffalo Airport Never Closed Amid US-Canada Border Explosion - New York Governor

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - The Buffalo airport did not stop service and is operating normally following the car explosion on the border between Canada and the United States, New York Governor Kathy Hochul said at a briefing.

"The Buffalo airport, despite earlier reports... was never closed and everything is normal," Hochul said Wednesday. "Domestic flights are still active, there has been no cessation in service there."

Meanwhile, Amtrak's services are temporarily suspended between New York and Canada, the governor said.

The FBI is in the lead of the investigation into a vehicle explosion at the Rainbow Bridge border crossing between the United States and Canada.

The incident left two people dead.

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New York Governor Hochul Says Rainbow Bridge Vehicle Explosion Not Terrorist Attack

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - New York Governor Kathy Hochul said that the incident involving a car on the Rainbow Bridge connecting the United States and Canada was not an act of terrorism.

"There was no sign of terrorist activity with respect to this crash. We've identified that this is a local individual," Hochul said during a press briefing on Wednesday.

The governor also said that the two individuals caught up in the explosion died in the vehicle.

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UPDATE - Amtrak Suspends Cross-Border Service Between New York State, Canada - Spokesman

(Adds official comment in para 6, fixes headline)
WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - Amtrak has temporarily suspended its services between New York and Canada following the car explosion on the border with the United States, a company spokesman said in a statement.
"Amtrak has temporarily suspended cross-border service between New York State and Canada," Amtrak spokesman Jason Abrams said as quoted by CNN on Wednesday. "Amtrak regrets any inconvenience to our customers."
The FBI is currently in the lead of the investigation into a vehicle explosion that occurred earlier in the day at the Rainbow Bridge border crossing between the United States and Canada.
The incident reportedly left at least two people dead.
Media reported earlier that the FBI was investigating the incident as a potential terrorist attack.
A senior US administration official told CBS News the explosion was "more than a freak accident, but we don't yet have details."

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Volkswagen to Increase Chattanooga Production Team Wages by 11% in December - Spokesperson

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - Volkswagen Group of America has announced that its Chattanooga-based production team members' wages will increase by 11% starting in December, company spokesperson Michael Lowder told Sputnik.
"We will be raising our Chattanooga-based production team member wages by 11% beginning in December," Lowder said on Wednesday.
Volkswagen evaluates annually the compensation for its production team members at the end of the year to ensure the company continues to offer a competitive package designed to attract and motivate employees who make daily operations possible at the plant, the statement added.
Earlier this week, the United Auto Workers union suspended a strike against the so-called Big Three producers - General Motors, Stellantis and Ford - after reaching a tentative agreement to increase compensation. Automakers Toyota, Honda, Hyundai and Subaru have also announced wage increases in the wake of the agreement.

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Amtrak Suspends Cross-Border Service Between New York State - Spokesman

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The incident reportedly left at least two people dead.

Media reported earlier that the FBI was investigating the incident as a potential terrorist attack.

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Toronto Police to Increase Patrols Amid US-Canada Border Crossing Explosion - Statement

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - The police of the Canadian city of Toronto will boost directed patrols following the car explosion on the border with the United States, the Toronto police announced via X on Wednesday.

“Due to today’s incident at the Canada-US border, we will be increasing directed patrols of uniformed officers throughout the city,” the statement said. “This is out of an abundance of caution and there are no known threats for the city of #Toronto.”

The FBI is currently leading the investigation into a vehicle explosion at the Rainbow Bridge border crossing between the United States and Canada.

The incident reportedly left at least two people dead.

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Drug Dealer Jailed For Six Years Over Arizona Girl's Teen Fentanyl Death - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - An Arizona drug dealer will serve a six year jail sentence for the fentanyl death of a teenager in the US state of Arizona, the Department of Justice announced in a press release on Wednesday.

"Michael Fox, 29, of Tucson, was sentenced on Monday by United States District Judge G. Murray Snow to 72 months in prison, followed by five years of supervised release," the release stated.

Fox was indicted by a grand jury on September 28, 2021, and pleaded guilty to Distribution of

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Fentanyl on April 6 this year, the release noted.

"On June 29, 2019, Fox sold three fentanyl pills to a 16-year-old female in Glendale. Within approximately one hour, the victim was found unconscious and not breathing. The victim was rushed to the hospital, but she never recovered and was pronounced dead on July 1, 2019," the release said.

A Maricopa County Medical Examiner determined the cause of death was cardiac arrest related to a fentanyl drug overdose, the Justice Department said.

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PREVIEW Canada-EU Summit of 2023 to Focus on Trade, Climate, Current Global Situation

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - Canada and the European Union (EU) are set to hold their 2023 Summit in the city of St. John's, Newfoundland from November 23-24 with an agenda that includes trade, climate, and the current global situation.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will be hosting his EU counterparts European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen to discuss a range of bilateral and international matters.

In terms of trade, the discussions will follow up on the progress made on key commitments established during the 2021 Canada-EU Leaders' Summit in Belgium by notably reiterating their support for strengthening trade under the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement.

As Europe aims to completely displace Russian fuel imports, reduce dependence on China for critical minerals and as Canada presents itself as a reliable partner in those areas, Ottawa and Brussels will seek ways to advance their strategic partnership on critical raw materials, and to further connect EU and Canadian businesses to speed-up related trade and investments.

In the international sphere, bilateral discussions will center on three regions prone to conflicts and instability, respectively Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and the Middle East.

Russia's special military operation in Ukraine will be at the core of discussions regarding the Eastern European region. Both parties are set to reaffirm their long commitment to Kiev and their "unwavering support" for the Ukrainian side.

Among the commitments are those related to security, military assistance, post-war reconstruction, the global consequences related to the ongoing conflict, and the reforms Ukraine must implement on its path to European integration.

In addition, amid a deteriorating security situation in the Caucasus following the war between Azerbaijan and the self-proclaimed Republic of Artsakh earlier this year, the parties will discuss the ways in which Ottawa can contribute to the EU mission in Armenia under the Common Security and Defense Policy.

On the Middle Eastern front, Trudeau and his European counterparts will address the ongoing Israel-Gaza war and its broader regional and global implications.

Ottawa and Brussels are likely to jointly reiterate their condemnation of Hamas' October 7 attacks, reaffirm their support for Israel's right to self-defense, while also highlighting the

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necessity of de-escalation amid an increasingly dire humanitarian situation in Gaza.
Among other items to be addressed during the Summit is the environment, where the parties will navigate ways to enhance cooperation in fighting climate change, the loss of biodiversity, and lower pollution, in line with their commitments to global net-zero emissions by 2050.
Talks on digital cooperation are also expected to take place as Canada and the EU jointly work on artificial intelligence, cyber security, and toward a safe and resilient international connectivity.
Trudeau had said in late October that along with Michel and von der Leyen, he would reaffirm their commitment to the promotion of democracy and human rights, clean energy, and the rule of law.

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Biden Spoke With Argentine President-Elect Milei on Continuing Bilateral Ties –White House

(Updates with information from the White House)
WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden spoke by telephone with Argentine President-elect Javier Milei and discussed the importance of continuing to build a strong bilateral relations between the United States and Argentina, the White House said on Wednesday.
"The two leaders discussed the importance of continuing to build on the strong relationship between the United States and Argentina on economic issues, on regional and multilateral cooperation, and on shared priorities, including advocating for the protection of human rights, addressing food insecurity and investing in clean energy," the statement said.
Biden congratulated Milei on his election and applauded the electoral process as a testament to the strength of Argentina's democratic institutions, it added.
On Sunday, far-right libertarian Milei won the run-off presidential election in Argentina. He is scheduled to officially take office on December 10. Milei advocates ditching the national currency for the US dollar and a foreign policy oriented towards Israel and the United States. He is also against joining BRICS.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) -

ISRAEL INVASION OF GAZA
* Fifty-six Palestinian children have been killed in the West Bank over the past six weeks, "scores" have been displaced and 450,000 children are in need of humanitarian assistance amid the Israel military operations, UN Children's Fund Executive Director Catherine Russell

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said on Wednesday.
* The level of contamination by explosive remnants of the war in Gaza will be unprecedented with tens of thousands dangerous elements scattered across the enclave and will pose a threat for decades, Russell said.
* At least 191 people sheltering in the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) schools in the Gaza Strip have been killed since the start of Israel-Hamas war, the UNRWA said.
* The United Nations believes the situation on the ground in the Gaza Strip is not conducive to investigating what happened in the Al-Shifa Hospital, UN spokesperson Farhan Haq said.
* The deal between Israel and Hamas on the release 50 Israeli hostages in exchange for 150 Palestinians held in Israeli prisons scheduled for November 23 will be repeated later in the month, Reuters reported on Wednesday, citing a Palestinian official.
* The Lebanese movement Hezbollah will comply with the truce reached between Israel and Hamas, Al Jazeera reported, citing a source in the movement.

G20 VIRTUAL SUMMIT
* The current global situation requires collective decisions based on consensus and it is necessary to take into account changes in the world order, Russian President Vladimir Putin told the virtual G20 summit on Wednesday.
* Russia has never rejected peace talks with Ukraine and it was Ukraine who publicly announced that it was withdrawing from the negotiation process, Putin said.
* The current global situation requires collective decisions based on consensus, and it is necessary to take into account changes in the world order, Putin said.
* No documents are expected to be signed following the results of the virtual G20 summit organized by India, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told Sputnik.

EXPLOSION ON US-CANADA BORDER
* The FBI Buffalo field office issued a statement on Wednesday that it is investigating an explosion of a vehicle at the Rainbow Bridge border crossing between the United States and Canada.
* Canada is gathering information on an explosion of the vehicle and is speaking with US officials about the incident, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said.

RUSSIA-FINLAND BORDER DISPUTE
* Finland has decided to close all border checkpoints with Russia except for the northernmost Raja-Jooseppi until December 23, the government's press office said on Wednesday.
* The Finnish government will close all border checkpoints with Russia except for the northernmost Raja-Jooseppi, the Helsingin Sanomat newspaper reported.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE
* Germany has delivered 20 more Marder combat vehicles and more than 2,000 155-mm artillery shells to Ukraine since November 13, the government's website said on Wednesday.
* The Ukrainian armed forces hit a group of Russian reporters with drones armed with cluster munitions in the Zaporizhzhia region, the Russian Defense Ministry said, adding that one

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reporter was injured.
* US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin urged partners from the Ukraine Defense Contact Group to provide Kiev with air defense capabilities ahead of the winter months.

CSTO SUMMIT
* Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Wednesday that Moscow regrets Armenia's decision not to participate at in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) summit in Minsk at the highest level and hopes Yerevan will continue to work within the CSTO framework.
* A lot of work has been done with CSTO countries on forming a single air defense system, Russian President Vladimir Putin said.
* Putin is not planning to separately meet with the leaders of CSTO countries during the Minsk summit on November 23, but there will be discussions on the sidelines of the event, Peskov told Sputnik.

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US Lobbying Firm Says Cut All Ties With Ex-Obama Aide After He Harassed Cart Vendor

WASHINGTON, November 23 (Sputnik) – A Manhattan-based lobbying firm Gotham Government Relations said in a statement that it decided to cut all ties with former Obama administration official and diplomat Stuart Seldowitz, 64, after he harassed a halal cart vendor in New York City.
"Gotham Government Relations has ended all affiliation with Stuart Seldowitz, an individual who hasn't contributed to our work in years," the statement said on Tuesday. "The video of his actions is vile, racist, and beneath the dignity of the standards we practice at our firm."
The firm made this statement after several videos appeared online in which Seldowitz was caught insulting a halal food vendor on one of the busy intersections of New York, in the Upper East Side.
In one such video published on X by a Columbia University student, Seldowitz asks the vendor, "Did you rape your daughter like Mohammed did?" and states that killing 4,000 Palestinian children "wasn't enough."
According to UNICEF, more than 5300 Palestinian children were killed as a result of massive Israeli bombardments of Gaza while over 850,000 were displaced.
In another video, Seldowitz accuses the vendor of allegedly selling hos food without a license and entering the United States illegally, to which he responds that he is a US citizen and has all the permits.
In his interview for City & State, Seldowitz admitted that it was him who harassed the vendor.
"I did have an argument with a food vendor," City & State cited Seldowitz as saying. "It is quite possible that it's me. I mean, I've not seen the video, but I believe it's probably me."
Contrary to the lobbying firm's claim that they are not affiliated with him, Seldowitz has served as chairman of the company's Foreign Affairs Chair since November 2022, according to Gotham's website.

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President of Gotham Government Relations David Schwartz refuted claims that Seldowitz had any affiliation with the company and added that he is ready to represent the food vendor for free if he decides to bring a lawsuit against him, the report said.

"I regret the whole thing happened and I'm sorry," Seldowitz said in the interview. "But you know, in the heat of the moment, I said things that probably I shouldn't have said."

Seldowitz began his public service career in 1999 at the Department of State where he was dealing with Israeli and Palestinian affairs till 2003. During the Obama administration, he served as the Director of the National Security Council.

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Buffalo Niagara Airport Closed to International Aircraft - Federal Aviation Administration

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - The Buffalo Niagara International Airport in the US state of New York has been closed to aircraft departing or arriving from abroad, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) said on Wednesday.

"Buffalo Niagara International is closed TO DEP. AND ARR. INTL. ACFT.," the FAA said in a notice.

In a separate notice, the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authorities (NFTA) said they are boosting security system-wide and are imposing additional checks at the airport in response to a reported incident involving an explosion of a vehicle at the Rainbow Bridge connecting the United States and Canada.

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Biden Briefed on Vehicle Explosion at Canada Border, Following Developments - White House

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden has been briefed on the vehicle explosion at the border crossing with Canada and is closely following the developments, the White House said on Wednesday.

"The President has been briefed on the vehicle explosion at the Rainbow Bridge Port of Entry. He and his team are closely following developments," said the White House in a release.

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Biden Speaks With Israeli Prime Minister to Discuss Hostage Deal - White House

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WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu discussed the hostage deal during a phone call on Wednesday, the Whited House said.

"President Biden spoke with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel to discuss the deal to secure the release of hostages taken by Hamas during its brutal assault against Israel on October 7th and the latest developments in the region," the White House said, as quoted by the press pool.

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FBI Investigating US-Canada Border Crossing Explosion as Terrorist Attack - Reports

(Update: adds details in paras 4-6)

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - The FBI is investigating a vehicle explosion at the Rainbow Bridge border crossing between the United States and Canada that left two people dead as an attempted terrorist attack, Fox News reported on Wednesday.

The FBI is investigating the incident as an attempted terrorist attack, the report said, citing sources familiar with the matter.

Two people who were in the vehicle died as a result of the incident, the report said. The vehicle, which was driving from the US to Canada, attempted to drive toward the border officer building, the report added.

A 27-year-old man was also injured in the explosion and taken to a hospital with minor injuries, the report said.

Explosives were found in the vehicle, the Fox News report said. However, ABC News reported that investigators at the scene were treating a suitcase or briefcase as a possible explosive device.

Moreover, NBC News reported that no explosives at all were found in the vehicle, further obscuring the situation.

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Canada Public Safety Chief Says Border Incident Taken ‘Extremely Seriously’ by Ottawa

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - Canada’s Minister of Public Safety Dominic Leblanc said on Wednesday that the incident at the Rainbow Bridge was taken with utmost seriousness.

Earlier on Wednesday, a vehicle exploded at the Rainbow Bridge border crossing between Canada and the United States. The FBI said it is reportedly investigating the incident as an attempted terrorist attack.

"This is obviously a very serious situation. The government of Canada is taking this situation extremely seriously. We are in close contact with American authorities. I will be speaking with

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the US homeland security secretary shortly," Leblanc told reporters.
The minister said it was important to avoid speculation on the provenance of the vehicle which media reported as having arrived from the Canadian side. Leblanc said they have incomplete information.

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Trudeau Says Canada Gathering Information on Border Crossing Explosion, Talking to US

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - Canada is gathering information on an explosion of a vehicle at a United States-Canada border crossing and us speaking with US officials about the incident, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Wednesday.
"We're trying to gather all the information. We're providing support. We're talking to the Americans," Trudeau said during remarks to the House of Commons.
Earlier on Wednesday, a vehicle exploded at the Rainbow Bridge border crossing between Canada and the United States. The FBI said it is reportedly investigating the incident as an attempted terrorist attack.
Trudeau said Canada has shut down several border crossings and is contemplating additional security measures in response to the incident.

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Biden Speaks With Argentine President-Elect Milei About Continuing Strong Bilateral Ties

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden spoke by telephone with Argentine President-elect Javier Milei and discussed the importance of continuing to build a strong bilateral relations between the United States and Argentina, the White House press poll reported on Wednesday.
"President Biden spoke with President-elect of Argentina Javier Milei to congratulate him and discuss the importance of continuing to build on our strong bilateral relationship," the report said.

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UPDATE - New York Governor Says Briefed About Vehicle Incident on Bridge Linking US With Canada

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(Adds details in paras 5)
WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - New York Governor Kathy Hochul said on Wednesday that she has been briefed about the incident on the Rainbow Bridge in Niagara Falls linking the United States and Canada and emphasized that the state's agencies stand ready to assist.
Local media attributed the incident to an explosion of a vehicle outside of the border inspection plaza on the US side. The reports cited witnesses that loud noises akin to explosions and a cloud of smoke were observed at the site.
"I've been briefed on the incident on the Rainbow Bridge in Niagara Falls and we are closely monitoring the situation. State agencies are on site and ready to assist," Hochul said.
The Rainbow Bridge has been closed from both sides due to an incident involving a vehicle, the Niagara Falls Mayor's Office said on Wednesday.
Hochul further noted that at her request, the New York State Police will cooperate with the FBI Join Terrorism Task Force to monitor all the points of entry into the State, adding that she will travel to Buffalo and meet with local law enforcement and emergency responders.

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FBI Investigating US-Canada Border Crossing Explosion as Terrorist Attack - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - The FBI is investigating a vehicle explosion at the Rainbow Bridge border crossing between the United States and Canada that left two people dead as an attempted terrorist attack, Fox News reported on Wednesday.
The FBI is investigating the incident as an attempted terrorist attack, the report said, citing sources familiar with the matter.
Two people who were in the vehicle died as a result of the incident, the report said. The vehicle, which was driving from the US to Canada, attempted to drive toward the border officer building, the report added.

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All Border Crossing in the Niagara Region Closed Over Vehicle Incident - Ontario Police

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) – The Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) Highway Safety Division said on Wednesday that all border crossings in the Niagara region have been closed to traffic form both sides following an incident at the Rainbow Bridge on the US-Canada border.
Local media attributed the incident to an explosion of a vehicle outside of the border inspection plaza on the US side. The reports cited witnesses that loud noises akin to explosions were heard and a cloud of smoke observed at the site.
"In Niagara region, we currently have, right now, the Rainbow Bridge closed in both directions

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in Niagara Fall," the OPP said via X (formerly Twitter). "As a result, we also currently have the Fort Erie Peace Bridge closed at the end of the QAW, closed to all crossing coming to, leaving Canada."

Law enforcement is in the process of closing Highway 405 as well as the Lewiston-Queenston Bridge, the statement said.

"You can expect heavy delays in the Niagara area," the statement added.

The police has asked civilians to delay their travels until the bridges and highways are clear for reopening, according to the statement.

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Israel to Continue Military Operation With 'Full Force' After Pause Ends - UN Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, November 22 (Sputnik) - Israel will continue its military campaign against Hamas in Gaza after a pause related to the hostage deal ends and will not stop until it eliminates all Hamas capabilities in the enclave, Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations Gilad Erdan said on Wednesday.

"Make no mistake, as soon as the pause ends, we will continue striving towards our goals with full force. We will not stop until we eliminate all of Hamas' terror capabilities and ensure that they can no longer rule Gaza and threaten both Israeli civilians and the women and children of Gaza," Erdan said during a UN Security Council meeting on the situation in the Middle East.

Erdan called Hamas solely responsible for what is taking place in Gaza and added that once it is gone, Gazans will have a chance for a "brighter future."

Earlier today, Hamas confirmed that it had agreed with Israel on a four-day truce in the Gaza Strip with the cessation of all hostilities and the release of 50 Israeli hostages in exchange for 150 Palestinian prisoners. Israel's cabinet said later in the day that the truce deal provided for the release of 10 Israeli hostages per day, while Israel pledged to free Palestinian prisoners as soon as the first group of hostages returned to the country.

As of Wednesday, the death toll from Israel's bombardment and invasion of the Palestinian enclave has surpassed 14,500, and some 6,000 of those killed are children.

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US Oil Stockpiles Up 5th Week in Row, Raising Questions About Demand

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - US crude stockpiles rose for a fifth week in a row, raising questions about demand, as global producer group OPEC+ postponed a meeting that could have led to further output cuts.

US crude stocks jumped 8.7 million barrels during the week to November 17, adding to four previous weeks of gains that had lifted raw oil inventories in the United States by a cumulative

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19.5 million barrels.

Seasonally, oil demand is weak at this time of year as cold weather transitioning from autumn to winter in a month from now limits driving.

Last week though, it wasn't just crude stocks that rose as refiners processed less oil into fuel products.

Inventories of gasoline - the No. 1 US fuel product - perked by 750,000 barrels for its first growth in three weeks.

Refineries operated at 87% of their operable capacity last week. Gasoline production decreased last week, averaging 9.4 million barrels per day. Distillate fuel production increased last week, averaging 4.9 million barrels per day.

US crude oil imports averaged 6.5 million barrels per day last week, rising by 156,000 barrels per day from the previous week despite the ongoing squeeze in production by OPEC+.

OPEC+ — which comprises the 13-member Saudi-led OPEC, or Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and 10 independent oil producers steered by Russia — delayed on Wednesday a ministerial meeting expected to discuss oil output cuts.

The meeting will be held November 30 instead, OPEC+ said, amid media reports that the producer group was having trouble agreeing on the quantum for further cuts. OPEC is already withholding around 5 million barrels of regular daily production to boost prices.

But oil prices have fallen instead the past two months, with the benchmark US West Texas Intermediate crude going from a settlement of just above $90 per barrel in September to around $76 now due to demand issues in both China and the United States — the world's first and second largest oil consumers.

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FBI Says Investigating Vehicle Explosion at New York Border Crossing With Canada

NEW YORK, November 22 (Sputnik) - The FBI Buffalo field office issued a statement on Wednesday that it is investigating a the explosion of a vehicle at the Rainbow Bridge border crossing between the United States and Canada.

"The FBI Buffalo field office is investigating a vehicle explosion at the Rainbow Bridge, a border crossing between the US and Canada in Niagara Falls," the statement said.

The FBI is cooperating with local, state but also other federal law enforcement partners in the investigation, the statement said.

The situation remains "very fluid," the statement added.

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New York Governor Says Briefed About Vehicle Incident on Bridge Linking US With Canada

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WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - New York Governor Kathy Hochul said on Wednesday that she has been briefed about the incident on the Rainbow Bridge in Niagara Falls linking the United States and Canada, and emphasized that the state's agencies stand ready to assist.

Local media attributed the incident to an explosion of a vehicle outside of the border inspection plaza on the US side. The reports cited witnesses that loud noises akin to explosions and a cloud of smoke were observed at the site.

"I've been briefed on the incident on the Rainbow Bridge in Niagara Falls and we are closely monitoring the situation. State agencies are on site and ready to assist," Hochul said.

The Rainbow Bridge has been closed from both sides due to an incident involving a vehicle, the Niagara Falls Mayor's Office said on Wednesday.

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US-Canada Rainbow Bridge Closed After Reports of Vehicle Explosion

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - The Rainbow Bridge, an international link at the US-Canada border, has been closed from both sides following an incident involving a vehicle, Niagara Falls Mayor Office said on Wednesday.

"The Rainbow Bridge is currently closed until further notice," the office said in a statement.

The local Niagara Gazette attributed the incident to a reported explosion of a vehicle outside of the border inspection plaza on the American side.

The car reportedly sped the wrong way into the inspection booths, where the explosion occurred, the report added.

Reports further noted citing witnesses that loud noises akin to explosions and a cloud of smoke were observed.

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China Urges for Early Release of Hostages as It May Lead to Peace Negotiations - Zhang

UNITED NATIONS, November 22 (Sputnik) - China supports additional diplomatic efforts to secure the early release of more hostages, which may create the necessary dialogue for negotiations to restore peace, Chinese Ambassador to the United Nations Zhang Jun said on Wednesday.

"We support further diplomatic efforts so that more people held captive can be released at an early date. We hope this will create political space for dialogue and negotiation and the restoration of peace," Zhang Jun said during a meeting of the UN Security Council.

The Chinese ambassador also said that efforts must be increased to promote all initiatives aimed at protecting civilians in the Gaza Strip and beyond.

On October 7, the Palestinian movement Hamas launched a surprise attack against Israel from

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the Gaza Strip. Israel declared war on Hamas and launched massive strikes while imposing a complete blockade on Gaza, cutting the Palestinian enclave from supplies of water, food, medicines, electricity and fuel. Israel also launched a ground invasion of Gaza on October 27, with the stated goal of eliminating Hamas and rescuing hostages. Some 15,000 Palestinians have been killed and well over 30,000 wounded in Israel's military operations.

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China Calls for End to Hostilities, Immediate Ceasefire in Gaza - UN Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, November 22 (Sputnik) - China is calling for stepping up efforts to implement an immediate end to hostilities in Gaza and the realization of a ceasefire, Beijing's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Zhang Jun said on Wednesday.

"We must step up efforts to promote an immediate end to hostilities and realization for ceasefire," Zhang Jun said during the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) meeting.

Furthermore, Zhang Jun said that it must be implemented immediately and fully to achieve a lasting ceasefire and avoid a larger humanitarian catastrophe.

On October 7, Palestinian group Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip and breached the border, killing and abducting people in neighboring Israeli communities. Israel launched retaliatory strikes and ordered a complete blockade of the Gaza Strip, 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 resulted in the deaths of around 1,400 people in Israel and over 11,000 in the Gaza Strip.

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Conditions in Gaza Don't Allow Probe Into Al-Shifa Hospital Tragedy-UN Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, November 22 (Sputnik) - The United Nations believe the situation on the ground is not conducive to investigating what happened in the Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza, the UN Spokesperson Farhan Haq said on Wednesday.

"I don't believe the conditions on the ground would allow for an investigation into the situation there, at the present," Haq told a briefing when asked if the UN wants to use this four-day truce to investigate what happened in Al-Shifa hospital.

Earlier today, Hamas confirmed that it had agreed with Israel on a four-day truce in the Gaza Strip with the cessation of all hostilities and the release of 50 Israeli hostages in exchange for 150 Palestinian prisoners. Israel's cabinet said later in the day that the truce deal provided for the release of 10 Israeli hostages per day, while Israel pledged to free Palestinian prisoners as

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soon as the first group of hostages returned to the country.

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UN to Use 4-Day Truce to Expand Deliveries of Humanitarian Aid, Fuel to Gaza - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, November 22 (Sputnik) - The United Nations seeks to use the four-day truce between Israel and the Palestinian movement Hamas to expand its humanitarian aid operations and deliver much needed goods and fuel into the Gaza Strip, UN spokesperson Farhan Haq said on Wednesday.

"What we're trying to do is make sure that during this particular pause, however long it lasts, we will be able to expand our operations. So we're going to try to do as much as we can to bring humanitarian goods and to bring fuel into Gaza," Haq said during a press briefing.

Earlier on Wednesday, Hamas confirmed that it had agreed with Israel on a four-day truce in the Gaza Strip, complete with a release of 50 Israeli hostages in exchange for 150 Palestinians held in Israeli prisons. Israel said the truce agreement provided for the release of ten Israeli hostages daily and Israel would free imprisoned Palestinians as the first group of hostages is returned to safety.

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Canada Views Israel-Hamas Hostage Release Deal as 'Important Bit of Progress' - Trudeau

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - The hostage release deal between Israel and the Palestinian movement Hamas is an "important bit of progress," but more efforts are still required to achieve a lasting peace, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, Israel and Hamas confirmed that they had agreed to a four-day humanitarian pause in the Gaza Strip, with the cessation of all hostilities and the release of 50 Israeli hostages in exchange for 150 Palestinians held in Israeli prisons.

"This is an important bit of progress, but we have to redouble our efforts now to get towards a lasting peace," Trudeau said.

The Prime Minister added that Canada and several other countries have long been calling for a humanitarian pause that would allow for the release of hostages, while also allowing humanitarian assistance for the people in Gaza.

"It's going to allow for protecting of civilian life, including hopefully, getting even more Canadians and foreign nationals out," Trudeau said.

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

US Urges Increased Humanitarian Aid for Gaza Strip - Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, November 22 (Sputnik) - The United States has called for an increase in humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip in collaboration with the United Nations and regional partners, US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield said on Wednesday.

"Colleagues, we must scale up our humanitarian assistance to Gaza. And you know that the United States continues to work with the United Nations and partners in the region to do just that," Thomas-Greenfield said during a UN Security Council meeting.

The ambassador also said that the United States was pleased to see the first deliveries of much-needed fuel to the Gaza Strip after Israel committed not to attack or otherwise stop such deliveries.

"This will help keep vital communications networks running and help UNRWA [United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees] deliver humanitarian aid, but much more aid, including fuel, is needed urgently," Thomas-Greenfield added.

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UN Hopes to Repair North Gaza Facilities During Ceasefire – Relief Chief

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) – The UN's relief chief said Wednesday in an interview with CNN that the UN hopes to return to northern Gaza to repair its facilities during the proposed temporary ceasefire.

Earlier in the day, Hamas confirmed that it had agreed with Israel on a four-day truce in Gaza to release 50 Israeli hostages in exchange for 150 Palestinian ones held in prisons. Israel said the agreement provided for the release of 10 Israeli hostages per day and pledged to free Palestinians held in prisons as soon as the first group of hostages returned.

"We have a plan…Hopefully with this potential pause, [displaced Gazans] may be able to go back home to the north and we may be able to go back to the north also to repair facilities," Martin Griffiths, UN under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator, said.

Griffiths acknowledged Israel's stated plan to shift the focus of its military operations to the south, where it had been directing Gazan residents in the north to evacuate. He described the north as "an area of desolation. We fear terribly about this being repeated in the south."

"We need to be prepared for a major humanitarian operation in the south and we need to grab every moment of any pause that comes our way," Griffiths said.

He said UNRWA would continue do its best to provide aid for people both in the north and south, noting that it still had 5,000 staff working on the ground despite suffering more than 100 casualties in the war. He mentioned that the UN had a plan to repurpose schools as distribution points.

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Russia Concerned About Mass Killings of Children in Gaza by Israeli Army – UN Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, November 22 (Sputnik) – Russia is concerned about the mass killings and injuries of children in Gaza by the Israeli military, including during attacks on schools and hospitals, Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said on Wednesday.

"The mass killings and maiming of children committed by the Israeli army in the course of its operations as well as attacks on schools and hospitals, that claim innocent lives, are of utmost concern," Nebenzia said during a UN Security Council meeting on the situation in the Middle East.

Nebenzia called Israeli bombings of mosques, churches, refugee camps, UN facilities with women and children a blatant violation of the international humanitarian law.

The ambassador also noted that Russia has to date seen no persuasive proof of allegations that Hamas' command posts and bunkers were located in such facilities.

Earlier in the day, UN Children's Fund Executive Director Catherine Russell said that over the past 46 days if fighting in Gaza, a total of more than 5300 Palestinian children have been killed and 850,00 displaced as a result of Israeli military operations in the enclave.

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US Lawmakers Urge SEC to Probe Musk Statements on Neuralink for Fraud - Letter

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - A group of US House Democrats sent a letter on Wednesday to Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Chair Gary Gensler, urging a fraud investigation into tech entrepreneur Elon Musk for statements made about the Neuralink implant.

In September, Musk claimed that no monkeys died as a result of Neuralink experiments, but that the company implanted terminal monkeys to minimize risks to healthy ones. The statement came in response to reports of deaths among monkeys implanted with Neuralink.

"Mr. Musk knows this statement is false. Monkey health records show that, while several animals had suffered physical trauma and been used previously in experiments at UC Davis, there is no evidence that they were 'close to death,' as Mr. Musk stated," the letter said.

The SEC ought to investigate Musk for potentially committing securities fraud by making intentionally misleading statements to investors, the letter said.

The animals' deaths and the reason behind them relate directly to Neuralink's marketability and safety, the letter said. It is critical that investors receive accurate information about the product, the letter said.

The letter was backed by US Representatives Earl Blumenauer, Barbara Lee, James McGovern and Tony Cardenas.

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UN Relief Chief Expresses Hope for Two-State Solution

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) – The UN's relief chief said Wednesday in an interview with CNN that he hoped the two-state solution would "get the attention it deserves" following the massive death toll in Israel's war on Gaza.

"What about that two-state solution that has been put on the backburner for all these years? Is that now actually going to get the attention that it deserves as a result of the killings of these innocent civilians? God, I hope that at least we could hope for," Martin Griffiths, UN under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator, said.

He suggested that UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has been wary of involving the UN in some kind of post-war governance role in Gaza in order to avoid promoting the idea that the organization could find a "quick solution to the very very real problem."

Griffiths said the secretary-general was right to discuss the looming post-war problem, adding that the more discussion, the better.

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Canada, US Investigating India's Alleged Assassination Attempts on Sikh Leaders – Trudeau

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) – Canada and the United States are closely cooperating in investigating India's alleged involvement in the murder or attempted assassination of Sikh leaders, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Wednesday.

In September, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Ottawa was examining "credible allegations" linking Indian officials to the killing of Sikh separatist leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar. The activist, who was shot by two masked men in the Canadian province of British Columbia on June 18, advocated for the creation of an independent Sikh state in India called Khalistan.

"We have been working closely with our allies, including the Americans since the middle of the summer," Trudeau told reporters. "Obviously, we continue to engage with India in hopefully constructive ways, and we hope that India will continue to take these real concerns seriously."

The Prime Minister further noted that during Wednesday G20 Summit held virtually, he brough up the necessity to abide by the "rule of law" and to continue engaging issues of concern in a constructive way.

Trudeau's remarks addressed a question on media reports that the US had allegedly warned India of concerns that its government was involved in a plot to assassinate a Sikh separatist leader in the United States.

The alleged attempted which is said to have been thwarted after the issue was raised following Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi state visit to Washington in June, targeted Gurpatwant

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Singh Pannun, a US and Canadian citizen.

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Gaza Conflict Not Compartmentalized, Threatens to Destabilize 'All of Us'- UAE Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, November 22 (Sputnik) - The conflict in Gaza has a huge potential to spillover and can threaten the whole world, United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ambassador to the United Nations Lana Nusseibeh said on Wednesday.

"This conflict is not compartmentalized and contained in the Gaza Strip. And it threatens to unleash forces that destabilize all of us," Nusseibeh told the Security Council during a meeting on Palestine.

This is why we need to defeat this increasing hatred, she added.

Earlier today, Hamas confirmed that it had agreed with Israel on a four-day truce in the Gaza Strip with the cessation of all hostilities and the release of 50 Israeli hostages in exchange for 150 Palestinian prisoners. Israel's cabinet said later in the day that the truce deal provided for the release of 10 Israeli hostages per day, while Israel pledged to free Palestinian prisoners as soon as the first group of hostages returned to the country.

On Tuesday, the Gaza authorities said that the death toll from Israel's bombardment and invasion of the Palestinian enclave has surpassed 14,100 since October 7, and nearly 5,900 of the killed are children.

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World Bank, Global Fund to Fight AIDS Agree to Collaborate on Healthcare in Poor Countries

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - The World Bank and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on cooperating to strengthen health systems in the poor countries of the Global South, the World Bank said in a statement on Wednesday.

"The goal is to support more efficient, effective and sustainable financing to improve health outcomes in the face of climate change," the statement said.

The two organizations warned that more than half of the world population is not fully covered by essential health services.

World Bank President Ajay Banga emphasized in the statement that adequate progress in health care cannot be achieved if rising temperatures change the patterns of infectious diseases and breed pandemics.

"Our only option is to respond aggressively, simultaneously and comprehensively," he said.

Banga expressed confidence that the new partnership will allow the two organizations to build a coalition with other partners needed to address the situation, the statement said.

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Global Fund Executive Director Peter Sands urged all interested sides to redouble efforts to fight malaria, AIDS and tuberculosis.

"With malaria serving as an early tracer of the impact of climate on health, we need intensive interventions and strong partnerships to reverse the negative impact of climate change on health," Sand said in the statement.

The two organizations will cooperate on climate and health priorities to reduce the burden of these diseases through stronger health systems, including better access to primary healthcare services for the most vulnerable populations, the statement said.

They also will advocate for increased financing and focus on improving the regional production and procurement of health supplies, including drugs and medical devices, the statement added.

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Only Immediate Ceasefire Can Change Unacceptable Situation in Gaza - Russia's UN Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, November 22 (Sputnik) – Only an immediate ceasefire can change the unacceptable humanitarian situation in Gaza and not short pauses in fighting, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said on Wednesday.

"There's no doubt that no humanitarian pause can change this unacceptable situation," Nebenzia said during a UN Security Council meeting. "An immediate ceasefire in the conflict zone is necessary. Only this will make it possible to avoid new casualties and to ensure that necessary humanitarian assistance is provided to those in need, particularly children."

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Russia Says UNSC Resolution on Gaza Cannot 'Remain on Paper Only' - Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, November 22 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council resolution on Gaza calling for urgent and extended humanitarian pauses in Gaza and an immediate release of hostages must be urgently implemented, Russian Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia said on Wednesday.

"Under no circumstances we can allow Resolution 2712 to remain on paper only," Nebenzia told the UN Security Council.

After the resolution was adopted, it is important that the UN Secretary General provides the council with proposals especially regarding the monitoring mechanism, the diplomat added.

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RFK Jr. Says Will Resume JFK's Effort to End US 'Military Empire' if Elected in 2024

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - Independent US presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said on Wednesday that he will continue the effort of his uncle, former US President John F. Kennedy, to end the United States' military expansion around the world if elected in 2024.

Wednesday marks the 60th anniversary of JFK's assassination.

"JFK was acting from a strong, idealistic commitment to peace," RFK Jr. said in an op-ed for Fox News. "If the American people choose me as their president, I will resume the process (that my uncle broached sixty years ago) of unwinding the American military empire. I will return the military to its proper function of defending the homeland."

The US can redeem JFK's vision of the country serving as an exemplar of peace and freedom, RFK Jr. said, adding that his uncle's death will not have been in vain.

RFK Jr. said that he will close most of the US' foreign military bases and end policies that provoke Russia and China. RFK Jr. also said that he will create a domestic version of the Peace Corps to provide young people with a new way to serve the US.

"It is not too late to step off the war path and onto the peace path that John F. Kennedy envisioned for our nation," RFK Jr. said.

On November 22, 1963, JFK was assassinated during a motorcade ride in Dallas, Texas. The US government's Warren Commission determined that Lee Harvey Oswald killed JFK, although their conclusion has been scrutinized for decades.

RFK Jr. posted a petition to his campaign website on Wednesday, calling for US President Joe Biden to release all records related to the JFK assassination. Earlier this year, the National Archives and Records Administration completed its review of the records, approximately 99% of which have been made public.

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Plurality of Americans Say US Government Spends Too Much Money on Ukraine - Poll

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - A plurality of people in the United States believe the US government is spending too much money on Ukraine, a new Associated Press and NORC Center for Public Research Affairs poll revealed on Wednesday.

Nearly half of the respondents, 45%, say they believe the United States is spending too much on aid to Ukraine, the poll said. Fourteen percent of respondents say they believe the United States is spending too little on Ukraine, while 38% believe Washington is spending about the right amount, the poll said.

The percentage of Americans who believe the United States is spending too much on Ukraine is down from 52% in October, coinciding with a seven-point rise in the percentage of people who believe the US is spending approximately the right amount, the poll said.

A plurality of Americans, 43%, also believe that the United States is spending too much on aid to Israel, following a surprise attack by the Palestinian movement Hamas last month, the poll

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said.
Fifteen percent (15%) of Americans say they think the United States is spending too little on aiding Israel and 38% believe the amount of aid is about right, the poll said.
Americans are split on whether the United States is spending too much or too little on humanitarian aid for Gaza, with 29% saying they believe Washington is overspending and 29% saying it is underspending, while 38% say they believe the United States is spending the right amount, the poll added.
The poll surveyed 1,239 adults from November 2-6. The poll maintains a margin of error of plus-or-minus 3.9 percentage points with a 95% confidence level.

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UN Relief Chief Describes Gaza as 'Complete and Utter Carnage'

UNITED NATIONS, November 22 (Sputnik) – The UN's relief chief said Wednesday in an interview with CNN that the humanitarian impact of Israel's war on Gaza was unprecedented in his decades-long career in humanitarian affairs.
"I don't think I've seen anything like this before. It's complete and utter carnage," Martin Griffiths, UN under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator, said.
He noted that 68% of people killed in Gaza were women and children, with "more children killed in this conflict than in any other that we can think of."
Griffiths pushed back at attempts to dispute the death toll in Gaza, noting that UNRWA had a long history of working with Gaza's health ministry. He also pointed out that it was rather "academic" to be disputing the death toll by the hundreds or even thousands, given how "awful" the toll clearly was.

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Canada Space Agency Announces Back Up Astronaut for Artemis II Mission to Moon - Statement

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - The Canada Space Agency announced on Wednesday that it has assigned Jenni Gibbons as the back-up astronaut for the Artemis II mission to the Moon and Joshua Kutryk for a six-month mission on the International Space Station.
"Today, the Honorable Francois-Philippe Champagne, Minister responsible for the Canadian Space Agency (CSA), announced two significant assignments for CSA astronauts. Jenni Gibbons will serve as the backup astronaut for the historic Artemis II mission to the Moon," CSA said in a statement. "Joshua Kutryk has been assigned to a six-month mission on the

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International Space Station (ISS) launching aboard Starliner-1."

Gibbons will replace Jeremy Hansen if he happens to be unable to take part in the Artemis II flight but more broadly will have the chance to influence how future Artemis missions will unfold and how to prepare for them, the statement said.

Being part of the crew flying on board of the Boeing CST-100 Starliner first operational mission, Kutryk will become the fourth CSA astronaut taking part in a long-term mission to the International Space station, the statement added.

Artemis II is planned as a preparatory flight for Artemis III, which is scheduled to return US astronauts to the lunar surface in December 2025, including the first female US astronaut and first US astronaut of color, according to NASA.

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Biden Praises JFK on 60th Anniversary of US President's Assassination - Statement

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden on Wednesday praised predecessor John F. Kennedy on the sixtieth anniversary of his assassination, characterizing Kennedy's vision for the United States as a lasting call to action.

"Sixty years ago today, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, a defining moment of deep trauma and loss that shocked the soul of our nation," Biden said in a statement. "We remember the unfulfilled promise of his presidency — not only as a tragedy, but as an enduring call to action to each do all we can for our country."

Kennedy called on the US to take history into its own hands and to strive to live up to its highest ideals, the statement said. Kennedy caused the US to view itself as a country full of "youthful hopes and ambitions" but hardened by what it has overcome, the statement said.

Kennedy set the US's compass on many of the most consequential issues of the 20th century, including civil rights and equal pay for women, the statement said.

Kennedy's presidency was cut short on November 22, 1963, when he was assassinated during a motorcade ride in Dallas, Texas. The US government's Warren Commission concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald killed Kennedy, although the official narrative has been the subject of scrutiny for decades.

In December 2022, Biden released some government records related to the Kennedy assassination, but continued to withhold others. In June, the National Archives and Records Administration completed its review of Kennedy assassination records, approximately 99% of which have been made public.

On Wednesday, Kennedy's nephew — 2024 independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. — posted a petition to his campaign website, urging the Biden administration to release all records related to the Kennedy assassination.

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

UNICEF Director Calls Level of Contamination by Explosives in Gaza 'Unprecedented'

UNITED NATIONS, November 22 (Sputnik) – The level of contamination by explosive remnants of the war in Gaza will be unprecedented with tens of thousands dangerous elements scattered across Gaza and will pose a threat for decades, UN Children's Fund Executive Director Catherine Russell said on Wednesday.

"When the war ends, the contamination by explosive remnants of war will be unprecedented with potentially tens of thousands of remnants scattered across Gaza and beyond, a lethal threat to children that could last for decades," Russell said during a UN Security Council meeting.

In Russell's view, the effects of violence perpetrated on Palestinian children have been "catastrophic, indiscriminate, and disproportionate."

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Fifty-Six Palestinian Children Killed in West Bank, 450,000 Need Humanitarian Aid - UNICEF

UNITED NATIONS, November 22 (Sputnik) - Fifty-six Palestinian children have been killed in the West Bank over the past six weeks, "scores" have been displaced and 450,000 children are in need of humanitarian assistance amid the Israel military operations, UN Children's Fund Executive Director Catherine Russell.

"We estimate that 450,000 children in the West Bank need humanitarian assistance," Russell said during a UN Security Council meeting. "Over the past six weeks, 56 Palestinian children have been killed [in the West Bank] while scores have been displaced from their homes."

In Gaza, more than 1.7 million people, including about 850,000 children, have been displaced and 5,600 children have been killed in just over 46 days since the beginning of the escalation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Russell said.

An additional 1,200 children are estimated to be under the rubble of the bombed-out buildings in Gaza, Russell also said.

Russell pointed out that Gaza today is the most dangerous place in the world for children and called for an urgent humanitarian ceasefire rather than short pauses in fighting.

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UN Says Situation With Safety of Women, Girls in Gaza 'Beyond Catastrophic'

UNITED NATIONS, November 22 (Sputnik) - The United Nations has deep concerns about the safety of women and girls in war-torn Gaza, United Nations Population Fund Executive Director

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Natalia Kanem said on Wednesday.

"We are deeply concerned for the safety and wellbeing of all women and girls caught up in the conflict. The situation they face is beyond catastrophic," Kanem told a UN Security Council meeting.

Some two-thirds of all the people killed in Gaza are women and children, she said.

Earlier in the day, Hamas confirmed that it had agreed with Israel on a four-day truce in the Gaza Strip with the cessation of all hostilities and the release of 50 Israeli hostages in exchange for 150 Palestinian prisoners. Israel's cabinet said later in the day that the truce deal provided for the release of 10 Israeli hostages per day, while Israel pledged to free Palestinian prisoners as soon as the first group of hostages returned to the country.

As of Tuesday, the death toll from the Hamas-Israel conflict has topped 14,000 in the Gaza Strip, with nearly 5,900 children among those killed.

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UN Welcomes Ceasefire in Gaza, Urges Immediate Provision of Aid to Civilians - Official

UNITED NATIONS, November 22 (Sputnik) - The United Nations is pleased about the Israel-Hamas four-day ceasefire and urges using this opportunity to immediately reach the desperate civilians in the Gaza Strip, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Executive Director Natalia Kanem said on Wednesday.

“The announcement of a four-day humanitarian pause is a welcome development, which must be used to allow for additional aid to reach those in desperate need,” Kanem said during a UN Security Council meeting.

The United Nations is also worried than most of the hospitals in Gaza have been shut down or damaged, and various civilians in need of medical help, including pregnant women, are in danger, Kanem said.

Earlier on Wednesday, Hamas confirmed that it had agreed with Israel on a four-day truce in Gaza to release 50 Israeli hostages in exchange for 150 Palestinian ones held in prisons. Israel said the truce agreement provided for the release of ten Israeli hostages per day, while Israel pledged to free Palestinian held in prisons as soon as the first group of hostages returned.

The Gaza authorities said that the death toll from Israel's bombardment and ground invasion has surpassed 14,100 civilians of which nearly 5,900 are children.

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Gaza Hostages Exchange Includes 3 Americans, But US Has No Complete Information - Sullivan

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WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - A humanitarian pause and hostages exchange agreed by the Israeli government and the Palestinian movement Hamas should include three US citizens, but the Biden administration will not have complete information on their identity until they are released, White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said on Wednesday.

"What we know is that the women and children are being held. We know who they are, and we know, based on the list that has been provided, that there should be three Americans - two women and a child among them. But again, until we have eyes on the hostages, the American hostages and all of the others, we can not be certain about who exactly will be delivered in this deal," Sullivan told NBC News.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Qatar Foreign Ministry said the starting time of the humanitarian pause in Gaza would be announced within the next 24 hours and would be subject to extension. The pause will allow the release of 50 hostages held by Hamas during the October 7 attack on Israel in exchange for 150 Palestinians hostages in Israeli jails.

Sullivan said the agreed number of hostages, including Palestinians, will be released over the course of four days.

"This will be done in a carefully choreographed way so that both sides can verify that the other side is upholding their end of the deal," he said.

Sullivan also said that if the fighting resumes during the humanitarian pause, "the Israeli government will continue to try to focus on taking out the leadership of Hamas."

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Mossad Director Travels to Doha to Finalize Agreement with Hamas – Reports

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) – The director of Israel's Mossad will visit Doha on Wednesday to meet with Qatar's prime minister and other officials to finalize the details of a temporary ceasefire and hostage exchange with Hamas, Axios reported, citing two unnamed sources.

Mossad Director David Barnea has been Israel's lead negotiator, the report said. US and Israeli officials have both warned that talks over the next 24 hours are very sensitive and the agreement could still be derailed.

A Hamas official said Wednesday that the ceasefire would start on Thursday at 10:00 a.m. local time. One Israel official confirmed the time, while another said it would be determined on Wednesday. Another official said the ceasefire would start when the first Israeli child hostage was repatriated.

Under the proposed agreement, Hamas will free 50 Israeli women and child hostages in exchange for 150 Palestinian women and children jailed in Israel. The exchange would take place in groups over a four-day ceasefire in Gaza.

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India High Commission to Canada Says Resumes Issuance of E-Visas to Eligible Canadians

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) - The Indian High Commission in Ottawa said on Wednesday that it has resumed the issuance of e-visas for Canadian tourist or business-related trips to India.

In late October, the Indian High Commission announced that it would resume its visa services after suspending them in September 21 amid a diplomatic scandal between the countries regarding the killing of a Sikh separatist leader in Canada.

Following a security review, the diplomatic mission said that services for entry, business, medical and conference visas would be reinstated.

"Indian eVisa facility has been restored w.e.f. 22 November 2023, for all eligible Canadian citizens holding Regular/Ordinary Canadian passports," the Indian High Commission said in a statement shared via X (formerly Twitter). "Holder of any other category of Canadian passport will need to apply for regular paper visa, in accordance with the existing modalities."

In September, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Ottawa was examining "credible allegations" linking Indian officials to the killing of Sikh separatist leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar. The activist, who was shot by two masked men in the Canadian province of British Columbia on June 18, advocated for the creation of an independent Sikh state in India called Khalistan.

Following the incident, Canada expelled a high-ranking Indian diplomat allegedly linked with Indian foreign intelligence. In response, the Indian authorities ordered a senior Canadian diplomat to leave the country. The Indian Foreign Ministry later urged its citizens planning to visit or currently in Canada to exercise extra caution in view of the growing anti-India activities.

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Nearly 70% of Canadians Support Expanding Carbon Tax Relief to All Home Heating - Poll

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) – Nearly 70% Canadians would support a decision to expand a carbon tax exemption for home heating oil to all forms of home heating fuel, a Leger poll revealed on Wednesday.

In contrast, 36% of respondents said they are against such decision.

The poll also showed that 56% Canadians do not properly understand how the carbon tax works, whereas 44% said they have a good understanding of the matter, with a slightly higher proportion among homeowners.

In 2019, the government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau introduced a carbon tax. Based on two components, it firstly aims to charge fossil fuel distributors for fuel consumed across Canada, and secondly, to tax large industrial companies as major carbon emitters.

However, the tax also affects ordinary Canadians who see gas prices at the pump increase, something they can also observe in their households depending on the fuel used to power home-heating.

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Both fuel distributors and industrial emitters currently pay C$65 ($47) per tonne of carbon, a price that is set to increase by C$15 every year to ultimately reach C$170 by 2030.

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US Federal Jury Convicts Woman for Iowa 2020 Elections Voter Fraud - Justice Department

WASHINGTON, November 22 (Sputnik) – A US federal jury in Sioux City, Iowa convicted Kim Phuong Taylor, 49, on Wednesday for perpetuating a voter fraud scheme during the Iowa 2020 primary and general elections, according to a Department of Justice release.

"The jury convicted Taylor of 26 counts of providing false information in registering and voting, three counts of fraudulent registration, and 23 counts of fraudulent voting," the release stated.

Phuong Taylor, a resident of Sioux City, fraudulently generated votes for her husband in the primary election for Iowa's 4th US Congressional District in June 2020. After he lost in the primary, he ran for Woodbury County Supervisor in the 2020 general election. She engaged in ballot fraud on his behalf again, causing absentee ballots to be fraudulently requested and cast, according to the release.

She submitted or caused others to submit dozens of voter registrations, absentee ballot request forms, and absentee ballots containing false information. She completed and signed voter forms without voters' permission and told others that they could sign on behalf of relatives who were not present.

Phuong Taylor faces a maximum penalty of five years in prison for each count. A sentencing date will be set after the preparation of a presentence report.

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