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US Warns Ships to 'Exercise Caution' in Red Sea, Gulf of Aden After Ship Attacks

In response to several attacks and seizures of commercial vessels in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean in recent weeks, the US government has issued a warning to navigators to "exercise caution" when transiting the waterways.

"Exercise caution when transiting these areas and remain cognizant of evolving threats in this region," the US Department of Transportation said on Monday in an alert about the seizure of several ships in recent days.

However, UK security company Ambrey told US media that it was Israeli-owned or Israeli-flagged ships that faced the most risk in the region, although noting that sometimes vessels have been attacked due to mistaken identity, too.

The southern Red Sea and Gulf of Aden have long been dangerous areas to traverse, especially due to the war in Yemen between the Yemeni government and its Sunni allies and the insurgent Shiite Ansarallah movement, better known as the Houthis, that has raged since 2015. However, Somali pirates, driven by desperation from decades of civil war, have threatened nearby commercial vessels for nearly two decades.

Recently, however, things have taken a new turn with the war between Israel and Palestinian militant groups that re-erupted on October 7. Seemingly triumphant in the Yemeni civil war, Ansarallah has declared itself allied with the Palestinian resistance groups and launched a series of drone and ballistic missile attacks against the southern Israeli city of Eilat, as well as US warships in the region.

On November 19, Ansarallah fighters boarded and seized an automobile carrier, the Galaxy Leader, owned by Israeli billionaire Abraham Ungar, which was taken to the Red Sea port of Hodeidah. After, Ansarallah posted a graphic of the Galaxy Leader alongside the Rwabee, an Emirati-flagged ship the group seized in early 2022 on claims it was carrying military supplies for the Saudi-led anti-Houthi alliance. The graphic warned: "we will seek out more."

A few days after the Galaxy Leader was seized, the Liberia-flagged chemicals tanker Central Park was boarded and temporarily seized in the Gulf of Aden. The ship is owned by Zodiac Maritime, which is chaired by Israeli billionaire Eyal Ofer. However, after the US Navy boarded the vessel on Monday and returned control to the owners, it was revealed the hijackers were Somalis, not Yemenis, and that Ansarallah was not involved.

Pentagon Press Secretary Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder told reporters it was "clearly a piracy-related incident," adding: "we know that they're not Houthi."

Nonetheless, the Yemeni group fired a pair of ballistic missiles at the USS Mason, the American destroyer that responded to the distress call, a few hours after the incident with the Central Park had ended. The missiles fell into the sea roughly 10 nautical miles from the warship.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Another vessel, the Maltese-flagged container ship CMA CGM Symi, was allegedly targeted by an Iranian-made drone carrying a small bomb, while in the Indian Ocean. Anonymous US officials told US media they believed the attack had been coordinated by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), although they provided nothing to substantiate that claim. CMA CGM is part of the Singapore-based company Eastern Pacific Shipping, another part of Ofer's shipping empire.

After nearly two months of air bombardment and weeks of furious ground combat following an Israeli invasion of the Gaza Strip, a temporary pause in the fighting began on November 24 to allow for the release of hostages on both sides and for humanitarian aid to enter the besieged territory.

According to Gaza's Ministry of Health, nearly 15,000 people have been killed in the territory, although thousands more remain unaccounted for amid the widespread destruction and massive population transfer by the Israeli Defense Forces. Some 1,200 Israeli civilians were killed on October 7 amid a cross-border attack by Gazan militant forces, and according to the IDF, at least 66 Israeli soldiers have been killed in the Gaza invasion, although Hamas and other Palestinian groups have claimed dozens of strikes on Israeli armored vehicles.

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North Korea's Spy Satellite Makes Pyongyang 'Full-Fledged Member of Space Club'

North Korea's new reconnaissance satellite has placed it among an elite group of nations with autonomous space capabilities, but the device will have powerful strategic effects, too, such as increasing the deterrence powers of the country's nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles, an expert said.

Last week, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) announced it had successfully launched a reconnaissance satellite into orbit. Called Malligyong-1, the satellite was launched on a Chollima-1 carrier rocket from the Sohae Satellite Space Launching Station on the country's western coast.

On Tuesday, Pyongyang said the new satellite had already been tested out on its chief adversary, photographing the White House, Pentagon, and aircraft carriers at the Norfolk naval base. The US said it couldn't verifythe North Korean claims.

Moscow-based military expert Alexey Leonkov told Sputnik on Tuesday that the DPRK's accomplishment had placed it on par with a handful of other space-faring nations.

"The DPRK's space program has a long history. They have twice launched telecommunications satellites into space. One of them turned out to be successful, the other not so much. But they corrected their mistakes and created an optical-electronic reconnaissance satellite, which took these pictures. And when they showed how the rocket was launched, it was a completely normal space rocket, a three-stage rocket, very reminiscent of the [Soviet] Zenit rocket," he said.

Leonkov said accusations from the United States that Pyongyang had help from Russia with the satellite launch "are not true."

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

“The fact is that back in 2016, American intelligence reported that Ukraine was actively involved in the DPRK's missile program and, in particular, named such two structures as the Yuzhnoye Design Bureau and Yuzhmash,” he said, referring to two Ukrainian state-owned design bureaus, the former of which produced the Zenit rocket and the latter of which produces rocket parts such as engines.

“For about 10 years, representatives of these two scientific and technical divisions of the company traveled to the DPRK, where they helped them create a missile program. And thanks to them, and, as they say, the perseverance of North Korean engineers, such a missile program appeared.”

“It was in 2016 that tests of new intermediate- and intercontinental-range ballistic missiles began. In the end, it resulted in the appearance of the reconnaissance satellite, which, I think, will not be alone.”

“Both the US and Japan will likely be annoyed by this because the images from this satellite can and will be used for military purposes,” he added. “That is, they will be used to determine coordinates and objects. If the satellite operates in a coordinate system, then further photographic images will be quite enough to provide target designation for an intercontinental ballistic missile.”

“Most of all, of course, this has strained the Japanese, because all the anti-missile air defense that they are building with the help of the Americans will not give the results they expect: the American missile defense system may not be able to resist Korean intercontinental missiles. But what bothers the Japanese is that the Koreans can now update their digital maps and use them for target designation.”

Leonkov further said the emergence of a North Korean space program would make the small socialist state “a member of the club of space powers,” something even South Korea has not achieved, thanks to a domineering hand by Washington that limited Seoul to launching its satellites on American rockets.

“In other words, calling South Korea a full-fledged member of the space club can be conditional. South Korea most likely belongs to the states that do not have their own spaceports and use the services of spaceports of other states. And after the launch of such a satellite, North Korea entered not just the club of space powers, but the club of those powers that have military reconnaissance satellites,” he said.

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Report: Special CIA Office Recovered Nine UFOs Since 2003, Two Fully Intact

The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has been recovering extraterrestrial spacecraft for decades using a special insertion team typically used to recover adversaries’ technology from wrecked vehicles, according to reports in British media.

The UK Daily Mail exclusively reported on Tuesday that the CIA has recovered at least nine UFOs from crash sites, including two that are completely intact, and has advanced technology

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

able to detect them even when “cloaked,” a science fiction term for when vessels become undetectable, especially to the human eye.

The report is based on “three sources briefed on those alleged top secret operations,” which the tabloid said “spoke on condition of anonymity to avoid reprisals” and had “been briefed by individuals involved in those alleged UFO retrieval missions.”

According to their information, the CIA’s Office of Global Access (OGA), part of the agency’s Science and Technology Directorate, has recovered nine UFOs since 2003, including two complete specimens.

“There's at least nine vehicles. There were different circumstances for different ones,” said one individual who claimed to have been briefed on the program by another person who allegedly had knowledge of it. “It has to do with the physical condition they're in. If it crashes, there's a lot of damage done. Others, two of them, are completely intact.”

The source added that the CIA has a “system in place that can discern UFOs while they're still cloaked,” sending out a team to collect the wreckage if or when they crash down to Earth.

References to the OGA’s existence can be found in some sources, including the CV of Douglas Wolfe, a former CIA Chief Information Officer (CIO) from 2013 to 2016, which says he helped set up the office and served as its deputy director.

According to the outlet’s sources, the OGA is typically used by the CIA to get the US military access to secret areas where it would normally be “denied,” such as behind enemy lines, and to recover extremely sensitive items such as crashed aircraft or satellites or lost nuclear weapons.

The last few months have seen similar accusations leveled at the US government by several high-profile figures, including David Grusch, a veteran with the US Air Force who led the Pentagon’s Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena Task Force, who told Congress in July the US was concealing its possession of extraterrestrial technology and bodies.

Lawmakers have taken a keener interest, too, with Congress requiring the Pentagon to submit annual reports on its efforts to explain the origins of Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (UAPs), the new term intended to replace Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs).

The US Senate has also passed a bill championed by Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) that would create a review board with wide-reaching powers for the purpose of uncovering and disclosing non-human vehicles or bodies held by the US government.

“The American public has a right to learn about technologies of unknown origins, non-human intelligence, and unexplainable phenomena,” Schumer said in July.

The US space agency NASA has also launched a parallel effort to investigate UAPs, with a panel concluding in September that there was no evidence pointing to UAPs being extraterrestrial visitors, although it acknowledged some incidents defy explanation.

For lawmakers the concern isn’t alien, either, it’s decidedly terrestrial: they’re concerned UAPs could be advanced technology, such as drones or hypersonic weapons, being tested by adversary nations like Russia and China, which possess technology the US does not.

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‘SpaceX Auroras’: Scientists Say Musk’s Rockets Punching ‘Atmospheric Holes’

Scientists tracking the flights of SpaceX’s many rocket launches have found that they produce a unique type of aurora-like light, which is the telltale sign of a hole being torn in the ionosphere, the uppermost layer of Earth’s atmosphere.

The phenomenon was first noted earlier this year when SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket launches were connected with a “bleeding” red sky over Arizona and California. The red light was a type of aurora produced by rocket engines and deorbiting booster rockets interacting with the ionosphere.

That a burning rocket engine could punch a hole in the ionosphere is not new information for scientists, who have observed the phenomenon for decades. However, the concern comes from its increasing frequency.

Stephen Hummel, an astronomer and outreach program coordinator at McDonald Observatory in Texas, told US media the facility was seeing "2 to 5 of them each month.” The red orbs are “very bright” and "easily visible with the naked eye," he said.

Indeed, such incidents were widely reported over the summer, including one very bright post-launch aurora over the American Southwest.

The ionosphere is the highest layer of the Earth’s atmosphere, extending from 125 to 185 miles above the Earth’s surface and formed by the sun’s radiation, which strips atmospheric molecules of their electrons.

When rocket engines burn, their exhaust produces carbon dioxide and water vapor, which causes ionized oxygen atoms to recombine into oxygen molecules. Doing so “excites” them with lots of energy, causing them to emit light. It’s the same process that causes auroras, except that auroras are caused by solar radiation heating up the gases rather than recombining them.

The holes last about 20 minutes before the sun’s powerful radiation once again splits the molecules and strips away their electrons.

SpaceX, a commercial space flight company owned by Elon Musk, gets steady work from US government contracts that keep the rockets flying on a regular basis, as does the company’s Starlink satellite internet system, which is based on thousands of satellites in low Earth orbit. In addition, the company’s rocket boosters are reusable, meaning they don’t just fall back to Earth, they carefully maneuver back to the launch pad after putting their payload into space. That involves many small rocket bursts to correct their flight, which produces the mini-auroras as they descend.

Hummel said the holes in the ionosphere don’t pose any danger to life on Earth, but said "their impact on astronomical science is still being evaluated.” The ionosphere is also used in some communication and navigation operations, such as shortwave radio, so there’s a potential for such “holes” to impact them as well.

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Canine Epidemic? Mysterious Dog Illness Spreads to More Than a Dozen US States

The unknown canine respiratory illness was first reported over the summer, but has since reached 14 states across the US, reports have determined.

Dogs across the US have been falling ill to an unknown respiratory illness with similar symptoms to kennel cough and pneumonia, officials have warned.

Since mid-August, more than 200 cases of the illness have been reported in the state of Oregon alone. But now, cases of the respiratory infection have reached the states of Colorado, California, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington, according to reports.

However, the unreported cases of sick pups could be much higher.

The symptoms of the illness include a cough, fever, difficulty breathing, dehydration, nasal and/or eye discharge, a loss of appetite, and lethargy. The “chronic mild-moderate tracheobronchitis” is not responsive to antibiotics, says the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA). The illness appears to last for 6 to 8 weeks, and in some cases can be lethal when and if the illness leads to pneumonia.

Similar to how humans experience the effects of COVID-19, the illness seems to spread in social gatherings amongst dogs, including: doggy day cares, boarding, dog parks, pet stores, and the grooming salons.

Researchers from the University of New Hampshire’s Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory and the Hubbard Center Genome Studies told an American news outlet they believe they have discovered the pathogen responsible for making man's best friend ill.

After studying 70 dogs who were sick with the illness, they found a “funky bacterium” that is “smaller than a normal bacterium in its size and in the size of its genome.”

“It’s smaller than a normal bacterium in its size and in the size of its genome. Long story short, it’s a weird bacterium that can be tough to find and sequence,” said Dr. David Needle, the pathology section chief at the College of Life Sciences and Agriculture at the University of New Hampshire.

The germ “is new as a potential cause of disease, but it is likely to be - or to have evolved from - a component of the dog microbiome,” he added.

“After initial sequencing showed there were no known viral, bacterial or fungal pathogens, time consuming and dogged work by graduate student Lawrence Gordon showed that 21 of the initial 30 samples from New Hampshire had some genetic material from one atypical bacterial species,” Needle said.

But researchers still aren't sure if this is the same bug causing widespread illnesses, and further research will have to be conducted to find a medicine able to tackle the contamination.

According to Needle, the disease is not always fatal, and the small percentage of dogs who have died thus far had underlying health issues prior to becoming ill.

For now, the AVMA has advised some steps that dog owners can take to prevent their companions from getting ill, including: making sure dogs are fully vaccinated, especially against kennel cough.

Owners should also avoid areas where their dog may socialize with other dogs including: dog parks, pet stores and grooming facilities, if possible. Boarding a pooch should also be avoided unless “absolutely necessary.”

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

In the event that an owner notices their dog is showing any signs or symptoms of the mysterious illness, officials are urging individuals to isolate their pup from other canines, and make an appointment with their dog's vet as soon as possible.

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Flip-Flop: After Mostly Uncritical Support, Biden Allegedly Wants Israeli Restraint

Amidst dismal polling and fierce criticism from the Democratic Party's base, US officials say they're warning Israel against further deepening the humanitarian crisis the country has created in the besieged Gaza Strip.

Senior Biden administration officials have urged Israel to exercise restraint in their expected upcoming military incursion into southern Gaza, according to a report by the New York Times. The reporting, released Tuesday, suggests the White House wants to prevent a deepening of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, which international bodies like the UN have consistently labeled an "unfolding catastrophe." Anonymous Biden officials claimed the US would be "ramping up humanitarian aid during the cease-fire that took effect last week," according to the report.

The officials also "expressed optimism" that humanitarian assistance could continue even after Israel resumes fighting. Israel was "receptive" to American demands to maintain access to water and power in southern Gaza and allow for hospitals and UN shelters to operate, according to the report.

The claims emerged after a temporary ceasefire between Israel and Hamas was extended by two days while the sides exchange captives. Palestinians are pressing for a permanent end to Israel's aggression in the besieged territory, but Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently claimed the country's military operation will "continue full power" in the coming days.

"Our team has prioritized getting… much-needed relief into Gaza to alleviate the suffering of Palestinian civilians there," said White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby recently. Kirby claimed Washington would "take advantage of every hour of every day that there's a pause to try to help the people of Gaza."

But President Joe Biden has been mostly supportive of Israel's military action in recent weeks after a lifelong political career of strong support for the US ally. In the days after Hamas' October 7 operation in Israel, Biden repeated alleged atrocity propaganda that Palestinian fighters had beheaded Israeli babies during the attack.

Sometime later, Biden publicly questioned reports of mass civilian casualties emanating from authorities in Gaza, which have proven to be accurate and verifiable in the past. The move forced him to apologizeafter a recent meeting where Muslim-American leaders slammed the US president's apparent ambivalence over Palestinian suffering in Israel-occupied territories.

Biden's about-face comes as the Democratic Party has shown signs of fracturing in recent weeks over the issue of Israel. The reporting in the Times, which is often viewed as strongly supportive of Western military efforts, demonstrates the president's attempts to assuage his political base while still ultimately supporting Israel's purported effort to "destroy Hamas."

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Netanyahu has adopted genocidal language regarding Palestinians in recent weeks, equating the fellow semitic peoples with the Biblical Amalekites. The Israelites were instructed to wipe out the enemy people according to Jewish legend, killing “men and women, children and infants.”
The language has been adopted by other prominent Israeli politicians as well; recently Minister of the Knesset Michal Woldiger said, "They [the Palestinians] are Amalek and we need to erase them. We just need to wipe them off the face of the earth, because there is not a single gram, not a single speck, of humanity in what they did."
"We saw burned babies, burned elderly, burned women,” Woldiger added. Recent reporting has shown that the charred corpses recovered after the October 7 Hamas attack were the result of indiscriminate Israeli shelling amidst the country’s chaotic response to the operation.
But the reports played a key role in Israeli government attempts to dehumanize Palestinians amidst a military bombardment that has reportedly killed more than 15,000 in Gaza, including 6,000 children and 4,000 women.
Recently, Florida Governor and US presidential candidate Ron DeSantis said the United States should refuse entry of Palestinians into the United States, claiming the ethnic group are “all antisemitic.”
The rhetoric demonstrates the social liberal rhetoric that has undergirded Western imperialism in recent decades, after a US invasion of Iraq staged to “spread democracy” and a 20-year occupation of Afghanistan frequently justified under the banner of improving conditions for women in the country.
In recent days, Biden administration officials have claimed Israel should ensure electricity and water remain available to Palestinians in southern Gaza during their upcoming invasion of the area. Officials have also reportedly warned their Middle Eastern ally against impeding humanitarian efforts at hospitals and UN shelters.
The Biden White House has remained mum on the question of Internet access for Gazans as Israel’s deadly military operation continues. In the immediate days after October 7, social media became an important way for Palestinians on the ground to share video and testimony directly from the besieged territory, with personalities such as racial justice advocate Shaun King amplifying Gazans’ on-the-ground journalism.
Israel soon made attempts to ensure Palestinians in the Gaza Strip lost access to the internet.
In recent days, US tech magnate Elon Musk has rejected calls to provide telecommunications services in Gaza via his Starlink satellite technology.

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CIA Director Increasingly Supplanting 'Neocon' Blinken in Gaza Diplomacy - Analyst

Meanwhile, the advocacy group Center for Constitutional Rights has filed a lawsuit against Joe Biden, accusing the US president of “failure to prevent genocide” of Palestinians.
Labor attorney and human rights activist Dan Kovalik joined Sputnik’s Political Misfits crew Tuesday to discuss the ongoing crisis in the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

As a fragile ceasefire of hostilities continues, Washington has reportedly been working behind the scenes to secure the release of captives and facilitate negotiations in Qatar. Increasingly, one Biden administration figure has been playing a key role in US statecraft.

"The irony of ironies is that [William] Burns, who's the head of the CIA, actually has much more of a diplomatic temperament than [Antony] Blinken does," said Kovalik, claiming that Biden's Secretary of State has taken a backseat in secret negotiations regarding the Palestine-Israel conflict.

"Blinken's a neocon. And in terms of what's happening in Ukraine and in what's happening in Gaza, he's extreme, and has really tended to do things to increase the chance for conflict rather than the opposite."

Secretary of State Blinken has a relationship with Biden going back decades, making him one of the closest members of the White House cabinet to the current president. But host John Kiriakou suspects the career diplomat is "in over his head" on matters relating to Israel.

"Burns is a man of action," Kiriakou claimed, to which Kovalik agreed before adding: "Burns has been a much more calm and considered diplomat."

"He's been a voice of reason," continued Kovalik, noting Burns' past recognition that Ukraine joining NATO "would be a red line for Russia that we don't want to cross."

President Biden elevated the Central Intelligence Agency director to a cabinet-level position earlier this year, representing the increasing importance of the controversial agency.

The CIA's often underhanded practices were once highly controversial in the United States, famously culminating in the Senate Church Committee hearings in 1975. The inquiry uncovered a plethora of abuses committed by the agency, including the MKULTRA human experimentation program, support for the Chilean coup against Salvador Allende, and domestic spying and infiltration of civil rights groups.

Since then the CIA's tactics have increasingly been adopted by other government agencies such as USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy. When former President Donald Trump made ex-CIA director Mike Pompeo his secretary of state, it seemed to imply a complete merger between the secretive government body and America's public-facing foreign policy establishment.

Biden's reliance on Burns may provide him with an expanded toolset in the United States' increasingly unpopular support for Israel's military incursion, but it could also risk damaging Biden's long-term reputation, which Kovalik noted is already at risk after the announcement of support for sending unlimited supplies of US weapons to Israel.

"At a time that israel is being credibly accused of genocide and ethnic cleansing and war crimes, Biden is going out of his way to make sure that none of the above will be an impediment to them getting weapons," said Kovalik. "He's already going to be remembered for dead children in Gaza."

In other news relating to Israel, hosts John Kiriakou and Michelle Witte discussed revelations regarding Sen. John Fetterman (D-PA), who reportedly confessed to knowing little about the Palestine-Israel conflict as he pledged to repeat pro-Israel talking points in exchange for the lobby's support in his primary campaign last year.

The then-Pennsylvania Attorney General confessed that he's "not really a progressive in that sense" of criticizing Israel's human rights abuses against Palestinians.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Meanwhile, Cindy McCain, the wife of former US Senator John McCain, has weighed in on Gaza's humanitarian crisis from her position as executive director of the World Food Program. McCain recently said the besieged territory is "on the brink of famine," which will result in the spread of disease and deepen the suffering of Palestinians.

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GOP Presidential Candidate Scoops Up Coveted Koch Endorsement, Cash

Nikki Haley previously held a position on the board of the military contractor Boeing, demonstrating her willingness to fight for the priorities of corporate America.
In the United States, government officials take power by winning the votes of Americans. But some votes are more important than others.
Former Trump Secretary of State Nikki Haley won a coveted vote of confidence on Tuesday when it was announced that the powerful group Americans for Prosperity Action would back her in the Republican Party's presidential primary contest.
"In sharp contrast to recent elections that were dominated by the negative baggage of Donald Trump and in which good candidates lost races that should have been won, Nikki Haley, at the top of the ticket, would boost candidates up and down the ballot," read a memo from the political advocacy group.
The organization made clear they see Haley as their best bet in challenging former President Donald Trump's populist reelection campaign, claiming Haley is capable of "winning the key independent and moderate voters that Trump has no chance to win."
The announcement comes amidst polling consistently showing Haley rising in the polls, while the campaign of Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, once considered a favorite to win the nomination, has stalled.
Trump still maintains a massive lead over his opponents for the Republican nomination. But the controversial businessman currently faces 91 felony counts in four separate criminal cases, threatening to derail his campaign next year.
Americans for Prosperity's endorsement shows the group is bullish on her ability to defeat President Joe Biden in 2024's election. It may also suggest Haley's appeal among America's economic elite – the lobbying group is known for championing pro-business, libertarian policy.
The endorsement should allow Haley to benefit from Americans for Prosperity's well-funded political operation, which funds advertising and campaign efforts.
A policy memo released by the group is full of code words for conservative economic policy, praising Haley's commitment to "fiscal responsibility" and "tax reform." The group also praises Haley's advocacy for "immediate action" to reform the "current entitlement system" – privatizing Social Security has long been a goal of the US business class.
Americans for Prosperity is a conservative advocacy group founded in 2004 by the businessmen Charles and David Koch. The organization has played a key role in funding political campaigns and promoting free market economic policy, especially since a 2010 US Supreme Court decision struck down campaign finance regulations in the country.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

A 2014 study by researchers at Princeton University found the United States would be more accurately described as an “oligarchy” than a “democracy,” concluding average citizens “have little or no independent influence” on government policy. Nevertheless, the country frequently invokes the prerogative of “spreading democracy” to justify military intervention around the world.

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The Senility Wars - Cartoon

The “astonishingly excellent” health of America’s former president is being called into question. Ronny Jackson (R-TX), Donald Trump’s White House physician during his time in the Oval Office, sounded off on the former president’s health this week after headlines suggesting the controversial candidate may be in cognitive decline.
“He's incredibly sharp,” said Jackson in an interview on US television Monday. “He's got a better memory than I have, than you have. We all know this,” he said to television host Sean Hannity. According to one media outlet, the former President confused Biden with ex-President Barack Obama at least seven times in public appearances in previous weeks. A number of other verbal gaffes have also been documented, including incorrectly stating that Hungary shares a border with Russia and confusing DPRK President Kim Jong Un with Chinese President Xi Jinping. Jackson has attracted criticism from some who suggest his statements should be regarded with suspicion given his political allegiances as a Republican Party congressman. Still, Jackson’s endorsement may be judged to be more valid than the one offered in a 2015 letter by Trump personal physician Harold Bornstein.
Bornstein later admitted the letter – which claimed Trump’s blood pressure was “astonishingly excellent” and his strength is “extraordinary” – had been dictated to him by Trump himself over the phone.

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US Suicides Reached Record High in 2022 – CDC

WASHINGTON, November 29 (Sputnik) – The number of suicides in the United States reached a record high in 2022, the CDC National Center for Health Statistics said in a November report.
"The provisional 2022 suicide number (49,449) was 3% higher than the 2021 final number (48,183), and the highest number ever recorded in the United States," the report stated.
It said that the final figure for 2022 was likely to be higher, given the death certificates with pending causes of death.
The data was based on death certificate data received by the center as of August 6. As suicides generally require an investigation, provisional suicide rates based on death data

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

usually have a six-month lag.

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CIA Warns Staff Against Pro-Palestine Social Media Posts - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 29 (Sputnik) – The CIA has warned its staff against posting political views on social media following a senior official's pro-Palestine post, NBC News reported on Wednesday.

The internal e-mail was "simply a reminder of existing policy," an official told NBC.

The CIA's associate deputy director for analysis had posted on social media an image of a man waving a Palestinian flag. She has not been disciplined for the post, NBC reported.

The news came amid sharp divides within the US federal government over the Biden administration's support of Israel's war on Gaza. Hundreds of US federal government employees have endorsed an open letter calling for a ceasefire, hundreds of USAID employees signed a similar letter, and several dozen State Department staffers have issued multiple internal dissent cables.

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Over 70% of Canadians Want Trudeau to Step Down – Poll

WASHINGTON, November 29 (Sputnik) – Seventy-two percent of Canadians would like to see Justin Trudeau step down as prime minister and leader of the Liberal Party, an Ipsos poll showed on Wednesday.

The figure is a 12 percentage point increase from September.

Even among Liberal Party voters, a third want him to step down, which is a 5 percentage point increase from September.

Unlike Trudeau, the leaders of the Conservative Party, the New Democratic Party and the Bloc Quebecois all retain the support of the majority of Canadians, respectively with 56%, 51%, and 67% wanting them to remain at the helm.

The poll also explored how many Canadians would consider voting for the Liberal Party if other prominent party members were to become its leader. A quarter of Canadians would vote for the Liberals if Minister of Finance Chrystia Freeland was in charge. Twenty-one percent would support the ruling party if Minister of Foreign Affairs Melanie Joly became the head of the Liberals.

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

Biden to Visit World's Largest Wind Tower Manufacturer in Colorado – White House

WASHINGTON, November 29 (Sputnik) – US President Biden will visit on Wednesday the world's largest wind tower manufacturer in Colorado in order to promote his economic agenda and push back against criticism by the state's Republican congresswoman Lauren Boebert.

"Today, President Biden will visit CS Wind in Pueblo, Colorado — the largest wind tower manufacturer in the world — to highlight how Bidenomics is creating jobs and opportunities in Colorado's third congressional district," the release stated.

It also directly criticized "self-described MAGA Republicans like Representative Lauren Boebert [who] continue to undermine their constituents by trying to block the President's agenda."

CS Wind's expansion of its operations was a "direct result of the Inflation Reduction Act," which Boebert had slammed, it added. It attributed $7 billion in new manufacturing and clean energy investments by companies in Colorado, including hundreds of millions in Boebert's district, to Biden's leadership.

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UN General Assembly Renews Demand for Israel to Withdraw From Syria's Golan Heights

UNITED NATIONS, November 28 (Sputnik) - The UN General Assembly renewed its resolution demanding that Israel withdraw from Syria's Golan Heights.

The resolution was renewed on Tuesday with 91 votes in favor, eight against and 62 abstentions.

The resolution says that United Nations member states are "deeply concerned that Israel has not withdrawn from the Syrian Golan, which has been under occupation since 1967, contrary to the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions."

The document also emphasizes "the illegality of the Israeli settlement construction and other activities in the occupied Syrian Golan since 1967."

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US House Passes Legislation to Affirm Israel's Right to Exist, Urge Hamas to Free Hostages

WASHINGTON, November 29 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives passed two resolutions to reaffirm Israel's right to exist and urge Hamas to release hostages taken during its October 7 surprise attack.

The first resolution, which reaffirms support for Israel's existence as an independent country, passed the House of Representatives on Tuesday in a vote of 412-1, with one member voting

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

present. The resolution also declares denial of Israel's right to exist as a form of anti-Semitism.
House lawmakers also passed a resolution calling on Hamas to immediately release hostages in a vote of 414-0. The resolution condemns Hamas for its attack and demands the return of all hostages to safety.
Earlier this month, the House of Representatives passed a $14.3 billion security aid bill for Israel, separating the assistance from a larger request from the Biden administration. However, the proposal was rejected by Senate leadership in favor of attempting to pass the administration's whole aid request, which includes assistance for Ukraine as well.

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Pro-Palestine Protesters Escorted From US Capitol Christmas Tree Lighting Event - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 29 (Sputnik) - Several pro-Palestine protesters attempted to interrupt the Christmas tree lighting ceremony at the US Capitol on Tuesday night, media reported.
According to a Fox News correspondent, US Capitol Police escorted a few demonstrators at the ceremony who held signs and a Palestinian flag.
The ceremony was never paused and House Speaker Mike Johnson, who gave remarks during the ceremony, continued his remarks despite the demonstration, the correspondent reported.
Demonstrations have taken place throughout the United States for several weeks calling for a ceasefire in the Gaza conflict.
On Friday morning, Israel and Hamas declared a temporary truce to exchange some of the prisoners and hostages, as well as allow the delivery of humanitarian aid into Gaza. The humanitarian truce was extended for another two days on Monday. The conflict has so far resulted in the deaths of an estimated 1,200 people in Israel and over 14,800 in Gaza.
On October 7, Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip and breached the border, killing and abducting people. Israel launched retaliatory strikes and ordered a complete blockade of Gaza, cutting off supplies of water, food, and fuel. On October 27, Israel launched a large-scale ground incursion into the Gaza Strip.

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US House Rules Panel Advances Bill Blocking Funds to House Migrants on Federal Lands

WASHINGTON, November 29 (Sputnik) - The US House Rules Committee advanced legislation to prevent the Biden administration from using federal funds to house illegal migrants on federal government lands.
The panel advanced the legislation, dubbed the Protecting our Communities from Failure to Secure the Border Act, in a vote of 9-4 on Tuesday.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

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"Our southern border is consumed by chaos. This ongoing national security and humanitarian crisis of epic proportions has been inflicted upon the nation by the disastrous policies of President Biden," Rules Committee Chairman Tom Cole said in a statement on the bill.

On Monday, the White House said that US President Joe Biden opposes the bill. The legislation significantly restricts the ability of federal land-management agencies to make decisions regarding appropriate use of their resources, including in emergencies, the White House said.

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White House National Christmas Tree Knocked Over by Wind, 48 Hours Before Being Lit - NPS

WASHINGTON, November 29 (Sputnik) - The National Christmas tree has been toppled by the wind near the White House, the National Park Service (NPS) said.

"As the saying goes, 'the show must go on' and the NPS and our event partners are looking at all possibilities to ensure a successful event this year," an agency spokesperson said as quoted by ABC.

According to the report, the national park service is currently evaluating the damage, however, the agency expressed hope that the lighting ceremony of the tree scheduled for Thursday will go on as scheduled.

A crane could be seen near the White House lifting the fallen tree.

The 40-foot Norway spruce from West Virginia was reported to have fallen on Tuesday as winds were gusting over 30 miles per hour in Washington, DC.

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White House Can't Confirm McConnell, Biden Spoke of Conditions for New Israel, Ukraine Aid

WASHINGTON, November 29 (Sputnik) - White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters she cannot confirm Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell spoke with President Joe Biden about conditions for approving new legislation to provide Israel and Ukraine additional security aid.

Earlier in the day, McConnell said that he told Biden last week that in order to get enough Republican support in the Senate to approve additional funding for Ukraine or Israel, there would have to be a credible effort to address the crisis on the US southern border.

"I cannot confirm this particular conversation at this time," Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday.

Jean-Pierre highlighted that White House officials continue to have conversations with Republican and Democratic senators on this matter.

The US House of Representatives passed an Israel aid bill earlier this month, separating the assistance from a broader request from the Biden administration, which also included aid for Ukraine. However, Biden and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer rejected the proposal,

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instead favoring the joint aid request.

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US Air Force Orders 15 More KC-46A Air Tankers From Boeing - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, November 29 (Sputnik) - Boeing Defense, Space and Security has been awarded a more than $2.3 billion US Air Force modification contract for 15 more KC-46A air tankers, the Defense Department announced.

"Boeing Defense, Space & Security ... has been awarded a $2,325,052,415 modification [contract] ... for 15 KC-46A Air Force Production Lot 10 aircraft," the Defense Department said in a press release on Tuesday.

Work on the contract will be performed in Seattle, Washington over the next three and a half years, and is expected to be completed by July 31, 2027, the release said.

The Air Force Life Cycle Management Center at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio will oversee the project as its contracting activity, the release added.

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US Navy Orders 118 Long-Range Missiles for $2.3Bln From Alliant Technology - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, November 29 (Sputnik) - The US Navy has ordered 118 more extended-range advanced anti-radiation guided missiles from Alliant Techsystems for more than $2.3 billion, the Defense Department announced.

"Alliant Techsystems Operations, a wholly owned subsidiary of Northrop Grumman Defense Systems [of] Northridge, California, is awarded a $235,695,564 contract ... for the production and delivery of 118 low rate initial production Lot Three AGM-88G Advanced Anti-Radiation Guided Missiles - Extended Range (AARGM-ER)," the Defense Department said in a press release on Tuesday.

The order will include 84 AGM-88G AARGM-ER all up rounds for the Navy; 34 AGM-88G AARGM-ER all up rounds for the Air Force; six AGM-88G AARGM-ER captive air training missiles and eight telemetry/flight termination system kits, the release said.

Most of the work on the contract will be performed in Northridge, California (61%) and Rocket Center, West Virginia (32%) over the next three years and is expected to be completed in February 2027, the release added.

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Musk in Response to Hamas Invite Says Visit to Gaza 'A Bit Dangerous Right Now'

WASHINGTON, November 29 (Sputnik) - Tesla Motors CEO Elon Musk in response to an invitation by a Hamas representative said visiting Gaza right now would be too dangerous.

"Seems a bit dangerous there right now, but I do believe that a long-term prosperous Gaza is good for all sides," Musk said in a post on X on Tuesday.

The remarks were in response to a post made by Bloomberg, stating that a Hamas representative had invited Elon Musk to visit Gaza and witness the extent of destruction caused by Israeli bombardment.

Earlier in November, the US entrepreneur came under fire for endorsing a social media post that claimed Jewish communities were pushing hatred against White people, saying it was "the actual truth." Film companies Warner Bros., Sony Pictures, Paramount, and Lionsgate suspended advertising on Musk's social network X due to his "anti-Semitic" comments. A similar decision was made by Walt Disney, as well as technology giants IBM and Apple.

Last week, Musk said that the network would donate all its proceeds from the content related to the conflict in the Gaza Strip to Israeli hospitals and an international humanitarian organization providing medical assistance to Palestinians.

On October 7, Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip and breached the border, killing and abducting people. Israel launched retaliatory strikes and ordered a complete blockade of Gaza, cutting off supplies of water, food, and fuel. On October 27, Israel launched a large-scale ground incursion into the Gaza Strip.

On Friday morning, the sides declared a four-day truce to exchange some of the prisoners and hostages, as well as allow the delivery of humanitarian aid into Gaza. The conflict has so far resulted in the deaths of an estimated 1,200 people in Israel and over 14,800 in Gaza.

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Russia Concerned by Israeli Statements About Plans to 'Clean Out' Gaza After Pause - Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, November 29 (Sputnik) - Russia is worried over the Israeli government's statements about their plans to clean out the Gaza Strip after the humanitarian pauses, the Russian Deputy Permanent Representative Dmitry Chumakov told the UN General Assembly members during a meeting on Palestine.

"We are very concerned by some statements of representatives of the Israeli leadership regarding plans to continue to clean out the Gaza Strip intensively after the humanitarian pauses finish," Chumakov said Tuesday.

The resumption of hostilities would worsen the humanitarian disaster, he added.

Last week, Qatar mediated a deal between Israel and Hamas on a four-day truce and an exchange of some of the prisoners and hostages, as well as the delivery of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. On Monday, Qatar announced that an agreement had been reached between Israel and Hamas on a two-day extension of the truce.

On October 7, Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the

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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

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UN General Assembly Renews Demand for Israel to Withdraw From Syria's Golan Heights

UNITED NATIONS, November 28 (Sputnik) - The UN General Assembly renewed its resolution demanding that Israel withdraw from Syria's Golan Heights.

The resolution was renewed on Tuesday with 91 votes in favor, eight against and 62 abstentions.

The resolution says that United Nations member states are "deeply concerned that Israel has not withdrawn from the Syrian Golan, which has been under occupation since 1967, contrary to the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions."

The document also emphasizes "the illegality of the Israeli settlement construction and other activities in the occupied Syrian Golan since 1967."

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US Hopeful More Americans Will Be Released After Hamas Releases Another 12 Hostages -Kirby

WASHINGTON, November 29 (Sputnik) - Another 12 hostages were released by Hamas on Tuesday and the United States remains hopeful that more Americans will be released soon, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said.

"Another 12 individuals got out today - ten Israelis, two from Thailand. No Americans, unfortunately, got out today, but we're hopeful. Tomorrow's another day and we certainly hope that we can see some more Americans come out," Kirby said during a press briefing on Tuesday evening.

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No Signs of 'Full Ceasefire' in Gaza Strip - Russian Deputy Envoy to UN

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

UNITED NATIONS, November 29 (Sputnik) - There are no prospects for a full ceasefire in the Gaza Strip despite the current truce between Israel and Hamas, Russian deputy envoy to the United Nations Dmitry Chumakov said.

"There are currently no signs, unfortunately, of a full ceasefire in the recent cycle of violence," Chumakov said during a UN General Assembly meeting on Palestine.

The Russian diplomat also said that there is no justification for killing civilians or taking people hostage.

Last week, Qatar mediated a deal between Israel and Hamas for a four-day truce that would include exchange of hostages for imprisoned Palestinians as well as the delivery of limited amount of humanitarian aid to Gaza. Israel has imposed a full blockade of Gaza, cutting off water, food, medicines, electricity and fuel to the Palestinian enclave, causing a massive humanitarian crisis.

On Monday, Qatar announced that an agreement had been reached between Israel and Hamas on a two-day extension of the ceasefire.

The most recent round of the Israeli-Palestinian war has resulted since October 7 in the deaths of an estimated 1,200 Israelis and more than 16,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and in 36,000 wounded Palestinians. The World Health Organization has warned that the threat of diseases can result in an even greater death toll amid Israel's blockage.

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Russia Agrees With UN to Carry Out 'Comprehensive Assessment' of Israeli Occupation -Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, November 29 (Sputnik) - As proposed by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) department, a comprehensive assessment of the Israeli occupation needs to be worked out, the Russian Deputy Permanent Representative Dmitry Chumakov said on Tuesday.

"We note UNCTAD's initiative to develop a framework for a systematic comprehensive assessment of the occupation. This is an important challenge that needs to be carried out," Chumakov told the UN General Assembly members during a meeting on Palestine.

This conflict has become so unprecedented also due to the US position of closing its eyes regarding the Israeli settlements, he added.

Last week, Qatar mediated a deal between Israel and Hamas on a four-day truce and an exchange of some of the prisoners and hostages, as well as the delivery of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. On Monday, Qatar announced that an agreement had been reached between Israel and Hamas on a two-day extension of the truce.

On October 7, Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip and breached the border, killing and abducting people. Israel launched retaliatory strikes and ordered a complete blockade of Gaza, cutting off supplies of water, food, and fuel. On October 27, Israel launched a large-scale ground incursion into the Gaza Strip. The conflict has so far resulted in the deaths of an estimated 1,200 people in Israel and over 16,000 in the Gaza Strip.

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Yellen Discusses Ukraine, Cap on Russian Oil With EU Envoy to US - Treasury

WASHINGTON, November 29 (Sputnik) - US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has met with European Union (EU) Ambassador to the United States Stavros Lambrinidis and discussed support for Ukraine and the oil cap on Russian oil, the Treasury Department said.

"Secretary Yellen expressed particular gratitude for the European Union's cooperation on sanctions, the G7 oil price cap and support for Ukraine," the Treasury Department said in a statement on Tuesday.

Yellen thanked Lambrinidis, who will transition to a new post as European Union envoy to the United Nations, for his service in strengthening the Transatlantic relationship, the statement added.

In December 2022, the Group of Seven (G7) countries, Australia and the European Union imposed a price cap of $60 per barrel on Russian crude oil transported by sea. Russia responded by prohibiting selling its oil to countries supporting the price cap.

In September, Yellen said that the cap was not working as well as expected. Yellen attributed the failure to Russia allegedly expanding its "shadow fleet" to ensure oil exports.

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G7 Calls on Houthis to Immediately Cease Attacks on Civilians - Joint Statement

WASHINGTON, November 29 (Sputnik) - The Group of Seven (G7) calls on the Houthis to immediately cease attacks on civilians and stop threatening international shipping lanes, according to a joint statement published by the Foreign Ministry of Japan.

"We especially call on the Houthis to immediately cease attacks on civilians and threats to international shipping lanes and commercial vessels and release the M/V Galaxy Leader and its crew, illegally seized from international waters on November 19," the statement said on Tuesday.

The Houthis said earlier in November that they had seized a Bahamian-flagged ship, Galaxy Leader, over its alleged links to an Israeli businessman. The rebels said they would treat its 25-man crew as guests as long as they were not Israelis and warned that they would continue targeting Israel-linked ships until Israel stopped attacking the Gaza Strip.

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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

US Lawmaker Deluzio Calls for 'Full Investigation' Into Aliquippa Water System Cyberattack

WASHINGTON, November 29 (Sputnik) - US Congressman Chris Deluzio announced that he is calling for a "full investigation" into the cyberattack on the water system of Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, and for prosecuting the hackers responsible for the attack .

"I'm calling for a full investigation and prosecution of the attackers," Deluzio said on Tuesday.

Deluzio also said that the cyberattack is a "terrible reminder" that the United States' adversaries continue to target the country's critical infrastructure.

A hacking group infiltrated the Aliquippa water system last week, prompting an immediate shutdown and switch to manual operations, US media reported.

However, neither the water service nor the quality of the water were affected, the report said.

An ongoing investigation involves the Pennsylvania state as well as the US federal authorities, the report added.

The media reports have also alleged that the hacking group is "pro-Iranian."

Chris Deluzio, a member of the Democrat party, represents Pennsylvania's 17th congressional district.

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G7 Supports Further Extension of Israel-Hamas Pause, Hostage Release – Statement

WASHINGTON, November 29 (Sputnik) – The Group of Seven (G7) supports further extension of the Israel-Hamas humanitarian pause as well as future pauses to increase the flow of aid and facilitate the release of hostages, according to a joint statement published by the Foreign Ministry of Japan.

"We support the further extension of this pause and future pauses as needed to enable assistance to be scaled up, and to facilitate the release of all hostages," the statement said on Tuesday.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, November 29 (Sputnik) -

GAZA CEASEFIRE

* Palestinian movement Hamas said that it will discuss the possibility of extending the ongoing truce with Israel for two days to achieve the release of 50 more Palestinians held at Israeli prisons.

* Hamas will release 20 Israeli hostages during the two-day extension of the humanitarian

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

pause and the list of names of those to be released on Tuesday has been handed over to the parties, Qatari Foreign Ministry spokesman Majed Mohammed Al-Ansari said.
* Nine Israeli women and one child were released from the Gaza Strip on Tuesday and among them are citizens of Argentina, Austria and the Philippines, Al-Ansari said.
* CIA chief William Burns arrived in Qatar for secret meetings with his Israeli counterpart Aharon Haliva to broker an agreement between Hamas and Israel on hostage swap expansion, the Washington Post reported.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS-RELATED DEVELOPMENTS
* The Russian Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday that it has notified Japan of the termination of the bilateral agreement on cooperation in the field of nuclear weapons reduction.
* Russia has no plans to hold contacts with the United States on issues pertaining to nuclear weapons until the end of the year, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said.
* Russia is monitoring the situation regarding the possible weapons tests in the US state of Nevada, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.

FINLAND BORDER CROSSING CLOSURES WITH RUSSIA
* Finland will close all border crossing checkpoints with Russia for asylum seekers until December 13, the Finnish Interior Ministry said on Tuesday.
* Lithuania does not see any reason to follow Finland and close border checkpoints with Russia, as the situation with migration is stable, Interior Minister Agne Bilotaite said.

OSCE MINISTERIAL MEETING IN MACEDONIA
* The refusal of foreign ministers of the Baltic countries to attend the OSCE meeting in Macedonia because Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov was present will not affect the organization's fate, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko said on Tuesday.
* US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will elaborate on the United States' commitment to Ukraine during OSCE ministerial meeting in Macedonia, US Permanent Representative to the OSCE Michael Carpenter said.
* A "great deal of opposition" remains among OSCE participating states against Russia's military operation in Ukraine, but the organization is still able to carry out a lot of valuable work, Carpenter said.
* Russia has no plans to hold contacts with the United States on issues pertaining to nuclear weapons until the end of the year, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said.
* Russia is monitoring the situation regarding the possible weapons tests at a nuclear test site in the US state of Nevada, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE
* A peace treaty between Russia and Ukraine is possible if all goals of the special military operation are achieved, Russian presidential aide Vladimir Medinsky said on Tuesday.
* Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the collective West dragged Moscow and Kiev into hostilities and Russia's goal has never been to conquer the whole of Ukraine, Medinsky said.
* The Council of the European Union approved a $212 million increase in the funding to train

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

the Ukrainian military through the European Peace Facility.
* Ukraine lost up to 135 soldiers in the Donetsk direction in the past 24 hours, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

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Guterres Urges Reform of Int'l Financial Institutions to Address Root Causes of Conflicts

UNITED NATIONS, November 28 (Sputnik) - The world needs to reform international financial institutions to address economic and social factors behind conflicts, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Tuesday.
"[W]e need to globalize the international community to address the economic and social root causes of conflicts," Guterres said at a press conference alongside African Union Commission chair Moussa Faki. "And that is why we are so keen on the need for reforming international financial institutions."
The economies need to correspond to today's world and not to the Second World War era, he added.
COVID has reflected a huge injustice around the world, with developed countries having the opportunity to print more money, while African countries are increasing their debts, Guterres said.

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Schumer Says US Senate Will Consider Bill for Aid to Israel, Ukraine Next Week

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) - The US Senate will consider legislation next week on providing aid to Israel and Ukraine, Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said on Tuesday.
"I'm going to put them on the floor next week, hopefully with bipartisan support, because that's the only way you can get it done," Schumer said during a press conference.
Last month, the Biden administration sent a $106 billion supplemental funding request to Congress, including aid for Israel and Ukraine.
The House of Representatives passed a standalone Israel aid bill, but the legislation was rejected by Schumer and President Joe Biden.
Schumer said that he is working with Senate Republicans to find agreement on border security proposals that some lawmakers seek to add to the legislation as well. However, Republicans are making negotiations "difficult," Schumer added.

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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

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

Canadian Government Introduces Legislation to Make Life More Affordable - Finance Ministry

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) - The Canadian government has introduced new legislation aiming to deliver on the measures taken under the 2023 Fall Economic Statement to make life more affordable, the Finance Department said on Tuesday.

"Today, the Honorable Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, tabled the Notice of Ways and Means Motion to introduce the Fall Economic Statement Implementation Act, 2023," the Finance Department said in a news release. "This legislation ... advances the government's economic plan to make life more affordable, build more homes faster and build an economy that works for everyone."

Some of the measures under the legislation include removing the good and services tax/harmonized sales tax from a range of mental health services such as counselling therapy as well as from new rental homes constructions for co-operative housing corporations, the release said.

The measures would also include introducing a 15-week shareable employment insurance adoption benefit and a paid leave for federally regulated workers to support families who experience pregnancy loss, the release said.

In addition, the rural top-up on the pollution price rebate would be raised from 10% to 20% and competition would be modernized by amending the Competition Act and the Competition Tribunal Act, the release said.

Some of the measures to create jobs and stimulate the economy include establishing a water agency to better coordinate the management of water resources nationwide and implementing the Digital Services Tax for companies.

On November 21, Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland presented the Fall Economic Statement to the House of Commons, which is a mini budget that updates the federal finances and outlines new measures based on current government priorities.

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Ex-US President Jimmy Carter Makes Rare Appearance at Wife's Tribute Service

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) - Former US President Jimmy Carter made a rare appearance at his late wife's tribute service held on Tuesday at Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church in Atlanta, according to a broadcast.

The former first lady Rosalynn Carter died of natural causes on November 19 in the state of Georgia. She was 96.

Jimmy Carter, who is 99 years old, is currently under hospice care at his home in Plains, Georgia. He was seated in the front row of the church on a wheelchair dressed in a black suit with a blanket draped over him.

President Joe Biden, First Lady Jill Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris were seated near

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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Jimmy Carter and his aides.

Former President Bill Clinton, and former first ladies Melania Trump, Michelle Obama, Laura Bush and Hillary Clinton also attended the service.

According to media reports, the funeral procession will continue on Wednesday at Maranatha Baptist Church in Plains, Georgia, with a service for family and friends.

The 39th president of the United States, at the time of his wife's death, said Rosalynn was his equal partner in everything he had ever accomplished.

"She gave me wise guidance and encouragement when I needed it. As long as Rosalynn was in the world, I always knew somebody loved and supported me," he said.

The Carter family announced earlier this year that Rosalynn had dementia.

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Pentagon Says No Information on What DPRK Has Captured Using Satellite Imagery

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) - The United States has no information regarding images collected by North Korean satellites, Pentagon Press Secretary Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder said on Tuesday.

"I don't have any information to provide on what the North Korean satellite has captured imagery of," Ryder said during a press briefing.

Ryder's comments come hours after reports circulated that North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un received photos recently taken by their spy satellite of the White House, Pentagon, and US aircraft carriers at the naval base in Norfolk, Virginia.

On Monday, a Pentagon spokesperson told Sputnik that the accuracy of such a claim could not be confirmed.

Last week, North Korea's KCNA state news agency reported that Pyongyang had successfully launched its Malligyong-1 military reconnaissance satellite and would launch several more satellites in a "short span of time."

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US Lacks Desired Shipbuilding, Flagship Capacity - Transportation Secretary

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) - The United States lacks the shipbuilding and US-flagged ship capacity that it desires, US Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said on Tuesday.

"The facts are that we do not have the shipbuilding capacity or the US flag capacity that we want or that we ought to have," Buttigieg said during an event at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Buttigieg explained that there is a clear correlation between US shipbuilding capacity and the

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

restoring of US seapower.
However, even the Department of Transportation's historically large budget is not enough to carry out this effort, Buttigieg said.
The United States could look to Defense Department resources to support shipbuilding as well, Buttigieg added.

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Pentagon Faces Funding Challenges for Middle East Operations Amid Congress Cuts - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) - The Department of Defense (DOD) has increased its presence in the Middle East due to growing tensions, yet congressional financial constraints are affecting planned military activities, Politico reported on Tuesday.
According to the report, President Joe Biden signed a stopgap measure to keep the government open while awaiting a full-year spending bill, leading the Department of Defense to reallocate funds, resulting in reduced budgets for pre-planned military training, exercises, and deployments.
Furthermore, Pentagon officials say that operating under a stopgap not only prevents the initiation of new programs but also constrains spending beyond the previous year's levels. This concern is worsened by the Defense Department currently managing two active conflicts in Ukraine and Israel, the report said.
Moreover, it is estimated that maintaining the Pentagon under the stopgap measure essentially results in a $35 billion budget cut, the report added.
Earlier this month, the US Senate passed legislation to temporarily fund the federal government into next year to avoid a government shutdown.
The two-step continuing resolution gives lawmakers until after the winter holiday season to complete the appropriations process.

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McConnell Says Ridiculous, Unnecessary for US Congress to Place Conditions on Israel Aid

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) - US Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said on Tuesday that the United States placing conditions on aid to Israel would be ridiculous and unnecessary.
"I think it’s ridiculous," McConnell said during a press briefing, when asked about Senate Democrats considering conditions on aid for Israel. "To condition, in effect, our assistance to Israel on their meeting our standards it seems to me is totally unnecessary."
The US’s national security relationship with Israel is the closest it has with any other country in the world, McConnell said.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

McConnell said he hopes the United States can deliver aid to Israel very soon.

The US House of Representatives passed an Israel aid bill earlier this month, separating the assistance from a broader request from the Biden administration, which also included aid for Ukraine. However, US President Joe Biden and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer rejected the proposal, instead favoring the joint aid request.

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Quebec Public Workers to Strike for Week in December, Warn Unlimited Strike If No Pay Rise

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) – Some 420,000 public servants in Canada's province of Quebec will be on a seven-day strike from December 8-14 in a third and final attempt to get better wages before declaring a general unlimited strike, the Front Commun said on Tuesday.

On November 6, the Front Commun (Common Front), which represents 420,000 public servants from some of Quebec's largest labor unions, went on a one-day strike to demand better pay to offset the soaring cost of living, brushing aside a "ludicrous" proposal to increase their salaries by only 10.3% over a five-year period.

The unions had jointly determined that the proposed increase was insufficient considering that inflation levels were set to grow to 18% over the same period. The increase was also contested due to Quebec's move to hike the salaries of lawmakers by 30%.

In a second attempt, the unions held a three-day long provincewide strike from November 21-23.

"The Front Commun announces a new seven-day sequence of strikes to be held from December 8-14. This is the final sequence before a general unlimited strike is declared in order to reach a deal before the holidays," the Front Commun said in a statement on Tuesday.

Involving the majority of nurses, teachers, personal support workers, as well as several thousand more personnel in the academic, health and social services sectors, this would be the longest public sector in Quebec in 50 years, the statement said.

On Thursday, Prime Minister of Quebec Francois Legault asked unions to be more flexible when it comes to collective agreements, promising that in exchange for more flexibility, his government would be willing to improve its current offer of a 14.8% wage increase.

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US Has Paused Drone Flights Over Gaza During Israel-Hamas Truce - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) - The United States has paused reconnaissance drone flights over Gaza as part of a truce deal between Israel and Hamas, Pentagon Press Secretary Brig. Gen. Patrick Ryder said on Tuesday.

"So in light of the operational pause, and in compliance with the agreement reached between

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Israel and Hamas, we are not currently conducting those ISR [intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance] flights and so those have been paused for now," Ryder said during a press briefing.

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No New Attacks on US Forces in Mideast Since Start of Israel-Hamas Truce - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) - There have been no new attacks against US forces in Iraq and Syria since the start of the humanitarian truce between Israel and Hamas on November 23, Pentagon Press Secretary Brig. Gen. Patrick Ryder said on Tuesday.
"There have been no attacks on US forces in Iraq and Syria since November 23, since the operational pause began in Israel," Ryder said during a press briefing.

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US Defense Chief to Meet Australian, UK Counterparts This Week to Discuss AUKUS - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) - US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will meet with his UK and Australian counterparts in California later this week to discuss matters related to the AUKUS security pact, Pentagon Press Secretary Brig. Gen. Patrick Ryder said on Tuesday.
"Secretary Austin will travel to California December 1 through 2," Ryder said during a press briefing. "On Friday, he will host Australia's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Richard Marles and UK's Secretary of State for Defence Grant Shapps at Moffett Airfield to discuss the Australia United Kingdom United States security partnership."

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US Congressman Says Expediting Effort to Expel George Santos From House of Representatives

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) - US Congressman Robert Garcia called up legislation to expel Congressman George Santos from the House of Representatives as a privileged resolution on Tuesday, moving it toward expedited consideration by lawmakers.
"The time has come to remove George Santos from Congress," Garcia said in a statement. "This move forces House Republican leadership to schedule a vote on his expulsion within 48 hours."

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

The expulsion effort comes following the release of the results of a House Ethics Committee investigation, which concluded that Santos defrauded donors, filed false reports and repeatedly engaged in criminal behavior.

The panel determined that Santos' conduct brought discredit upon the House of Representatives and warranted public condemnation.

Santos survived previous attempts to oust him from the lower chamber of Congress, prior to the release of the Ethics Committee's investigation. Santos also faces criminal charges related to his alleged conduct.

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US Delivers to Egypt Load of Humanitarian Aid That Will Be Sent to Gaza - White House

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) - The United States dropped off a large load of humanitarian aid in Egypt that will soon be delivered to people throughout the Gaza Strip, the White House said on Tuesday.

"Today, the United States airlifted 24.5 metric tons, more than 54,000 pounds, of UN humanitarian supplies to provide vitally needed medical supplies and food and nutrition assistance to the people of Gaza," the White House said in a press release.

A US Air Force C-17 aircraft delivered loads of medical supplies and food to Egypt, which will soon be transported via ground into Gaza and then distributed by United Nations agencies, the release noted.

According to the White House, some 1.7 million people in Gaza are displaced, but overall 2.2 million are in need of humanitarian assistance.

The United States intends to fly in additional loads of humanitarian aid into Egypt in the coming days, the release said.

Last week, the United States delivered more than 500,000 pounds of food assistance for Gaza residents.

On Monday, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said the United States has warned Israel that if it further displaces Gaza residents as its military operations move further south of the enclave, it will be too much for any humanitarian network to handle.

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President of Iraq's Kurdistan Seeks Efficient Working Relations With Baghdad - Advisor

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) -The President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Nechirvan Barzani, would like an effective working relationship between the region and Baghdad as it will not only benefit the stability of Iraq but the Middle East as a whole, senior advisor to KRG President Nuri Osman told Sputnik.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

"President Barzani would like to have an effective and amicable working relationship with Baghdad, to not only benefit the economic and political stability of Iraq, but to also support the stability of the Middle East as a whole," Osman said, commenting on the prospects of the resumption of crude exports from the Kurdistan region of Iraq to Turkey that have been paused since March.

In addition, the senior advisor underlined that it is crucial for Iraqi leaders to "revisit the fundamental principles of cooperation" to resolve the ongoing dispute.

"The political parties in Iraq need to be willing to work together to establish the laws set out by the country's Constitution and co-operate to execute the Constitution effectively, to its full extent," Osman added.

In March, Turkey halted the flow of Kurdish oil through the Iraqi-Turkish pipeline. It came after the Paris-based International Chamber of Commerce ruled in favor of Iraq in a long-running legal battle. The arbitration court found that Turkey had violated a joint agreement by allowing the Kurdistan Regional Government to export oil to the port of Ceyhan without Baghdad's consent.

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Stratolaunch to Conduct Hypersonic Research Test Flights for US Navy - Statement

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) - A US Navy contractor has awarded Stratolaunch a contract to conduct hypersonic research test flights using the company's Talon-A aircraft, the aerospace firm said on Tuesday.

"Stratolaunch, LLC announces the receipt of a flight test contract award from Leidos, the prime contractor for the Navy's Multiservice Advanced Capability Test Bed [MACH-TB]," the company said in a press release. "This contract award funds five Talon-A hypersonic flights and optional payloads."

Stratolaunch's Talon-A aircraft is a reusable autonomous hypersonic vehicle that will help advance the Navy's hypersonic research goals, the release noted.

The data collected from the flight tests will provide insight to the US Defense Department on technology improvement and capability validation, according to the release.

The contract award is funded by Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC), Crane Division through the Strategic and Spectrum Missions Advanced Resilient Trusted Systems (S^2MARTS) Other Transaction Agreement (OTA).

The Stratolaunch firm has also been used by Virgin Galactic to launch its spacecraft for its space tourism flights.

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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

US Invests in Own Security by Investing in Ukraine - Buttigieg

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg said on Tuesday that investing in Ukraine means investing in US national security.

"An investment in Ukraine and an investment in defeating that kind of Russian aggression is an investment in our security," Buttigieg said during a Council on Foreign Relations event.

Buttigieg added that he believes that US President Joe Biden's $106 billion supplemental funding request will get done and that the United States will continue to support Ukraine.

In late October, the Biden administration submitted to Congress a $106 billion request to provide assistance to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan and protect the southern US border. The amount includes around $61.4 billion for Ukraine and $14.3 billion for Israel.

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

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UN Condemns Attack on 3 Palestinian Students in US State of Vermont - Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, November 28 (Sputnik) - The United Nations strongly condemns the attack against three students of Palestinian descent in the US state of Vermont over the weekend, United Nations spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said.

"First of all, we condemn this violence," Dujarric said during a press briefing on Tuesday.

On Saturday, three students - Hisham Awartani, Tahseen Aliahmad and Kinnan Abdalhamid - were shot in the town of Burlington near the University of Vermont campus. The three arrived in Burlington to visit one of the students' relatives for the Thanksgiving holiday.

While all three students sustained wounds in the attack, one has reportedly been seriously wounded.

Police arrested on Sunday the suspected shooter, Jason Eaton, and the following day Eaton pleaded not guilty in court to three counts of attempted murder.

Dujarric emphasized that the United Nations stands firmly against any hate and bigotry and wishes the three students a speedy recovery.

"I think the signs of hate are probably fairly apparent and there is absolutely no room for any anti-Islam hate and bigotry of any other form of hate," Dujarric said.

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Syria's UN Envoy Says Israel's Actions in Gaza Tantamount to Crimes, Terrorism

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

UNITED NATIONS, November 28 (Sputnik) - Syria's deputy permanent representative to the United Nations said Tuesday that Israel's military operations in Gaza amount to crimes and could be qualified as terrorism.

"What the Israeli forces have done is tantamount to crimes and a deliberate destruction that was witnessed by all of humanity and denounced by humanity. If this does not amount to terrorism, and deliberate killing, what is it then," Alhakam Dandy said during a UN Security Council meeting.

On October 7, Palestinian movement Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip and breached the border, killing and abducting people. Israel launched retaliatory strikes and ordered a complete blockade of Gaza, cutting off supplies of water, food, and fuel. On October 27, Israel launched a large-scale ground incursion into the Gaza Strip.

Last week, Israel and Hamas agreed to a four-day pause in military operations to exchange some of the prisoners and hostages, as well as allow the delivery of humanitarian aid into Gaza. On Monday, they agreed to extend the truce by two more days to allow the release of more hostages.

The conflict has killed around 1,200 people in Israel and over 16,000 in Gaza.

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Jordan Believes Israel-Hamas Truce Should Lead to Total End of War in Gaza - UN Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, November 28 (Sputnik) - Jordan believes that the newly brokered truce between Israel-Hamas should lead to total end of the war in Gaza, the Jordanian Ambassador to the United Nations Mahmoud Daifallah Hmoud said on Tuesday.

“We also believe that this truce should be a step towards a total cessation of the war in Gaza,” Hmoud told the General Assembly hall members where the issue of Palestine was discussed.

The truce also should facilitate the humanitarian aid delivery into the Gaza Strip, he added.

Last week, Qatar mediated a deal between Israel and Palestinian group Hamas on a four-day truce and an exchange of some of the prisoners and hostages, as well as the delivery of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. The first group of Israeli and foreign hostages were released from the enclave this past Friday. On Monday, Qatar announced that an agreement had been reached between Israel and Hamas on a two-day extension of the truce.

On October 7, Palestinian movement Hamas launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip and breached the border, killing and abducting people. Israel launched retaliatory strikes and ordered a complete blockade of Gaza, cutting off supplies of water, food, and fuel. On October 27, Israel launched a large-scale ground incursion into the Gaza Strip. The conflict has so far resulted in the deaths of an estimated 1,200 people in Israel and over 16,000 in the Gaza Strip.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

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Majority of Voters Support Effort in US Congress to Impeach Mayorkas - Poll

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) - A majority of likely voters in the United States support efforts in the US Congress to impeach Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas for his handling of the situation at the border, a Rasmussen Reports poll released Tuesday said.

A majority of respondents, 55%, approve of the effort to impeach Mayorkas, including 37% who strongly approve, the poll said. One-third of respondents disapprove of the effort and 12% are unsure, the poll said.

Earlier this month, US Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene introduced an impeachment resolution against Mayorkas, alleging mishandling of migration at the US' southern border. However, House lawmakers blocked the bill from advancing in a vote of 209-201.

The poll surveyed 997 likely US voters on November 16, 19 and 20. The poll maintains a margin of error of plus-or-minus three percentage points with a 95% confidence level.

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After 11 Rate Hikes, Fed Governor Bowman Calls For More Tightening To Fight Inflation

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) - The Federal Reserve may have instituted 11 rate hikes in under two years to fight runaway inflation but Fed Governor Michelle Bowman thinks even more tightening is needed to make economic policy restrictive enough to get to the central bank's target of 2% per annum inflation.

"My baseline economic outlook continues to expect that we will need to increase the federal funds rate further to keep policy sufficiently restrictive to bring inflation down to our 2 percent target in a timely way," Bowman said in a live-streamed speech that referred to efforts by the Fed's Open Market Committee, or FOMC, to rein in inflation that was quadruple to the Fed's target some 18 months ago.

Inflation, measured by the so-called Consumer Price Index, or CPI, hit a four-decade high of 9.1% during the year to June 2022.

By October this year though, the CPI had moderated to just 3.2%.

Since March 2022, the FOMC has boosted rates 11 times, increasing its benchmark rate from a mere 0.25% to 5.5% per annum — the highest level in 22 years.

The Fed's next rate decision is on December 20. The FOMC has passed three meetings thus far without a rate hike.

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China Says Syria, Israel Should Exercise Restraint, Avoid Escalation - UN Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, November 28 (Sputnik) - China said that all parties involved in Syria and Israel must exercise maximum restraint to prevent escalation, China's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Geng Shuang said on Tuesday.

"All parties in Syria and Israel should exercise maximum restraint and avoid escalation," Geng Shuang said during the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) meeting.

Geng Shuang added that major countries outside the region should "play a constructive role contributing to the de-escalation of the situation."

According to reports, there have been numerous alleged Israel strikes on Syria since the beginning of the war between Israel and Hamas, starting on October 7.

However, the US Department of Defense and the White House attribute these attacks to regional armed groups with support from Iran.

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West's War on Terror Effectively Ended But Troops Remain in Syria - Nebenzia

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) - The US-led War on Terror by the collective West has essentially ended, however, US troops and those of its allies illegally remain in Syria under the pretext of fighting terrorism, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said on Tuesday.

"An extremely destabilizing role continues to be played as well by the West's regional interventions under the pretext allegedly of combating terrorism," Nebenzia said during a meeting of the UN Security Council. "It is under that banner that the US and its allies have been illegally present in Syria since 2014."

At the same time, the fight against the Islamic State and al-Qaeda (both outlawed in Russia) in the Arab countries is something that "the West has essentially stopped doing," Nebenzia said.

The collective West has used the excuse of allegedly fighting terrorism to pursue its own goals, including to engage in subversive action against the Syrian government and army, Nebenzia said.

The armed conflict in Syria has been ongoing since 2011, with various insurgent groups, including terrorist organizations, fighting the Syrian army in their efforts to oust the legitimate government of President Bashar Assad.

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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Palestine Wants Truce Between Israel, Hamas to Turn Into Permanent Ceasefire - Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, November 28 (Sputnik) - The truce between Hamas and Israel should be expanded into a permanent ceasefire in order to save lives, Ambassador of the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine Riyad Mansour said on Tuesday.

"This truce must turn into a permanent ceasefire. The massacres of Palestinian children, women and men cannot resume, should not resume, you should not allow it to resume," Mansour told a session of the UN General Assembly where members were discussing the issue of Palestine.

International law prohibits such massacres and sides with the norms of humanity, he added.

Last week, Qatar mediated a deal between Israel and Hamas on a four-day truce to allow for an exchange of prisoners and hostages, as well as the delivery of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. The first group of Israeli and foreign hostages were released from the enclave on Friday. On Monday, Qatar announced that an agreement had been reached between Israel and Hamas to extend the truce for two days.

On October 7, the Palestinian Hamas movement launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip and breached the border, killing and abducting people. Israel launched retaliatory strikes and ordered a complete blockade of Gaza, cutting off supplies of water, food and fuel. On October 27, Israel launched a large-scale ground incursion into the Gaza Strip.

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UAE Says Hopes Syrian Constitutional Committee Holds Meetings Free of Foreign Interference

UNITED NATIONS, November 28 (Sputnik) - The United Arab Emirates (UAE) said that they hope for prompt Syrian-led constitutional committee meetings, emphasizing the need for independence from foreign influence, UAE's Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Mohamed Abushahab said on Tuesday.

"We hope that the [Syrian] constitutional committee will hold its meetings as soon as possible under Syrian leadership and ownership, free from any foreign interference," Mohamed Abushahab said during the United Nations Security Council meeting.

Furthermore, Mohamed Abushahab said that the meetings would contribute to enhancing dialogue among the Syrian parties to end the crisis.

Established during the 2018 Syrian National Dialogue Congress in Sochi, the Syrian Constitutional Committee is tasked with preparing a constitutional reform for Syria.

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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Fed Can Deliver Both 2% Inflation and 'Soft Landing' For US Economy - Gov. Waller

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) - Federal Reserve policy seems well positioned to slow US growth enough to achieve a 2% inflation rate and barring a major shock, a soft landing is possible for the economy, Fed Governor Christopher Waller said Tuesday.

"I am increasingly confident that policy is currently well positioned to slow the economy and get inflation back to 2%," Waller, one of the US central bank's seven governors, said in a live streamed speech on efforts by the policymaking Federal Open Market Committee, or FOMC, to rein in inflation that was quadruple to the Fed's target some 18 months ago.

Inflation, measured by the so-called Consumer Price Index, or CPI, hit a four-decade high of 9.1% during the year to June 2022.

By October this year though, the CPI had moderated to just 3.2%.

Despite his optimism that inflation will return to the level desired by the Fed, Waller said he was aware of the challenges and realities faced by the economy.

"While I am encouraged by the early signs of moderating economic activity in the fourth quarter based on the data in hand, inflation is still too high, and it is too early to say whether the slowing we are seeing will be sustained," he said.

Waller added that there was "still significant uncertainty about the pace of future activity," adding: "I cannot say for sure whether the FOMC has done enough to achieve price stability. Hopefully, the data we receive over the next couple of months will help answer that question."

He also said that barring a major shock, there was little reason to believe the Fed could not pull off a soft landing for the economy.

"If you go back in US history, when you think about a recession, it's always caused by some major shock that could happen again. There could be another major shock and this whole soft landing disappears. But shocks are shocks, we can't really forecast it," he said.

The possibilities of the US economy averting a recession has been one of the most keenly debated issues over the past two years as the Fed carried out some of the most aggressive interest rate hikes in its history to tame runaway inflation in the aftermath of 2020 coronavirus outbreak.

Since March 2022, the Fed has boosted rates 11 times, increasing its benchmark rate to the highest level in 22 years.

US Gross Domestic Product, or GDP, growth contracted by 8.9% in the second quarter of 2020, after the outbreak of COVID-19 in the first quarter of that year. Final GDP growth for all of 2020 was minus 2.8%. By 2021 though, the economy had rebounded strongly from the pandemic, registering a 5.9% growth. GDP expansion moderated by the end of last year but remained positive, with a 2.1% growth.

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US, Saudi Arabia to Cooperate on Space Exploration – Joint Statement

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) – The United States and Saudi Arabia announced their intent on Tuesday to cooperate on space exploration for “peaceful purposes,” according to a joint statement released by the State Department.

“The United States and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia expressed their intent to expand bilateral cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes on November 27, in accordance with the Jeddah Communique,” the statement said.

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US Envoy Says ‘Great Deal of Opposition’ Between OSCE Members, Russia on Ukraine Conflict

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) - A "great deal of opposition" remains among the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) participating states against Russia’s military operation in Ukraine, but the organization is still able to carry out a lot of valuable work, US envoy to the OSCE Michael Carpenter said on Tuesday.

"All of the other participating states call out [Russia’s special military operation] and condemn it. There is no meeting of the minds. So, to this extent, yes, there is a great deal of opposition in the OSCE, but many other things carry on, and a lot of valuable work ends up being done," Carpenter said during a press briefing.

Carpenter acknowledged that there was a "political blockage" regarding such matters such as filling top leadership positions due to Russia’s dissent and given that the OSCE operates on the principle of consensus.

However, Carpenter insisted that the OSCE was still productive in other areas of its work, including promoting democracy, cataloguing human rights violations and monitoring elections.

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Russia Says Trusts UN Envoy For Syria Will Do Most to Continue Constitutional Committee

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) - Russia trusts that UN Special Envoy for Syria will do utmost to help the Syrian parties to agree on a venue to resume the work of the Constitutional Committee, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said during the UN Security Council on Tuesday.

"On the political track, we support the resumed work of the Constitutional Committee in the context of advancing the political process that is Syrian-led, Syrian-owned and UN-facilitated," Nebenzia said. "To do this, the Syrian representatives need to agree on the relevant venue. We trust that in accordance with his direct mandate the Special Envoy will do everything to facilitate this not frittering away efforts on other initiatives that have not been agreed by the Syrian parties."

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UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen said the end of October that complacency is the reason for why the Syrian Constitutional Committee has not met since May 2022.

The Syrian Constitutional Committee was established during the congress of the Syrian national dialogue in Sochi in 2018. The Geneva-based body is charged with preparing a constitutional reform in Syria.

In June 2022, Russia suggested that a new venue should be chosen for meetings of the Syrian constitutional committee, expressing concern that Switzerland had lost its impartiality and neutral status.

In August 2023, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said that the next meeting of the Syrian Constitutional Committee may take place in Oman and the Syrian government is ready to accept the sultanate's invitation.

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Blinken, Stoltenberg Discuss Ukraine, Balkans – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on Tuesday in Brussels to discuss the situation in Ukraine, Western Balkans and the preparations for the upcoming alliance summit, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Tuesday.

"Secretary Blinken and Secretary General Stoltenberg discussed priorities for the Alliance, including preparations for the Washington Summit and NATO's 75th Anniversary in 2024, continued support to Ukraine, and security in the Western Balkans," Miller said in a statement.

The two sides also discussed NATO's investment and readiness commitments to further strengthen the alliance's deterrence and defense, he added.

Blinken is traveling to Brussels to participate in the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting.

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Blinken to Elaborate on US Support for Ukraine at OSCE Ministerial in Macedonia - US Envoy

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will elaborate on the United States' commitment to Ukraine during an Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) ministerial meeting later this week, US Permanent Representative to the OSCE Michael Carpenter said.

"The secretary will, of course, elaborate on the US' enduring commitment to Ukraine and its people," Carpenter said during a press briefing on Tuesday.

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

Carpenter said that Blinken will lead the US delegation during the meetings.

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Although Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will attend the event, the United States has no planned interactions with the Russian delegation, Carpenter said.

There will not be any "crossing of paths" between Blinken and Lavrov at the meetings, Carpenter added.

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Kamala Harris Extends Sympathies to Families of Palestinian Students Shot in Vermont

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) - US Vice President Kamala Harris on Tuesday expressed her sympathies with all those impacted by the shooting of three Palestinian college students in Burlington, Vermont.

"Doug and I join President Biden, the First Lady, and Americans across the country in praying for the full recovery of the three Palestinian students who were shot in Burlington, Vermont as they traveled to one of their grandmother's homes during the Thanksgiving holiday weekend. We send our deepest sympathies to their families and to all those who have been impacted by this senseless violence," Harris said in a statement.

Three 20-year-old students - Hisham Awartani, Tahseen Aliahmad and Kinnan Abdalhamid - were shot on Saturday evening in Burlington while walking on a street in the vicinity of the University of Vermont campus. They were visiting one of the victims' relatives for the occasion of Thanksgiving.

Harris said that too many people in the US fear that they could be targeted and attacked because of their faith or ethnicity. She also expressed gratitude to law enforcement and pledged to make every effort to "keep our communities safe from both hate and gun violence."

The suspected shooter, Jason Eaton, was arrested Sunday and on Monday pleaded not guilty to three counts of attempted murder.

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US Spying Authority Played Key Role in Disrupting Iran's Weapons Program - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) - The United States has successfully used a special spying authority in recent years to prevent Iran from obtaining certain advanced weapons parts, Politico reported on Tuesday.

The CIA and other intelligence agencies used Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) to get access to the electronic communications of foreign weapons manufacturers to disrupt a number of shipments of advanced weapons parts to Iran, the report said, citing unnamed US officials.

FISA made it possible to identify US-made parts that Iran needed and add those components of advanced weapon systems and their manufacturers into the Section 702 database, the report

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

said.

The US government undertook a "number of actions" that in at least one instance stopped sales either before they went or while they were en route, the report said.

Section 702, which is set to expire at the end of this year, has repeatedly come under fire from the general public and Congress. Many legislators have called for revising the act, including introducing a requirement to obtain a court order to access the communications or wiretap US citizens.

Earlier in November, the US House Intelligence Committee called on the Biden administration to reform the FISA, including reforms to prevent the FBI from abusing FISA queries, enhance penalties for lying to the FISA Court or for leaking FISA applications and increase the transparency of the FISA Court.

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US Congressman Says Expects Hunter Biden's 'Full Cooperation' With Subpoena for Deposition

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) - US House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer said on Tuesday that he expects US President Joe Biden's son, Hunter, to fully cooperate with the subpoena for deposition.

"Our lawfully issued subpoena to Hunter Biden requires him to appear for a deposition on December 13. We expect full cooperation with our subpoena for a deposition but also agree that Hunter Biden should have opportunity to testify in a public setting at a future date," Comer said in a statement.

Comer said Hunter Biden has been trying to play by his own rules instead of following the rules required of everyone else.

"That won't stand with House Republicans," Comer added.

Earlier on Tuesday, Hunter Biden's lawyer sent a letter to the House Oversight Committee saying that his client has agreed to testify before the panel on December 13.

The House Oversight Committee issued a subpoena for Hunter Biden earlier in November requiring that he testify as part of the ongoing impeachment inquiry into President Biden.

However, the lawyer said in the letter that Hunter Biden would insist on a public proceeding in order to prevent selective leaks, manipulated transcripts, doctored exhibits or one-sided press statements.

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State Dept Hopes Congress Will Renew Global Anti-AIDS Program - Envoy

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 11/29/2023 11:20:46 AM

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WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is hopeful that US Congress will reauthorize the country's global AIDS relief program PEPFAR for another five years, US Global AIDS Coordinator John Nkengasong said on Tuesday.

Launched by US President George W. Bush in 2003, PEPFAR has been renewed every five years. On September 30, Congress missed the deadline to reauthorize the program.

"Yes, we still have to resolve the five-year reauthorization that the Biden administration requests. We continue to work with both sides of Congress, and I remain optimistic that our good work that has been done over the last 20 years, guided by strong bipartisanship, will continue," Nkengasong told reporters.

PEPFAR, or President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, has a goal to prevent HIV infections and accelerate progress toward achieving HIV/AIDS pandemic control in more than 50 countries around the world, mostly in Africa.

Nkengasong expressed hope that the US will continue to fulfill its obligations under the program.

"PEPFAR is committed to working with countries to finish its fight and make sure that we celebrate the end of HIV/AIDS," he added.

He also stressed that the US has provided more than $110 billion over the course of 20 years to fight HIV/AIDS in Africa. Each year, PEPFAR is investing about $7 billion in supporting countries to respond to HIV/AIDS, the official added.

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US, European Nations Bust Ukrainian Ransomware Group in Major Operation

WASHINGTON, November 28 (Sputnik) – Six European countries and the United States dismantled a Ukrainian-based ransomware group whose cyber attacks across the world resulted in losses of at least several hundred millions of euros, the EU Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust) said on Tuesday.

The investigation, which began in September 2019, involved France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Ukraine, and the United States.

"Judicial and law enforcement authorities from seven different countries have joined forces in an action against a criminal network responsible for significant ransomware attacks across the world. These attacks are believed to have affected over 1,800 victims in 71 countries," Eurojust said in a statement. "The perpetrators targeted large corporations, effectively bringing their business to a standstill and causing losses of at least several hundred millions of euros."

An operation supported by Eurojust and Europol led to the arrest of the ringleader and the detention of four suspects in Ukraine. Thirty locations were searched, and more than a hundred digital devices were seized, according to the statement.

The group is believed to have been involved in infiltration attempts and have used multiple mechanisms to compromise IT networks, including brute force attacks, among others, to gain access to networks and deploy malwares such as Trickbot.

The hackers demanded that victims pay them in bitcoin in exchange for decryption keys.

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The latest operation follows a first round of arrests made in 2021 as part of the same investigation.

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