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North Korea's Kim Yo Jong Blasts US 'Double Standard' for Hysteria Over Spy Satellite

In a statement carried by state media on Thursday, Kim Yo Jong, vice department director of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, decried the hysteria over the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) recent launch of a reconnaissance satellite.

"I deplore the fact that the UNSC [United Nations Security Council], at which the purpose and principle of the UN Charter have to be strictly respected, is being turned into a land of lawlessness where the sovereignty of independent states is wantonly violated, extreme double standards are imprudently applied and injustice and high-handed practices are rampant due to the US and some forces following it, and strongly denounce and reject it," she said.

"The whole course of the open meeting of the UNSC over the DPRK's reconnaissance satellite launch, convened at the gangster-like demand of the US and its followers, clearly proves how weak, false and absurd are the unreasonable arguments of some UN member states denying the DPRK's sovereign rights," Kim added.

She criticized the claims by Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the US representative at the United Nations, who described the DPRK's right to space development as "illegal" and claimed the US was a "victim" after the North Korean satellite photographed several of its military and command sites, including the White House. She compared it to the US deploying of nuclear-powered submarines and aircraft carriers near Korea, denouncing it as "provocative."

"The double-faced stand and behavior of the US, whose deeds are quite different from its words are a vicious factor disturbing peace and stability in the region of the Korean peninsula along with double standards, the height of high-handed and arbitrary practices," Kim added.

North Korea launched the Malligyong-1 satellite last week aboard a Chollima-1 carrier rocket from the Sohae Satellite Space Launching Station on the country's western coast. Ironically, the DPRK's rocket program was spurred in part by Ukraine, which once helped the country service its Soviet-built rockets.

The DPRK had previously put two short-lived satellites into orbit, which were used for monitoring weather, but Malligyong-1 is its first reconnaissance satellite.

Kim Song, Pyongyang's envoy to the United Nations, told the UN Security Council that only Washington and Seoul had a problem with the DPRK launching a satellite. He mocked claims from Washington that the DPRK had used the launch to further hone its missile capabilities, asking if the US puts satellites into orbit "with a catapult."

The diplomat also noted the extreme pressure the US has put on the DPRK, between whom a technical state of war still exists, since the 1950-53 war only ended in a ceasefire instead of a permanent peace treaty.

"No other nation in the world is in the security environment as critical as the DPRK," Kim said on Monday. "One belligerent party, the United States, is threatening us with a nuclear weapon."

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"It is a legitimate right for the DPRK as another belligerent party to develop, test, manufacture and possess weapons systems equivalent to those that the United States possesses or is developing," he added.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the US put extreme pressure on the DPRK, denying the country aid in the wake of a series of natural disasters in 1994 and 1995 that destroyed its food supply, triggering a famine that killed between 240,000 and 3.5 million people. However, the socialist state did not collapse, and the government continued to pursue nuclear weapons and ballistic missile technology in the interest of self-defense, eventually testing a nuclear device in 2006 and an intercontinental ballistic missile in 2017.

Pyongyang has said it needs such weapons for self-defense in the absence of a permanent peace treaty and the departure of US troops from the Korean peninsula, where 28,000 of them remain. Efforts to reach a deal on denuclearizing the Korean peninsula in 2018 and 2019 failed after the US refused to lower economic sanctions before "verifiable" denuclearization had happened, despite the DPRK having already demolished several of its nuclear sites. Relations have cooled considerably in the years since.

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Japan Asks US to Suspend V-22 Osprey Flights Following Deadly Crash

Japan has suspended operations of the V-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft in the wake of a crash off the coast earlier this week. The notoriously unstable aircraft has had dozens of crashes, often triggering similar temporary groundings.

The suspension announcement was made on Thursday by Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's chief cabinet secretary, Hirokazu Matsuno, who said Tokyo had asked the US to temporarily halt non-emergency flights of Ospreys.

"Safety has to come first," he said, adding that Japan had to take the situation "seriously."

On Wednesday, an Osprey carrying six US service members (the US Coast Guard initially told the press it was eight) crashed off the coast of Japan's Kagoshima Prefecture, one of whom died in the accident. Little information has been released since, including the fate of the other five people on board. One eyewitness told Japanese media he had seen the aircraft's left engine on fire as it plummeted into the sea.

"The occurrence of such a major accident causes great anxiety to the people of the region, and it is truly regrettable," Japanese Defense Minister Minoru Kihara said, adding it was not the first time an Osprey had crashed near Japan, but it was the first time someone had died in such an incident.

Just last year, Japan temporarily grounded all of the US Air Force's Ospreys amid a series of "safety incidents," something the US Navy didfor its version of the aircraft just months before.

The V-22 was first unveiled in 1988, but due to a series of chronic issues involving its highly complex tilt-rotor system, which allows it to fly either horizontally like a fixed-wing aircraft or vertically like a helicopter, the Osprey didn't enter service with the US military until 2007.

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The US has several military bases in Japan, which has been a close US ally since its defeat in World War II. However, Japanese residents have at times resisted the US military's activities, including mobilizing to block several proposed Aegis Ashore radar and air defense installations, which are likely to become targets in the event of a war with North Korea or China. Residents of Okinawa, an island in the Ryukyu Islands, have also fought plans to expand the massive Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in central Ginowan city.

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Dublin Says Only X Refused to Take Down 'Vile' Social Media Posts During Anti-Immigrant Riot

Amid attempts to crack down on a riot that erupted in the capital city of Dublin last week, the Irish government has revealed it pressured social media companies to take down posts it said were fanning the flames of the violence.

The admission came during Prime Minister's Questions in the Dáil Éireann on Wednesday, during which Justice Minister Helen McEntee sat in for Taoiseach Leo Varadkar. McEntee told lawmakers that X, the social media site renamed from Twitter by CEO Elon Musk, had refused to take down "vile messages" on the site amid the Dublin riot last week.

McEntee was asked about police claims that "far-right ringleaders" had used "sophisticated communication online" to coordinate their activities during the riot. She said the Garda had been "actively engaging with TikTok, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, or X" to take down what she described as "vile messages."

While most companies were cooperating, "X were not. They did engage. They did not fulfill their own customer standards," McEntee said.

The riot started on November 23 after a 49-year-old Algerian-Irish man was arrested and accused of stabbing five people outside a primary school in eastern Dublin, including three children, leaving a five-year-old girl and a woman in her 30s in critical condition.

Three passersby incapacitated the man, who had lived in Ireland for more than 20 years and became a naturalized citizen of the country. At the time of the attack, he had been staying at a special accommodation for homeless people, according to Irish media.

As news of the attack spread, a crowd grew near the scene of the crime, with many believing the man had been an illegal immigrant. They carried signs and chanted anti-immigrant slogans, and many wore face-covering balaclava masks and carried crowbars and other devices fashioned as weapons. As they grew increasingly violent, the crowd of several hundred overwhelmed the Gardai and set fire to several vehicles, including a city bus and a tram, as well as several businesses, which were also looted.

Police had subdued the riot after several hours and dispersed the crowd, with more than 35 people arrested during and after the riot.

Garda Commissioner Drew Harris said the disturbance had been carried out by a "complete lunatic hooligan faction driven by far-right ideology" and called the riot "disgraceful." He called on people "to act responsibly and not to listen to the misinformation and rumor that is circulating on social media."

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After the riot, Musk attacked the Irish government for attempting to suppress posts, accusing Varadkar of "hating the Irish people" and carrying out a "massive attack on freedom of speech."
Former mixed martial arts fighter Conor McGregor also attacked Varadkar's government, claiming he was being made into a "scapegoat" for the riot after police said they were investigating his social media posts before and during the violence.
"Attempt to scapegoat me all you wish," he posted on X. "If it makes you feel better, I will take it."
The night before the stabbings, McGregor told his 10.3 million followers on X "Ireland, we are at war," without further context.
During the riot, he replied to Harris' comments about right-wing ideology being behind the violence by saying: "There is grave danger among us in Ireland that should never be here in the first place and there has been zero action done to support the public in any way, shape or form with this frightening fact. NOT GOOD ENOUGH. Make change or make way. Ireland for the victory."
His next post that night simply said: "You reap what you sow."
The former MMA star has since condemned the violence, but characterized it as a justified response to the government's inaction on immigration, which he connected to a wave of recent violent attacks.
Interestingly, Musk has recently praised McGregor, endorsing a hypothetical election campaign by the former MMA fighter as "not a bad idea" and repeating McGregor's position that Varadkar "hates the Irish people."
"The current Irish government clearly cares more about praise from woke media than their own people," Musk said in response to a proposal by Varadkar's government to widen the country's hate speech laws that he had made before the riot happened. "Suppression of the Irish people is the real crime," Musk also said about the proposal.

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NATO Refusing Ukrainian Membership as Alliance Has 'No Power to Confront Russia'

While NATO wants to disarm and dismember Russia, its members are actually very afraid of a direct war with Moscow they know they cannot win, a historian told Sputnik. That is why, despite Kiev's failing position, they will continue to refuse its demands to join the alliance and make Ukrainians fight NATO's war for it.
At a Brussels summit of the foreign ministers of NATO members and of Ukraine on Wednesday, the alliance put forward a new statement vowing to support Kiev "for as long as it takes" and would undertake steps to further integrate the operational ability of the Ukrainian military with that of NATO.
However, the Western alliance once again stopped short of immediately offering Ukraine membership - something Kiev's government has been constitutionally obligated to pursue since a US-backed coup seized power there in 2014. NATO has repeatedly refused demands by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to admit his country to the alliance and invoke its

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mutual protection clause, bringing 31 member states into a state of war - three of them nuclear-armed - with the Russian Federation, which also possesses nuclear weapons.
Filmmaker Igor Lopatonok, who directed the documentary films "Ukraine On Fire" in 2016 and "Revealing Ukraine" in 2019, told Radio Sputnik's The Backstory on Thursday that adding Ukraine to NATO was "a real red line" that would mean war between NATO and the Russian Federation, which many members understand and fear.
"They need to understand, if they want to escalate without any remorse and without any regrets so they can accept Ukraine into NATO, but that will mean immediate war for NATO," he said. "And this is not making NATO members happy, because they understand that a war with Russia they actually cannot withstand. Because from February of 2022 and from 2014, we all saw how NATO was re-encircling in their approach to the borders [of Russia] and positioning their forces to attack. This is not a position for defense, this is a position [from which] to attack. And this is why Russia is acting accordingly."
Lopatonok noted that it wasn't Russia that moved its borders up to the edge of NATO countries, but NATO who moved its borders until they were against Russia's.
"You remember that they tried to lie and cheat as usual and say and nobody promised [Soviet President Mikhail] Gorbachev to not enlarge NATO, until all the documents were released and delivered and everybody saw, yeah, that was not in the discussion," he said. "They agreed together with [US President] Ronald Reagan, and then Gorbachev moved forward and dismantled the Warsaw Pact. And then Reagan just just dropped his promises and NATO was never dismantled."
"To understand what is going on with NATO in Ukraine, you need to understand what NATO is," Lopatonok said, adding that there was no better example than NATO's war in Serbia in 1999.
"In 1999, NATO was bombing Serbia, together with the United States, for more than 80 days, with no reason. There's only one reason: it was not [Serbian President Slobodan] Milosevic, it was not Serbia, which posed no threat to anyone, it was just that NATO was on the verge of collapse because members did not understand why they need a military alliance when there is no threat, there is no enemy. And Russia was even trying to be accepted into NATO, to be a member of the alliance, for security. No, they were not interested in this. They needed [Russian President Vladimir] Putin as a perfect villain."
"But in reality, you know, you can do this in the media, you can do it everywhere. But in reality, they have no power to confront Russia," he said, noting that Russia had "so precisely" undertaken its special operation in Ukraine as a slow operation rather than a very quick one, of which it was certainly capable.
He said doing so would have "lead to very bad consequences because, you know, the perception of this will be wrong. Perception can make a big blow to the Russian stance and its standing in the international geopolitics 'big game'. Russia is taking it slow and delivering the result . We all understand in 2024 there will be no peace in Ukraine. [Russian chief negotiator Vladimir] Medinsky revealed how [in the Spring of 2022] Ukraine destroyed the peace deal in whatever they negotiated in Istanbul."
Lopatonok said that everybody understands "that nobody [in Kiev] is interested in peace, nobody is interested in a position of national interest of Ukraine or national security of Ukraine. Everybody is interested in only one thing: how to bring a ring of fire to the Russian borders, how to make Russia weaker, how to divide Russia, split it into pieces, take away nuclear deterrence

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forces, and enslave the Slavic people who live in Russia. This is an existential conflict of Western and Eastern civilizations and Russia here it is not Western civilization," he said, noting that the Scythians were the ancestors of both Russians and Ukrainians and were never considered part of the West.
Russia, he said, "will win in this conflict and Ukraine will rejoin their orbit of Russian influence. Russia doesn't need the territory of Ukraine, Russia has enough territory in Siberia, they are the biggest country in the world. They don't need that, but they need a peaceful, friendly neighbor who actually are Russians themselves."

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Mark Your Calendar! US Looks to Make First Lunar Visit in Decades by 2024

The upcoming lunar trip, which is expected to take place in January of next year, will be the first US mission to the moon since the last Apollo mission in 1969, during which American astronaut Neil Armstrong became the first person to walk on the moon.
The US is returning to the moon, but this time, they're going private.
The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has commissioned a private American company, Astrobotic, to carry out the lunar mission. The six-foot-tall lander, Peregrine, will have no one on board but will instead carry NASA instruments that will be used to study the moon's environment.
If the mission proves to be successful, Astrobotic could be the first private company to land on the moon.
The commission is part of the Commercial Lunar Payload Services (CLPS) initiative, in which NASA works alongside various American companies "to deliver science and technology to the lunar surface."
According to NASA's website, the companies "bid on delivering payloads for NASA", and CLPS contracts are "indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity contracts with a cumulative maximum contract value of $2.6 billion through 2028." The purpose of these fixed-price contracts will help to create a lunar economy that will provide lower prices for space travel, according to some experts in the field.
"NASA leadership is aware of the risks and has accepted that some of these missions might not succeed," said Chris Culbert, the CLPS program manager. "But even if every landing isn't successful, CLPS already had an impact on the commercial infrastructure needed to establish a lunar economy," he said.
John Thornton, the CEO of the Pittsburgh-based company Astrobotic, underscored that "one of the big challenges of what we're attempting here is attempting a launch and landing on the surface [of the] moon for a fraction of what it would otherwise cost."
"Only about half of the missions that have gone to the surface of the moon have been successful. So it's certainly a daunting challenge. I'm going to be terrified and thrilled all at once at every stage of this," he said.

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The launch is expected to take off on December 24 at 1:50 a.m. local time from Florida aboard the United Launch Alliance's (ULA) Vulcan Centaur rocket. The probe is then expected to touch down on the moon on January 25, 2024.
A total of 12 people - all American men involved in the Apollo missions - have walked on the Earth's moon. Only four countries have had successful touch downs on the moon: the US, Russia, China, and more recently, India.

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Family's Legal Spat Over Inheritance Money From Sue the T. Rex is On-Going - Reports

The famous, mostly-intact dinosaur skeleton was first discovered in 1990 on property owned by Maurice and Darlene Williams in the US state of South Dakota.
"Sue" the T. rex is the largest and most complete Tyrannosaurus rex specimen ever discovered, according to Chicago's Field Museum. The fossil stands at 13 feet (4 meters) tall at the hip and more than 40 feet (12.2 meters) long. The fossil was discovered on a South Dakota couple's estate, and after a legal battle, the couple was able to claim rights to the skeleton. They then auctioned the skeleton for $7.6 million (more than $16 million today).
But Sue is now at the center of another legal battle: the children of the couple that profited from the sale of the dinosaur skeleton are now wondering who will inherit whatever is left from that sale.
Maurice Williams first died in 2011, followed by his wife Darlene Williams in December of 2020. The couple had four children, with three of those siblings now involved in a court dispute over the profits of "Sue" the dinosaur skeleton. Darlene had two wills, the first, which was signed in 2017, included all of her children and grandchildren and listed her daughter Sandra Williams Luther as the person to take charge of settling the estate, as well as making sure her will was carried out, per one report.
But her second will was signed on November 25, 2020, less than three weeks before she passed away.
The second will designated Luther as the sole heir and executor of her estate. But another daughter of Darlene, Jacqueline Schwartz, is questioning the legitimacy of Darlene's second will. Schwartz says her mother was in hospice care and was critically ill when she signed the document. Her signing of the will also had no witnesses due to COVID-19 regulations.
Schwartz has also contested the sale of her mother's home in South Dakota which took place just a couple of weeks before her death. The proceeds of which went to her Darlene's son, Carson Williams.
A trial date for this family's legal dispute has not yet been set.

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‘Cultural Genocide’ in Puerto Rico Displaces Population, Destroys Heritage – Analyst

Quality of life has declined for much of the population of the US territory since Hurricane Maria in 2017. But many argue the roots of Puerto Rico’s problems go back much further.

Colonialism may seem like a phenomenon of the past, the stuff of dry documentaries, period films and college history lectures. But scholar Adriana Maí Garriga-López argues the exploitative practice lives on, with deadly consequences.

“Puerto Rico needs decolonization, not statehood,” said Garriga-López in an appearance on Sputnik’s Political Misfits program Wednesday.

The Associate Professor of Anthropology and Comparative Studies at Florida Atlantic University joined hosts John Kiriakou and Michelle Witte to discuss a series of recent news items demonstrating the deteriorating conditions in the US territory since Hurricane Maria wreaked devastation there six years ago.

On Tuesday, a US news outlet published a shocking analysis showing a sharp increase in excess mortality on the island in 2022. An excess of 3,300 people in Puerto Rico died last year than what historic patterns would ordinarily predict. That made last year’s death rate in the territory 11% higher than that of the United States overall.

A COVID-19 surge is partially to blame for the morbid development, but not entirely. A deteriorating health system on the island and growing economic strain are also placing an unprecedented burden on ordinary Puerto Ricans. The latter is driving a decline of traditional funeral ceremonies in the territory – something Garriga-López says is part of a “cultural genocide” taking place there.

All That is Solid Melts Into Air

“What is happening in Puerto Rico – and I’m not being hyperbolic when I say this – is cultural genocide,” insists Garriga-López, who was born on the island. “And that is what has been happening in Puerto Rico since the aftermath of Hurricane Maria and Irma in 2017, when people were simply ignored.”

“The people who survived Hurricane Maria, who were desperate for food and water for many days, were largely neglected. And we know because of congressional investigations that funds – recovery funds – were deliberately held up, and weren’t actually dispersed to Puerto Rico for many years until after the change of administrations in 2020. So we know that this is an ongoing process of population displacement, of gentrification.”

Families’ struggle to recover from the 2017 disaster – as well as rising inflation and a skyrocketing cost of living – have combined to create unprecedented economic difficulty according to Garriga-López. Puerto Rico has a rich tradition of elaborate funeral ceremonies, multi-day affairs where people on the island lovingly mourn and celebrate the lives of departed family members.

But the ritual is increasingly out of reach for bereaved Puerto Ricans, denying them the comfort and dignity of honoring their loved ones. Many are instead opting for cremation.

Housing is also becoming unaffordable in the territory. “We have seen an incredibly high – skyrocketing increase – in real estate prices, we have seen families literally not being able to find an apartment to rent,” says Garriga-López.

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“So we have seen only increasing pressures on the population, which have pushed and driven hundreds of thousands of people to leave Puerto Rico, most of whom did not really want to leave, simply leaving as a response to the critical economic and political situation.”

Fleeing Puerto Ricans are often replaced by wealthy Americans from the mainland, according to Garriga-López, who take advantage of the situation to buy second and third vacation homes on the island. This creates a feedback loop where Puerto Rico’s economy is frequently molded by and oriented to serve the new, non-native population.

“This is a recreation of the colonial fantasy of a ‘terra nullius,’ where one can go and found a new society,” says Garriga-López. “And that’s what they think they’re doing in Puerto Rico.”

“So there is literally a genocidal imagination, where the people who are in Puerto Rico right now are going to be moved off the island, the labor force that can be productive is going to be siphoned into the United States, and the people who are left in Puerto Rico are going to be an aging population that’s going to eventually die out, and political power will be consolidated in the hands of these wealthy new investors and part time residents of Puerto Rico.”

‘I Saw the Future… There Are No Puerto Ricans’

Although the devastation of Hurricane Maria was unanticipated, the political response isn’t, according to Garriga-López.

“The so-called Puerto Rican recovery has been a bonanza for US companies looking for post-disaster expertise that then sets them up for future work in disaster-prone areas like Texas, Florida, Louisiana, etcetera,” she notes. “And that’s what we call ‘disaster capitalism’... These situations create these opportunities where then there’s an intensification of an extractive colonial mode that’s already in place.”

“We do know that a large part of this money has gone to US contractors who have been paid to do shoddy work in places that they are not familiar with, and being paid two and three times what local contractors are being paid.”

“They don’t see the personal, the individual cost that this has had on Puerto Rican families, on Puerto Rican people," said Garriga-López, noting the disastrous effect of the trend towards profiteering at the expense of individual Puerto Ricans.

“That story of the woman dying waiting for an ambulance… that’s not just one person,” said Garriga-López, referring to reports of an elderly Puerto Rican woman who died in her home while waiting over two hours for an ambulance to arrive. “There are so many dozens of stories that I’ve heard just like that one.”

Garriga-López decried the “ongoing maintenance of unjust, unjustifiable and really inequitable policies that create a situation of institutional insufficiency, where we have one neurologist – literally one neurological surgeon – operating in Puerto Rico for the entire population.”

The researcher notes that Puerto Rico is excluded by the US Congress from public healthcare funding available to America’s fifty states. Public education has also seen significant cutbacks in recent years, encouraging many young Puerto Ricans to simply leave the island.

“Young people who are entering the labor market, who are going to college, who are starting their professional lives, must leave the island in order to attain the education that they need, in order to attain the professional experience, the placements they cannot get in Puerto Rico, and so on and so forth” says Garriga-López.

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"Once that happens, oftentimes people leave without the intent of staying away, with the intent of coming back – then there is no way to return, because there are no jobs, there's no way to financially establish."

The territory lacks a voting representative in Congress, meaning Puerto Ricans face taxation – and political domination – without representation.

The arrangement culminated in the passage of the PROMESA Act in 2016, after which economic policy in Puerto Rico has been dictated by an unelected board appointed by the US president. The economic body, often derided by Puerto Ricans as the "Junta of Control," has imposed austerity on the island and sold off public institutions to private interests.

The situation has led to massive protests over the last several years, especially after a trove of private messages from government officials was leaked in 2019. The texts and emails confirmed people's worst suspicions that policy is being enacted to serve outside investors rather than Puerto Rican families.

"I saw the future, it's so wonderful, there are no Puerto Ricans," read one ominous message.

Garriga-López's interview, as well as other episodes of Political Misfits, can be heard on Rumble and other podcast platforms.

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'Make Them Pay': Trump Attacks US News Outlet in Social Media Salvo

The comments suggest the former president may seek retribution against opposition media outlets if reelected in 2024.

Former US President Donald Trump railed against cable news channel MSNBC in a post on his Truth Social platform Tuesday, accusing the liberal media outlet of forming part of an "election interference" effort against the former commander-in-chief.

"MSNBC (MSDNC) uses FREE government approved airwaves, and yet it is nothing but a 24 hour hit job on Donald J. Trump and the Republican Party for purposes of ELECTION INTERFERENCE," wrote Trump in the late night post.

"It is the world's biggest political contribution to the Radical Left Democrats who, by the way, are destroying our Country. Our so-called 'government' should come down hard on them and make them pay for their illegal political activity."

MSNBC is actually a cable news outlet, unlike broadcast networks like ABC, CBS, or MSNBC's sister network NBC.

The US Federal Communications Commission has limited power to regulate political speech on broadcast outlets available over-the-air but generally lacks authority over content on "cable or satellite TV systems," meaning the US government may lack power to "come down hard" on the channel.

The comments may suggest another area in which the former president would attempt to seek retribution against his enemies; Trump recently said he may seek to prosecute political opponents if reelected next year.

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As president, Trump reportedly pressured the media conglomerate Time Warner to sell cable network CNN in order to win approval from his Justice Department for their planned merger with AT&T. Trump has frequently condemned the channel, which in turn was often sharply critical of the former president during his time in the White House.

Although Trump's attacks on various news outlets have sometimes proven controversial, they may fall on fertile ground amidst a broader crisis of institutional legitimacy in the United States. Recent polling has shown only about a third of Americans have trust in US mass media. That number has fallen from a high of 72% of Americans who said they had a "great deal" or "fair amount" of trust in US media outlets in 1976.

US mass media has trended toward increasing corporate consolidation in recent decades, especially after the signing of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 which broadly deregulated the industry. About six large conglomerates reportedly control 90% of media in the United States: Comcast, Disney, AT&T/Time Warner, Paramount, Sony, and Fox. The number has fallen from about 50 companies that controlled 90% of US media in 1983 according to some studies.

Even within the United States' small public media sector, funding from corporations and private institutions plays a key role. Political threats to abolish public support for outlets like PBS and NPR may also help drive their editorial line. Meanwhile, the journalism industry faces a broader financial crisis in the United States, with 2023 seeing a record number of layoffs in the sector.

The 1988 book, "Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media," by academics Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman argued that US mass media outlets are "ideological institutions that carry out a system-supportive propaganda function."

The authors' studies suggested government influence, self-censorship, and capitalist market forces play an important role in shaping news coverage, especially in regards to support for Western military action.

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'F*** You': McCarthy Reportedly Cursed Trump After Speakership Battle

McCarthy was angry with the former president for not offering support as Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-FL) sought the then-House speaker's removal, according to people familiar with the matter.

Ex-House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) had a few terse words for former US President Donald Trump after the latter refused to offer assistance during his battle for the speakership, according to American media reports.

"F*** you," the former House speaker told Trump in a phone conversation after his ouster, according to sources McCarthy reportedly told about the interaction.

The outburst reportedly came after Trump offered a list of reasons why he refused to back McCarthy amidst the unprecedented drama last month.

McCarthy had long angered populist elements of the House Republican caucus, who only agreed to allow him to become speaker after he submitted to a series of demands from the conservative Freedom Caucus.

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McCarthy has publicly defended Trump, who remains the favorite to win the presidential nomination of his party in the 2024 election. The California lawmaker has even stood by Trump as 91 felony charges have been filed against the former president.

Recent findings from former Rep. Liz Cheney's looming book, "Oath and Honor," revealed that McCarthy in 2021 made a public visit to Trump's Mar-a-Lago compound to comfort the former commander-in-chief after his electoral loss the previous November.

"Trump's not eating, so they asked me to come see him," McCarthy told Cheney at the time, according to excerpts from the book.

The visit resulted in criticism of McCarthy, who had blamed Trump for the January 6 riots at the US Capitol just days before, but it seemed to suggest a degree of respect between the two political figures. But the former president was reportedly angry that McCarthy didn't seek to expunge his two impeachments at the time of their phone call this year.

Nevertheless, people familiar with Trump and McCarthy's relationship say the two continue to share text messages with each other.

McCarthy has previously been an important fundraiser for the Republican Party, which is currently having difficulties raising money, according to recent filings with the Federal Election Commission. Powerful donors have reportedly cut back on donations to the party in rejection of Trump's continuing influence.

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UK's Sunak Having 'Hissy Fit' Over Sculptures Taken from Greece - Ex-Tory Minister

Greece has called upon the United Kingdom to return ancient sculptures from the Parthenon that have been held in London for over 200 years.

A spat between the UK's Prime Minister and his Greek counterpart escalated this week, but former Conservative chancellor George Osborne suggests domestic politics may be to blame.

The ex-Tory finance minister made the comment on his podcast Political Currency. Earlier this week UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak canceled a planned meeting with the Hellenic Republic leader Kyriakos Mitsotakis. Officially, Sunak's office claimed the meeting was scrapped after Mitsotakis publicly raised the issue of the return of ancient Greek sculptures currently held in the British Museum.

The sculptures, known in the United Kingdom as the Elgin Marbles, were removed from Athens in the early 19th century and have controversially remained in London ever since.

"Is it just petulance?" said Osborne, who now serves as chair of the British Museum. "Is it just having a bit of a hissy fit? And, I think if that's the reason, it's not because Mitsotakis was going to raise the Elgin Marbles. It's because he had met [Labour Party leader] Keir Starmer the day before."

Polls currently show Sunak trailing Starmer's center-left Labour Party, although the next general election remains unscheduled. The Labour Party was previously led by socialist Jeremy Corbyn, who faced opposition from prominent members of UK intelligence agencies. With Corbyn out of

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the equation, Starmer's more centrist Labour Party has faced less establishment opposition within the United Kingdom's purported democracy.
Osborne suggested Sunak was scoring "cheap points" by casting his feud with the Greek Prime Minister in terms of the battle over the sculptures.
In Greece, the marbles are considered part of the Parthenon Sculptures after the ancient temple they were originally taken from. Greece has sought their return to Athens for centuries.
The British Museum is highly controversial for containing numerous artifacts that critics allege were stolen during the reign of the British Empire. Human rights lawyer Geoffrey Robertson once called the museum one of the "world's largest receivers of stolen property."
Recently, the museum announced it would be creating digital records of its collection after reporting some 2,000 artifacts had been stolen or were missing. The museum claims to hold some 8 million objects from around the world.

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Coming in Hot: UN Chief Says 2023 Warmest Year 'Recorded In Human History'

The year 2023 has seen severe fires, floods, and heat waves around the world.
If this summer felt particularly hot to you, you aren't just imagining things.
United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said 2023 will be the hottest year on record during the opening of the COP28 climate summit in Dubai Thursday.
The claim is surprising because, naturally, the data isn't all in yet. The world still has another month to go before there will be a full year's worth of statistics. Actually, the World Meteorological Organization report cited by the UN head didn't include full data for November either.
Guterres nevertheless felt confident making the claim, as the WMO report concluded 2023 has been so hot that it's unlikely the last two months would alter the prediction.
"We are living through climate collapse in real time," Guterres claimed before delegates in Dubai. "Record global heating should send shivers down the spines of world leaders. And it should trigger them to act."
Previously this month the WMO said the El Niño weather pattern should be expected to last until April, raising the prospect that 2024 will be another record-setting year.
The WMO preliminary report shows that 2023 was on average 1.4 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial temperatures. That's just shy of the 1.5 degree rise world leaders have set as a goal.
The Paris Climate Agreement set a two degree Celsius rise versus pre-industrial numbers as the safe upper limit. This global temperature average was surpassed briefly earlier in November.

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US Supreme Court Mulls Taking Up Three January 6 Appeals - Reports

WASHINGTON, December 1 (Sputnik) - The US Supreme Court will consider for the first time on Friday whether to move forward with appeals from defendants facing charges related to the events at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, heightening the stakes for former President Donald Trump's own criminal case, NBC News reported.

The Supreme Court will consider whether to take up three appeals filed separately by Joseph Fischer, Edward Lang and Garret Miller. The three seek the dismissal of charges that they obstructed an official proceeding. Trump and other individuals have also been charged with the same offense.

A lower court ruling has already allowed the government to pursue the charges. If the Supreme Court decides to move forward with any of the appeals, it would issue a ruling sometime during its current term that ends in June.

Such a decision would also mean that Trump's legal team could seek to delay his election interference criminal trial, which is scheduled to begin in March.

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Canada Pledges $11.8Mln to Fight Climate-Related Damage in Developing Countries - Minister

WASHINGTON, December 1st, (Sputnik) - Canada is contributing C$16 million (US$11.8 million) to the global fund to address climate-related losses and damages in developing countries, Minister of Environment Steven Guilbeault said on Friday.

"Canada is providing $16 million to address the impacts of climate change through the fund on loss and damage," Guilbeault said via X (formerly Twitter).

Guilbeault made the comment in Dubai, where he is representing Canada at the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28).

The minister also said he was very encouraged to see the COP28 presidency demonstrate "strong leadership" in securing the adoption of the fund on Thursday.

The country's environment ministry issued a statement saying Canada is one of the first contributors to the initiative.

Although all countries are affected by the consequences of climate change, developing nations are particularly vulnerable to its effects, the statement said.

"Developing countries, which contribute the least to the pollution that causes climate change, are the most vulnerable to some of its harshest consequences," the statement added.

The funding has been provided through Canada's C$5.3 billion (US$3.9 billion) climate finance commitment, according to the statement.

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

US Plans Visa Ban on Extremist Israeli Settlers in West Bank - Reports

WASHINGTON, December 1 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken conveyed to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that the White House plans to impose visa bans within a matter of weeks on Israeli settlers involved in extremist violence in the West Bank, The Washington Post reported on Friday, citing a senior State Department official.

Blinken made the remarks in a closed-door meeting with Netanyahu in Jerusalem, the report added. He also encouraged Israel to take legal action against all lawbreakers, including Israelis who are also US citizens.

The ban would prevent extremist settlers from traveling to the US, although those who are dual US-Israeli citizens would not be affected.

According to the UN, which began tracking fatalities in 2005, the year 2023 was already on track to be the deadliest for Palestinians in the West Bank, with 248 killed by Israeli forces and settlers before October 7. Since then, the violence has only skyrocketed, with the same number of Palestinians killed.

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UN Chief Calls on Governments to Adopt Legislation Helpful to Reduce Fossil Fuels

UNITED NATIONS, December 1 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Friday urged governments to adopt legislation to reduce the use of fossil fuels and adopt suitable tax reforms.

"I urge governments to help the industry make the right choice - by regulating, legislating, putting a fair price on carbon, ending fossil fuel subsidies and adopting a windfall tax on profits," Guterres said during the opening ceremony of the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28).

Governments should also accelerate the transition to renewable sources of energy, Guterres added.

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UN Chief Tells Fuel Company Leaders That Their Old Road 'Rapidly Aging'

UNITED NATIONS, December 1 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Friday sent a message to the leaders of fossil fuel companies that their "old road is rapidly aging."

"So, I have a message for fossil fuel company leaders: Your old road is rapidly aging," Guterres said during the opening ceremony of the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference

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(COP28).

Guterres also encouraged energy leaders and others to move toward renewable sources of energy.

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Kissinger Didn't Believe in US World Hegemony, Sought to Keep Stability - Ex-Official

WASHINGTON, December 1 (Sputnik) - The late Henry Kissinger, former US Secretary of State, did not believe in the United States having hegemony over the world, but instead envisioned using American influence to help maintain global stability, former Assistant Treasury Secretary Paul Craig Roberts told Sputnik.

Kissinger, known for his contributions to contemporary political discourse and the field of international relations, died on Wednesday at his home in the US state of Connecticut at the age of 100.

"Henry Kissinger was not a neoconservative who believed in US hegemony over the world. He believed in stability. American power was to be used to maintain stability," Roberts, who served as a senior Treasury official in the Reagan administration, said.

Roberts described Kissinger and President Richard Nixon as men of peace who inherited a "disastrous war" in Vietnam.

"President John F. Kennedy intended to stop the war before it could get started, which was one of the reasons he was assassinated by the CIA, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Secret Service," Roberts said. "The Soviet threat had to be resisted even at the cost of President Kennedy's life and the trauma inflicted on what was still in those days a free nation."

With respect to the Cambodian bombings, Roberts said Nixon and Kissinger were desperate to exit the war without it being seen as a defeat by their political base.

"They were trying to use force to achieve an honorable exit, but the enemy would not give it to them," Roberts said.

Moreover, Robert said Nixon and Kissinger also had to restart the efforts started by Kennedy to defuse the dangerous tensions of the Cold War brought on by the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Vietnam War.

The pursuit of detente by the Nixon administration resulted in the Strategic Arms Limitations Agreement and created a working relationship between Washington and Moscow, Roberts said.

In addition, the Nixon administration's efforts to normalize relations with China might have prevented another war, Roberts said.

Nixon and Kissinger's work to defuse the Cold War were unrivaled until President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev ended the Cold war, Roberts said.

"Today I still encounter American conservatives who claim that Reagan won the Cold War," Roberts said. "This is nonsense. Reagan told those of us involved that the purpose was to end, not win, the Cold War."

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Biden Says Although Often Disagreed With Kissinger, His 'Fierce Intellect' Evident

WASHINGTON, December 1 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden said that although he often disagreed with former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, he took note of the former top US diplomat's level of intellect.

"I'll never forget the first time I met Dr. Kissinger. I was a young Senator, and he was Secretary of State—giving a briefing on the state of the world. Throughout our careers, we often disagreed. And often strongly. But from that first briefing - his fierce intellect and profound strategic focus was evident," Biden said in a press release on Thursday,

Biden highlighted that long after Kissinger retired from working in the US government, he continued to offer his views and ideas on important policy discussions throughout the years.

Kissinger, known for his contributions to contemporary political discourse and the field of international relations, died on Wednesday at his home in the US state of Connecticut at the age of 100.

According to the international geopolitical consulting firm Kissinger Associates, Kissinger will be interred at a private family service. At a later date, there will be a memorial service in New York City.

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Biden Says During Meeting With President Lourenco He Would Visit Angola Again

WASHINGTON, December 1 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden met with his Angolan counterpart Joao Lourenco in the Oval Office and said he would visit Angola again, according to a White House pool report.

"I have been there [in Angola] and I will be back," the report cited Biden as saying on Thursday.

Lourencio told Biden that he would invite him to visit Luanda and will discuss the possible dates of the visit, the report said.

Earlier on Thursday, Biden hosted Lourenco to mark three decades of diplomatic relations between the United Sates and Angola and to discuss plans to deepen bilateral cooperation in trade, investment, climate and energy.

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Terrorist Groups Worldwide Remain Resilient, Determined to Attack - US State Dept. Report

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WASHINGTON, December 1 (Sputnik) - International terrorist organizations like the Islamic State (IS, banned in Russia) continue to be strong despite crucial counterterrorism progresses, the State Department said in a new report.

"Despite key counterterrorism successes, terrorist groups remained resilient and determined to attack," the State Department said in its 2022 Country Reports on Terrorism released on Thursday. "ISIS [IS] maintained an enduring global enterprise, promoting a large-scale terrorism campaign across the Middle East, Africa, and Asia... [and] a significant underground operational structure and conducted terrorist operations throughout Iraq and Syria."

While the death of IS leader Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi in February marked an important milestone, the group remained capable of conducting large-scale attacks, the report said.

In West Africa, the report added, IS affiliates increasingly expanded across borders and coordinated asymmetric attacks.

IS also expanded its recruitment and operations across key locales, growing its global network to some 20 branches.

Moreover, last year al-Qaeda terrorist group (banned in Russia) and its affiliates remained resilient and determined, and particularly its senior leaders continued to oversee a global network to target the United States and its interests in Africa and the Middle East.

Al-Qaeda, IS, and regionally focused terrorist groups remained active inside Afghanistan. al-Qaeda and its affiliates has the intent but lacked the capability to directly attack the United States from Afghanistan, the document said.

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US House of Representatives Passes Bill to Ban Funding of Migrant Shelters on Federal Land

WASHINGTON, December 1 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives passed legislation banning the use of federal funds to house illegal migrants on US government land, despite opposition to the bill by the White House.

House lawmakers passed the legislation, dubbed the Protecting Communities from Failure to Secure the Border Act, in a vote of 224-203 on Thursday.

“House Republicans won’t stop fighting to ensure Americans don’t continue paying the price for Biden’s failures by losing their public spaces,” House Majority Leader Steve Scalise said in a statement on the bill.

The legislation would prohibit using federal funds to provide temporary shelter to certain noncitizens on land managed by agencies, including the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Forest Service.

The Biden administration opposes the bill due to its restrictions on the ability of federal agencies to make decisions regarding appropriate use of their land and resources, the White House said in a statement.

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US House of Representatives Passes Bill to Refreeze $6Bln in Iranian Funds Freed by Biden

WASHINGTON, December 1 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives passed legislation to refreeze $6 billion in Iranian funds initially released by the Biden administration as part of a prisoner swap deal reached earlier this year.

House lawmakers passed the bill, dubbed the No Funds For Iranian Terrorism Act, in a vote of 307-119 on Thursday.

The legislation imposes sanctions on any financial institution that engages in transactions with the Qatari banks holding the Iranian funds, effectively freezing the money, according to a House Republican statement on the bill.

The United States and Qatar agreed to block Iran from accessing the funds following Hamas' October 7 surprise attack on Israel. The Biden administration has also stressed that that funds could only be used for humanitarian purposes.

However, the money is fungible and could be used to fund the activities of groups like Hamas and Hezbollah, the House Republican statement said.

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Tucker Carlson Says Will Vote for Trump, Rally Support if Former US President Convicted

WASHINGTON, December 1 (Sputnik) - Former Fox News host Tucker Carlson said during an interview with comedian Roseanne Barr that he supports former US President Donald Trump in the 2024 US presidential race, adding that he will rally support behind Trump if he is convicted in court.

"I certainly support Trump," Carlson said on Thursday. "I'm voting for Trump, and if they convict him, I will send him the max donations and I will lead protests."

Carlson said that he became an active Trump supporter following a raid on his Mar-a-Lago property by federal law enforcement.

Trump faces a number of criminal charges in several cases, including for his alleged mishandling of classified documents and ties to the January 6 US Capitol riot.

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Tesla Makes Three Cybertrucks Models Available for Reservation Starting at $60,990

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WASHINGTON, December 1 (Sputnik) – Tesla has finally published prices for its three Cybertruck models on its website and opened reservations for cars that will not be available until next year, and some only in 2025.

At the moment, one can reserve one of three Cybertruck models: Rear-Wheel Drive, All-Wheel Drive, and Cyberbeast. The prices for these three models will start at $60,990, $79,990, and $99,990, respectively, according to the information on the Tesla website published on Thursday.

The cheapest rear-wheel drive Cybertruck model with a 250-mile range won't be available until 2025, while Tesla will begin shipping the other two models in 2024.

The most expensive model, Cyberbeast, will have a 320-mile range and feature an 845-horsepower engine with a maximum speed of 130 miles per hour. The car will be able to speed up to 60 miles per hour in just 2.6 seconds, according to its specifications.

To reserve a Cybertruck model, one will have to pay $250, which is fully refundable.

Tesla confirmed in October that the first deliveries of Cybertrucks were scheduled for November 30 and that their production would begin by the end of 2023. The company also said about 125,000 Cybertrucks per year would be produced at a gigafactory in Texas.

The Tesla Cybertruck is a battery electric full-size pickup truck, built with "an exterior shell made for ultimate durability and passenger protection" and featuring "a nearly impenetrable exoskeleton" and "armor glass," according to Tesla. The truck is capable of accelerating from 0-60 miles per hour in 2.9 seconds and traveling for up to 500 miles.

The release of the truck, first announced in 2019, has been postponed several times. It was first scheduled to be available for purchase in 2021, but then Tesla postponed sales to 2022 and 2023.

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Russia’s Dunaev Pleads Guilty to 2 Counts, Sentencing Set For March 20 – Court Document

WASHINGTON, December 1 (Sputnik) – Russian national Vladimir Dunaev pleaded guilty in a federal US court to two criminal counts related to cyber fraud and will be sentenced on March 20, 2024, a court document said.

“Plea entered by Vladimir Dunaev (5), Guilty as to Counts 1 and 2 of the Indictment, which the court accepts as stated on the record. A written plea agreement was executed,” the court said in a filing on Thursday.

Sentencing is set for March 20 at 11:00 a.m. Eastern time, it added. However, the sentencing could be moved to an earlier date if the pre-sentence investigation (PSI) report can be expedited, the filing added.

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US Senator Blackburn Says Colleague Blocked Epstein Flight Log Subpoena Request

WASHINGTON, December 1 (Sputnik) - US Senator Marsha Blackburn said in a statement that her Senate colleague Dick Durbin blocked her request to subpoena flight logs connected to convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

"[Senator Durbin] blocked my request to subpoena Jeffrey Epstein's flight logs," Blackburn said on Thursday via social media platform X. "What are Democrats trying to hide?"

In August 2019, Epstein was found dead in his cell at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in New York. The New York City Office of the Chief Medical Examiner determined that Epstein committed suicide.

Epstein died while awaiting trial on child sex trafficking charges and the circumstances of his death have been the subject of scrutiny and speculation.

Earlier this year, Blackburn filed a subpoena request to Epstein's estate for flight logs from his private plane, which was used to transport people to his properties.

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US As Matter of Basic Principle Supports Free, Fair Elections In Palestine - Blinken

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - The United States supports free and fair elections around the world, including in the Palestinian territories, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said during a press conference in Tel Aviv on Thursday.

"As a matter of basic principle, we support free and fair elections around the world, including, of course for Palestinians," Blinken said.

Blinken added that the Palestinians should have the right to choose their own leaders.

"But that has to be a process. And it's something that we need to be talking about as we move from the conflict to, as we've been calling it, the 'day after,' looking at what needs to happen in Gaza, as well as the West Bank, but starting in Gaza, particularly, with regard to things like governance, like security, like rebuilding. And part of that discussion needs to be about elections," Blinken said.

Earlier this month, Palestinian National Authority President Mahmoud Abbas announced readiness to hold general presidential and parliamentary elections in all Palestinian territories.

The Palestinian Authority has not conducted elections since January 2006, when Hamas came to power in Gaza after winning a parliamentary vote.

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US, Allies Sanction North Korea in Response to Satellite Launch - Treasury Department

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WASHINGTON, December 1 (Sputnik) - The United States along with Australia, Japan and South Korea has imposed new sanctions on North Korea in response to its launch of a spy satellite earlier this month, the US Treasury Department said in a press release.

"Today, in coordination with foreign partners, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned eight foreign-based Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) agents that facilitate sanctions evasion, including revenue generation and missile-related technology procurement that support the DPRK's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs," the Treasury said in its release on Thursday.

The Treasury said it also sanctioned cyber espionage group Kimsuky for allegedly gathering intelligence on behalf of North Korea.

It added that the sanctions came in response to North Korea's November 21 launch of its Malligyong-1 military reconnaissance satellite.

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US, Angola to Have High-Level Dialogue in 2024 - Biden Administration Official

WASHINGTON, December 1 (Sputnik) - The United States and Angola will engage in a high-level dialogue next year to discuss various potential agreements, a senior Biden administration official said.

"We are going to have a high-level dialogue in 2024," the official said during a press briefing.

The official made the comment in response to a question regarding the upcoming US-Angola defense cooperation agreement, which is scheduled to be signed in 2024.

The official said the two countries will discuss various agreements such as enhancing security, military-to-military exchanges as well as education and English language capacity.

"There's really a lot of excitement about the ways in which we can work more closely with the Angolan security issues," the official added.

US President Joe Biden is set to host later on Thursday a bilateral meeting with Angolan President Joao Manuel Goncalves Lourenco to mark three decades of diplomatic relations and discuss plans to deepen bilateral cooperation in trade, investment, climate and energy.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, December 1 (Sputnik) –

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* Russian High Commissioner for Human Rights Tatiana Moskalkova said on Thursday that she visited 119 Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) in Russia, while her Ukrainian counterpart, Dmytro Lubinets, visited 119 Russian POWs in Ukraine at the same time.

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* US President Joe Biden and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan have directed the US government to prioritize efforts to bolster Ukraine's energy infrastructure to prepare for the winter ahead, White House Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said.
* Ukraine has lost up to 270 soldiers in the Donetsk direction over the past 24 hours, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

WAR IN GAZA

* The United States does not support a permanent ceasefire in the Israeli-Hamas war at this time, but backs humanitarian pauses, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Thursday.
* Two Israeli prisoners have been handed over to the Red Cross and are currently being sent to Israel, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said.
* Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas told US Secretary of State Antony Blinken that it is necessary to strengthen the ceasefire that is currently in place in the Gaza Strip, Palestinian news agency WAFA reported.
* Blinken said that during his visit to Israel he made clear that Israel must put plans in place to minimize civilian casualties once it resumes its military operations in the Gaza Strip.

GLOBAL ENERGY MARKETS

* The United Arab Emirates will implement an additional voluntary cut of 163,000 barrels per day in oil output in the first quarter of the next year, the Emirates News Agency (WAM) reported on Thursday.
* The decisions on oil production made within the framework of the OPEC+ alliance will help go through the winter when the oil demand is lower, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said.
* Russia will deepen the additional voluntary oil exports cuts to 500,000 barrels per day, and extend it until the end of the first quarter of 2024, Novak said.
* The drop in the global oil prices on Thursday exceeded 3% after the OPEC and OPEC+ ministerial meetings, the trading data showed.

OSCE MEETING

* The logic that it is impossible to discuss Europe’s fate without Russia has prevailed in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Thursday.
* The OSCE is on the brink of an abyss and it is unclear if it is worth "investing" in it to ensure security, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said.
* Lavrov expects a very busy schedule within the framework of the meeting of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in Skopje, with many working meetings planned, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

ARMENIA-AZERBAIJAN TALKS

* Yerevan and Baku have agreed to intensify meetings of commissions on delimitation, the Armenian Foreign Ministry said on Thursday.
* Azerbaijan and Armenia agreed to intensify the meetings of the state border delimitation commissions, the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry said.

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Foiled Murder Plot of US Sikh Separatist Worries Canadian Sikhs – Public Safety Minister

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) – The foiled plot to murder a US citizen of Indian origin who advocated for the creation of an independent Sikh state in India is a source of concern for the Sikh-Canadian community, Minister of Public Safety Dominic Leblanc said on Thursday.

On Wednesday, the US Department of Justice laid charges against an international drug trafficker plotting to kill Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a Sikh separatist leader, on US soil, at the alleged request of an Indian government employee.

The incident raised concern in Canada as in September, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau had said Ottawa was examining “credible allegations” linking Indian officials to the killing of Sikh separatist leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

The activist, who was shot by two masked men in the Canadian province of British Columbia on June 18, also advocated for the creation of an independent Sikh state in India called Khalistan.

“The RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] with their policing partners across the country are very engaged with the Sikh community and other communities across the country that understandably feel an increased threat level,” Leblanc said during the House of Commons question period.

The Ministers' remarks addressed a question by the leader of the New Democratic Party, Jagmeet Singh, who demanded clarifications on what the Canadian government was doing to ensure the safety of Sikhs in the country, amid the latest allegations.

Leblanc added that with respect to the actions taken by the US Department of Justice following the thwarted assassination plot, it was understandable for Sikh communities in Canada to be concerned.

“The RCMP are continuing to collaborate with American law enforcement partners, and we'll do everything necessary to ensure the safety of Canadians,” the Minister continued.

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US Lawmakers Call on Biden Administration to Probe Chinese Drone Maker Autel - Letter

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - The Select US House Committee on the Chinese Communist Party is calling on the Biden administration to investigate Chinese drone maker Autel and whether it should potentially be subject to US sanctions, according to a letter obtained by Sputnik on Thursday.

"We are writing to urge the Department of Commerce, the Department of Defense, and the Department of Treasury to investigate People’s Republic of China (PRC)-headquartered drone manufacturer Autel Robotics, as well as its apparent US subsidiary Autel Robotics USA LLC, for inclusion on the Commerce Entity List, the DoD Chinese Military Companies List, and the

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Treasury Non-SDN Chinese Military Industrial Complex Companies List (NS-CMIC List)," the letter said.

The Committee, led by Chairman Mike Gallagher and Ranking Member Raja Krishnamoorthi, sent the letter to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, and Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm.

According to the lawmakers, Autel is affiliated with the Chinese government and poses a direct threat to US national security because local US law enforcement and state and local government agencies are purchasing and operating the company's drones, which could potentially expose sensitive data.

The Committee also said it is concerned that Autel's technology has been used by Chinese public security officials to conduct surveillance operations throughout the country and that Autel maintains operations in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

Moreover, the letter claims that Autel further appears to be potentially supporting Russia's military operation in Ukraine.

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Boeing Lauds $5.9Bln Deal with Canada, Says Will Bolster Defense Capability, Readiness

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) – US aircraft manufacturer Boeing on Thursday lauded a newly inked $5.9 billion deal with Canada's Department of National Defense, saying it would considerably increase its defense capability and combat readiness.

Earlier on Thursday, Canada's Minister of National Defense Bill Blair said that Ottawa had awarded the multibillion-dollar contract to procure up to 16 P-8A Poseidon surveillance planes to replace the Royal Canadian Air Force's (RCAF) aging fleet of CP-140 Aurora aircraft.

"The P-8 will bolster Canada's defense capability and readiness, and we look forward to delivering this capability to the Royal Canadian Air Force," the statement said, quoting the President of Business Development for Boeing Defense, Space & Security Heidi Grant.

Grant further noted that the company would continue to cooperate with Canada in delivering a strong industrial and technological package aimed at guaranteeing the prosperity of the country's aerospace industry.

With the deal, Canada will be joining its Five Eyes allies - the US, United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand – in operating P-8A Poseidon multi-mission aircraft, the statement added.

The procurement contract will also support the creation of 3,000 jobs annually in the Canadian aerospace industry and its supply chain, National Defense said in a separate statement. Under the deal, Boeing will be contributing around $358 million to Canada's GDP yearly over the course of a decade.

The Department added that it had determined the plane was the best option for delivering on antisubmarine, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, which would in turn ensure the protection of Canada's Arctic and bolster the country's ability to meet commitments

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to NATO and NORAD.

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Pentagon Says Tracking Investigation Into Alcohol Consumption at US Military Worksites

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin is tracking an investigation into potential alcohol consumption at US military worksites, Pentagon Deputy Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said on Thursday.

"The Secretary is aware of the investigation," Singh said during a press briefing. "I'm not going to get ahead of the investigation, as it's ongoing now, but we are certainly tracking it here."

On Wednesday, US Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command chief Gen. Glen VanHerck confirmed the launch of an investigation into alcohol consumption at military worksites.

Officials recovered beer and liquor containers in a classified workspace during a walk-through of office spaces, VanHerck said in remarks to US media. The probe, which could take several weeks, will examine whether alcohol was consumed during work hours, VanHerck said.

Preliminary assessments indicate that there are no readiness issues or cultural problems related to alcohol consumption by US troops, VanHerck said.

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US Looking to Israel to Take Steps Over Settler Violence, Considering Own Steps - Blinken

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - The United States expects Israel to take appropriate steps to stop extremist violence in the West Bank and is considering its own steps in this regard, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Thursday.

"With regard to extremist violence, all I can tell you is this. We're looking to the Israeli government to take some additional steps to really put a stop to this. And at the same time we're considering our own steps," Blinken said at a press conference in Tel Aviv.

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Blinken Says Discussed With Abbas Need to Reform Palestinian Authority

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Thursday that during his meeting with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas he discussed the need for a range of reforms to revamp the Palestinian state so it could be more effective in

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meeting the aspirations of the Palestinian people.

"I had an opportunity to discuss today with President Abbas the need for reform, the need to revitalize, to revamp the Palestinian Authority, so that it can most effectively meet the aspirations of the Palestinian people and deliver for them," Blinken said during a press conference in Tel Aviv as part of his trip to the region.

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Artemis Manned Landing on Moon Likely Delayed to 2027 - Official Report

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - NASA is likely to delay the first US manned mission to the Moon at least until 2025 and probably 2027 because of unresolved problems with space suits and the new lunar lander, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) said in a new report on Thursday.

"NASA and its contractors ...are still facing challenges with developing the lunar lander and space suits," the report said. "As a result, we found that the lunar landing mission is unlikely to occur in 2025 as planned. ...GAO found that if development took as long as the average for NASA major projects, the Artemis III mission would likely occur in early 2027."

More than half the key development events to develop the new lander are already at least half a year behind schedule, the GAO report acknowledged.

"As of September 2023, the Human Landing System program had delayed eight of 13 key events by at least six months. Two of these events have been delayed to 2025 - the year the lander is planned to launch," it said.

NASA has acknowledged there are delays in developing the lunar lander, the GAO acknowledged. The space agency has stated it was reviewing the schedule for developing the lunar lander, the report noted.

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Blinken Says Massive Loss Of Civilian Life In Northern Gaza Must Not Be Repeated In South

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) -US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Thursday that during his visit to Israel he discussed details of Tel-Aviv's military operations and underscored that massive civilian casualties that took place in Northern Gaza must not repeat in the south of the enclave.

"We discussed the details of Israel's ongoing planning, and I underscored the imperative the United States, that the massive loss of civilian life and displacement of the scale that we saw in northern Gaza, not be repeated in the South," Blinken said.

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Blinken Says Raised With Israel Concerns About Settler Violence, Expansion of Settlements

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Thursday that in his talks with the Israeli leadership he raised the issue of extremist settler violence and recent proposals in the Israeli government to expand illegal settlements in Palestine.

"I raised our deep concerns about steps that could escalate tensions in the West Bank, including extremist settler violence and proposals from parts of the Israeli coalition government to further expand settlement," Blinken said during a press conference in Tel Aviv as part of his trip to the region.

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Blinken Says Made Clear Israel Must Put Plans in Place to Minimize Civilian Casualties

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Thursday that during his visit to Israel he made clear that Israel must put plans in place to minimize civilian casualties once it resumes its military operations in the Gaza Strip.

"In my meetings today with the Prime Minister and senior Israeli officials, I made clear that before Israel resumes major military operations, it must put in place humanitarian civilian protection plans that minimize further casualties of innocent Palestinians," Blinken said at a press conference in Tel Aviv.

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US Congressman Massie Says Platform X Got Better After Elon Musk Bought it

UNITED NATIONS, November 30 (Sputnik), Lenka White - US Congressman Thomas Massie said on Thursday that platform X has gotten much better after Elon Musk acquired it and that he already has given up on Facebook.

"In my experience, Twitter (X) is much better after Elon purchased it," Massie replied to public on his X profile on a question whether the social platform has improved. "I gave up on Facebook - removed the App from my phone - so I wouldn't know about it. My staff reposts my original twitter material to Facebook."

Earlier today, Massie also posted that organizations, which were government funded, were censoring his and other congressmen accounts on social media, such as on X. The

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congressman added that if the government is flagging members of Congress, then they can be doing it against any user.

Massie is an avid X user who posts about his goals and visions within the US Congress. The congressman is also against any aid to Kiev or Tel Aviv, given that US debt is in trillions of dollars.

On Thursday, committee Chair Jim Jordan released evidence of the White House repeatedly pressuring Google to censor content on YouTube. The evidence follows similar releases detailing collusion between the US government and social media platforms including Twitter (now known as X) and Facebook (outlawed in Russia as an extremist organization).

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Pentagon Says Attacks on US Forces in Iraq, Syria Up to 74 After Attack on Tuesday

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - There have been 74 attacks on US forces in Iraq and Syria since October 17, following the most recent attack on Tuesday, Deputy Pentagon Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said on Thursday.

"There was an attack on Tuesday … so that brings the total attacks up to 74 attacks from October 17 until now," Singh said during a press briefing.

The latest attack took place in Syria, Singh said. The attack did not result in any injuries or damage to infrastructure, Singh said.

The attacks by Iran-backed groups come amid heightened tensions in the Middle East due to the conflict between Israel and Hamas.

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US Senator Says Intends to Introduce Bill Thursday to Stop Tax Avoidance by Super Rich

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - US Senator Ron Wyden said that he intends to introduce on Thursday the Billionaire Income Tax bill to prevent tax avoidance by the super rich in the United States.

"A billionaire buys a business, and then borrows against its growing, untaxed value to fund their extravagant lifestyle," Wyden, a Democrat from Oregon, said. "Everything from super-yachts, to luxurious vacations, expensive art deals, you name it. It goes up and up in value all while not paying a dime in tax. And when they die, their assets are passed to their kids - often entirely tax-free - and the cycle continues."

Wyden explained that the bill seeks to address the "buy, borrow, die" phenomenon, whereby the average billionaire can enter a "measly" 8% tax rate while nurses, firefighters and other working Americans making $45,000 are paying a 22% percent tax on their wages.

"Under current tax law 'buy, borrow, die' is perfectly legal - [a] pretty sickening reality," Wyden

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said.

By contrast, working people do not get to play by the same rules as billionaires and they do not have available an army of high-priced lawyers and accountants every time they do not feel like paying taxes, Wyden said.

However, the odds of the bill becoming law are slim, with rival Republicans being in control of the House of Representatives via a razor-thin majority. Corporate leaders who backed President Joe Biden in the 2020 election have also conveyed deep skepticism that the bill would ever become law. Biden has previously said that he sought a 25% tax and other levies on billionaires under the bill.

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Kirby Says India Still Strategic Partner Despite 'Plot' to Kill Sikh Separatist in US

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) – The United States still views India as a strategic partner after linking its government to a foiled plot to assassinate a US citizen of Indian origin who advocated for the creation of an independent Sikh state in India, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Thursday.

"India remains a strategic partner and we're going to continue to work to improve and strengthen that strategic partnership with India at the same time we take this [alleged assassination attempt] very seriously," Kirby said during a press briefing.

The White House welcomes India's plans to announce its own efforts to investigate the case and wants to see anyone responsible for this to be held accountable, Kirby added.

Last week, the Financial Times reported, citing multiple unnamed sources, that the United States had thwarted a plot to assassinate Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a Sikh separatist leader, on US soil.

On Wednesday, the US Department of Justice said that an international drug trafficker had been charged with plotting to kill a US citizen of Indian origin who had publicly advocated for the creation of an independent Sikh state. The man was allegedly directed by an Indian government employee.

India is concerned by reports of the charges being brought against an Indian citizen, Foreign Ministry spokesman Arindam Bagchi said on Thursday. The accusations made by the US Department of Justice are "contrary to government policy," Bagchi said. India has set up a high-level committee to investigate the case.

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Kirby Says Will Be 'Really' Difficult to Support Kiev After End of Year Without New Funds

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WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) – The United States will find it “really” difficult to continue supplying Kiev with weapons for its conflict with Russia if Congress does not provide new funds for the administration by the end of the year, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Thursday.

“We think we've got till about the end of the year before it gets really, really hard to continue to support Ukraine, and the end of the year is coming soon” Kirby said during a press briefing.

Kirby reiterated the White House's call for Congress to approve its supplemental funding request, especially ahead of the winter months, which can become critical for Kiev.

In October, the White House announced that the funds approved by Congress for further military assistance to Ukraine were almost exhausted, forcing it to continuously reduce the volume of aid packages for Kiev. Biden submitted a $106 billion supplemental request to Congress that includes $61 billion for Ukraine along with aid for Israel.

Earlier in November, the US House of Representatives passed a $14 billion Israel aid bill, separating the assistance from the broader request from the Biden administration for funds for Ukraine, Taiwan and border security. Biden and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer rejected the proposal, instead favoring a combined funding package.

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Texas Attorney General Says Suing Pfizer for Misrepresenting COVID-19 Vaccines

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton said on Thursday that he is suing pharmaceutical company Pfizer for allegedly misrepresenting the efficacy of their COVID-19 vaccine and attempting to silence critics of the shot.

“The facts are clear. Pfizer did not tell the truth about their COVID-19 vaccines,” Paxton said in a statement.

Pfizer engaged in deceptive and misleading practices by making unsupported claims about their COVID-19 vaccines, in violation of the Texas Deceptive Trade Practices Act, the statement said. Pfizer fostered a misleading impression that their vaccine provided durable protection and withheld information that undermined claims about the duration of its effectiveness, the statement said.

Pfizer also intimidated and conspired to censor critics of the vaccines, the statement said.

Texas is pursuing justice for people who were coerced into taking a “defective product sold by lies,” the statement said.

The lawsuit follows an investigation by Paxton into Pfizer and other vaccine manufacturers.

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US Not Seeing Progress From Caracas on Demands to Maintain Sanctions Relief - White House

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - The United States is not seeing progress from Venezuela as a deadline nears for Caracas to fulfill certain commitments to maintain partial sanctions relief on the country's energy sector, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Thursday.

Venezuela must make progress on its commitments exchanged for partial sanctions relief before the end of November to avoid snapback sanctions by the United States.

"Haven't seen any progress yet, there's eight hours left in the day, so we'll see what the Venezuelans decide to do," Kirby said during a press briefing.

Kirby said he would not preview decisions about sanctions.

On October 18, the US Department of Treasury announced it issued a six-month waiver easing US sanctions on Venezuela's oil and gas industry, which will be renewed only if Venezuela meets its commitments under the electoral roadmap as well as other commitments with respect to those who are wrongfully detained.

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Canada Awards Boeing $5.9Bln Deal to Replace RCAF Aging CP-140 Aurora Fleet - Blair

(Updates with more details, background in paras 6-9)

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - Canada has awarded Boeing a $5.9 billion contract to replace the Royal Canadian Air Force's (RCAF) aging feet of CP-140 Aurora surveillance planes, National Defense Minister Bill Blair said on Thursday.

"I'm very proud to announce that Canada's acquiring up to 16 Boeing P-8A Poseidon aircraft in the US government for the Royal Canadian Air Force," Blair said.

In late March, Canada submitted a request via the US foreign military sales program to acquire up to 16 P-8A Poseidon surveillance aircraft in replacement of its aging fleet of CP-140 airplanes, which are scheduled to be retired in 2030.

On June 27, the US State Department notified Congress of its decision to approve a potential sale to Canada of up to 16 P-8A patrol aircraft and related equipment in a contract worth $5.9 billion.

Blair said he anticipated the deliveries of the aircraft would begin in 2026, with the final one set to be handed to the RCAF as soon as 2027. The fleet will be based at two locations in Nova Scotia and British Columbia.

The minister also said the determination made by National Defense to acquire the aircraft was the right one for Canada given that it meets the country's national interests as well as responsibilities to NATO.

Blair pointed out that the acquisition would also assist Canada maintain its sovereignty amid the alleged increasingly frequent incursions by Russia and China.

"There are countries who have demonstrated that they are adversarial to our national interest, and this really is a question of national security," Blair said.

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The contract attribution was made despite repeated calls by opposition lawmakers to launch an open and fair competition. The possibility of awarding the deal to Boeing without a procurement process had been notably criticized by Quebec's aircraft manufacturer Bombardier, who expressed concern over the decision's lack of transparency, stressing that it was also able to procure RCAF with Canadian-made alternatives.

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IDF Chief Tells Blinken Operation in Gaza to Take 'More Than a Few Extra Weeks' - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) – Israel Defense Forces chief of staff Gen. Herzi Halevi told US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Thursday that the Israeli military operation in Gaza will take "more than a few additional weeks," Axios reported, citing three people with direct knowledge of the meeting.

Blinken met on Thursday in Jerusalem with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and members of his cabinet. The possibility of an Israeli operation in southern Gaza was a major topic, according to the report.

A source described the discussion as "a frank exchange of views," hinting at mounting disagreements between the parties with regard to the IDF operation in Gaza, the report said.

Blinken was reportedly the one who initiated the conversation when he asked about the Israeli military's plans for southern Gaza and about how long Israel believes the military operation will continue, the report said.

Blinken also reportedly urged Israel to ensure that the operation does not lead to a higher amount of civilian casualties.

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San Francisco Police Arrest 14-Year-Old for Theft of Over $30,000 in Merchandise - Reports

SAN FRANCISCO, November 30 (Sputnik) - The San Francisco Police Department said on Thursday that it has arrested a 14-year-old female who is alleged to be behind a series of organized retail crimes (ORC) of more than $30,000 in stolen merchandise.

"ORC investigators diligently reviewed dozens of retail-related incidents and identified a prolific ORC suspect, a 14-year-old female (name not being disclosed), for the thefts of over $30,000 in merchandise," the San Francisco Police Department said in a statement.

Last week, police officers responded to an organized retail theft report in downtown San Francisco and located and arrested the suspect, the statement said.

"The investigator developed probable cause to arrest the suspect for fifteen organized retail crimes listed below. The suspect was transported to the San Francisco Juvenile Justice Center where she was booked for these crimes," the statement said.

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The crimes include a series of thefts on various dates this year, involving multiple suspects and substantial losses, the statement also said.
The approximate losses incurred during these incidents vary, with the highest recorded at $6,600 on April 11, the statement added.

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US Does Not Support Ceasefire in Israel-Hamas Conflict at This Time – Kirby

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) – The United States does not support a permanent ceasefire in the Israeli-Hamas war at this time, but backs humanitarian pauses, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Thursday.
"We do not support a permanent ceasefire at this time. We do support the idea of humanitarian pauses," Kirby said during a press briefing.

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Biden Directs US Gov't to Help Ukraine Bolster Energy Infrastructure for Winter - Kirby

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan have directed the US government to prioritize efforts to bolster Ukraine's energy infrastructure to prepare for the winter ahead, White House Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby on Thursday.
"Ahead of this winter, President Biden and National Security Adviser Sullivan directed the United States government to prioritize these efforts [to protect energy infrastructure], just as we did last year. So we've been focused on driving forward three key lines of effort. First, we've been strengthening Ukraine's air defensive capabilities so that they can shoot down Russian missiles and their Iranian drones targeting critical infrastructure," Kirby said during a press briefing.
"That's why we provided Ukraine in recent packages with Patriot batteries, Hawk and Avenger air defense systems, counter unmanned air systems equipment and other critical air defense assets," he stated.
Second, the US has been helping Ukraine harden their energy infrastructure, Kirby stated.
Third, the US has been providing Ukraine with backup equipment, he added.

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Pentagon Chief Austin Says He Repeatedly Sought Kissinger's Geopolitical Perspective

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Thursday said he repeatedly asked former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger for his political perspectives, and always found such exchanges inspiring.

Kissinger, known for his contributions to contemporary political discourse and the field of international relations, died on Wednesday at his home in the US state of Connecticut at the age of 100.

I am deeply saddened by the passing of former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger at the age of 100. He was the rare scholar turned strategist, and he has been widely hailed as one of our most powerful and influential secretaries of state," Austin said in a statement. "Dr. Kissinger served two Presidents and offered counsel to 10 more. I sought his geopolitical perspective repeatedly over the course of my career and always found our exchanges thought-provoking."

Austin went on to say that Kissinger's involvement with the Pentagon spanned from his service in the US Army during World War II to sitting on the Defense Policy Board late in his long life.

In 2016, Kissinger was awarded the US Defense Department's Distinguished Public Service Award, the Pentagon's highest civilian honor, he added.

According to the international geopolitical consulting firm Kissinger Associates, Kissinger will be interred at a private family service. At a later date, there will be a memorial service in New York City.

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Yellen Talks Up US Lithium Plant, Hits Out Against Overdependence on China

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on Thursday hit out at the American overdependence on Chinese raw minerals supply, as she toured a domestic lithium plant aimed at supporting battery technology for electric cars, cellphones and other gadgets.

"Our country's energy security is dependent on the resilience of our supply chains. And for too long, the supply of critical raw materials and the manufacturing capacity to process them have been too concentrated beyond our borders," Yellen said in remarks delivered at a Livent Corp lithium factory in North Carolina. "Key supply chains in areas like clean energy are overconcentrated in China, in part due to unfair non-market practices over decades."

The most important use of lithium is in rechargeable batteries for mobile phones, laptops, digital cameras and electric vehicles. It is also used in some non-rechargeable batteries for things like heart pacemakers, toys and clocks.

Lithium was among the minerals US manufacturers were critically short of when global supply chains broke down in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic.

China dominates the global electric vehicle battery supply chain, including the production of graphite - the single largest component. The United States produced less than 10% of lithium-ion batteries in 2022, although demand is expected to grow over seven times by 2035.

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Yellen said overdependence, including on China, makes America more vulnerable to risks that disrupt its access to that foreign production, be they natural disasters, macroeconomic forces or deliberate actions such as economic coercion, she said.

"Disrupted access can result in economic disruption and higher prices for American consumers," she added.

To counter some of these deficiencies, US private companies have ventured into manufacturing and clean energy projects since President Joe Biden took office, Yellen stated. That includes $142 billion in investments in electric vehicles and batteries and $71 billion in clean energy manufacturing, she said.

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Canada Awards Boeing $5.9Bln Deal to Replace RCAF Aging CP-140 Aurora Fleet - Blair

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - Canada has awarded Boeing a $5.9 billion contract to replace the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) aging feet of CP-140 Aurora surveillance planes, National Defense Minister Bill Blair said on Thursday.

“I'm very proud to announce that Canada's acquiring up to 16 Boeing P-8A Poseidon aircraft in the US government for the Royal Canadian Air Force,” Blair said.

In late March, Canada submitted a request via the US foreign military sales program to acquire up to 16 P-8A Poseidon surveillance aircraft in replacement of its aging fleet of CP-140 airplanes, which are scheduled to be retired in 2030.

On June 27, the US State Department notified Congress of its decision to approve a potential sale to Canada of up to 16 P-8A patrol aircraft and related equipment in a contract worth $5.9 billion.

Blair said he anticipated the deliveries of the aircraft would begin in 2026, with the final one set to be handed to RCAF as soon as 2027.

The fleet will be based at two locations in Novia Scotia and British Columbia.

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Kissinger's 'Ruthless' Diplomatic Genius Reshaped World - Experts

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - Former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger who died at the age of 100 was a ruthless genius who put the Soviet Union and China on the road to capitalist economies and remodeled the entire world in his own image, experts told Sputnik.

Kissinger, who passed away at his home in Connecticut on Wednesday, served as US Secretary of State under presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford after serving as Nixon's National Security Adviser - a period during which he was credited with helping repair US ties with major superpowers.

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"One can't help but marvel at Kissinger's adroitness in engineering the pivot to the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1971-72," constitutional historian and political commentator Dan Lazare told Sputnik. "Not only did it take an arch-enemy and turn it into something approaching a US client, but detente, its necessary complement, did roughly the same vis-a-vis the Soviet Union."

However, the dark side of Kissinger's record in power also needed to be remembered and assessed, Lazare added.

"Kissinger was an imperialist of a particularly ruthless sort. He intensively bombed Cambodia and North Vietnam and then succeeded in extricating America from what was clearly a growing quagmire by throwing US allies in South Vietnam to the wolves," he said.

Lazare also said Kissinger helped overthrew Chile's government and backed Pakistan in a brutal crackdown in Bangladesh. Kissinger also set the nations of the Middle East on reckless courses that threaten world peace more than ever today, Lazare recalled.

"He deepened [US] relations with Israel and forged an alliance with the Saudis that would insure a continued flow of oil, but would also lead to untold horrors in the oughts and teens as.... Saudi [terrorist] proxies went on a rampage and threw much of the globe into turmoil," Lazare added.

For better or worse, Kissinger reshaped and guided the world in the direction he thought it should go and today, Americans had still to grapple with and face up to the consequences of his policies, Lazare warned.

"Kissinger remodeled the world in his own image, in other words, and now we're living with the results," Lazare said.

Former UK Ambassador Peter Ford said while Kissinger sought good relations with Moscow and Beijing, in contrast to the generations of neoliberal and neoconservative ideologues, he also prepared the way for their emergence.

"Although in his later years Kissinger seemed a relatively sensible moderate compared to the neocons, it's the neocons who must be considered Kissinger's biggest and most dreadful legacy," Ford told Sputnik.

Kissinger entirely remodeled the position of National Security Adviser, giving it a power and status it had never had before, and that would dazzle and seduce his successors, Ford added.

Kissinger's genius in crafting his own legendary image played a central role in this transformation, Ford said.

"He was good at creating a myth around himself, a myth which continued to swirl around him to the end: It was the myth of power, the power of the unconstrained superpower which he guided," Ford said. "The neocons grew out of this myth, to the extent that US ambition and presumptions to world control knew literally no limits."

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UN Finds Death Toll Reported by Gaza Government to Be More or Less Correct - Spokesperson

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UNITED NATIONS, November 30 (Sputnik) - The United Nations is using the number of deaths provided by Gaza's Ministry of Health and finds them by and large to be accurate, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Thursday.

"The numbers that we're using are from the Ministry of Health in Gaza. We have found them by and large to be correct," Dujarric said during a press briefing.

The spokesperson explained that the practice of using the number of people killed in the Gaza Strip is based on our own sad experience in Gaza [a record number of UN staff have died within the last years due to the conflict], he added.

As of mid-November, 101 United Nations employees in the Gaza Strip have been killed by Israel's massive indiscriminate strikes and invasion of the Palestinian enclave.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has resulted in the killing of 1,200 Israelis and more than 18,000 Palestinians since October 7.

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US Lawmaker Says Continuing to Push for UAP Transparency, But Stalled by Other Members

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - A bipartisan group of US lawmakers continue to push for transparency from the government on unidentified anomalous phenomena (UAP, also known as UFOs) but are facing pushback from other members of Congress, US Congressman Matt Gaetz said on Thursday.

Earlier this year, Congressman Tim Burchett introduced an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to require the US Defense Department to declassify UAP information that does not compromise the national security of the United States.

"We had an NDAA conference meeting yesterday, where members of the House and Senate both raised this issue in debate," Gaetz said during a press conference. "The strongest resistance to transparency and disclosure and the Burchett language came from the House Intelligence Committee."

The Burchett amendment could serve as a starting point to pursue further transparency on UAP from the intelligence community, Gaetz said.

Members of Congress who have criticized the proposal have not provided details on their objection, but have expressed broader national security concerns, Gaetz said. The House Intelligence Committee and Senate Armed Services Committee have issued a "generalized veto" to the measure, Gaetz said.

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UN Says Few Diplomats in Living Memory Have Had Greater Influence Than Kissinger

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UNITED NATIONS, November 30 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is saddened by the death of former US Sectary of State Henry Kissinger, spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Thursday.

Kissinger died on Wednesday at his home in the US state of Connecticut at the age of 100.

"The Secretary General was saddened to learn last night about the passing of the former US Secretary of State as a prominent figure in international relations during the late 20th century. Few diplomats in living memory have had a greater influence on international affairs," Dujarric told a briefing.

Guterres extends his condolences to Kissinger's family, he added.

Earlier in the day, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that Kissinger was not only a student of history and strategy, he also "made both."

Former senior State Department official Chas Freeman told Sputnik on Thursday that Kissinger will be remembered for achieving half a century of reduced tensions around the world and avoiding the risk of war between the United States, the Soviet Union and China.

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Blinken Says Kissinger Not Only Student of History, Strategy But 'He Made Both'

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Thursday that the late Henry Kissinger was not only a student of history and strategy, he also "made both."

"Henry Kissinger once wrote that 'however different the great statesmen of history, they had a common sense of the past and a vision for the future,'" Blinken said. "Henry was not only a student of history and strategy. Over the course of an extraordinary 100 years, he made both."

Kissinger died on Wednesday at his home in the US state of Connecticut at the age of 100.

Blinken said that Kissinger made "countless history bending decisions" in his role as secretary of state and national security advisor.

"To serve as America's chief diplomat today is to move through a world that bears Henry's lasting imprint – from the relationships he forged, to the tools he pioneered, to the architecture he built," he said.

Blinken pointed out Kissinger had observed that the challenge facing diplomats was having to make vital decisions within short periods of time, with incomplete information and unknowable consequences.

"Unlike the historian, the academic or the analyst, Henry wrote, 'The statesman is permitted only one guess; his mistakes are irretrievable,'" Blinken said.

Blinken also said that Kissinger was a lifelong student and anticipated and understood the forces changing the world, as well as helped grapple with their implications.

"Even in his tenth decade, he [Kissinger] was as determined to look to the future as he was to the past," he said. "Few people were better students of history - and even fewer people did more to shape history - than Henry Kissinger."

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Russia's Dunaev to Plead Guilty to US Cybercrime Charges - Court Official

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) – Russian national Vladimir Dunaev is expected to plead guilty to US cybercrime charges, a US court official told Sputnik on Thursday.

"We are expecting to go forward with a change of plea hearing, and then, if all goes forward accordingly, he will be set for sentencing," the official said.

The hearing will take place at 3:00 p.m. EST [20:00 GMT] at the US District Court for the Northern District of Ohio.

The sentencing will likely be scheduled within 16 weeks, according to the official. "That will put us about mid-March or so," the official added.

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US Citizens Divided Over Israel's Actions in Gaza as 50% Approve, 45% Disapprove - Poll

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - US citizens are almost evenly split over Israel's military action in Gaza, with 50% expressing support for its operation and 45% voicing disapproval, a new Gallup poll showed on Thursday.

"Half of Americans approve of Israel's military action in the Hamas-led Gaza Strip, and 45% disapprove, according to a Gallup poll conducted several weeks after Hamas launched a deadly attack on Israel that led to a major military operation by Israel," Gallup said in a summary of the poll's findings.

Public opinion on Israel's military actions in Gaza varies significantly by gender, age, race and party affiliation, with Republicans, older adults and White individuals showing more support for Israel's actions, as Democrats, younger adults, people of color and women express more disapproval, Gallup said.

Broken down by party, 71% of Republicans approve of Israel's actions in Gaza, while 63% of Democrats disapprove. Meanwhile, 59% of men said they back Israel's military action while a more slight majority or 52% of women said they approve.

When accounting for age, 63% of adults over 55 approve of Israel's actions, while 67% of adults under 35 disapprove. Among White adults, 61% expressed approval of Israel's military actions, while 64% of people of color voiced disapproval.

Separately, the poll found that 67% of Americans believe the current military aid to Israel is appropriate, while 25% advocating for increased aid and 31% think the US is providing too much aid to Israel.

The poll surveyed 1,013 US adults from November 1-21 and has a margin of error of 4 percentage points.

On October 7, the Palestinian Hamas movement launched a surprise large-scale rocket attack

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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 Must Redouble Attention to Hep Ukraine Make It Through Winter - Deputy Energy Secretary

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - The United States should redouble its attention to help Ukraine make it through the winter, US Deputy Secretary of Energy David Turk said on Thursday.

"Last winter was challenging, we made it through," Turk said. "This winter we all need to double our attention, redouble our attention and our focus, and we certainly are trying to do whatever we can from the US Department of Energy side of things."

Ukrainian media reported earlier about power deficits in the country on Wednesday and Thursday and the fact that the Kiev regime secured emergency assistance from Slovakia, Poland and Romania. The shortages have been reportedly caused by the cold weather.

Turk said he is aware of the big storm going on and the fact that Ukraine is facing very challenging circumstances, which Russia is trying to use to its advantage.

"They tried to do it last winter with their concerted bombardment of electrical infrastructure in particular," he said. "They are trying to do similar things this year as well. Last winter I was incredibly proud that the US government, working with the allies, and again just supporting the bravery and supporting the resourcefulness of the Ukrainian people and the government officials."

In September, Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said the upcoming winter would be difficult for the country's energy system. Ukrainian power grid operator Ukrenergo said that it planned to repair a record number of power plant units before the start of the heating season.

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Ottawa Regrets USITC Decision to Allow US Duties on Canada’s Lumber – Trade Minister

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) – Ottawa is disappointed over the determination made by the U.S. International Trade Commission (USITC) allowing for the imposition of duties on Canadian softwood lumber products, Trade Minister Mary Ng said n Thursday.

In early October, a North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) panel ruled that elements of Washington's import duties on softwood lumber from Canada were inconsistent with US law and directed the US Commerce Department to review key aspects of its determination.

Ng had previously noted that the "unfair, unjust and illegal" 7.99% duty on softwood lumber

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products imported from Canada has hurt the Canadian wood industry and played a role in the rising housing costs in both countries.

"Canada is disappointed that the USITC has determined that the United States can continue to impose unfair and unwarranted duties on Canadian softwood lumber products," Ng said in a statement shared via X (formerly Twitter).

The Minister pledged to continue the country's fight to uphold Canadians' interests and to use all available legal venues, including by pursuing litigation under NAFTA, the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, and the World Trade Organization (WTO), to settle the matter.

The dispute over Canadian softwood lumber dates to the early 1980s and has been a drag on the two countries' bilateral trading relationship for decades, including mutual complaints through the WTO.

In 2006, the two sides reached a settlement under which the United States agreed to suspend lumber duties. The deal expired in 2015 and the administration of former US President Donald Trump subsequently imposed new tariffs on Canadian lumber.

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Kissinger Will be Remembered for Avoiding War Between US, Russia and China -Ex US Diplomat

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - Former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger, who died on Wednesday at the age of 100, will be remembered for achieving half a century of reduced tensions around the world and avoiding the risk of war between the United States, the Soviet Union and China, former former senior State Department official Chas Freeman told Sputnik on Thursday.

"Kissinger should be remembered for his engineering of détente - a crucial relaxation of tensions with the Soviet Union built on the opening to China he carried out for then President Nixon," Freeman, who served as President Richard Nixon's translator on his 1972 state visit to China with Kissinger, said.

Kissinger was also an outstanding academic analyst and diplomatic historian, Freeman recalled.

Kissinger served as a Harvard professor before being appointed National Security Adviser in 1969, and his academic works included his masterful study of the European balance of power in 'A World Restored' as well as his ruminations on statecraft and diplomacy, Freeman said.

This profound intellectual understanding of history and statecraft were the foundation for Kissinger's remarkable successes as a diplomat and statesman himself, Freeman pointed out.

Although Kissinger lived in the United States for 85 years from age 15 to his death, he was far more German in his scholarship, philosophy and sense of strategy than in any American tradition, Freeman advised.

"He was a very German statesman who, even as he sought to minimize and offset Russian power, understood the need for Russia to have an assured place in the management of security

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in Europe," he said.

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US Appeals Court Reinstates Gag Order on Trump in New York Civil Fraud Case - Filing

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - A US appeals court reinstated a gag order on former President Donald Trump in his civil fraud case in the state of New York, court documents revealed on Thursday.

"It is ordered that the motion is denied; the interim relief granted by order of a Justice of this Court, dated November 16, 2023, is hereby vacated," the court filing said.

The gag order prohibits Trump and his lawyers from making public statements about Allison Greenfield, the principal law clerk of Manhattan Supreme Court Judge Arthur Engoron, who is overseeing the ongoing civil fraud trial.

Engoron has twice fined Trump for violating the gag order.

Trump's attorneys argue that the gag orders violate his First Amendment rights under the US Constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech.

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

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Greene Says Does Not Back House Speaker Plan to Fund Ukraine in Exchange for Secure Border

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - US Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene said on Thursday that she does not support House Speaker Mike Johnson's plan to support new funding for Ukraine in exchange for Democrats agreeing to support measures to secure the US southern border.

"I disagree with Speaker Johnson's plan to fund Ukraine in exchange for border policy wins," Marjorie Taylor Greene said via X (former Twitter). "Democrats will never enforce our strong secure border policies, they would just use them as a win at the polls."

Greene emphasized that Ukraine is not the 51st US state and is not a NATO member and added that the country is losing the war with Russia - a conflict that a majority of Americans do not support.

In October, the White House announced that the funds approved by Congress for further military assistance to Ukraine were almost exhausted, which is why the volume of aid packages has been consistently reduced. Biden submitted a $106 billion supplemental request to Congress that includes $61 billion for Ukraine along with aid for Israel.

Earlier in November, the US House of Representatives passed an Israel aid bill, separating the

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assistance from the broader request from the Biden administration, which also included aid for Ukraine. Biden and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer rejected the proposal, instead favoring the joint aid request.

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Treasury Sanctions Three Mexican Individuals, 13 Companies Linked to Mexico's CJNG

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) – Three Mexican individuals and thirteen companies related to the Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generacion (CJNG) timeshare fraud have been sanctioned, the US Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) said on Thursday.

In 2015, the United States sanctioned CJNG pursuant to the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (Kingpin Act) for playing a significant role in international narcotics trafficking.

"Today, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned three Mexican individuals and 13 Mexican companies. These individuals and companies are linked, directly or indirectly, to timeshare fraud led by the Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generacion (CJNG)," Treasury's statement said.

The step was a coordinated action between American and Mexican institutions, the statement said, that included OFAC, the FBI, the DEA, as well as Mexico's Financial Intelligence Unit.

Several of the sanctioned individuals and entities operate from the city of Puerto Vallarta in the State of Jalisco, a port-city considered to be a strategic stronghold of the Cartel, the statement continued.

Created in 2009, the CJNG is a violent cartel based in Mexico. It notably engages in arms and drug trafficking and is said to be responsible for a significant proportion of the illicit fentanyl trade entering the United States. The group has gained a foothold in some eighteen of the thirty-two Mexican States and has expanded its operations to several parts of the Americas, Europe, and Asia.

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Blinken to Seek Full Accountability for Attacks on West Bank Palestinians - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah and told him that he would continue to press for full accountability regarding extremist violence against Palestinians in the West Bank, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a readout of the conversation on Thursday.

"The Secretary condemned extremist violence against Palestinian civilians in the West Bank and said he would continue to insist on full accountability for those responsible," Miller said.

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"Secretary Blinken and President Abbas also spoke about the urgent need for measures to improve security and freedom for Palestinians in the West Bank."

In addition, Blinken spoke about ongoing efforts to accelerate the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza, Miller said.

Blinken reiterated that the United States remains committed to advancing tangible steps for a Palestinian state, Miller said.

Two Palestinians were killed as a result of an Israeli raid in Jenin in the West Bank and several others were injured, the Palestinian Health Ministry said on Saturday.

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US Congresswoman Says House Republican Claims on Social Media Censorship 'Unfounded'

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - The House Republicans' claims about collusion between the US government and social media companies to censor speech online are unfounded and intended to achieve political goals, US Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett said on Thursday.

"In preparation for the 2024 presidential election, Republicans on this committee want to entrench their theory of social media censorship - their unfounded accusation that social media companies are colluding with the government to censor conservative voices. There's no evidence of this collusion," Plaskett said during a hearing of the House Judiciary panel's Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government.

Earlier on Thursday, committee Chair Jim Jordan released evidence of the White House repeatedly pressuring Google to censor content on YouTube. The evidence follows similar releases detailing collusion between the US government and social media platforms including Twitter (now known as X) and Facebook (outlawed in Russia as an extremist organization).

However, Plaskett said that 29 witnesses denied such collusion during closed-door testimony.

The hearing held on Thursday "suits political purposes," Plaskett said. House Republicans are attempting to distract from the potential for former US President and 2024 candidate Donald Trump to weaponize the US government, Plaskett added.

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US House Judiciary Chief Says Biden Admin Pressed YouTube to Censor COVID 'Misinformation'

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration was working with Google to censor content on YouTube regarding COVID-19 and vaccine "misinformation," House Judiciary Committee chief Jim Jordan said on Thursday.

"Now, here's the first edition of the YouTube Files. We knew the Biden White House was

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pushing Facebook [banned in Russia as an extremist organization] and Twitter to censor more. Now we know the White House was repeatedly pressuring Google to censor content on YouTube," Jordan said on X.

Jordan said that on April 12, 2021, the White House's Director of Digital Strategy Rob Flaherty emailed Google wanting to know how Google could better "crack down on vaccine misinformation" and discuss "ways the White House (and our COVID experts) can partner in your product work."

He expressed interest in trends related to "vaccine misinformation" on YouTube and the company's efforts to prevent the spread of "misinformation," according to an email posted by Jordan.

A separate internal email by YouTube's Government Affairs team pointed out that "there is a very high degree of interest coming from the White House now regarding vaccine misinfo/vaccine hesitancy and our work around borderline content."

The product team should brief the White House "to prevent anything from potentially spiraling out of control," the email said.

Jordan also released emails confirming that Google and YouTube teams had multiple meetings with White House officials on the matter.

"Over the last several weeks, the Google & YT GAPP team have had conversations with the White House staff on YouTube's policies and all the great work that is being done to raise authoritative information and fight harmful misinformation related to COVID-19 misinformation," an email said.

The US House will continue its investigations into the matter to inform legislative solutions to the "vast government censorship enterprise," Jordan said.

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Canada Opens National Suicide Prevention Crisis Helpline - Public Health Agency

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) - The Canadian federal government has introduced a new suicide prevention crisis helpline, the Public Health Agency of Canada announced in a statement on Thursday.

"Today, the government of Canada is taking an important step to provide suicide prevention support for people who need it, when they need it most. 9-8-8, Canada's new three-digit suicide crisis helpline, is now available to call or text, in English and French, 24 hours a day and seven days a week, across Canada," the statement said.

As suicide continues to be a serious public health matter, the new line will provide callers and texters with compassionate support and responders will help people in need to explore ways to keep them safe when going through a crisis, the statement said.

The provided assistance would be "trauma-informed" and "culturally appropriate," provided by trained crisis responders and based on a set of determined practices, protocols and procedures, the statement said.

In July, the Public Health Agency announced that it was investing C$156 million ($115 million)

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in the Center for Addiction and Mental Health to establish and operate the nationwide suicide prevention line.

An average of 4,500 Canadians per year commit suicides, according to government data.

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US EPA Proposes Replacing All Lead Water Pipes Within 10 Years – White House

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) – The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed a sweeping rule on Thursday to require water utilities to replace their lead service lines within a decade, according to a White House release.

"The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced a proposal to strengthen its Lead and Copper Rule that would require water systems to replace lead service lines within 10 years, helping secure safe drinking water for communities across the country," the release stated.

It added that more than 9.2 million US households connect to water through lead pipes and service lines, with low-income and non-white communities disproportionately affected by lead exposure.

The EPA's proposed amendments to the Lead and Copper Rule also include increasing tap water sampling requirements, requiring water systems to complete comprehensive and public lead service line inventories, and strengthening and streamlining requirements for water systems to take additional actions to reduce lead health risks.

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Canada's Deal with Google Shows Online News Act Viable, Meta Can Comply – Minister

WASHINGTON, November 30 (Sputnik) – The newly announced deal between Canada and Google to resolve their dispute over the Online News Act (C-18) shows that the legislation is viable and Meta (banned in Russia as an extremist organization) has no reason to avoid complying with it, Heritage Minister Pascale St-Onge said on Thursday.

On Wednesday, St-Onge announced that following months of negotiations, the federal government and Google had reached an agreement to end their dispute over C-18 - a measure passed to compensate Canadian media outlets for using their content on social media.

"I think what this shows is that the piece of legislation that we introduced is viable, equitable, that it works, and that there is no good reason except for ideological reasons, that Facebook won't comply with the legislation," St-Onge told a Canadian Heritage House of Commons committee.

St-Onge's comments came in response to a question about how Canadian Heritage sees the future of negotiations with Meta following the government's agreement with Google.

The minister said it was unfortunate that Meta was opening its social media platforms to

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disinformation and misinformation, but noted that the company has been behaving like this around the world.

Meta is refusing to be responsible for the content circulating on its platforms, St-Onge said, adding that the company does everything it can to avoid accountability.

On August 1, Meta announced it would end Canadian access to news on its Facebook and Instagram platforms in response to C-18. However, Google had left the door open for negotiations to address its specific concerns about the legislation, emphasizing that it would only end Canadian access to news if a compromise could not be found.

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