Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

12/27/23 Wednesday

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Gaffes, Mistakes & Bloodshed: Scandals That Enveloped Joe Biden in 2023

At 81, Joe Biden is the oldest president ever elected in the United States, which means he technically breaks his own record every day he is in office. That may be Biden's biggest accomplishment while in the White House: that, save a tragedy over the next 300-something days, he will have made it through an entire term in his geriatric state.

With 2023 coming to a close, it is worth reflecting on US President Joe Biden's third year in office and all the gaffes, stumbles and mistakes he made along the way.

Classified Docs for Me, Not Thee

Throughout 2022, former President Donald Trump's mishandling of classified documents was a huge story, and with a trial against Trump still ongoing, it inarguably remained a massive story for much of 2023.

But the media world was shocked when it learned that Biden, who once called Trump's poor handling of classified documents "totally irresponsible," had stored classified documents he took while serving as vice president to a think tank office in Virginia and in the garage of his home in Delaware.

In his first public remarks regarding the mishandling, Biden brushed off the severity of the situation at the time, telling reporters he had "no regrets," and that "there's no 'there' there." He later shifted blame for the mishap on his team since "they didn't do the kind of job that should have been done to go thoroughly through every single piece of literature that's there" when his offices were being "packed up."

Earlier this month, US media reported that special counsel Robert Hur is not expected to file charges in the case; however, the "double standards" on how the Biden and Trump cases were handled was not lost on Republicans, with many questioning why an FBI raid was not held on Biden's properties as it had been done with his predecessor.

Elsewhere, while Biden has continuously suffered from poor approval ratings, the classified docs case has only seen Trump's rating among supporters skyrocket as his case and others have continued to work their way through the justice system.

The Balloons Are Coming! (Biden's Failed China Policy)

Tensions with China were already high in 2022 after then-Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) visited with separatist leaders in Taiwan, angering the Chinese government. Things only got weirder in 2023 when a balloon appeared in the skies off the coast of Alaska.

The US government claimed it was a Chinese spy balloon. The Chinese government insisted it was an independent weather observation balloon that had blown off course. The media tracked the balloon as it flew over Canada into the United States and across the country. Republicans called Biden weak for not shooting it down immediately, China warned the US against shooting down the object.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

In the end, Biden waited for the balloon to cross the US before shooting it down off the coast of South Carolina, angering China and not satisfying Republicans.

Bizarrely, multiple other balloons and other unidentified objects appeared over US and Canadian airspace, most of which were again shot down, but little explanation was given about what the objects actually were. A Boy Scout group claimed their weather balloon experiment vanished around this time, though the State Department denied the possibility they were responsible for its disappearance.

Relations between China and the US started off-base and ended worse in 2023. Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen visited then-House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) in the US in April, causing sino-US tensions to grow further throughout the year.

However, Biden had a plan. Chinese President Xi Jinping was one of the world leaders hosted in San Francisco during the APEC summit. It was the perfect opportunity to smooth things over with the world's largest industrial manufacturer.

According to Biden during a post-meeting presser, things went well. Biden said the two leaders discussed shared issues and reestablished military-to-military contact in an attempt to reduce misunderstandings.

All seemed to be going to plan until, after declaring the engagement over, Biden decided to take one more question:

"Mr. President, after today, would you still refer to President Xi as a 'dictator'? This is a term that you used earlier this year," asked the reporter.

"Well, look, he is," the commander-in-chief replied, drawing near-instant condemnation from the government Biden had just worked hard to court. A clip capturing Secretary of State Antony Blinken's reaction to Biden's comments went viral in the following days. Blinken later claimed the visible wince was due to a sore neck.

Biden, Famous for His 'Empathy' Ignores & Insults Disaster Victims

In February, a Norfolk Southern train carrying hazardous materials derailed in East Palestine, Ohio, causing a fire. Rather than attempt to douse the flames, city, state and Norfolk officials made the decision to initiate a controlled demolition of the substances.

The resulting explosion sent dangerous chemicals into the air, soil and water. Residents were evacuated, being told they could return less than a week after the derailment and three days after the explosion.

But months later, residents in East Palestine were still sounding alarms about health issues they believed were linked to the chemicals and several videos went viral, seeming to show an oily rainbow film over nearby streams and in muddy soil.

Biden promised to visit the area, but as 2023 comes to a close, he has declined to, citing his busy schedule. However, he did manage to find significant time to vacation in Delaware.

According to US media, by August 2023, Biden had spent nearly four out of every 10 days away from the White House, primarily at his two homes in Delaware and the presidential retreat Camp David in Maryland.

"It's now been just over 7 months - 213 days since the derailment and 186 days since [Biden] promised he would visit," Rep. Bill Johnson (R-OH) wrote in a tweet this August. "He's had multiple opportunities. Sadly, the only reasonable explanation at this point for his choosing not to visit is that he simply doesn't care."

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Meanwhile, Biden's likely opponent in the 2024 presidential election scored some points with voters in the swing state after he visited East Palestine the same month the crash happened. The former president called the federal response to the accident a "betrayal."

Biden's lack of empathy for disaster victims arose again after it took 13 days for him to visit Hawaii after devastating wildfires killed more than 100 people. When the US president finally showed up, he attempted to connect with the victims by recounting a house fire that "almost" cost him his car and cat, sparking more outrage.

"Lightning struck at home, on a little lake that's outside of our home—not a lake, a big pond—and hit a wire that came up underneath our home into the heating ducts and air conditioning ducts," the president said. "To make a long story short, I almost lost my wife, my '67 Corvette, and my cat."

Reports from the time described the 2004 fire as "small" and "contained to the kitchen," noting there were no injuries and it was contained within 20 minutes.

Nobody Believes in Zelensky Like Biden

Biden's poll numbers have never been great, but they did see a slight bump following the start of Russia's special military operation in 2022. During a speech in Warsaw, Poland, a month later he proclaimed the American people stand with Ukraine and urged NATO and the EU to remain unified "today and tomorrow and the day after and for the years and decades to come."

It was a sentiment he repeated often throughout 2022 and 2023, but throughout the year, the American people and some NATO allies turned against Biden's proxy war against Russia.

Polls showed strong support among Americans for Ukraine aid at the start of the special operation but have since reversed, with more than half of Americans opposing additional aid as early as August. America's opinion on Ukraine likely was not helped when classified Pentagon documents were leaked on Discord, showing a grim internal evaluation of Ukrainian Armed Forces capability.

The souring public opinion on Ukraine led the Republican party, which included a small faction opposed to funding at the start of the conflict, to completely turn against further aid. Even US Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC), who, along with the late Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) infamously encouraged Ukrainian marines to break the Minsk ceasefire agreement in 2017, came out against sending more aid to Ukraine.

Biden has repeatedly demanded that Congress pass an additional $60 billion in aid for Ukraine, but Republicans have remained steadfast in blocking it, demanding border concessions that are too distasteful for his base to accept.

Meanwhile, parliamentary elections in Slovakia in September ushered in Prime Minister Robert Fico, who ran on a promise to end all aid to Ukraine and in November the Slovak parliament confirmed that agenda.

That wasn't the only break in NATO on the Ukraine issue. In December, Hungary Prime Minister Viktor Orban blocked €50 billion in aid earmarked for Ukraine and promised to continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

Ceasefires Are Bad, Mmkay?

On the subject of the other conflict the US is fueling - Israel's bombing campaign and invasion of Gaza, Biden has fared even worse.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

According to a poll released earlier this month, 57% of Americans disapprove of his handling of the situation, compared to just 33% who approve. The same poll found that some one-third of respondents felt as though the Biden White House was being too supportive of Israel's actions.
Despite taking a slightly harsher tone with the Israeli government, Biden and administration officials have repeatedly refused to set any red-lines that would make the US reconsider sending aid and weapons to Israel.
The US has blocked several calls for a ceasefire by the UN Security Council, being the only member state to vote against it, thereby vetoing it.
Multiple human rights organizations have warned about a humanitarian crisis in the area. More than 20,000 Palestinians have been killed since Israel's operation began and more than 570,000 are starving, according to the UN.
The Biden administration's steadfast support of Israel's viscous military campaign has resulted in plummeting polls for Biden among his base, and growing calls from within his own party to shift the administration's Israel strategy.
Additionally, a steady stream of pro-Palestinian protests have broken out across the country and Biden has been bleeding support among minorities and young voters, a situation that is almost certain to doom his reelection campaign if he cannot reverse the trend before November.
Fear & Loathing in the White House: The Hunter Biden Story
There have been some interesting first son and daughter controversies in the White House. Neil Bush, the son of former US President George H. W. Bush was sued by federal regulators for alleged "conflict-of-interest regulation" violations. Donald Trump Jr. shot an endangered deer in Mongolia. Malia Obama got caught smoking. The Bush twins were cited for underage drinking and allegedly partied with American actor Ashton Kutcher, which seemed like a big deal at the time.
But no first family controversy appears to hold a candle to the much-talked-about presidential son, Hunter Biden. To be fair, Hunter is also considered the most exposed first son in history. He allegedly abandoned a laptop at a Delaware repair shop, the contents of which were eventually leaked to the media just prior to the 2020 election.
The laptop, initially suppressed by much of the mainstream media and large social media sites, included photos and videos of Hunter smoking what appears to be crack cocaine in various stages of undress, including inside a drug rehab facility, while driving his car at high speeds on the highway and with alleged escorts.
It also included emails between Hunter and his foreign business associates, as well as numerous financial records. It is that aspect that has continued to haunt Joe Biden throughout 2023.
According to the House Oversight Committee, which is heading the ongoing investigation into the Biden family, payments were allegedly routed through Hunter and the president's brother James Biden before ending up in Joe's hands.
Committee Chairman James Comer (R-KY) showcased evidence of at least two examples of James Biden depositing money into Joe Biden's account following payments by an American hospital operator and a Chinese company into Hunter or James Biden accounts.
There was also evidence on the laptop that Joe wrote letters of recommendation to universities for the children of a Chinese business associate of Hunter, emails from Hunter complaining about giving half his salary to his father and that he met in person with a number of his foreign

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

business associates, including individuals from Ukraine, Russia, Mexico, China and Kazakhstan.

Throughout his campaign and presidency, Biden repeatedly denied he met or spoke with his son's business associates or discussed business with him.

In early December, House Republicans voted to formally open an impeachment inquiry into Joe Biden. The White House, as it has since the start of the investigation, decried it as politically motivated.

"I did not. And it's just a bunch of lies. They're lies. I did not. They're lies," the president told reporters in December, despite documents put forth by congressional lawmakers.

Hunter Biden was also indicted on gun and tax charges, though those are unlikely to blow back on his father.

Hunter also appeared to cause his father's administration a few more headaches over the summer when cocaine was found in the White House; however, the Secret Service closed the case without a suspect after two weeks. Despite a mass finger-pointing at Hunter due to his past with illicit drugs, the White House insisted it didn't belong to anyone in the Biden family - including Hunter, who was there just before it was discovered.

The Inevitability of Age & Decline

It is possible that the reason Biden continues to deny meeting with Hunter's associates is that he doesn't remember meeting them.

Age was an issue for Biden even during his campaign, but rewatching clips from 2020, he looks sprightly compared to present day - although that can be said of many presidents pre- and post-White House. Biden started his presidency older than his predecessors, and it shows.

The 81-year-old president has looked lost while trying to find his way off stage, regularly stumbled over words, said the October 7 surprise attack by Hamas happened 65 years ago, confused popular celebrities Taylor Swift, Beyonce and Britney Spears in a single sentence, tripped over a wire while giving a speech, falsely claimed he was at Ground Zero the day after September 11, and got confused about where to go while watching the reef laying at the tomb of the unknown soldier.

Some 77% of Americans, including a whopping 69% of Democrats, admitted in August that they have concerns about Biden's age, questioning whether he is mentally and physically fit enough to serve for another term.

"I tell you what, I don't know about you, but I'm going to go to bed," Biden said after a 26-minute conference in Hanoi, Vietnam. The September blip didn't help improve the president's image, instead prompting more questions about the commander-in-chief's mental acuity.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

"Russia has continuously expanded its military industrial base while at the same time the West allowed theirs to atrophy"

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Geopolitical analyst and former US Marine Brian Berletic slammed US military technology in an interview with Sputnik while noting Russia's emergent parity, and even supremacy, on the battlefield.

Western technological development has been stunted, according to Berletic, from years of only engaging with "irregular forces in failed states."

Now Russian military technology is leapfrogging the West in terms of both quantity and quality, as seen in the country's tanks, projectiles, and electronic capabilities in Ukraine.

Russia's advances place it in the position of developing clear superiority in the technologies that will define modern warfare for years to come.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Gaffes, mistakes & bloodshed: Scandals that enveloped Joe Biden in 2023

With 2023 coming to a close, it is worth reflecting on US President Joe Biden's third year in office and all the gaffes, stumbles and mistakes he made along the way.

From the "double standards" of the classified documents case to chasing high-altitude balloons and his no-show in East Palestine after the devastating chemical fire, take a trip down memory lane for a round-up!

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Pentagon Releases Internal Report on 'Growing' Extremist Beliefs Within US Military

The report is part of just one of the "immediate actions" US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said he would take in the wake of the January 6 insurrection at the US Capitol.
The US Department of Defense has finally released an internal report on extremism in the military, which has - unfortunately - left many questions unanswered.
The report was first commissioned by Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin following the January 6, 2021, Capitol riot; a separate report showed that more than 80 of those charged in crimes related to the attack had some tie to the US military, and many of those with a military background were veterans.
The released report was first completed in June of 2022.
But in its 262 pages, the report - obtained by US media - does little to shed light on extremism issues in the US military. Instead of offering new data, it gathered existing data from sources that included the military's inspector general.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

The report also researched court-martial judgements for data on extremists and found 10 such cases. However, courts-martial only represent a small portion of extremists, the report said. The reason being that many cases of extremism don't make it to court-martial, and are instead addressed through "administrative action, non-judicial punishment, or referral to command for appropriate action," the report determined.

The report found—through public data which included the Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) database—that "participation rates for former service members appear to be growing."

"The rate of military participation in violent extremist incidents, as tracked within PIRUS, has roughly quadrupled from the two decades before 2010 to the decade after 2010 (or more than doubled, if the events of 6 January 2020, are excluded)," the report added, explaining the years 2017, 2020, and 2021 were significant in mobilizing violent extremism.

The "Unite the Right" rally occurred in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017, with the COVID pandemic, Black Lives Matter protests, and the US presidential election occurred in 2020. A year later, the January 6 attack on Capitol Hill kicked off 2021.

The report also found through PIRUS data that 28% of those who participated in extremism served in either the Army or the Marine Corps. While the Army is the largest branch, "the Marine Corps is the smallest," which "means that the Marine Corps has the largest per capita rate of participation in extremism cases," the report wrote.

The findings also determined the process for handing out security clearances to military personnel were outdated and insufficient.

"DOD's processes for awarding security clearances, assessing suitability, and granting access to facilities still focus to a significant extent on Cold War threats and threats related to the Global War on Terrorism rather than the threat of home-grown extremism," the report writes.

But the DOD doesn't need data to know that their security clearance is outdated. This year, a Massachusetts Air National Guardsman was arrested after sharing classified military information online. Despite being only 21, he was granted top-security clearance allowing him access to highly classified US government information.

Amid the US military's ongoing difficulties with making recruiting goals, a watchdog previously determined that some recruiters were intentionally skipping portions of the onboarding screening process that flags any applicants tied to extremist groups or gangs. An inspector general finding from August found that in a sample of 224 applicants from 2021 to 2022, 41% of applicants weren't properly vetted.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden's Ratings Slip to Historic Low: Those Who Touted Bidenomics Fearful of Looking Fraudulent

US President Joe Biden's approval rating dipped to a historic low in December: the 81-year-old's approval rating slipped below 40% for the fifth time this year. His approval rating is

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

also the lowest when compared to the past seven presidents at the same point during in their first term in office.

Biden's approval rating hit 39% for the month of December, and when compared to other former presidents, his is the lowest of the bunch. Former president Donald Trump's rating was 45% in December of 2019, Barack Obama's was 43% in 2011, and George W. Bush's was 58% in 2003. But despite the low approval rating, the Biden administration isn't willing to walk back on their "Bidenomics" policies because they're afraid of looking "fraudulent", said Peter Coffin, a journalist and author who spoke with Sputnik's The Final Countdown on Wednesday.

"It is a historic low for a modern sitting president at this point in their term," said Coffin about Biden's recent approval rating.

Biden's lowest job approval rating was 37% which occurred three times, and was most recently recorded in November. Meanwhile, his average approval rating has lingered around 43% for his first term.

"Yes, the unemployment [in the US] is low but it's negligible compared to Trump's non-COVID numbers," Coffin continued. "Unemployment was actually higher with most of these presidents that we're mentioning who had higher approval ratings," he added, emphasizing the point that there seems to be little correlation between unemployment rates and a president's approval rating.

"A lot of unemployment numbers are considered somewhat inaccurate, like there are various polling firms that keep a real unemployment tally which is significantly higher than what's reported," added Coffin.

"Bidenomics, this brand that he's brought up and tried to paint as this massive improvement for the country, doesn't look very different from how it's been," he continued. "Just because inflation has slowed down doesn't mean those prices have returned to the previous point. It means that rather than 9% inflation—which was our highest inflation rate during this whole thing—we're down in the 3% range," said Coffin. "That's still prices going up as money becomes less valuable."

"There's a lot of people who would vote that are not in a great situation financially speaking, and they attribute that to the economy," said Coffin.

A poll from earlier this month showed that more Americans believe their standard of living is worse than their parents' was. A majority of these include millennials and Gen-Xers, who are in an age group that is typically known for their prime working years. The poll also found that 85% of Americans pay more attention to their real life experiences than they do to national data.

A separate poll from November also found that 81% of registered voters in the US viewed the economy as either "fair" or "poor".

"The way I see it, the economy has absolutely slowed. It's maybe not what people are being told, but it doesn't seem like—maybe for the finance guys it's not—but it doesn't seem like it's actually speeding up to most people," said Coffin.

Coffin was then asked how Biden expects to survive "$45 fried chicken" that was reportedly found on a restaurant menu in the US.

"I don't see how he really can, but I also, on the other hand, am not really so sure if they're going to be so quick to kick him off, because I don't know if they look good when they change direction so quickly," said Coffin, adding that the Democrats are most likely fearful of walking back on their Bidenomics plan because they don't want to look fraudulent.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

“It’s a credibility problem, I think they’re kind of damned if they do, damned if they don’t, and that’s why I think they’re ultimately going to air on the side of safety and probably keep him [as a Democratic presidential nominee]” said Coffin. “I don’t know what’s going to happen with Trump with all of these legal battles going on, but I don't see Biden winning, honestly, the way that things are going it just doesn't look like Biden has a legitimate chance.”
The likelihood of Democrats having a “plan B” for Biden is slim to none. Not only is it difficult to run a political campaign against a sitting president, but Biden is still relatively popular among Democratic voters despite his single digit approval ratings among Republicans. And the deadline to enter one’s name on the primary ballot has already passed for many states.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

“Russia has continuously expanded its military industrial base while at the same time the West allowed theirs to atrophy”
Geopolitical analyst and former US Marine Brian Berletic slammed US military technology in an interview with Sputnik while noting Russia’s emergent parity, and even supremacy, on the battlefield.
Western technological development has been stunted, according to Berletic, from years of only engaging with “irregular forces in failed states.”
Now, Russian military technology is leapfrogging the West in terms of both quantity and quality, as seen in the country’s tanks, projectiles, and electronic capabilities in Ukraine.
Russia’s advances place it in the position of developing clear superiority in the technologies that will define modern warfare for years to come.
“Maybe the problem isn’t with them, maybe the problem is with you”
Journalist Esteban Carrillo speculated that UN member nations’ antipathy towards Israel may have more to do with their decades-long brutality against Palestinians than any alleged “anti-Israel bias” within the organization.
The Beirut-based analyst joined Sputnik’s The Final Countdown program to discuss news emanating from the Middle East in recent days, including renewed claims Israel is harvesting organs from dead Palestinians.
Meanwhile, the US retaliated against pro-Palestine groups in the region Tuesday by launching airstrikes on Baghdad, proving that the more things change in the Middle East, the more they remain the same.
But Carrillo suggested the growing power of forces opposing the United States in the region suggested there “won’t be such an uneven playing field anymore” in the years to come.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

🏴 Turkiye is urging the United States to make good on promises to sell the country 40 F-16 fighter jets, an anonymous Turkish diplomatic source told US media on Wednesday.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

The country's foreign minister made the request to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken during a phone call after a Turkish parliamentary commission voted to move forward with Sweden's ascension to NATO.
Turkiye has repeatedly held up Sweden and Finland's NATO membership, attempting to extract concessions from the countries in exchange for Ankara's approval.
The $20 billion fighter jet sale still requires the backing of the US Congress.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

The US military's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) is hoping to develop next-generation technology capable of replacing the troubled V-22 Osprey aircraft.
The agency has awarded funds to four private companies for designs for a plane that features the Osprey's ability to take off and land vertically.
DARPA is looking for an aircraft that can travel at significantly faster speeds than the Osprey, presumably without constantly crashing and killing US service members.
The V-22 Osprey was grounded throughout the US military earlier this month after a crash off the coast of Japan killed eight Air Force Special Operations Command members.
The aircraft has been involved in some 40 accidents since its introduction in 2007, claiming the lives of at least 53 US troops.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Former US Marine: West Can't Grasp Russia's Technological Supremacy on Battlefield

An analyst spoke frankly with Sputnik about how the United States fell behind Russia in developing the weapons and tools that will define modern warfare.
As 2023 comes to a close, observers are drawing lessons from another year of fighting in eastern Ukraine. Brian Berletic, a geopolitical analyst and former US Marine, sat down with Sputnik to discuss the state of military technology employed in the conflict as Western weapons are put to the test against their increasingly sophisticated Russian analogues.
"The US and its allies neglected for decades crucial areas of defense technology including air defense and electronic warfare," Berletic claimed candidly, noting how Western objectives in recent years shaped emergent military technology. In the 21st century US-led coalitions have focused mostly on war in the Middle East, combatting guerilla fighters or small armies in countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria.
Berletic said this focus has damaged the West's ability to compete with more professional militaries, noting the US and other countries have focused "instead on technology and tactics meant to fight irregular forces in failed states across the developing world from North Africa to Central Asia."

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

The West's need to play technological catch up was displayed vividly in 2022 when Russia unveiled powerful new hypersonic weapons, a technology not yet obtained by any other country. This dynamic is more recently illustrated in Russia's development of the Supercam ammunition, which is "highly protected against means of electronic warfare," according to Sergey Chemezov, the CEO of the Russian state-owned defense company Rostec. The United States has scrambled to compete in the electronic warfare space recently with a troubled drone development initiative and an attempt to create microwave weapons to disable enemy electronics.

But Berletic noted Russia derives an advantage from its years-long investment in these areas, giving the country an edge not only in quality of weapons but also quantity, "compounding the problems Ukrainian troops face day to day." As Russia works to perfect the Supercam technology it's already developed advanced radar systems that can detect Ukrainian drones from tens of kilometers away.

Russia is also testing new remotely-operated ground vehicles for use in combat. The technology's value is still unproven, but these weapons may ultimately transform warfare as significantly as aerial drones have. If they do, they will represent another area where Russia has the edge.

"Should these vehicles enable Russia to remotely engage and destroy Ukrainian armored vehicles and fortified positions without losing precious manpower, for example, considering Russia's large military industrial advantage, it would allow Russian strategy to be more aggressive at a lower cost in terms of life lost," said Berletic.

Discussion then turned towards Russia's Armata tank which is being developed as a response to the US Abrams and British Challenger tanks. Chemezov has spoken highly of the technology, confidently claiming"there truly is no exaggeration whatsoever when Russia's tank-building tradition is described as the most advanced in the world." He also recently said the Armata already surpasses Israel's bloated Merkava tanks.

Berletic noted that the Armata has so far only seen "limited trials" amid the special operation in Ukraine but said Russian designers are improving tank technology as they learn lessons from the military effort.

"We have often heard how much 'better' Western main battle tanks are – bigger, with more armor, with faster top speeds," said the analyst. "However if these larger, more expensive tanks cannot cope with difficult terrain because of their size and weight, or cannot be built in large enough numbers to cope with high losses to Russian anti-tank weapons, what good do these specifications have besides looking impressive on paper?"

"The West still seems incapable of learning that quantity can indeed be a quality of its own," Berletic stated.

Berletic concluded by addressing the larger state of play surrounding Russia's rapidly emerging technological parity, and even supremacy, on the battlefield.

Once again, quantity is a powerful indicator of Russia's abilities. Rostec's CEO recently noted that "the number of fifth-generation fighter jets being put into service is almost doubling every year." Meanwhile, Russia's production volume of artillery shells "has skyrocketed by roughly 50 times compared to 2021" while the number of infantry fighting vehicles and other armored fighting vehicles produced has quintupled. Russia now builds seven times the number of tanks it produced in 2021, according to Chemezov, making the country a global leader in the category.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

"The collective West still believes firmly in its own full-spectrum supremacy in terms of political, economic, and military power, despite the growing body of evidence to the contrary," said Berletic. "For decades (if not generations), the West has taken for granted the disparity between its own power and that of its adversaries, indifferent to the reality that as technology evolves, the geopolitical playing field is gradually being balanced."

"Russia for many years worked on making itself more self-sufficient in general, dismantling many potential dependencies on an increasingly aggressive and irrational West," said the former Marine. "This clearly paid off when Western sanctions in 2022 failed to have the crippling impact Washington, London, and Brussels had hoped for, and instead backfired on the West itself."

Most recently, the political consequences of the West's sanctions regime have been observed in Germany, where Chancellor Olaf Scholz's popularity has plummeted amidst economic difficulties. Polling shows the populist right may ride to power there as they did in Italy, with the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party rising in the polls.

"Russia has continuously expanded its military industrial base while at the same time the West allowed theirs to atrophy," said Berletic. "The result is a proxy conflict where the collective West is incapable of matching let alone exceeding Russia's level of ammunition, weapons, and vehicle production."

"And while the West appears to understand this mistake in hindsight, they still seem incapable of grasping just how much time is needed to rectify this or accept the possibility that it is perhaps impossible at this point to rectify."

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

2023 or 2003? US Launches Airstrikes in Iraq as Middle East Tensions Escalate

The United States continues to throw its weight around in the region, although the growing power of anti-Western forces suggests the current balance of power may not remain for long. Beirut-based journalist Esteban Carrillo joined Sputnik's The Final Countdown on Wednesday to discuss what's changed in the Middle East over the last decades, and what's remained the same.

In a flashback to the 2003 illegal invasion of Iraq the US announced Tuesday they'd launched airstrikes in Baghdad. The strikes were targeted against fighters affiliated with Kataib Hezbollah as the US accused the group of using the Iraqi capital as a base of "aerial drone activities." Opponents of Israel's Western-backed war in Gaza have been launching drone attacks on US bases in the region daily over the past months in a show of defiance.

"These factions in Iraq are attacking US bases because of the support the US is giving to Israel to [commit] atrocities on a daily basis against the Palestinians," said Carrillo.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Carrillo noted that "the Iranian-backed organization was instrumental in defeating ISIS in Iraq. We often hear that the US drove ISIS out of Iraq. It's not really the case. It was these groups that really led the battle, that really led the fight to liberate Iraq from the grip of ISIS."

"These groups are also represented in [Iraqi] parliament, which is something very important to understand," reminded Carrillo. Iraq's government has consistently opposed the continuing US military presence in the country – to no avail – as American troops have remained stationed there despite multiple resolutions from the Iraqi legislature calling for their withdrawal.

"The response from the Iraqi government has been very strong," said Carrillo regarding the US airstrikes. "They have said 'this is unacceptable, this endangers bilateral relationships between Iraq and the US, you can't do this, Iraq is not your country.'"

"Without coordinating with the government you cannot be dropping bombs inside the capital city," the journalist stressed.

But Carrillo noted the act is typical of America's treatment of countries in the region that the US has moved to dominate for decades.

Meanwhile, the hosts noted reports that China is building 8,000 schools in Iraq while the United States has constructed less than 30 since its 2003 invasion, which wrought devastation of the country's infrastructure. At the time Iraqis were already suffering from a severe US-led economic embargo of the country, which killed an estimated 500,000 children. Former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright famously remarkedthat she thought the deaths were "worth it" in order to punish the country's leaders for the invasion of Kuwait.

"The breakdown in [the international] order has been happening for a while now," remarked Carrillo, agreeing that such actions would be viewed as acts of war if undertaken by most other countries.

"We just need to look at how the conflict in Ukraine was portrayed as opposed to what's happening in Gaza," said the analyst, noting the double-standard. "When it's the bad guys, you can bomb them as much as you can. When it's the Western allies, you can't."

But Carrillo noted the "unprecedented" nature of Hamas' resistance on October 7, saying it demonstrated that "the world has changed," and there "won't be such an uneven playing field anymore" between US allies and opposition forces.

Finally hosts Angie Wong and Ted Rall discussed Israel's announcement that the country would deny visas to United Nations employees in the future, accusing them of facilitating "Hamas propaganda." Carrillo claimed the move would prove to be "detrimental for the Palestinian people who rely on aid from the UN" as Israel has enforced a blockade on the Gaza Strip for years.

The journalist noted Israel's poor reputation among UN member nations, which is likely to continue to worsen after accusations the country is harvesting organs from Palestinians killed in Gaza.

"Maybe the problem isn't with them, maybe the problem is with you," Carrillo said of Israel, which consistently accuses the UN of harboring an anti-Israel bias.

The Final Countdown can be heard on Rumble and followed on the Sputnik website as well as various podcast platforms.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Turkiye Doubles Down, Urges US to Keep F-16 Promise - Reports

The NATO member country is hoping to buy 40 F-16 jets from the United States, but the deal still needs the approval of US lawmakers.

Turkiye's foreign minister pressured the United States to follow through on a pledge to sell F-16 fighter jets to the country in a call with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, an anonymous Turkish diplomatic source told US media on Wednesday.

The United States allegedly initiated the call the day after a Turkish parliamentary commission voted in favor of approving Sweden's entry into NATO. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan took advantage of the opportunity Wednesday to make the request to Blinken, citing Tukiye's status as a US ally in NATO.

"Fidan stated that, regarding the sale of F-16s, we expect the US administration and US Congress to act in line with the spirit of alliance and keep the promises made," the source explained.

Turkiye has repeatedly held up the approval of Sweden and Finland's NATO membership bids, attempting to extract concessions regarding the extradition of people the country considers terrorists, among other demands. The Turkish parliament's general assembly still must approve Sweden's NATO ascension in order for it to move forward, raising the prospect that the process could still be delayed if new tensions emerge between Turkiye and other NATO members.

New countries require the unanimous approval of NATO member states in order to formally join the military alliance.

The $20 billion sale of the 40 jets to Ankara may face opposition from backers of Israel in the US Congress; Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has made waves in recent months with his strong criticism of the country's military campaign in Gaza.

Meanwhile it was reported in October that four key US legislators serving roles related to foreign affairs were wavering on the sale, citing human rights issues among other concerns.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Pentagon Seeking High-Speed Vertical Takeoff X-Plane

DARPA is sponsoring a moonshot effort to develop next-generation technology featuring the flexibility of the troubled V-22 Osprey aircraft.

The US military's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) has granted four private companies funds to develop a next-generation aircraft similar to the V-22 Osprey.

The Osprey has found wide usage due to its novel ability to take off and land vertically like a helicopter, allowing it to operate in areas without runways. DARPA is launching the SPRINT

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

(Speed and Runway Independent Technologies) program to develop a comparable aircraft capable of flying at much faster speeds.

"What we ... want to be able to achieve is higher-end speeds," said Navy Commander Ian Higgins to a US media outlet. "We're going another 100-plus knots beyond [the Osprey], which itself challenges physics if you were just to use the propulsion system that's in the Osprey."

The current V-22 Osprey has a max speed of 270 knots or just over 300 miles per hour. DARPA is hoping for the development of an aircraft by spring 2027 that can travel at a brisk 460 to 520 miles per hour.

But DARPA retains a broad wishlist for other capabilities it wants to see in the new technology. The agency is not requiring the design to be fully practical, but is hoping to develop technology at this stage that will inform future projects.

However, the aircraft will be required to be able to carry a load of 40% of the vehicle's projected weight, suggesting DARPA is hoping for an aircraft that can serve the logistics functions of the Osprey.

The companies Aurora Flight Sciences (a subsidiary of Boeing), Bell Textron, Northrop Grumman, and Piasecki Aircraft Corp have been awarded funds to begin developing their ideas. Some of the early concepts, such as the one from Bell Textron, appear to be physically similar to the Osprey.

Others, like the one from Aurora, appear to offer a simpler design that may be intended to avoid the technological complexity of the Osprey.

The V-22 Osprey is valued by the US Marine Corps for its logistics capabilities but the aircraft has suffered numerous catastrophic failures since its introduction in 2007, claiming the lives of at least 53 service members. The plane was once again grounded throughout the US armed forces earlier this month after a crash off the coast of Japan killed eight Air Force Special Operations Command members.

A recent analysis from Sputnik examined the complex mechanical design of the Osprey that makes the aircraft difficult to operate and maintain.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Musk Says His Ukraine Peace Plan Could Have Averted Many Deaths

WASHINGTON, December 28 (Sputnik) – Elon Musk said on Thursday that "many deaths could have been avoided" if a Ukraine peace plan he floated last year had been adopted.

"Many deaths could have been avoided," Musk wrote.

In October 2022, Musk posted a yes/no poll for a handful of measures that he believed could achieve peace between Russia and Ukraine, including a UN-supervised redo of referenda to join Russia by the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions; placing Crimea formally within Russia borders; assuring a water supply to Crimea and Ukraine's neutrality.

His proposals sparked condemnation from Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Choosing Arms Supplies Over Diplomacy on Ukraine 'Not Working' - Russian Envoy

VIENNA, December 25 (Sputnik), Lenka White - The choice made by the collective West in favor of supplying arms and munitions to Ukraine without attempting to diplomatically resolve the conflict there will not bear fruit, Russian Ambassador to International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov has told Sputnik.

"In general, it is becoming increasingly clear that the current [Western] policy, based, on the one hand on the oblivion of diplomacy, and on the other hand on massive arms supplies, is not working. At least some countries will inevitably make appropriate conclusions," Ulyanov said in an interview when asked if any other countries were ready to join Hungary and Slovakia in not sending weapons to Ukraine.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

No Prospect for Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone in Mideast So Long as Israel Against - Ulyanov

VIENNA, December 28 (Sputnik), Lenka White – The prospects for a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Middle East are non-existent so long as Israel opposes the initiative, Russia's Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov told Sputnik.

"The prospects of creating such a zone look relatively remote now, not only because of the situation in Gaza, but because the Israelis refuse to have this dialogue with their neighbors and to participate in the UN conference on this issue," Ulyanov said.

However, the Russian diplomat acknowledged that the issue would remain on the international agenda.

"Israel's neighbors do not rush, and the conference will take place annually," he added

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Russia Expects Visit of IAEA Chief in 2024 - Envoy

VIENNA, December 28 (Sputnik), Lenka White – Russia expects International Atomic Energy Agency chief Rafael Grossi to visit Moscow next year, but the specific date will depend on the readiness of both sides, Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov told Sputnik.

"I think, most likely, he will visit Russia in 2024," Ulyanov said.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

When asked about a concrete date, the diplomat pointed out that it depends on the readiness of both sides.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Tying NATO Buildup to Russia's Withdrawal From CFE Treaty Unconvincing - Russian Envoy

VIENNA, December 28 (Sputnik), Lenka White – NATO's attempt to tie its ongoing military buildup to Russia's withdrawal from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) has been unconvincing since Moscow suspended its participation in the treaty back in 2007, Russia's Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov told Sputnik.

"Yes, indeed, we recently withdrew from the CFE Treaty officially, but in general we stopped participating in it, de facto we suspended our participation on December 13, 2007. In practical terms, nothing new has happened in terms of security. Any connection between Russia's withdrawal from the CFE treaty and the need to build up NATO forces close to the Russian borders is a very unconvincing connection," Ulyanov said in an interview.

Ulyanov stated that at the moment everything indicates that the military presence of NATO and the United States near Russian borders will only increase over time.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Finland Will Not Benefit From Accession to NATO – Russian Envoy Ulyanov

VIENNA, December 28 (Sputnik), Lenka White – Finland will not benefit from NATO accession and risks becoming the first to suffer in the event of any military escalation, Russia's Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov told Sputnik.

"I just don't understand how Finland benefits from this [accession to NATO]. They lived calmly, and peacefully, and unexpectedly found themselves between Russia and NATO ... But they are our neighbors, and God forbid if there is any aggravation, then Finland itself will suffer first. I really wouldn't want this to be the case, of course," Ulyanov said in an interview.

Ulyanov also pointed out that a defense cooperation agreement signed by Helsinki and Washington last week is a "serious challenge" for Moscow. The deal provides US soldiers with access to 15 Finnish military areas and facilities.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Russia Will Not Seek China Joining New START Successor Treaty - Envoy Ulyanov

VIENNA, December 28 (Sputnik), Lenka White – Russia will not be seeking China's participation in a New START successor treaty but will not object if Beijing decides to join, Russia's Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov told Sputnik.

"If China decides that it wants to join and work in the format of the Nuclear Five [along with Russia, the United States, France, and the United Kingdom], we probably won't object. But we are not going to force Beijing to join like the United States is trying to do," Ulyanov said in an interview.

France and the United Kingdom, however, must be part of any New START successor treaty, the diplomat stated.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Colorado GOP Appeals to Top US Court Colorado Decision to Remove Trump From Ballot -Filing

WASHINGTON, December 28 (Sputnik) - The Colorado Republican Party filed an appeal with the US Supreme Court challenging the decision by the Colorado Supreme Court to disqualify former President Donald Trump from the state ballot in the upcoming election, a court filing revealed.

"The state has interfered in the primary election by unreasonably restricting the Party's ability to select its candidates," the court document stated on Wednesday. "As a natural and inevitable result, the state has interfered with the Party's ability to place on the general election ballot the candidate of its choice. And it has done so based on a subjective claim of insurrection the state lacks any constitutional authority to make."

The Colorado Supreme Court recently ruled that Trump is disqualified from the 2024 Republican primary ballot due to his role in the events on January 6 at the US Capitol, citing the 14th Amendment of the US Constitution. The amendment restricts people who are engaged in insurrection from holding public office.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

France, UK Must Be Part of New START Successor Treaty - Russian Envoy

VIENNA, December 28 (Sputnik), Lenka White – France and the United Kingdom must be part of any New START successor treaty, since their nuclear arsenals can no longer be ignored, Russia's Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov told Sputnik.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

"This future [New START successor] agreement should involve France and the United Kingdom," Ulyanov said in an interview. "France and the United Kingdom are military allies of the United States in the NATO bloc and, of course, we cannot ignore their [nuclear] potential."

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Blinken Says Discussed With Mexico's Lopez Obrador Efforts to Reduce Migration on Border

WASHINGTON, December 28 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement that he discussed with Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador shared efforts to reduce the influx of migrants arriving on the US-Mexico border.

"The US-Mexico partnership is crucial to prosperity and security in our countries and throughout the Americas," Blinken said on Wednesday. "Good to discuss these issues, and our shared efforts to reduce irregular migration, with [Lopez Obrador] today in Mexico City."

Blinken was also joined by Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, White House National Security Advisor Liz Sherwood-Randall, and US Ambassador to Mexico Ken Salazar.

Blinken further said the US delegation made it clear in Mexico City that the United States is committed to partnering with Mexico to address shared challenges, including managing "unprecedented" irregular migration in the region, reopening key ports of entry, and combating illicit fentanyl and other synthetic drugs.

Media reports citing CBP sources said that the month of December is on track to set an all-time record for the largest number of crossings in a month on the US southern border. As of Tuesday, there were some 250,000 illegal crossings on the US-Mexico border this month, according to the reports.

The number of illegal immigrant crossings into the United States over the last 11 months outnumbered the population of 15 US states, according to data from US Customs and Border Protection (CBP). The data shows that about 2.7 million immigrants came illegally across the US borders from January to November, most of which occurred via the United States' border with Mexico.

Republicans in Congress are currently negotiating with White House officials on a plan to impose stricter immigration policies that will deter the heavy flow of immigrants arriving on the US southern border.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

No Prerequisites for Talks on New START Successor Treaty - Russian Envoy

VIENNA, December 28 (Sputnik), Lenka White - There are no prerequisites to resume talks on a New START successor treaty without Washington first making steps to normalize relations with Moscow, Russian Ambassador to International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov told

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Sputnik.

"There are no prerequisites. On the contrary, the entire US policy [toward Russia] is aimed at aggravating our relations and in these conditions, it is completely unrealistic to discuss how the Americans will inspect our nuclear facilities. First, they must normalize relations and then we'll see. Nobody probably knows what the new agreement will look like," Ulyanov said in an interview.

New START, which stands for New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, entered into force in 2011. Ten years later, the two countries negotiated an extension until February 2026.

Russia suspended its participation in the accord in February this year.

President Vladimir Putin said that the US demanded that Russia unconditionally fulfill its obligations under the treaty while being arbitrary about its own obligations. He also said any Russian return to talks would require clarity about how NATO's combined nuclear strike potential would be taken into account since the current treaty does not cover the nuclear arsenals of France and the United Kingdom.

In June, the US announced its "countermeasures" in response to Russia's suspension of the treaty.

Both sides say they continue to abide by New START's numerical limits.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Choosing Arms Supplies Over Diplomacy on Ukraine 'Not Working' - Russian Envoy

VIENNA, December 25 (Sputnik), Lenka White - The choice made by the collective West in favor of supplying arms and munitions to Ukraine without attempting to diplomatically resolve the conflict there will not bear fruit, Russian Ambassador to International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov has told Sputnik.

"In general, it is becoming increasingly clear that the current [Western] policy, based, on the one hand on the oblivion of diplomacy, and on the other hand on massive arms supplies, is not working. At least some countries will inevitably make appropriate conclusions," Ulyanov said in an interview when asked if any other countries were ready to join Hungary and Slovakia in not sending weapons to Ukraine.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Blinken Says US 'Will Not Rest' Until Paul Whelan Returned From Detention in Russia

WASHINGTON, December 28 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement that the Biden administration will not cease efforts to return US citizen Paul Whelan to the United States from his detention in Russia.

"December 28 marks five years since Russian authorities wrongfully detained US citizen Paul

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Whelan," the statement said on Wednesday. "Since President Biden took office, the United States has secured the release of more than forty wrongful detainees, and not a day goes by without intensive US Government efforts to bring Paul home. We will not rest until he is safely back with his family where he belongs."

Earlier this month, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that the Kremlin hopes to reach a mutually acceptable prisoner exchange deal with the US to return Whelan and Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich.

Russian authorities arrested Whelan in 2018 and subsequently sentenced him to 16 years in prison on espionage charges, which he denies.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US House Ethics Panel Says Launching Probe Into Congresswoman Cherfilus-McCormick

WASHINGTON, December 28 (Sputnik) - The US House Ethics Committee said in a statement that it is launching a probe into Congresswoman Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick for allegedly violating campaign finance laws.

"Pursuant to the Committee's action, the Investigative Subcommittee shall have jurisdiction to determine whether Representative Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick violated the Code of Official Conduct or any law, rule, regulation… with respect to allegations that she may have violated campaign finance laws and regulations in connection with her 2022 special election and/or 2022 re-election campaigns," the statement said on Wednesday.

The panel will also investigate whether Cherfilus-McCormick failed to properly disclose required information on mandatory filings with the House of Representatives or accepted voluntary services for official work from someone not employed in her office, the statement said.

The Ethics Committee is launching the probe following receipt of a referral on the matter from the Office of Congressional Ethics, the statement said.

US Congressman Andrew Garbarino will serve as chair of the Investigative Subcommittee, the statement added.

The launch of a probe does not itself indicate the occurrence of any wrongdoing, according to the statement.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Republicans Probing if Biden Tried to Obstruct Son's Cooperation With Impeachment Inquiry

WASHINGTON, December 28 (Sputnik) - US House Republicans are investigating whether President Joe Biden tried to influence or obstruct his son Hunter Biden's cooperation with the House impeachment inquiry, Congressmen James Comer and Jim Jordan said in a letter to the White House.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

"In light of an official statement from the White House that President Biden was aware in advance that his son, Hunter Biden, would knowingly defy two congressional subpoenas, we are compelled to examine as part of our impeachment inquiry whether the President engaged in a conspiracy to obstruct a proceeding of Congress," the congressmen said in the letter to White House Counsel Edward Siskel on Wednesday.

The letter asks the White House to provide by January 10 all documents and communications sent or received by employees of the Executive Office of the President regarding Hunter Biden's deposition.

Earlier this month, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said Biden was aware of what his son planned to say when he defied a House subpoena to testify behind closed doors about his business dealings.

On December 13, Hunter Biden arrived at the US Capitol steps to announce that he would not testify in a closed-door deposition later that day as previously scheduled. He said he would only answer questions at a public hearing.

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

The president dismisses the accusations against him, arguing that he has never discussed foreign business deals with his son.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Russia, Ukraine Close to Peace Deal in 2022 But UK, US Derailed Talks - Ulyanov

VIENNA, December 25 (Sputnik), Lenka White - Russia and Ukraine were very close to reaching a peace deal in 2022, but the United States and the United Kingdom derailed it, Russian Ambassador to International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov has told Sputnik.

"In March and April 2022, [Russia] and Ukraine reached. almost reached, a peace deal to cease military actions. However, the United Kingdom and the United States were against it, and the European Union, as always, joined them then," Ulyanov said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Main Beneficiary of Ukraine Conflict, Europe 'Loses a Lot' - Russian Envoy

VIENNA, December 25 (Sputnik), Lenka White – The United States is the main beneficiary of the conflict in Ukraine, while Europe remains a loser, Russian Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov has told Sputnik.

"As far as I understand, the US is the major beneficiary of the current situation in Ukraine, and Washington earns money on that. However, Europe loses a lot," Ulyanov said.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

He pointed out that the idea of the conflict was harmful to the Europeans, but they followed guidelines from Washington.

Ulyanov stated that the sanctions policy is not effective since Russia's GDP will grow by 3.5% this year, which is more than in the vast majority of countries in the European Union.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Oil Rebound Stalls as Red Sea Becomes Less Tense, Leading to Crude Loadings

NEW YORK, December 27 (Sputnik) - The rebound in oil prices just ahead of the year-end is beginning to see some resistance as developments in the Red Sea, which ignited the rally, became less tense, analysts said.

US crude oil's West Texas Intermediate (WTI) benchmark and London's Brent crude benchmark have moved almost 4% higher the past three weeks after plummeting some 20% over seven previous weeks.

But on Wednesday, both the benchmarks fell about 2%, with WTI settling down $1.46 at $74.11 and Brent finishing down $1.42 at $79.65.

The declines came after Danish shipping company Maersk reportedly scheduled several dozen container vessels to travel via the Suez Canal and the Red Sea in the coming weeks. Maersk had called a temporary halt to those routes after attacks by Yemen's Houthi militia.

France's CMA CGM was also reported to be resuming passage through the Red Sea after deployment of a multinational task force to the region.

Adding to the market's weight were reports citing Kazakhstan's energy ministry as saying the Caspian Pipeline Consortium terminal near the port was open, even as oil loadings at the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiysk were suspended due to a storm.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Stocks Extend Record High Streak on Bets of Interest Rate Cuts in 2024

NEW YORK, December 27 (Sputnik) - US stocks extended their record high streak on Wednesday, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average headed for an all-time high closing as investors piled into US stocks on bets that the Federal Reserve would slash interest rates in the coming year.

With an hour to settlement, the Dow, which serves as Wall Street's broadest equities indicator with stocks of 30 large US corporations, was up almost 22 points, or 0.1%, at 37,567, after a session peak at 37,684. At its current momentum, the index looks set to rewrite its December 19 record high closing of 37,558.

The S&P 500 Index, which represents the top 500 US stocks, was near flat at 4,773, after reaching a record peak of 4,785 during the session.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

The Nasdaq Composite Index, which comprises marquee names in technology such as Google, Amazon, Apple and Netflix, was up 7 points, or 0.1%, at 15,080.52, after an all-time peak at 15,114.

Stocks extended their gains on Wednesday after the US Treasury Department sold $58 billion in 5-year notes, prompting a further pullback in benchmark bond yields.

Yields have plummeted while equities went the other way on signs that inflation could reach the Fed's 2% target sometime in 2024.

A US inflation indicator closely followed by the Fed grew 2.6% in the year to November, below Wall Street's forecast and beneath the key 3% mark that suggested a greater likelihood of the central bank cutting interest rates significantly next year.

Some analysts worry that the market may have gotten ahead of itself.

"The stock market is too optimistic about the quantity of rate cuts expected in 2024, and we may be borrowing some of 2024's gains now as the year-end rally continues, because we don't expect to see as many rate cuts as the market is currently predicting," Michael Landsberg, chief investment officer at Landsberg Bennett Private Wealth Management, said in comments carried by MarketWatch.

Landsberg said his firm expected rate cuts no earlier than July and only three at the most for the year "unless something unexpected happens in the economy."

US GDP grew at 4.9% for the third quarter of this year, lagging forecasts by Wall Street's analyst community, which targeted a growth of 5.2%.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Confederate Statues Removed from Springfield Park, Florida - Statement

WASHINGTON, December 28 (Sputnik) - Mayor Donna Deegan said on Wednesday that the Confederate statues at Springfield Park are currently undergoing removal, the City of Jacksonville said in a statement on their website.

"Mayor Donna Deegan announced that the Confederate statues are being removed from Springfield Park today. This memorial was erected during the peak of early 20th century Confederate monument-building, part of a widespread campaign to promote and justify Jim Crow laws in the South and intimidate African Americans," the statement said.

According to the statement, the removal of the statues is underway and was funded from a grant provided to 904WARD, an organization which focuses racial topics and equity, by the Jessie Ball duPont Fund and anonymous donors.

"The plaque is also being removed and engravings of the pedestal will be covered with temporary plaques," the statement added.

The statement added that the cost of the removal work amounts to $187,000.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden Empowers Blinken to Authorize $20Mln in Foreign Aid to Ukraine - Memorandum

WASHINGTON, December 28 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Wednesday that he is empowering US Secretary of State Antony Blinken to provide $20 million in aid to Ukraine under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.

"By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including section 621 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, I hereby delegate to the Secretary of State the authority… to determine whether it is important to the security interests of the United States to furnish up to $20 million in assistance to Ukraine," Biden said in a memorandum to Blinken.

Earlier on Wednesday, Blinken announced up to $250 million in arms and equipment to Ukraine under previously directed drawdowns. The package includes air defense munitions, anti-armor munitions and artillery ammunition, Blinken said in a statement.

The aid comes as the Biden administration waits on further authorized assistance from the US Congress to provide Ukraine.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, December 28 (Sputnik) –

SWEDEN'S ACCESSION TO NATO

* Sweden has taken a number of serious steps in the process of becoming a NATO member, and Ankara expects serious progress to be made, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Chief Adviser Akif Cagatay Kilic said on Wednesday.

* US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke by telephone with his Turkish counterpart Hakan Fidan and discussed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, and Sweden's accession to NATO, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said.

ISRAELI-HAMAS WAR

* The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is in a state of "high readiness" along the border with Lebanon, the Chief of the General Staff said on Wednesday.

* The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) does not have information about the location and does not have access to the hostages in the Gaza Strip, as the security situation in the enclave prohibits the movement of groups, ICRC representative Sarah Davis told Sputnik.

* US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is expected to travel to the Middle East toward the end of next week to continue discussing Israel's war on Gaza, Axios reported, citing US, Israeli, and Arab officials.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

RUSSIAN ECONOMY

* Diamond exports from Russia will continue despite the EU sanctions, Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov said on Wednesday.

* The Russian Finance Ministry considers it possible to use the National Welfare Fund (NWF) in 2024 if oil prices drop, but it is not prepared to use up everything to the last penny, Siluanov said.

* Russia's GDP has slowed down by 4.4% in November from the previous estimate of 5.1% in October, and grew by 3.3% in January-November, the Russian Economic Development Ministry said.

* Russia's budget deficit is likely to be under 1.5% of the GDP, Russian President Vladimir Putin said.

RUSSIA-INDIA RELATIONS

* Russian President Vladimir Putin invited on Wednesday Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit Russia.

* Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar conveyed the greetings and a letter from Modi to Putin, and also announced the intention of the Indian Prime Minister to visit Russia in 2024.

* Russia-India relations develop steadily despite all the difficulties in the world, Putin said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* The Russian armed forces have taken control of a strategically important stronghold of the Ukrainian armed forces in the Donetsk direction and captured a large arsenal of Western trophies, a military source told Sputnik on Wednesday.

* Ukraine has lost up to 280 soldiers both killed and injured in the Donetsk direction over the past 24 hours, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Capitol Police Say Arrested Man Carrying Knife, Machete Near US Capitol Building

WASHINGTON, December 27 (Sputnik) - The US Capitol Police (USCP) arrested a 23-year-old man who was carrying a knife and machete near the east side of the US Capitol building, USCP said on Wednesday.

"Yesterday afternoon, United States Capitol Police officers arrested a man who was carrying a machete and a knife on the East Front of the US Capitol," USCP said in a statement. "The suspect has been identified as 23 year old Jose Leonardo Marquez of no fixed address."

On Tuesday, a USCP officer observed Marquez pacing back and forth and approached him, at which point he noticed Marquez carrying a brick, which the officer asked him to toss to the side, the statement said.

Marquez followed the request and then pulled out a knife and placed it on a nearby ledge, the statement said. The USCP officer secured the knife and noticed a machete under Marquez's clothing as well, the statement said. The officer drew his firearm and ordered Marquez to put his hands up — an order he complied with, leading to his safe arrest — the statement said.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Investigators have yet to determine why Marquez was in Washington, although there is no evidence he was targeting members of the US Congress, the statement said. Marquez faces criminal charges, including carrying a dangerous weapon and possession of a prohibited weapon, the statement said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Announces $250Mln Military Aid Package for Ukraine, Final for This Year - Blinken

WASHINGTON, December 27 (Sputnik) - The United States has unveiled its final military aid package Ukraine for this year, valued at up to $250 million, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement on Wednesday.

"The United States is announcing the year's final package of weapons and equipment for Ukraine," the statement said. "This package provides up to $250 million of arms and equipment under previously directed drawdowns for Ukraine. "

The aid package includes air defense munitions, other air defense system components, additional ammunition for high mobility artillery rocket systems, 155mm and 105mm artillery ammunition, anti-armor munitions, and over 15 million rounds of ammunition, according to the statement.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Apple Stores Say Have No Updates on Resumption of Watch Sales After Import Ban Pause

WASHINGTON, December 27 (Sputnik) - Apple stores have no updates on the resumption of watch sales after court rules to pause import ban, Apple store representatives told Sputnik on Wednesday.

"I don't have anything... It [Apple] hasn't given us any updated information," a store representative said in response to a Sputnik reporter's question about whether Apple would reintroduce the Series 9 in stores.

Earlier today, the US Appeals Court has temporarily halted the Apple Watch import ban, pausing enforcement of Remedial Orders during the pending appeal, as Apple seeks resolution in a dispute over blood oxygen monitoring patents.

On Tuesday, the Biden administration declined to reverse a decision by the US International Trade Commission (ITC), which found that some Apple Watches infringed on patents for blood oxygen monitoring technology.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

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

Trump Asks Maine Secretary of State to Recuse Herself From Ruling on Ballot Eligibility

WASHINGTON, December 27 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump on Wednesday asked Maine Secretary of State Shenna Bellows to remove herself from ruling on his ballot eligibility in the state for the upcoming 2024 presidential election because of her bias.

"President Trump requests that the Secretary disqualify herself from this matter because she has already concluded that President Trump engaged in insurrection - a determination that she made well before the submission of evidence or argument in this current matter," Trump's legal team said in a letter to Bellows. "Because the Secretary has exhibited a personal bias in this matter, she should disqualify herself from further proceedings."

The Trump campaign said in a separate statement that Bellows is a completely biased Democrat partisan and a Biden supporter who is incapable of making a fair decision.

"Any attempt to remove President Trump's name from the ballot is blatant election interference," the campaign said. "It is unConstitutional, unAmerican and wrong. Sec. Bellows's social media history displays a deep disdain for President Trump and betrays a level of personal animus and bias so deep that she is rendered incapable of allowing a fair hearing of this pressing matter."

Last week, the Colorado Supreme Court ruled that Trump is disqualified from the 2024 Republican primary ballot due to his role in the events on January 6 at the US Capitol, citing the 14th Amendment of the US Constitution. The amendment restricts people who have engaged in insurrection from holding public office.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Michigan Supreme Court rejected an attempt to remove Trump from the 2024 ballot.

The state of California is also looking into potentially removing Trump from the ballot, while Texas has threatened to remove Biden from the ballot.

The 14th Amendment of the US Constitution, ratified after the Civil War, bans officials from taking office if they engaged in insurrection. Thousands of former Confederates were disqualified from elections because of this provision.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Over Half of Americans Say Biden Will Win Democratic Presidential Nomination - Poll

WASHINGTON, December 27 (Sputnik) - A slight majority of Americans say they believe current President Joe Biden will be the Democratic party's candidate in the upcoming 2024 presidential election, a new Redfield & Wilton Strategies and Newsweek poll revealed on Wednesday.

The poll showed that 53% think Biden will win the Democratic nomination with a clear advantage.

Sixty-eight percent of respondents said that they would "strongly support" or "support" a

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

presidential bid by Vice President Kamala Harris, and 11% would oppose her nomination, a release on the poll said.

Forty-eight percent of respondents said they "strongly support" or "support" US Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and 11% said they would oppose his nomination, the release said.

Twenty-five percent of respondents said they "strongly support" California Governor Gavin Newsom and 26% said they would "support" him, the release said.

Twelve percent of respondents said "another candidate" will win the Democratic party presidential nomination, while 27% said they did not know who will win, the release added.

The poll was conducted online on December 19 among 1,500 registered voters nationwide, according to the release.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden Tells Congress Recent Iraq Strikes Necessary, Consistent With Int'l Law - Letter

WASHINGTON, December 27 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden on Wednesday sent a letter to Congress in which he defended his administration's decision to undertake strikes against Iran-backed groups in Iraq and Syria as being necessary and consistent with international law.

"The United States took this necessary and proportionate action consistent with international law and in the exercise of the United States' inherent right of self-defense as reflected in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter," Biden said in the letter.

On Monday, the Biden administration initiated strikes on three facilities after US troops at the Erbil Air Base in northern Iraq were attacked by a drone, leaving three US soldiers wounded, with one in critical condition.

The Defense Department explained that three targets of the Kataib Hezbollah militia and associated groups in Iraq were hit.

About 20 Kataib Hezbollah fighters were injured in the strikes, according to Shafaq News.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Austrian Firearm Businessman Gaston Glock Dies at Age 94 - Company

WASHINGTON, December 28 (Sputnik) - Gaston Glock, founder of the firearms company GLOCK, has died at the age of 94, the company said on Wednesday.

The company changed the main page of its official website to feature an "in memoriam" tribute to Glock, who was born in 1929 in Vienna, Austria.

"Gaston Glock not only revolutionized the world of small arms in the 1980s, but also succeeded in establishing the GLOCK brand as the global leader in the handgun industry," the website said. "His life's work will continue in his spirit."

GLOCK handguns have become popular in the military, law enforcement and civilian

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

self-defense markets. The handguns notably lack an on-off safety mechanism, allowing users to fire without operating an additional switch.

Various models of the handguns are used by many US federal law enforcement and special operations forces, as well as Russian security and some special operations forces.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Police Arrest Pro-Palestine Protesters Blocking New York's JFK International Airport

WASHINGTON, December 27 (Sputnik) - Port Authority Police of New York and New Jersey arrested pro-Palestine protesters who blocked the flow of traffic into John F. Kennedy International Airport, according to video of the situation on Wednesday.

The video shows law enforcement personnel arresting demonstrators, who were holding pro-Palestine signs and repeating chants in the middle of the road.

The video also shows people with luggage attempting to get around the protesters and into the airport complex.

The demonstration came in response to Israel's indiscriminate bombardment and military invasion of Gaza, prompted by an October 7 surprise attack on Israel by the Palestinian movement Hamas.

Some 1,200 Israelis - military and civilians - were killed during Hamas' attack. Some 21,000 Palestinians have been killed during Israel's military operations and 58,000 wounded since October 7.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

ANALYSIS - Putin Correct in Saying Odessa Russian City - Former US Diplomats, Analysts

WASHINGTON, December 27 (Sputnik) - Russian President Vladimir Putin was correct in saying recently that Odessa has always been a Russian city and his comment also suggests that he is determined to deny Odessa or other Black Sea outlets to Ukraine, former State Department officials told Sputnik.

Putin made the comment on the Russian origins and identity of Odessa during the annual year-end press conference on December 14.

"Odessa is a Russian city. We know this. Everyone knows this. But no, they drummed up all sorts of historical nonsense," Putin said.

ODESSA FOUNDED AS A RUSSIAN CITY

Former Assistant Defense Secretary for International Security Affairs Chas Freeman noted that Odessa was founded by Russian Empress Catherine the Great in 1794 as a Russian city and it has always been mainly Russian speaking.

"Perhaps that is what Mr. Putin meant to say," Freeman said.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

However, Putin's carefully chosen comments may also have been meant to signal a new intent and goal of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, Freeman said.

"Putin was perhaps signaling the intent to take Odessa and deny Ukraine a Black Sea coast," Freeman said.

The Russian president's comments were deliberately ambiguous and the public must await his explanation of what he meant, Freeman said.

A CITY DEVELOPED BY RUSSIA

Former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) analyst Philip Giraldi agreed with the assessment, noting that Odessa was incorporated into the Russian Empire when its territory was acquired after bloody wars with the Ottoman Empire.

"My understanding is, historically speaking, that the city is definitely much more Russian than Ukrainian," Giraldi said.

Moreover, Odessa was not only founded by Russia but was subsequently developed economically by the Russian government, Giraldi said.

Ukrainian influence grew in the city since Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, himself a Ukrainian, handed it over to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic within the Soviet Union in 1954, Giraldi also said.

"It is my understanding that it retains a substantial core of population that considers itself to be Russian," Giraldi added.

Former State Department official James Carden noted that Odessa was a key strategic port for Russia beginning under Catherine the Great.

"Putin was signaling intent to retain control of Odessa for Russia after the current conflict with Ukraine ended," Cardin said.

A MOOT ISSUE

Retired National Security Agency (NSA) senior analyst and whistleblower J. Kirk Wiebe pointed out that despite nearly 70 years of Ukrainian sovereignty, "practically speaking, Odessa has been in Russian hands for the last 100 years or so."

"Putin is aware that the headquarters of the Russian Black Sea fleet is close by, so the issue is moot unless Ukraine can push the Russians out - something highly unlikely to happen," Wiebe said.

In practical terms, Odessa has and would clearly remain under Russia's control, Wiebe added.

In 1794, Russian Empress Catherine issued a decree to build a Russian Navy harbor in Khadjibey (Gulf of Odessa) which was then renamed Odessa. From 1819 to 1858, the city was a free port. During the Soviet era from 1917 to 1991, it was an important trading port and naval base.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Migrant Border Crossings in US for Most of 2023 Outnumber Population of 15 States - CBP

WASHINGTON, December 27 (Sputnik) - The number of illegals immigrant crossings into the United States over the last 11 months outnumbered the population of 15 US states, according to

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

data from US Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

The data shows that about 2.7 million immigrants came illegally across the US borders from January to November, most of which occurred via the United States' border with Mexico.

CBP agents encountered some 2.2 million migrants on the US southern border over the last 11 months, data shows.

The US states with populations smaller than the total of immigrant border crossings this year include New Mexico, Nebraska, Idaho, West Virginia, Hawaii, New Hampshire, Maine, Montana, Rhode Island, Delaware, South Dakota, North Dakota, Alaska, Vermont and Wyoming.

Media reports citing CBP sources said that the month of December is on track to set an all-time record for the largest number of crossings in a month on the US southern border. As of Tuesday, there were some 250,000 illegal crossings on the US-Mexico border this month, according to the reports.

The current monthly record was set this September at 269,735, according to CBP data.

Republicans in Congress are currently negotiating with White House officials on a plan to impose stricter immigration policies that will deter the heavy flow of immigrants arriving on the US southern border.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Florida Teen Charged With Killing Sister on Christmas Eve After Presents Dispute - Sheriff

WASHINGTON, December 27 (Sputnik) - A 14-year-old in the US state of Florida is charged with murder for allegedly shooting and killing his 23-year-old sister on Christmas Eve after an argument over presents, Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtieri said during a press conference.

"The first person that was arrested is Damarcus Coley. He is a 14-year-old black male… and he has been charged with first-degree murder, child abuse, and being a delinquent in possession of a firearm," Gualtieri said on Tuesday.

Coley allegedly shot and killed his sister, Abrielle Baldwin, after getting into an argument earlier in the day with his 15-year-old brother about who was getting more Christmas presents. Baldwin was a mother to two children, a six-year-old and an 11-month-old.

The 15-year-old brother, Darcus Coley, was also arrested and charged with attempted murder and tampering with physical evidence, for allegedly shooting his younger brother in response to him shooting Baldwin, who was carrying her infant child at the time, Gualtieri said.

There was an eight-second gap between the time Damarcus Coley shot his sister and the time Darcus Coley shot his brother, Gualtieri said. Damarcus Coley was no longer armed at the time he was shot, Gualtieri added.

Baldwin died as a result of her room and Coley survived his injuries after surgery, Gualtieri said.

Prosecutors are considering whether to charge Damarcus Coley as an adult in the first-degree murder of his sister, Gualtieri said.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Looks Forward to Working With New UN Humanitarian Coordinator For Gaza – White House

WASHINGTON, December 27 (Sputnik) – The United States is looking forward to cooperating with Dutch First Deputy Prime Minister Sigrid Kaag to monitor humanitarian aid deliveries to the Gaza Strip, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Wednesday.

"We welcome Ms. Kaag's leadership and look forward to working together closely to increase the flow of aid into Gaza, and ensure safety and security for the aid delivery and the humanitarian staff providing the life-saving support to those in need," Sullivan said in a statement.

Kaag's appointment represents an "important step" in delivering and distributing life-saving humanitarian assistance in Gaza, he added.

Kaag is expected to begin her assignment on January 8. In this role, she will facilitate, coordinate, monitor and verify humanitarian relief consignments to Gaza.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Nebenzia Says Euromaidan Should Serve as Warning to Everyone Being Deceived by West

UNITED NATIONS, December 27 (Sputnik) - Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said on Wednesday that Ukraine's Euromaidan should be a warning to everyone having illusions about the collective West and its geopolitical agenda.

"Maidan, however, should serve as a warning for everyone who is being deceived by the West in its criminal pursuit of new pawns to promote its devastating and selfish geopolitical agenda. We are confident that most responsible and truly sovereign Member States clearly see through that," Nebenzia sadi during a meeting of the UN Security Council.

The Russian mission to the United Nations is hosting an informal Security Council meeting dubbed "Ten Years of Euromaidan in Ukraine: A Step Into the Abyss."

Between November 2013 and February 2014, Kiev's Maidan square witnessed pro-EU protests sparked by then Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych's refusal to sign the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement. The mass demonstrations led to a coup, which culminated in the ousting of Yanukovych. More than 100 people were killed during the violent events.

In April 2014, the new government in Kiev launched a military operation against the Donbas - a Russian-speaking region that refused to recognize the change of government in Kiev.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

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

US Appeals Court Temporarily Pauses Apple Watch Import Ban - Order

WASHINGTON, December 27 (Sputnik) - The US Appeals Court has temporarily halted the Apple Watch import ban, pausing enforcement of Remedial Orders during the pending appeal, as Apple seeks resolution in a dispute over blood oxygen monitoring patents, US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit said on Wednesday.

"The motion for an interim stay is granted to the extent that the Remedial Orders are temporarily stayed and the government is directed not to enforce the Remedial Orders until further notice while the court considers the motion for a stay pending appeal," United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit said in an order.

On Tuesday, the Biden administration declined to reverse a decision by the US International Trade Commission (ITC), which found that some Apple Watches infringed on patents for blood oxygen monitoring technology.

12/27/2023 11:54:20 AM -05:00

Ramaswamy Says Stopping 'Idiotic' Spending on Television Campaign Ads

WASHINGTON, December 27 (Sputnik) - Republican presidential hopeful Vivek Ramaswamy said in a statement on Wednesday that his campaign is cutting spending on television campaign advertisements, ahead of the Iowa Republican caucus and New Hampshire primary elections.

"Presidential TV ad spending is idiotic, low-return on investment and a trick that political consultants use to bamboozle candidates who suffer from low IQ," Ramaswamy said via the social media platform X, in response to reports of his campaign ending television advertisement spending.

Ramaswamy said his campaign will spend money in a way that follows data.

Ramaswamy also hinted at a "big surprise" on January 15, although the nature of the reveal is unclear at present.

The campaign's decision to end television advertisement spending comes ahead of the Iowa Republican Party caucus on January 15 and the New Hampshire presidential primary on January 23 - the first two electoral tests for the 2024 presidential hopefuls.

Former President Donald Trump holds 61.2% support, according to FiveThirtyEight primary poll averages released on Wednesday. Trump is followed by Florida Governor Ron DeSantis at 11.7% support, former US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley at 11% and Ramaswamy at 3.5%.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

ANALYSIS - Latest US Continental Shelf Claims Could Increase Tensions in Arctic

WASHINGTON, December 27 (Sputnik) - The new US continental shelf claims to an area twice the size of California, predominantly in the Arctic, could seriously spike tensions in the region, US and international analysts told Sputnik.

Last week, the Department of State released a new map showing that the US government is now claiming additional territories spanning approximately one million square kilometers (386,000 square miles).

Under the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, claims related to the continental shelf are to be reviewed by the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.

The US is not a signatory to the convention.

RISKS OF ESCALATION

The claims may further escalate already dangerously high tensions between the United States and both Russia and China, President of the American University in Moscow Edward Lozansky believes.

"As the lists of international conflicts and risks of doomsday scenarios keep growing - the Middle East, Ukraine already on fire, temperature in SouthEast Asia rising and only a matter of time before humans lose control of Artificial Intelligence (AI) - why not raise stakes with major nuclear powers Russia and China?" Lozansky asked.

The US government has already unilaterally seized more than $300 billion in Russian assets, enraging Moscow, Lozansky recalled.

Now it is following that up by seeking "to dramatically expand its continental shelf claims in the Arctic," he said.

US DOUBLE STANDARDS

The new US continental shelf claims would please right-wing hawks in the United States who have long clamored for such a move, former UK Ambassador to Syria Peter Ford said.

However, it also repudiates and undermines the so-called international rules-based order that the Biden administration always invokes to criticize national defense initiatives and deployments by Russia and China, the veteran diplomat pointed out.

"[The move demonstrates that] the 'rules-based order' does not apply to the United States," Ford said.

Any state is entitled under the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea to lay claim to an Extended Continental Shelf, Ford acknowledged.

"The United States, however, is not just any state. The United States claims to follow UNCLOS rules but typically it has not ratified UNCLOS. Whether the US will submit its new vast claim for UN appraisal and arbitration must be doubtful when it is not even a full party to UNCLOS," he said.

The State Department's announcement last week totally ignored this aspect of the matter, according to Ford.

Instead, it "presented the claim as a fait accompli, motivated only by a desire to avoid confusion, protect seabed and under seabed resources, and look out for biodiversity," he said.

In reality, the US announcement came following a drumbeat of calls from the US defense industry and its allied think tanks for the US government to "counter" moves that Russia and China had made in this area of activity and in other parts of the world, Ford observed.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Despite all its rhetoric against the supposed evils of further developing oil and gas energy sources, the Biden administration is more eager than ever to grab new such deposits in the Arctic, Ford said.

"The area now claimed by the United States almost certainly includes rich mineral deposits including oil, coal and gas, all frowned on officially by the Biden administration and held responsible inter alia for climate change," he said.

US corporations "must be rubbing their hands with glee" in anticipation of many new opportunities, Ford continued.

It will bode poorly however for UNCLOS if the US having made these massive claims continues to ignore it, the diplomat said.

ENFORCING THE CLAIMS

The Biden administration would prove to be determined and serious in its efforts to enforce its disputed rights to the newly claimed offshore territories in order to economically exploit their rich natural resources, the Independent Institute's Center on Peace & Liberty Director Ivan Eland advised.

"Can the US government implement these claims? It will try. The United States might need to modify its claim with Canada, but will otherwise try to enforce them," he said.

Washington would certainly maintain that its new claims were legal, Eland predicted.

However, "The United States should have ratified the Law of the Sea Treaty before claiming them," he said.

The new expanded subsea areas likely have strategic and commercial significance, Eland acknowledged.

"There is oil and gas on the Arctic continental shelf, as well as key minerals for making electric car batteries and other future technologies. Russia could complain that the United States has claimed too much," he said.

Eland also agreed that the Arctic and its resources and new transportation routes, given the sea ice melt, are a new area of competition for Russia, the United States, China, and other nations and could cause further tensions among them.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US, EU Look to Shift Ukraine to Defensive Posture to Prepare for Peace Talks - Reports

WASHINGTON, December 27 (Sputnik) - The United States and the European Union are looking to shore up Ukraine’s position in potential future negotiations with Russia to end the war, Politico reported on Wednesday, citing a White House official and a Washington-based EU diplomat.

The shift would focus away from the unrealistic goal of Ukraine achieving a complete military victory over Russia, the report said.

With Ukraine’s counteroffensive effectively stalled and the unclear future of continued US military aid, US and European officials are quietly considering the redeployment of Ukrainian

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

forces to the east to bolster their defensive position against Russian forces there instead, the report said.

A senior US official also confirmed the unofficial change in policy, the report said.

The new policy also involves helping Ukraine bolster its defenses along its northern border with Belarus and rebuilding its own defense industry in order to supply itself with weapons, the report said.

The shift does not mean Ukraine would not launch any new offensives, but implies that future negotiations would likely involve relinquishing some Ukrainian territory to Russia, away from Ukraine's stated goal of recovering all of its land.

A congressional official said the Biden administration could not publicly admit to a shift away from the stated unconditional support for Ukraine to preparing for peace talks with Russia at a time when President Joe Biden faces a tough re-election campaign in 2024.

The European diplomat said the European Union's threats to expedite Ukraine's membership in NATO were also part of the strategic shift to put Ukraine in the best possible position to negotiate with Russia.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US, Japan Entering 2024 With Strong Foundation to Enhance Joint Deterrence - Ambassador

WASHINGTON, December 27 (Sputnik) - The United States and Japan are entering 2024 with a strong foundation to enhance joint deterrence due to reform and modernization efforts undertaken by Tokio in the defense sector this year, US Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel said on Wednesday.

"As 2023 comes to an end it will be known as the year of reform and modernization of our [US-Japan] bilateral relationship," Emanuel said in a statement. "As we look to 2024 we have a strong foundation to build off of to enhance the credibility of our joint deterrence."

The United States issued the statement after Emanuel conducted a meeting with Japanese Defense Minister Minoru Kihara.

Kihara is building on a "groundbreaking" year for the Japanese Defense Ministry, including on the reforms undertaken in the defense sector; the participation in military exercises and efforts to match NATO budget guidelines; and the trilateral US-Japan-South Korea summit at Camp David in August, the statement said.

Japan also plans to increase the sharing of Patriot air defense system's capabilities, the statement added.

Earlier on Wednesday, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Japan's approval of the transfer of Patriot missiles to the United States will have negative consequences for global and regional security.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Blinken, Turkish Counterpart Discuss Aid for Gaza, Sweden's NATO Accession - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, December 27 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke by telephone with his Turkish counterpart Hakan Fidan and discussed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, and Sweden's accession to NATO, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Wednesday.

"Secretary Blinken and Foreign Minister Fidan continued their discussion on the timing of Sweden's NATO accession, the Israel-Hamas conflict and the importance of increasing the speed and scale of humanitarian assistance to Gaza," Miller said.

On Friday, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution on facilitating deliveries of humanitarian aid into Gaza. However, the United States vetoed a Russian-proposed amendment calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities.

Fidan said earlier that efficient deliveries of much-needed humanitarian assistance to Gaza must be ensured.

On Tuesday, the foreign affairs committee in the Turkish Parliament approved Sweden's bid for membership in NATO. The next step in the ratification process is a full vote by parliament and the final step is approval by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Russia's UN Envoy Says EU, US Played Key Role in Ukraine's Euromaidan Protests

UNITED NATIONS, December 27 (Sputnik) - The European Union and the United States played a major role in igniting and directing the 2013-2014 protests in Ukraine that led to a change of power in Kiev, Russian Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia said on Wednesday.

"We have no doubt about the key role of the EU and the USA in igniting, encouraging and directing the protest of a loud minority using far-right radicals and neo-Nazis as a leverage," Nebenzia told a UN Security Council meeting.

Nebenzia said that even western experts and politicians are nowadays "increasingly vocal" about that.

As an example, he cited US Republican Congressman Thomas Massie admitting earlier this month that the United States "helped to to overthrow" the elected government in Ukraine in 2014 and was "saber rattling against Russia."

The Russian mission to the UN is hosting an informal Arria formula meeting of the UN Security Council on Wednesday to mark 10 years of Euromaidan in Ukraine.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM

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

Russia Not Surprised EU Association Deal Put Ukraine at Disadvantage - Nebenzia

UNITED NATIONS, December 27 (Sputnik) - Russia is not surprised that the Association Agreement with the European Union, a treaty that was at the heart of the Maidan events and subsequent change of power in Kiev, placed Ukraine at a disadvantage, Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia said on Wednesday.

"Now even pro-European Ukrainians don't deny that the Association Agreement was disadvantageous for Ukraine and its implementation did more harm than good. We are not surprised by this outcome, not only because we warned about these consequences ten years ago, but also because we know this is a typical scheme of neocolonial exploitation by Western countries that they impose on all those who agree to implement their geopolitical agenda," Nebenzia told a UN Security Council meeting.

He recalled that the Ukrainian government's decision in November 2013 to postpone the signing of the agreement was met with "well-organized and coordinated protests." The European Union and the United States had key roles in igniting and directing these protests, the diplomat stated.

The Russian mission to the UN is hosting an informal Arria formula meeting of the UN Security Council on Wednesday to mark 10 years of Euromaidan in Ukraine.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trump Says Entitled to Immunity, Accuses Opponents of Election Cheating

WASHINGTON, December 27 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said on Wednesday that he has a right to immunity and accused his opponents of cheating the election.

"They cheated on the election in so many ways. Ballot stuffing, the 51 intelligence agents, not getting approval from state legislatures, FBI/Twitter files and much more. The election was long over, I wasn't campaigning, I was just doing my job. I am entitled to immunity!" Trump said on the social media platform Truth Social.

On Thursday, the US Supreme Court denied Special Counsel Jack Smith's request to decide right away on whether Trump is immune from prosecution in the case against him regarding interference in the 2020 presidential election.

Smith had argued that the public interest is very high so it was important to resolve the issue as quickly as possible.

Trump's legal team urged the Supreme Court to reject Smith's request, saying the special counsel was not acting in a partisan interest rather than in the public interest.

The trial is set to begin on March 4, 2024, but legal appeals will likely delay the proceedings. Trump's lawyers have sought to postpone the trial until after the 2024 presidential election.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 12/28/2023 2:54:38 PM