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Sunak Loses Support of Two Conservative Vice-Chairmen in Rwanda Bill Rebellion

The controversial and stalled plan to send asylum-seekers to Rwanda has led to a rebellion from senior lawmakers in Sunak's Conservative Party as they fall far behind the opposition Labour Party in opinion polls.

UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak appears to be captaining a sinking ship over his Rwanda migration policy. A Conservative Party officialconfirmed that on Tuesday evening, Lee Anderson and Brendan Clarke-Smith quit their roles as deputy chairman of the Conservative Party.

The two said they had resigned over the government's lack of willingness to toughen the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) bill---a piece of legislation which Sunak put forward after the Supreme Court ruled that his immigration plan was unlawful in November. But Anderson and Clarke-Smith aren't the only Tory MPS who are concerned the bill will not work in its current form.

As many as 70 Tory MPs are reported to most likely rebel against the Sunak's administration by voting for amendments in hopes of strengthening the bill. However, the administration is not expected to lose those votes as they don't have the support of the Labour Party.

On Tuesday, Sunak's government was able to defeat two changes to the bill that would have strengthened it. The next round of voting is expected to take place on Wednesday.

"Whilst our main wish is to strengthen the legislation, this means that in order to vote for amendments we will therefore need to offer you our resignations," Anderson and Clarke-Smith said in a joint letter. They added that the administration has "already had two pieces of legislation thwarted by a system that does not work in favor of the British people."

"It is for this reason that we have supported the amendments to the Rwanda Bill," they wrote. "This is not because we are against the legislation, but because like everybody else we want it to work."

The two resignations are further evidence of a governing party that is deeply divided over Sunak's flagship Rwanda bill, which he hopes will bulldoze legal challenges that are preventing the country from sending asylum seekers to Rwanda. Some of those in the Conservative Party believe the plan does not do enough, while others believe strengthening the bill could breach international law.

Sunak is using his bill as a last effort to raise his party's poll numbers as the opposition Labour Party surges ahead in polling.

While working as a UK Chancellor of the Exchequer under former Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Sunak had ethical objections to immigration policy that planned to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda. Sunak has since changed his tune and has adopted the plan in an attempt to save staggering poll numbers and to ease tensions in his party. But in mid-November, the UK's Supreme Court called the plan unlawful and the European Court of Human Rights even blocked flights to Rwanda in response to the bill.

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New Zealand 'Refugee' MP Resigns Over Shoplifting Allegations

Ghahraman, who came to Auckland as a child seeking political asylum from Iran, became the first refugee to be elected to New Zealand's Parliament. She is a former United Nations human rights lawyer.

On Tuesday, Golriz Ghahraman resigned from her role as a Green Party Member of Parliament over allegations that she had stolen three items from two clothing stores. Ghahraman, who has not been charged, previously held her party's justice portfolio. The 43-year-old said that work-related stress caused her to behave out of character.

"It is clear to me that my mental health is being badly affected by the stresses relating to my work," Ghahraman said in a public statement. "This has led me to act in ways that are completely out of character. I am not trying to excuse my actions, but I do want to explain them."

"People should, rightly, expect the highest standards of behavior from their elected representatives. I fell short. I'm sorry. It's not a behavior I can explain because it's not rational in any way, and after medical evaluation, I understand I'm not well. The mental health professional I see says my recent behavior is consistent with recent events giving rise to extreme stress response, and relating to previously unrecognized trauma," she said.

"With that in mind, I don't want to hide behind my mental health problems, and I take full responsibility for my actions which I deeply regret," the MP added. "I have let down a lot of people and I am very sorry."

"The best thing for my mental health is to resign as a Member of Parliament and to focus on my recovery and to find other ways to work for positive change in the world," she said.

The shoplifting allegations, which Ghahraman did not address, first arose in New Zealand media earlier this month. The MP made her resignation about 17 hours after a third shoplifting allegation was made against her. A CCTV video of the MP appearing to shoplift a designer handbag from a Scotties Boutique in Ponsonby, Auckland was also published.

Green Party leaders James Shaw and Marama Davidson spoke during a press conference, saying they supported her decision to resign.

"Obviously Parliament is a stressful place for anybody, but Ghahraman has been subject to continuous threats of sexual violence, physical violence, and death threats," said Shaw. "There have been police investigations into those threats almost the entire time that she has been a member of parliament, and so obviously if you're living with that level of threat in what is already quite a stressful situation then there are going to be consequences for that".

Shaw refused to comment on the allegations, adding that what is "important" is that Ghahraman is taking responsibility.

"I'm losing a friend and a colleague who I have been close to and have worked with for six years," added Davidson.

Police are reportedly investigating three alleged shoplifting incidents, two which occurred at Scotties in December and one which occurred at a high-end Wellington store called Cre8ivework in October.

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European Union leaders worry a second Donald Trump term would see the former US president negotiate an end to the conflict in the Donbass with Russia.

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EU President Alexander De Croo of Belgium expressed his opposition to Trump during a speech the morning after his Iowa caucuses victory, saying, “If 2024 brings us ‘America first’ again, it is really more than ever ‘Europe on its own.’”

Trump has repeatedly advocated for friendlier relations with Russia while European leaders have opposed the country, perhaps most notably during the Ukrainian “Euromaidan” protests that paved the way for a coup in 2014.

De Croo also questioned Trump’s commitment to democratic principles. Ironically, he made the remarks in front of the European Parliament, an institution that cannot write its own legislation but can only vote on laws drafted by the unelected European Commission.

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“The most difficult talks are those in which you feel simply that you want to go and punch your opposite number in the nose,” Ukraine’s foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba admitted, suggesting he has trouble controlling himself when dealing with his counterparts.

Kuleba clarified he had one specific person in mind as part of his fantasy: Russia's top diplomat Sergey Lavrov.

The impolitic comment came to light after the release of an interview between Kuleba and a Ukrainian online influencer.

“That is the problem: uneducated, aggressive people were recruited under the guise of serving as ministers to ruin Ukraine for American money,” said Russian spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, questioning Kuleba's competence and temperament.

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"[Hamas] started a process of the falling apart and the collapse of a world order that was already decaying and degrading… for 20 or more years," analyst Yezid Sayigh made the surprising claim in an interview published Tuesday in Chinese media.

Sayigh warned that domestic political pressures in both Israel and the United States during an election year created a dangerous situation where events could suddenly escalate into world war.

What's more, the West's unconditional support for Israel is threatening its hegemony and damaging the credibility of the liberal order it constructed after the last world war. The moment comes just as China, Russia, and other world powers are emerging as dominant players in a new multipolar world order.

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British Defense Secretary Grant Shapps delivered a speech intended to rally support for increased military spending Monday, but things didn't go quite as planned. Users on the X social media platform widely mocked the jingoistic lecture, which warned of alleged attacks from Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea within the next five years.

"The era of the peace dividend is over," Shapps proclaimed defiantly, but the British government has imposed austerity for a number of years while remaining America's staunchest ally in wars across the Middle East.

"Can you explain how British soldiers killed in Helmand or in Basra were at all beneficiaries of this so-called era of the peace dividend?" asked one X user in response to Shapps' tone deaf comments.

"Wars happen when the government tells you who your enemy is. Revolution happens when you work it out for yourself," said another.

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Ukrainian Top Diplomat's Competence Questioned After Violent Comment

The impolitic comment has inflamed tensions between Ukraine and Russia.
Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba contemplated slugging his counterpart Sergey Lavrov in the face during tense negotiations in the early days of Russia's special military operation, it was reported Monday.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/17/2024 11:04:33 AM

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The revelation came from the release of an interview with an online Ukrainian influencer who asked Kuleba about his most challenging negotiations as the country's chief diplomat.
"The most difficult talks are those in which you feel simply that you want to go and punch your opposite number in the nose, but you really can't do that," replied the foreign minister. "And I can say that this occurred two or three times. One occasion was with Lavrov in Antalya in spring of 2022."
Russian and Ukrainian diplomats met for a series of talks shortly after Russia initiated their special military operation in 2022, one of which took place in the Turkish resort city of Antalya. Following advice of its Western partners, Ukrainian representatives reportedly refused to continue negotiations, opting for an armed conflict with Russia. Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky has repeatedly rejected negotiations with Russia since then.
Zelensky's rejection of negotiations with Russia represents a continued about face for the Ukrainian leader, who ran as a peace candidate for the country's presidency in 2019. Zelensky campaigned on implementing the so-called Minsk agreements to end tensions with Russia, which would have granted ethnic Russian regions in the Donbass a degree of autonomy. Zelensky later admitted his promise was merely a ruse with European leaders to provide time for Ukraine to expand its military capabilities. Zelensky foresaw a war with Russia as inevitable, although his campaign rhetoric suggests the Ukrainian public was less willing to violently confront its neighbor. Indeed, members of Ukraine's military often refused to fight separatist forces in the country's east until leaders recruited members of the Azov Battalion* and other extremists.
Many observers speculated that Azov Battalion* members and other neo-Nazi elements of Ukrainian society also played a role in Zelensky's rejection of peace with Russia. Such far-right paramilitaries forced former President Viktor Yanukovych to step down from his position and flee Ukraine in 2014. Ukrainian leaders operate under the threat of such Russophobic elements doing the same if Ukraine backs down; indeed, extremist leaders have made it clear they consider the prospect of peace with Russia to be unacceptable.
Maria Zakharova of Russia's foreign ministry responded indignantly to Kuleba's comments. "That is the problem: uneducated, aggressive people were recruited under the guise of serving as ministers to ruin Ukraine for American money," the spokesperson said to a Russian newspaper. "Perhaps he belongs in a no-holds-barred bout rather than the foreign ministry?" Before he became leader of Ukraine, Zelensky was formerly an actor and comedian who played the president on the popular television program Servant of the People.

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EU Fears Second Trump Term Citing Negotiation with Russia, Threat to 'Democracy'

European Union President Alexander De Croo expressed the anxieties of many of the bloc's leaders in a speech before the European Parliament, which lacks the power to write legislation.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/17/2024 11:04:33 AM

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Leaders throughout Europe are reportedly worried about the prospect of former US President Donald Trump's return to the White House, citing the potential he would negotiate directly with Russia and threaten supposed democratic norms.

Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo expressed the concerns of many leaders in an address before the European Parliament the morning after Trump's convincing victory in the GOP's Iowa caucuses Monday. De Croo currently holds the position of President of the European Union as Belgium maintains the bloc's rotating leadership through June.

"If 2024 brings us 'America first' again, it is really more than ever 'Europe on its own,'" said De Croo, referencing the common nationalist refrain of Trump's supporters.

The Belgian politician added that the political bloc should seize the opportunity to act more independently, adding, "we should, as Europeans, not fear this perspective. We should embrace it."

Trump's four years as US president from 2017 to 2021 represented a nadir in relations between America and the 27-nation European Union. He repeatedly feuded with European leaders while championing an unapologetic primary focus on US interests.

Trump also questioned so-called free trade dogmas and insisted European countries should increase their financial contributions to NATO. Some worry he would pull the United States out of the alliance completely during a second term.

"The German government must now prepare more intensively than before for Trump's return to the White House," saidNorbert Röttgen of Germany's center-right Christian Democratic Union. "Among other things, this means that we need to ramp up our arms production so that Ukraine can defend itself against a Russian attack even without US help."

In fact many European leaders seem to be worried not that fighting in Ukraine would continue under a second Trump term, but that it would stop.

"He [Russian President Vladimir Putin] has made it clear that for him, the partner for possible negotiations is none other than the United States, regardless of what Ukraine or the rest of Europe thinks," remarked Czech President Petr Pavel recently. Trump repeatedly advocated for friendlier relations with Russia during his time as president. Meanwhile establishment European leaders have been vocal in their contempt for the country, openly supporting anti-Russia protests in Ukraine that culminated in the Euromaidan coup in 2014.

De Croo also questioned Trump's commitment to democratic norms, calling 2024 "a year where our democracies and liberties will be put to the test, not only with elections for this house, but equally for the U.S. Congress and the American presidency."

Trump's commitment to democratic principles is frequently questioned, although De Croo made the remark before the European Parliament, a legislative body that is unique in that it cannot write its own legislation. Instead, EU laws are drafted by the European Commission, an elite body made up of one unelected member appointed by the leader of each of the EU's member states. This setup insulates EU legislation from the needs and desires of voters within the bloc who elect members of its parliament.

The EU has frequently been criticized for this "democratic deficit" throughout the years. Historically the European Union attracted opposition from anti-establishment figures on the left and the right, with British MP Tony Benn famously slamming the institution as a cartel of elite European banking interests.

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More recently the EU has attracted substantial opposition from the political right over the issues of immigration and sacrifice of national sovereignty.

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World on 'Escalation Spiral' Towards War as Biden Struggles to Maintain Credibility

Events in the Middle East and the US President's need to consider domestic politics during an election year combine to create a dangerous situation for the world, according to one analyst. The likelihood of global military confrontation is increasing according to analyst Yezid Sayigh, a senior fellow at the Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center.

Sayigh made the assessment during an interview with Chinese media that touched on Israel, the crisis in the Red Sea, and the United States' so-called "pivot to Asia" policy. Commenting on tensions between Israel and its neighbors in the Middle East, Sayigh offered sobering insight on the potential for events to escalate beyond world leaders' control.

"I think the risk of a wider war is obviously increasing," said Sayigh. "However, at the same time, I think that the key parties will not go beyond a certain point into direct confrontation. At the same time, they have already started what we call an escalation spiral."

"The US is in a very risky situation, and it increasingly looks as though it is entering the war on the side of Israel as well," the analyst noted. "[Biden] has already, in a way, signaled military deterrence that encouraged Iran to use military deterrence. Biden, in a way, started this escalation spiral from the beginning with his immediate deployment of military assets to the Mediterranean."

Sayigh employed the metaphor of World War I to explain how events could lead towards war even without world leaders consciously seeking to initiate conflict. World War I was famously set into motion by the murder of Austro-Hungarian heir apparent Archduke Franz Ferdinand. But Sayigh argued the key factor in the war's outbreak was not the killing itself, but rather the greater zeitgeist of global tension created by previous events.

"By 1914, the world was ready for war," said the historian. "Global tensions had reached a point where it was the assassination that was the trigger, but it might have been something else. It could have been sinking a boat at sea. It could have been anything."

Part of what makes the current moment so perilous are the set of incentives created by domestic politics, Sayigh argued. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces corruption charges, as well as an Israeli public likely to hold the longtime leader accountable for Hamas' October 7 attack. Netanyahu has an interest in the continuation of military conflict to prevent either of those things threatening his political career.

But domestic politics also alters the calculations of US President Joe Biden, the analyst argued. Previously Biden showed signs of returning to former President Barack Obama's policy of detente with Iran, resisting many neoconservatives' call for war on the Middle Eastern country. Now, domestic support for Israel makes it harder for Biden to pursue reconciliation with the country's fierce enemy.

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"It [the Biden administration] no longer calculates foreign policy purely on the basis of strategic and global stability, as it was previously doing by improving relations with Iran or at least defusing tensions with Iran," Sayigh explained. "That was when it was thinking globally. However, now the administration has to consider domestic politics, and the calculation there is different."

"Foreign policy in the Middle East will become hostage to American domestic politics, which is very dangerous," he warned.

Sayigh argued that the very credibility of the entire Western world order is threatened by Israel's ongoing military action against the Palestinians. He noted that the West has done little to pressure Israel or discourage its most significant abuses. Rather, it has seemingly turned its back on the entire post-World War II order it created in favor of supporting its ally.

"The Western response, which disregarded international humanitarian law and the rules of war, also signifies a moment of change in world history," he shockingly claimed. "The liberal order that the West claims to protect and uphold since 1945 has been abandoned by the West itself."

Sayigh asserted that the moment comes just as the United States had committed itself to focusing its attention on East Asia, hoping to prevent China's rise along with a resurgent Russia. On the contrary, the disruption caused by events in the Middle East could actually accelerate the decline of the West's hegemony.

"They [Hamas] started a process of the falling apart and the collapse of a world order that was already decaying and degrading," Sayigh argued. "But it was the moment when it became visible. The change in the international order has been happening for 20 or more years."

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Britons Mock Warmongering Lecture by UK Defense Secretary

Grant Shapps intended to rally UK citizens behind calls for increased military spending by warning of alleged threats from all sides.

The United Kingdom's Defense Secretary Grant Shapps warned of potential war with Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea within the next five years in a widely mocked speech in London this week.

Shapps delivered the address to promote greater investment in military spending in the UK and its European allies.

"The era of the peace dividend is over," said Shapps in remarks he also shared on his profile on the X social media platform. The so-called "peace dividend" was a proposed reinvestment of government finances toward domestic concerns after the end of the Cold War.

The comment may leave many Britons wondering when exactly they enjoyed a peace dividend, as the British government has imposed a policy of economic austerity for a number of years.

The UK was also perhaps the US' strongest ally in the so-called "War on Terror," which led to the deaths of more than 4.5 million people across the Middle East according to some estimates.

The comments come as European media is reporting on supposed "leaked documents" that allege Russian President Vladimir Putin is planning to launch an attack on Germany and other

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/17/2024 11:04:33 AM

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NATO members in the near future. The claims were dismissed as “fake news” by Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov.
Britons greeted Shapps’ remarks with ridicule, with multiple posts by the defense minister being “ratioed” on the X platform, meaning they received more comments than likes as users piled on to jeer the jingoistic speech.
“Obviously, the best way to deter enemies and lead allies is by pouring billions of pounds into the military industrial complex,” responded one user sarcastically.
“You do know we were involved in bloody and unsuccessful wars in Iraq and Afghanistan?” added another. “Can you explain how British soldiers killed in Helmand or in Basra were at all beneficiaries of this so-called era of the peace dividend?”
“The people need to prepare for a new era of conflict with you bastards,” wrote user John Wight, expressing widespread antipathy towards governing elites in the West. “Wars happen when the government tells you who your enemy is. Revolution happens when you work it out for yourself.”

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Tensions Between US, Iran Reverberate in Iraq - Foreign Minister

DAVOS, January 17 (Sputnik) - The fallout of tensions between Iran and the United States can be felt in Iraq, Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein said on Wednesday.
"The tensions between Washington and Tehran are reflected on Iraqi soil," Hussein told the audience in Kurdish House at the World Economic Forum in Davos.
Baghdad wants Iran and the US to sit down and negotiate, the minister added.
Late on Monday, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps launched a missile attack against what it says were the spy headquarters of Israel in Erbil. According to the IRGC, the Mossad outpost was involved in planning and plotting terrorist attacks across the Middle East, including in Iran. The IRGC also launched missile strikes against "anti-Iran terror groups" in Syria and Pakistan.
Iran called the attacks retaliation for "anti-Iran groups" in the region, including the Islamic State terror group (banned in Russia), after a suicide bombing attack in Kerman at a memorial procession for Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani this month.
The Iraqi Foreign Ministry has said it considers Iran's strikes an act of aggression against the country's sovereignty and security. The ministry added that Iraq could file a complaint with the UN Security Council.
Iraq has also warned it may suspend its security agreement with Iran in the wake of the attack.

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US Pushes for Israel, Hezbollah Diplomatic Deal to Avert War – Reports

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WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) – US Special Envoy Amos Hochstein is pushing to broker a diplomatic deal between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah to prevent the border attacks since October 7 from escalating into a full-scale war, the Financial Times reported on Wednesday.

Last week, Hochstein discussed with Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati a deal involving an interim ceasefire and a longer-term solution, the report said, citing unnamed sources.

Israel wants Hezbollah to withdraw 30 km north to the Litani River, but the talks have focused on a compromise of 10 km. The US has raised the possibility of a financial package for Lebanon, whose economy and currency collapsed in recent years, the report said.

The sources warned that the diplomatic talks were still preliminary and faced many obstacles, with war remaining a real possibility.

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Blinken Says Negotiations on Long-Term Truce in Ukraine Not Even Close to Beginning

(Updates with comments from Blinken in paras 3-5, background information in paras 6-8)

MOSCOW, January 17 (Sputnik) - The negotiations on a long-term truce in Ukraine are not even close to beginning, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Wednesday.

"In this moment I do not see it [potential for a long term negotiation for a ceasefire in Ukraine] we are always open to it, attentive to it," Blinken said at the World Economic Forum 2024 in Davos.

He added there is a need for Russia to be ready for negotiations with good intentions, based on such principles as territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence, as only then Ukraine and the United States would support conducting talks.

Blinken also reassured the forum of the US ongoing support for Ukraine and of facilitating its economy.

"We're working very hard on getting private sector investment generated in Ukraine. We have Penny Pritzker, a former Secretary of Commerce [who] has come back into government to lead our efforts on this. Others are doing the same thing. There's tremendous opportunity economically in Ukraine. We've got to get the investment flowing in," Blinken added.

The 2024 edition of the World Economic Forum is taking place from January 15-19 and is expected to attract over 2,800 participants from over 120 countries.

Russia launched its military operation in Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Russian and Ukrainian delegations have engaged in several rounds of peace talks since then, but the negotiations ultimately reached an impasse.

In November 2022, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy unveiled his 10-point peace initiative dubbed the "peace formula." It included an all-for-all prisoner swap with Russia, security guarantees for Ukraine and a return to the pre-2014 borders. Moscow has continuously said it was open to peace negotiations as long as Kiev recognizes the territorial gains Russian forces have made since the launch of the military operation.

On Sunday, national security advisers from 83 countries held a meeting ahead of the World

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Economic Forum in Davos to discuss the peace plan for Ukraine put forward by Zelenskyy. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that talks in Davos on Kiev's peace proposal were pointless without Russia's participation.

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Guterres Warns About Risks Related to New Iterations of AI

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned on Wednesday that developing artificial intelligence (AI) may lead to serious consequences.

"Every new iteration of generative AI increases the risk of serious unintended consequences," Guterres said in an address on the state of the world at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

AI has enormous potential, but it may increase inequality in the world, Guterres pointed out, stressing that this issue, along with climate change, is being seriously discussed by the global community but with no results so far.

"We have no effective global strategy to deal with either," Guterres added.

The UN chief called on governments to urgently work with tech companies on risk management frameworks for current AI development. He also urged authorities to monitor the situation and mitigate potential threats.

Guterres stressed the necessity of systematic efforts to increase access to AI so that developing economies can benefit from its potential.

"We need to bridge the digital divide instead of deepening it," Guterres added.

The 2024 edition of the World Economic Forum is taking place from January 15-19. It is expected to attract over 2,800 participants from more than 120 countries, including prominent figures from business, political, and academic circles.

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Reforms of UN Security Council Would Help Prevent Conflicts - Guterres

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - Reforms of the UN Security Council would help with the prevention and resolution of conflicts, as well as rebalance global relations, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said.

“Reforms to the Security Council and a proposed New Agenda for Peace would help to prevent and resolve conflicts, rebalance geopolitical relations,” Guterres said in his address on the state of the world at the World Economic Forum in Davos.

Taking steps in that direction would also give developing countries a proportionate voice on the global stage, the UN chief said.

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In addition, Guterres pointed out that the existing global institutions, including the UN Security Council, were created 80 years ago and have to be rebuilt for the future generations.

"The United Nations is fully engaged this year in efforts to bring them up to date, rooted in equality and solidarity, based on the UN Charter and international law," Guterres added.

The 2024 edition of the World Economic Forum is taking place from January 15-19. More than 2,800 participants from some 120 countries are expected to attend from business, political and academic circles.

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Canada Says Over 100 Chinese, Russian Entities Pose Threat to National Security

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - The Canadian government has added more than 100 Chinese, Iranian and Russian institutions to its list of entities that allegedly pose the highest risk to national security in a bid to protect Canadian research efforts.

The list has 103 entities - 85 organizations in China, 12 in Iran and six in Russia. They allegedly pose a national security threat because of their connections with military, national defense and state security entities, according to the new guidelines for researchers in Canada published on Tuesday.

The list of entities in Russia includes A.A. Kharkevich Institute for Information Transmission Problems; Autonomous Noncommercial Organization Professional Association of Designers of Data Processing Systems; 27th Scientific Center of the Russian Ministry of Defense; 33rd Scientific Research and Testing Institute; 46th TSNII Central Scientific Research Institute; and 48th Central Scientific Research Institute.

The majority of the listed entities in China and Iran are universities, academies and colleges, including China People's Police University; China Academy of Electronics and Information Technology; Dalian Naval Academy, Institute of Applied Physics; Shahid Beheshti University; Sharif University of Technology; and others.

The Canadian government also published a list of sensitive technology research areas that are of interest to both Canada and foreign state actors seeking to get a disproportionate technological advantage.

The list of sensitive areas includes microelectronics; advanced nuclear generation technology; nanomaterials; critical materials manufacturing; advanced radar technologies; satellites; robotics; AI chipsets; exoskeletons; and others.

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US Senate Blocks Resolution to Request Information on Israeli Use of US Weapons

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WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - The US Senate blocked a resolution to require the State Department to report to lawmakers on whether Israel's use of United States-provided weapons comply with human rights standards.

The US Senate rejected a motion to discharge the resolution from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in a vote of 71-11 on Tuesday.

"This resolution is not prescriptive — it does not alter aid to Israel in any way. It simply requests that the State Department report on how our aid is being used," US Senator Bernie Sanders said in a statement on the legislation. "I hope it is not controversial to ask how US weapons are being used."

Section 502B9(c) of the Foreign Assistance Act allows the US Congress to direct the State Department to provide a human rights report on any country receiving US security assistance.

The resolution would require a report on Israel's use of US weapons during its military campaign in the Gaza Strip, the statement said.

The US has a responsibility to determine whether Israel's campaign has been "indiscriminate," the statement said. Moreover, such a probe could vindicate lawmakers who believe Israel has done nothing wrong, the statement said. Sanders introduced the resolution in December.

In October, Palestinian group Hamas launched an attack on Israel, prompting retaliatory strikes on the Gaza Strip. Thousands of people have been killed or injured in both Israeli and Palestinian territories as a result of the fighting. The resolution would require the US State Department to produce the report within 30 days, the statement said.

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US Senate Advances Temporary Government Funding Extension to Avert Shutdown

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - The US Senate on Tuesday advanced legislation to extend temporary government funding into March to avoid a shutdown and give lawmakers more time to complete the appropriations process.

The US Senate passed a motion to invoke cloture on a motion to proceed to the legislation.

The US Congress currently has until January 19 and February 2 to pass two separate sets of government funding bills, lest the federal government begin to shut down.

The bill under consideration would extend the temporary government funding measures approved last year until March 1 and 8, according to the text of the bill.

Earlier this month, a group of Republican members of Congress said that they would withhold government funding from the Biden administration until it secures the United States' borders.

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Trump Says Ex-Republican Candidate Will Be Working With His Team For Long Time

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WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said his former Republican rival Vivek Ramaswamy will be working with is team for a long time.

Ramaswamy suspended his campaign after only garnering close to 8% of votes in the Iowa Republican Caucus while Trump won the state's support for the Republican nomination with 51% of votes.

"He'll be working with us for a long time," Trump said during a campaign speech in the state of New Hampshire.

Ramaswamy made an appearance at Trump's campaign rally in New Hampshire to endorse the former US president for the upcoming US election.

Former Deputy Communications Director for Vivek 2024 Stefan Mychajli told Sputnik he will not speculate on what role Trump plans to have Ramaswamy serve in with his team.

"I would never, ever speculate on a decision that only President Trump knows<" Mychajli said. "What I can confidently say is that Vivek Ramaswamy is a conservative patriot who cares deeply about restoring American excellence. Vivek will stop at nothing to keep the 'America First' agenda moving forward, a cause that will restore the beauty of the American Dream for generations to come."

Whatever future capacity Vivek serves within a future administration will be up to Trump, he added.

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UPDATE-US Senate Blocks Resolution to Request Information on Israeli Use of US Weapons

(updates para 2 with additional data)

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"This resolution is not prescriptive — it does not alter aid to Israel in any way. It simply requests that the State Department report on how our aid is being used," US Senator Bernie Sanders said in a statement on the legislation. "I hope it is not controversial to ask how US weapons are being used."

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The resolution would require a report on Israel's use of US weapons during its military campaign in the Gaza Strip, the statement said.

The US has a responsibility to determine whether Israel's campaign has been "indiscriminate," the statement said. Moreover, such a probe could vindicate lawmakers who believe Israel has done nothing wrong, the statement said. Sanders introduced the resolution in December.

In October, Palestinian group Hamas launched an attack on Israel, prompting retaliatory strikes on the Gaza Strip. Thousands of people have been killed or injured in both Israeli and

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Palestinian territories as a result of the fighting. The resolution would require the US State Department to produce the report within 30 days, the statement said.

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US Senate Blocks Resolution to Request Information on Israeli Use of US Weapons

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - The US Senate blocked a resolution to require the State Department to report to lawmakers on whether Israel's use of United States-provided weapons comply with human rights standards.

The voting is still ongoing, however, enough votes were cast for the Senate to reject the motion to discharge the resolution from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Tuesday.

"This resolution is not prescriptive — it does not alter aid to Israel in any way. It simply requests that the State Department report on how our aid is being used," US Senator Bernie Sanders said in a statement on the legislation. "I hope it is not controversial to ask how US weapons are being used."

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US Funding For War In Ukraine Creates Problems For Biden Ahead of Elections – Activist

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) – US commitment to continue funding the war in Ukraine may create additional problems for President Joe Biden ahead of the upcoming elections in November, US human rights activist Phil Wilayto told Sputnik.

"As far as the presidential elections are concerned, U.S. funding for the war in Ukraine is one more reason why Biden is in political trouble," said Wilayto, a founding member of the Virginia Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality.

While in February 2022, when Russia began its military operation in Ukraine, polls showed that almost two-thirds of Americans were in favor of increasing support for Kiev, the most recent

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surveys reveal that over half of the voters feel that US Congress should not authorize more funding, he added.

Wilayto, who is also a coordinator of the Odessa Solidarity Campaign project, emphasized that the war is not going well for Ukraine, and the anticipated summer offensive by Kiev didn't show any real goals.

"Now winter is here, with the prospect of the war dragging on and on," he added.

The activist compared the current situation in Ukraine with the Vietnam War. "Public support for the long US war in Vietnam was relatively strong until the Tet Offensive of 1968 when many people realized that a US victory was unlikely," he said.

Wilayto also expressed confidence that most Americans do not know very much about Ukraine or Russia, but they do know that they are tired of endless wars.

"So long as the US is just sending dollars and not soldiers, it becomes just one more unpleasant, confusing issue out there that doesn't seem to affect their daily lives. But support for endlessly sending more money to Ukraine has definitely softened," he said,

Another US activist, Rick Sterling from the United National Antiwar Coalition, pointed out that more and more Americans are skeptical of US claims to morality in supporting Ukraine.

He expressed confidence that this mood increased since the beginning of the conflict In Gaza, which he called genocide by Israel against Palestine.

"Joe Biden is increasingly unpopular and known in some circles as 'Genocide Joe', many Americans are wondering why the US is spending so much money on foreign governments as infrastructure falls apart at home," Sterling said.

He also stressed that many recent polls show that half of the population thinks the US is doing "too much" to support Ukraine.

The recent polls conducted by the Pew Research Center and the Quinnipiac University in December revealed that almost half of Americans disapprove of Biden's approach to the conflict in Ukraine.

US Congress and the Biden administration officials have negotiated for weeks to reach a deal on the supplemental funds and provide the White House with more than $106 billion in extra funds for Ukraine, Israel, and other priorities, including US border security.

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US Financial Firm Employs AI Robot to Decide on Investment Deals - CEO

DAVOS, January 17 (Sputnik), Lenka White - General Atlantic uses an Artificial Intelligence (AI) robot called Ada as one of the company's Investment Committee employees to help decide on investment decisions, CEO William Ford said during a World Economic Forum session on AI and innovation.

General Atlantic is a US equity firm with more than $86 billion in assets under management.

"We decided to go back and look at 44 years of investment history at General Atlantic - all the decisions we made, all the data we had - and start to apply AI and said let's create an AI robot. We named it Ada. Ada is our sixth person on the Investment Committee and Ada votes on every

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deal now," Ford said on Tuesday.

Ford said Ada's performance review will be done together with the other five employees on the committee given that she has worked for only nine months.

Ada has been doing an excellent job because she does not have personal biases as an average human would, Ford said.

AI is the leading topic of this year's World Economic Forum and most companies are discussing the issue from at least some angle of interest.

The CEO of an Israeli cyber security company, who spoke to Sputnik on condition of anonymity, said that every speaker at Davos has mentioned AI at least once in their speech.

The CEO pointed out that he was participating in a session on cyber theft.

The topics concerning AI range from its use in healthcare to education, security and how to regulate the technology industry.

The 2024 edition of the World Economic Forum is taking place from January 15-19. More than 2,800 participants from some 120 countries are expected to participate, including prominent figures from the business, political and academic circles.

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Canada Says Over 100 Chinese, Russian Entities Pose Threat to National Security

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - The Canadian government has added more than 100 Chinese, Iranian and Russian institutions to its list of entities that allegedly pose the highest risk to national security in a bid to protect Canadian research efforts.

The list has 103 entities - 85 organizations in China, 12 in Iran and six in Russia. They allegedly pose a national security threat because of their connections with military, national defense and state security entities, according to the new guidelines for researchers in Canada published on Tuesday.

The list of entities in Russia includes A.A. Kharkevich Institute for Information Transmission Problems; Autonomous Noncommercial Organization Professional Association of Designers of Data Processing Systems; 27th Scientific Center of the Russian Ministry of Defense; 33rd Scientific Research and Testing Institute; 46th TSNII Central Scientific Research Institute; and 48th Central Scientific Research Institute.

The majority of the listed entities in China and Iran are universities, academies and colleges, including China People's Police University; China Academy of Electronics and Information Technology; Dalian Naval Academy, Institute of Applied Physics; Shahid Beheshti University; Sharif University of Technology; and others.

The Canadian government also published a list of sensitive technology research areas that are of interest to both Canada and foreign state actors seeking to get a disproportionate technological advantage.

The list of sensitive areas includes microelectronics; advanced nuclear generation technology; nanomaterials; critical materials manufacturing; advanced radar technologies; satellites;

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/17/2024 11:04:33 AM

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robotics; AI chipsets; exoskeletons; and others.

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Sullivan Discusses Iran Missile Attack on Erbil With Iraqi, Kurdish Leaders - White House

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met with Iraqi and Kurdish leaders to discuss Iran's missile strikes in Erbil, the White House said.

"National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met with Prime Minister Masrour Barzani of Iraq's Kurdistan region today in Davos, Switzerland," the White House said in a press release on Tuesday. "Sullivan strongly condemned Iran's reckless ballistic missile attacks the previous day in the capital city of the Kurdistan region, Erbil."

Sullivan and Barzani also discussed the importance of resuming oil exports and maintaining financial flows to Iraq's Kurdistan region, the release said.

In addition, Sullivan met with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani in Davos to discuss a range of issues, including Iran's ballistic missile strikes in Erbil, the release said.

The two officials focused on the efforts to stop attacks against US personnel in Iraq and Syria and committed to enhancing security cooperation as part of a long-term defense partnership, the release added.

Sullivan reaffirmed President Joe Biden's invitation for Sudani to visit the White House soon, according to the release.

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Austin's 911 Phone Call, 'Secret' Ambulance Request Revealed - Reports

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - United States Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, during a 911 call, requested that dispatchers be discreet, The Daily Beast reported on Tuesday citing the call transcripts.

"Can I ask—can the ambulance not show up with lights and sirens? Uhm, we're trying to remain a little subtle," one of Austin's aides is quoted as saying to dispatchers in the report.

According to the report, the dispatchers acquiesced to the request, noting that sirens are usually turned off once the ambulance enters a residential neighborhood. However, ambulances are required by law to run the sirens and lights on main streets.

The aide then told the dispatchers that Austin was experiencing "nausea with severe abdominal, hip, and leg pain" as quoted in the report. These symptoms were later revealed by medical staff to result from a urinary tract infection and impaired small intestine functioning.

Austin was hospitalized in early January due to an infection, following cancer surgery in late December. The Defense Department failed to communicate Austin's hospitalization to the White House for several days, prompting bipartisan calls for him to leave his leadership role.

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US House Unable to Spend Taxpayer Money, Remove Liberties Amid Snow Shutdown - Congressman

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives is unable to spend taxpayer money or remove liberties amid cancellations linked to winter weather in Washington, Congressman Matt Rosendale said.

"Congress canceled votes this evening because of two inches of snow," Rosendale said via the social media platform X on Tuesday. "I guess everyone is safe for the next day or two since Congress won't be passing any legislation to spend your money or take away your liberties!"

Earlier on Tuesday, US House Majority Whip Tom Emmer said that the lower chamber of Congress canceled votes due to inclement weather conditions. The capital area received up to three inches of snow on Monday and early Tuesday, with more snowfall expected overnight.

The weather-related cancellations come amid negotiations in Congress on government funding measures and supplemental aid for Ukraine and Israel. Lawmakers must pass appropriations bills or extend temporary government funding measures by January 19, lest the government begin to shut down.

The Senate will vote later on Tuesday to advance a temporary government funding measure, which would extend government funding into March to give lawmakers more time to pass full appropriations bills.

However, Rosendale led a group of Republican lawmakers last week in vowing to withhold government funding until the Biden administration secures the United States' borders from the record level of illegal immigration.

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Blinken Warns Failure to Support Kiev Might End in Direct Conflict Between NATO, Russia

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that if the West fails to support Ukraine now, it could end up in a conflict between NATO and Russia.

During an interview with CNBC on the margins of the Davos summit on Tuesday, Blinken said that if Washington and its allies stop providing support to Ukraine, it will open up a Pandora's box.

Asked what Russian President Vladimir Putin would do next, Blinken stated: "I think he would go full-tilt on Ukraine and then NATO countries."

"And of course, if he attacked a NATO country, we have Article 5 obligations under NATO to work to assist them," he said. "That would bring us in directly."

In December, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that US President Joe Biden's remarks about a possible Russian attack on NATO countries were "nonsense." Biden himself probably understands this, Putin added.

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Russia has no geopolitical, economic, political or military interest in waging a war against NATO countries, Putin stressed. Russia and these countries do not have any territorial claims against each other, he said.

Moscow has no problems with NATO countries, but they are the ones who create problems artificially because they do not want such a competitor as Russia, Putin stated.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) -

RED SEA DEVELOPMENTS

* US forces destroyed four anti-ship ballistic missiles on Tuesday after Yemen's Houthis attacked a US commercial vessel earlier this week, a US defense official said in a statement to Sputnik.

* White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said the United States reserves the right to take further action against the Houthis.

* The port of Rotterdam, which is Europe's largest, is not expecting any issues in its work over the situation in the Red Sea, but acknowledges that transportation costs have changed, spokesman Tie Schellekens, told RIA Novosti.

* The European Union believes that the situation in the Red Sea potentially threatens the European economy, but so far its consequences for the bloc are limited, European Commission Vice-President and Commissioner for Trade Valdis Dombrovskis said.

ISRAEL INVASION OF GAZA

* The risk of a full-scale global escalation of Israel's war on Gaza has been "real" since October 7 and it is so today, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Tuesday.

* The European Union has added the head of the Palestinian movement Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Yahya Sinwar, to its terrorist list.

* Israel has decided to allow entrance of medicines and humanitarian aid to the most devastated areas of Gaza in exchange for delivery of medicines to the Israeli hostages held by Hamas, the Qatari Foreign Ministry said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* The Ukrainian military has failed its counteroffensive and if this continues its statehood could be put into question, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Tuesday.

* Putin said Ukraine had rejected negotiations with Russia and that "everything would have been over long time ago" if it had not.

* The main goal behind Ukraine's strikes on civilian facilities inside Russia is to show its sponsors that Kiev still allegedly has an ability to respond to Moscow's actions, Putin said.

* The United States does not have another military aid package for Ukraine in the pipeline as

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funding for previous packages run dry, Natinoal Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said.
* Germany will provide military assistance to Ukraine worth$7.6 billion in 2024, the German government said.

IRAN STRIKES
* Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said on Tuesday that it had fired 24 ballistic missiles at targets in Iraq's Kurdistan region and in Syria.
* The Iraq Foreign Ministry said that it had recalled its ambassador to Tehran for consultations following Iran's attacks on targets in the country.
* IRGC launched ballistic missiles and drones at a base of a terrorist group in Pakistan for the first time, Iran's Press TV reported.

RUSSIA-NORTH KOREA RELATIONS
* Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Tuesday that he will discuss the situation on the Korean Peninsula with North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui.
* Russian President Vladimir Putin has been invited to visit North Korea and Pyongyang hopes to intensify the exchange of high-level delegations with Russia in 2024, Minister Choe Son Hui said.
* Putin held meetings with Lavrov and Choe Son Hui after their talks in Moscow, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

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UPDATE - Blinken Says US Not 'Crossing Over' With Chinese Delegation in Davos

(Updates with more details, background in paras 3, 10)
WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday that there are no meetings planned with the Chinese delegation at the World Economic Forum in Davos.
"I don't think we're crossing over," Blinken said in an interview with CNBC.
Asked whether there is something more that can be inferred from that statement, Blinken said, "No."
"Quite literally, we had one of their most senior foreign policy people in Washington," Blinken said. "We had extensive meetings with him - I did; Jake Sullivan, the National Security Advisor, did; and we'll continue to do that."
Blinken noted that since his trip to China last summer, the United States had re-engaged with China at every senior level and most importantly between presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping.
"That engagement continues," Blinken said.
On Saturday, Taiwan held a general election in which pro-independence candidate Lai Ching-te of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party won with 40.05% of the vote to head the island's local administration.
Blinken congratulated Lai on his victory and the Taiwan people "for participating in free and fair

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elections and demonstrating the strength of their democratic system."
Beijing condemned the remark and urged Washington to "act seriously in accordance with the commitments that have been reaffirmed multiple times by various US leaders on the Taiwan issue."
Taiwan has been governed independently of mainland China since 1949. Beijing views the island as its province, while Taiwan maintains that it is an autonomous country but stops short of declaring independence. Beijing opposes any official contacts of foreign states with Taipei and considers Chinese sovereignty over the island indisputable.

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US Senate Will Focus This Week on Passing Temporary Government Funding Extension - Schumer

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - The US Senate will focus this week on passing an extension of the temporary government funding measures in order to avoid a government shutdown, Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said on Tuesday.
"The focus of this week will be to pass this extension as quickly as we can," Schumer said during remarks on the Senate floor.
Congress currently has until January 19 and February 2 to pass two separate sets of government funding bills or a continuing resolution lest the federal government begin to shut down. A continuing resolution would extend temporary government funding measures passed late last year.
Schumer said that he is hopeful that lawmakers can complete work on a continuing resolution no later than Thursday.
On Tuesday, the Senate will consider a motion to advance the legislative vehicle for the continuing resolution.
The continuing resolution under consideration would extend the previous temporary government funding measures until March 1 and 8, according to the text of the bill.

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Blinken Says US Not ‘Crossing Over’ With Chinese Delegation in Davos

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"I don’t think we’re crossing over," Blinken said in an interview with CNBC. "But as I said, we had a very senior Chinese official in Washington just a couple of days ago."
Asked whether there is something should he read into it, Blinken said, "No."

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White House Confirms Kerry Leaving Administration in Upcoming Months

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) – US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry will leave his position in the upcoming months, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday.

"I can confirm that in the upcoming months, Special Envoy Kerry will leave the administration," Jean-Pierre told reporters.

US media reported last week that Kerry is stepping down and plans to help Biden's 2024 campaign.

Jean-Pierre declined to discuss Kerry's reported plans.

"I certainly cannot speak to that, but we will be sure to keep you posted," she added.

Jean-Pierre also declined to reveal who will replace Kerry in his position. She stressed that US President Joe Biden appreciated everything that Kerry had done over the past three years.

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Guterres, Iran Top Diplomat Discuss Situation in Gaza, Red Sea - UN Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, January 16 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian discussed the situation in the Middle East, including the developments in the Red Sea, United Nations spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Tuesday.

"Following our briefing, I wanted to confirm that the Secretary-General spoke to the Iranian

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Foreign Minister yesterday. They discussed the situation in the Middle East, including in the Red Sea," Dujarric said in a statement.

Guterres and Amir-Abdollahian also discussed the need for greater access for humanitarian deliveries to Gaza amid the ongoing conflict there, Dujarric said.

The UN Secretary-General reiterated his call for the release of all remaining hostages held by the Palestinian movement Hamas, Dujarric said.

In addition, Guterres emphasized the necessity of avoiding a further escalation of the conflict in the Red Sea and asked that all involved parties implement UN Security Council Resolution 2722, which calls on Yemen's Houthis to cease all attacks on commercial ships.

On Monday, Guterres warned that the current tensions in the Red Sea and beyond were "sky-high" and may be impossible to contain in the near future.

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Biden, Congress Leaders to Discuss Importance of Supplemental Request - White House

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden will discuss with congressional leaders on Wednesday the vital need to pass his national security supplemental request, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday.

"This is going to be about discussing critical importance of his national security supplemental request," Jean-Pierre told a briefing.

House Speaker Mike Johnson's spokesperson said earlier in the day that US congressional leaders will meet with Biden at the White House on Wednesday to discuss his supplemental funding request.

The White House has asked Congress to provide more than $100 billion in supplemental funds including more than $60 billion for Ukraine, but Republican lawmakers have refused to approve the requested amount without meaningful measures in place to end the border crisis.

Biden recently said that major changes are needed on the US southern border and he's prepared to make those significant alterations.

According to US Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, the negotiating parties are very close to reaching a deal on the supplemental bill.

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White House Spokesperson Called Texas Governor Abbott's Border Policies 'Extreme'

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters on Tuesday that what Texas Governor Greg Abbott is doing at the border is extreme and dehumanizing, and, moreover, making border patrol agents' work harder.

"What he [Governor Abbott] is dong at the border, his policy, how he is getting involved, it's

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/17/2024 11:04:33 AM

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extreme ," Jean-Pierre said. "It demonizes, it dehumanizes people but it also makes the job of the border patrol harder. And it's also more dangerous."

Last week, the US Justice Department in a court filing asked the Supreme Court to take action to prevent Texas officials, including state National Guard units, from blocking US Border Patrol agent's access to a stretch of land along the southern border so that they can carry out their duties.

The Texas Military Department said this action was taken to "prepare for future illegal immigrant surges and to restrict access to organizations that perpetuate illegal immigrant crossings in the park and greater Eagle Pass area."

The state of Texas and the US Justice Department are currently in the middle of at least two legal battles over differences on their handling of the immigration crisis on the US southern border. Earlier this month, US media reported that border security officials documented 302,000 migrant encounters in December, marking the highest single-month figure ever recorded. The Biden administration has also experienced three consecutive years of record numbers of illegal migration on the southern border.

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US 'Fully Anticipated' Retaliatory Strikes by Houthis - White House's Kirby

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - The United States expected retaliatory strikes by the Houthis after last week's military action in Yemen, White House Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Tuesday.

In the early hours of Friday, US and UK forces carried out airstrikes on Houthi targets in Yemen, including the capital of Sanaa. On Sunday, the Houthis fired an anti-ship cruise missile toward the USS Laboon destroyer, which was intercepted by a US fighter jet, the US Central Command said. On Monday, the Yemen-based group attacked a US commercial vessel. No significant damage was reported.

"We fully anticipated when we launched the salvo on Friday night that the Houthis would probably conduct some retaliatory strikes," Kirby said during a press briefing.

On Tuesday, US forces destroyed four Houthi anti-ship ballistic missiles in response to the January 15 attack. According to US officials, these Houthi missiles were prepared to launch from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen and presented an imminent threat to both merchant and US Navy ships in the region.

"As you saw today, we took additional strikes knocking out four ballistic missiles that we believe were prepped and ready to be launched from Yemen, took them out before they could do that. So we have said before, we'll say it again: we stand ready to defend our interests, our sailors, our ships and that of merchant shipping, as required. We're not looking for a war. We're not looking to expand this," Kirby added.

In November, the Houthis vowed to attack any ships associated with Israel until it halts military actions in the Gaza Strip. In December, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin announced the

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establishment of a multinational operation to secure navigation in the Red Sea.

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US Does Not Have Another Military Package for Ukraine In Works Right Now - Kirby

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - The United States does not have another military aid package for Ukraine in the pipeline as funding for previous packages run dry, White House Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Wednesday.

"There isn't another one in the works right now or being scheduled for announcement or delivery. We meant it when we said it at the time that that was the last one for which we had replenishment authority," said Kirby during a press briefing.

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DC Residents, Visitors Should Monitor for Measles Due to Infected Traveler - Health Dept.

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - Washington residents and visitors may have been exposed to measles by an international traveler at the Dulles and Reagan airports, the District of Columbia Department of Health said on Tuesday.

"DC Health has been notified of a confirmed case of measles in a person who traveled through DC area airports when returning from international travel. While the threat of transmission is low, DC Health is notifying District residents who were at these locations about their possible exposure," the DC Health Department said in a statement.

The measles-infected traveler visited Dulles International Airport between 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. on January 3, the statement said. The traveler then visited the Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport between 2:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. on January 4, the statement said.

People who received two doses of measles vaccines, or were born before 1957, are protected from measles and need not take action, the statement said. The majority of people born before 1957 are likely to have been infected naturally and are presumed protected against measles, mumps and rubella, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Anyone who was potentially exposed to the infected traveler should monitor for symptoms until January 25, the statement said.

Measles is a viral respiratory illness that most often occurs in children, the statement said. Symptoms include fever, anorexia, cough, fatigue and a rash, the statement said.

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Some 150 Protesters Demanding Ceasefire in Gaza Arrested on Capitol Hill – Action Group

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) – About 150 people have been arrested in the Cannon House Office building on Capitol Hill while demanding a ceasefire in Gaza, Mennonite Action, a grassroots movement said on Tuesday.

"A group of about 150 Mennonites were arrested today in the Cannon building in an act of peaceful civil disobedience, singing hymns and calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. As the Capitol Police made arrests, we never stopped singing," the group said in a post on X (formerly known as Twitter).

Protests like this happen regularly on Capitol Hill and across the United States with a variety of civil action groups and organizations taking part in them, including Code Pink, American Muslims for Palestine, Students for Justice in Palestine, IfNotNow and Jewish Voice for Peace, among several others.

One of the largest arrests in the Cannon House Office building took place in October with more than 300 demonstrators removed from the building in plastic handcuffs.

On October 7, Palestinian movement Hamas launched a large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip, while its fighters breached the border, opening fire on the military and civilians. As a result, over 1,200 people in Israel were killed and some 240 others abducted. Israel launched retaliatory strikes, ordered a complete blockade of Gaza, and launched a ground incursion into the Palestinian enclave with the declared goal of eliminating Hamas fighters and rescuing the hostages. Over 23,000 people have been killed so far in Gaza as a result of Israeli strikes, local authorities said.

On November 24, Qatar mediated a deal between Israel and Hamas on a temporary truce and the exchange of some of the prisoners and hostages, as well as the delivery of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. The ceasefire was extended several times and expired on December 1.

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Austin Spoke With Ukrainian Defense Minister To Discuss Defense Contact Group -Statement

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - United States Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin spoke by phone with Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov on the upcoming Ukraine Defense Contact Group (UDCG), the Defense Department said on Wednesday.

"Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III spoke by phone today with Ukrainian Minister of Defence Rustem Umerov to discuss the latest on the situation on the ground and the upcoming virtual Ukraine Defense Contact Group (UDCG) meeting on January 23," said the Defense Department in a statement.

The release added that during the call, Austin reiterated that the United States and our coalition of some 50 Allies and partners remain committed to supporting Ukraine.

The call comes only one day after Austin was released from the hospital after being diagnosed with prostate cancer.

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Guterres Before Meeting Blinken Says Everybody Wants Wars in Ukraine, Gaza to End

UNITED NATIONS, January 16 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Tuesday before meeting with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Davos that everybody wants the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza to end.

"I think we all want the war in Ukraine to end, to end in line with the UN Charter and in line with international law," Guterres told reporters. "We want this crisis in Gaza to end with a solution of peace, a two-state solution implemented, with Palestinians and Israel able to transform this horrible crisis into an opportunity to build a common future."

Guterres called the partnership with the United States an "absolutely fundamental part" of the UN's work.

He also thanked Blinken for his personal efforts to "address some of the most challenging problems around the world."

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US Congressional Leaders to Meet Biden Wednesday for Supplemental Talks - Lawmaker

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - US congressional leaders will meet with President Joe Biden at the White House on Wednesday to discuss his supplemental funding request, House Speaker Mike Johnson's spokesperson said on Tuesday.

"Speaker Johnson alongside other congressional leaders will be meeting with President Biden tomorrow at the White House," the spokesperson said in a statement.

According to media reports, the meeting will be about Biden's supplemental funding request.

The White House has asked Congress to provide more than $100 billion in supplemental funds including more than $60 billion for Ukraine, but Republican lawmakers have refused to approve the requested amount without meaningful measures in place to end the border crisis.

Biden recently said that major changes are needed on the US southern border and he's prepared to make those significant alterations.

According to US Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, the negotiating parties are very close to reaching a deal on the supplemental bill.

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Blinken Discusses Ukraine, Gaza During Meeting in Davos With EU President - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen met on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos to discuss international aid for Ukraine and the Palestinians in Gaza, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Tuesday.

"Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken met with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen today in Davos, Switzerland. Secretary Blinken and President von der Leyen discussed the importance of continued international assistance for Ukraine… They also addressed the urgent need to increase humanitarian assistance for Palestinian civilians in Gaza," Miller said.

The two officials also discussed the situation in the Red Sea amid the attacks by Houthis on commercial vessels related to Israel and underlined that freedom of navigation there is vital for global commerce and regional security.

The 2024 edition of the World Economic Forum is taking place from January 15-19 and 2,800 participants from some 120 countries are expected to be in attendance.

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Biden, Scholz Discuss Ukraine, Events in Middle East During Phone Call - White House

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden and German Chancellor Scholz have discussed Germany and the current situation in the Middle East during a phone talk, the White House shared on Tuesday.

“President Biden spoke with Chancellor Scholz of Germany this morning about a range of issues, including support for Ukraine and ongoing events in the Middle East,” the release said.

The White House added that the readout will be released soon.

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US Voters Will Reject Trump’s Views Like Ramaswamy’s - Democratic National Committee

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - Entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy’s departure from the 2024 presidential race after winning fourth place in the Iowa Republican caucus is a sign that voters will also end up rejecting the views of former US President Donald Trump, the Democratic National Committee (DNC) said on Tuesday

Ramaswamy suspended his campaign after Trump won the Iowa Republican caucus on Monday night. Ramaswamy came in fourth place, behind Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and former US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley.

"We didn’t think this was possible, but the entire Republican Party is worse for Vivek Ramaswamy having run for office," the DNC said in a statement. "Voters will make it clear that

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Ramaswamy's extreme views are a loser in the general election — just like Trump's."
Ramaswamy's campaign promoted "unhinged" conspiracy theories, the statement said. The DNC is not surprised that Ramaswamy endorsed Trump after suspending his own campaign, the statement added.
Ramaswamy's endorsement is a "great honor," Trump said in a statement to Truth Social.
Former Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson also suspended his presidential campaign on Tuesday, after a poor performance in the Iowa caucus.
"This news comes as a shock to those of us who could've sworn he had already dropped out," the DNC said on Tuesday in a statement on Hutchinson's departure from the race.
DeSantis and Haley — who won second and third place in the Iowa caucus, respectively — remain in the race against Trump for the Republican Party nomination.

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No Deal Yet on Ukraine Aid-Border Security Bill Amid Ongoing Talks in Congress - Source

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - The negotiations between the Biden administration and congressional Republicans have not resulted in an agreement yet on a bill to fund Ukraine aid and border security, among other US national security priorities, a source familiar with the matter told Sputnik on Tuesday.
Earlier in the day, Ukrainian President Volodymry Zelenksyy said during remarks at the World Economic Forum in Davos that he hopes Congress will soon reach a deal on the supplemental funding bill.
"I don't believe there has been any resolution. Certainly not in the upcoming continuing resolution," the source said when asked if the talks on the supplemental funding have been resolved.
The White House has asked Congress to provide more than $100 billion in supplemental funds including more than $60 billion for Ukraine, but Republican lawmakers have refused to approve the request without meaningful measures to end the border crisis.
President Joe Biden recently said that major changes are needed on the US southern border and he is prepared to make those significant alterations.
According to US Senator Kyrsten Sinema, the negotiating parties are very close to reaching a deal on a supplemental funding bill.

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Guterres, Blinken Meet on Sidelines of Davos Forum

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken are holding a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the World

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Economic Forum in Davos, spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Tuesday.

"As we speak, he [Guterres] is meeting with the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken," Dujarric told reporters without providing further details.

During his stay in Davos, the UN chief will meet with government officials and leaders of the private sector from different countries, Dujarric said.

"Tomorrow morning, he will deliver a special address on the state of the world, where he will highlight existential threats posed by the climate crisis and developments of artificial intelligence without the guardrails," Dujarric stated.

Guterres will also push for reforming UN institutions and rebuilding trust to "get back on track to safety, prosperity and peace," the spokesperson added.

The 2024 edition of the World Economic Forum is taking place from January 15-19. It is expected to attract over 2,800 participants from more than 120 countries, including prominent figures from business, political, and academic circles.

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Sentinel ICBM Solid Fuel Rocket Motor Passes Live Static Fire Test - Northrop Grumman

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - Northrop Grumman has has carried out a successful live static fire test of the solid fuel rocket motor for its Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), the planned successor to the almost-60-year-old Minuteman III, the company announced in a press release on Tuesday.

"Northrop Grumman Corporation successfully completed a live, static-fire test of a Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) stage-two solid rocket motor at the US Air Force Arnold Engineering Development Complex," the release said.

The test was conducted in a vacuum chamber simulating real-world environmental conditions the solid-rocket motor would experience during high-altitude and space flight, Northrop Grumman said.

"Test data will be analyzed to determine how motor performance matched digitally engineered model predictions, critical to maturing the design and lowering risk. Following this development effort, Northrop Grumman will begin a series of rocket motor qualification testing for both stages," the company said.

Northrop Grumman is designing and producing stages one and two of the three-stage Sentinel missile, the release noted.

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More Than 5,600 Flights Delayed, Canceled in US Due to Snowfall - FlightAware Portal

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/17/2024 11:04:33 AM

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(Updates with additional information in paras 6, 7; modifies headline, lede; edits throughout)
WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - More than 5,600 flights have been delayed and canceled in the United States amid a heavy snowfall on the country's east coast, FlightAware.com web portal said on Tuesday.
"Total delays within, into, or out of the United States today: 3,989," the portal said.
Another 1,761 flights were canceled, the website added.
LaGuardia airport in New York City has been most impacted by the inclement weather on the US east coast and canceled more than 200 flights while delaying almost 380 others.
New York's John Fitzgerald Kennedy and Newark's Liberty International airports reported more than 200 canceled flights and about 550 others delayed.
The three major airports in the Washington metropolitan area canceled 380 flights and delayed nearly 400.
In addition, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issued a weather-related ground stop for flights headed to the Philadelphia International Airport until 1:00 p.m. EST.
Airplanes are departing the Philadelphia airport, however, travelers have been advised to check with their airlines for the latest service updates.
The US National Weather Service has warned that the snowfall will continue in the region throughout the day.

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Red Sea Unrest Will Not Have Big Impact on Global Economy Unless Worsens - Federal Reserve

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - The tensions in the southern Red Sea are not expected to impact the global economy unless the situation spirals out of control, Federal Reserve Governor Christopher Waller said on Tuesday.
"I don't see it potentially being a big, big impact on certain global or US inflation unless this thing spirals into something much more severe than it appears as it is right now," Waller said during a discussion with the Brookings Institution.
Waller added that commercial vessels can use alternative routes to transport goods.
Earlier in the day, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said attacks by Yemen's Houthis on commercial vessels in the Red Sea have contributed to a further increase in the price of food and energy.
In November 2023, the Houthis - formally known as the Ansar Allah movement - pledged to attack any ship associated with Israel until that country stops its military actions against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.
Last week, the United States and United Kingdom launched major strikes against Houthi targets in Yemen as a means to degrade the group's ability to conduct attacks against commercial vessels. A few strikes against Houthi targets have continued over the last several days.

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US Forces Destroy 4 Houthi Anti-Ship Missiles After Monday Attack on US Vessel - Official

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - US forces destroyed four Houthi anti-ship ballistic missiles on Tuesday after they attacked a US commercial vessel earlier this week, a US defense official said in a statement to Sputnik.

"Following the January 15 attack on the M/V Gibraltar Eagle, a Marshall Islands-flagged, US-owned and operated container ship, on January 16 at approximately 4:15 a.m. (Sanaa time), US Forces struck and destroyed four Houthi anti-ship ballistic missiles," the official said.

The official said these Houthi missiles were prepared to launch from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen and presented an imminent threat to both merchant and US Navy ships in the region.

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FED Official Says Interest Rate Cut Possible in 2024 if Inflation Does Not Rebound

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - The Federal Reserve may be able to cut interest rates later this year as long as inflation does not rebound for a prolonged period of time, Federal Reserve Governor Christopher Waller said on Tuesday.

"As long as inflation doesn't rebound and stay elevated, I believe the FOMC [Federal Open Market Committee] will be able to lower the target range for the federal funds rate this year," Waller said during a discussion with the Brookings Institution.

However, Waller pointed out that interest rate cuts should not be rushed despite the improving conditions in the US economy.

For now, Waller said his view is that financial conditions remain restrictive and are a drag on economic activity, putting downward pressure on inflation.

The Federal Open Market Committee will decide when they have seen enough progress before approving a rate cut, Waller added.

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Top White House Officials Had 'Robust' Discussion with Zelenskyy – Sullivan

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) – US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Tuesday that he and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken had a “robust and detailed” discussion with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy earlier in the day

“Secretary Blinken and I had the opportunity to meet with President Zelenskyy this morning and

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/17/2024 11:04:33 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/17/2024 11:04:33 AM

talk about the battlefield and talk about various capabilities. We had a very good discussion. I will leave it at that. It's best left behind closed doors at the moment, but it was a robust and detailed discussion," Sullivan said at the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos.

He declined to comment on whether the US and its allies were contemplating more advanced weapons for Ukraine.

Sullivan said that US President Biden was "absolutely laser focused" on mobilizing bipartisan support in the House and Senate to fund aid for Ukraine and was seeking to resolve the matter in the coming weeks.

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Elon Musk Says 'No Way' He Will Attend World Economic Forum Gathering in Davos

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - Billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk said on Tuesday that there is no way he will attend the World Economic Forum annual gathering in Davos, Switzerland.

Scheduled attendees include both public officials and private sector leaders, such as US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, Chinese Premier Li Qiang and OpenAI CEO Sam Altman.

"No way," Musk said on social media platform X, in response to a user asking whether he plans to attend the event.

Musk has publicly criticized WEF on X, including holding a poll in January 2023 on whether the group should control the world. The vast majority of respondents, 86%, opposed WEF control.

Earlier this month, Musk criticized a WEF ranking of global risks, which listed misinformation and disinformation as the top threat. Musk claimed that WEF considers "anything that conflicts with its agenda" as misinformation.

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US Authorizes Certain Transactions Related to PdVSA Bond on or After April 16 - Treasury

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - The US Treasury Department on Tuesday issued a general license authorizing certain transactions related to the Petroleos de Venezuela (PdVSA) 2020 8.5% bond on or after April 15.

"Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this general license, on or after April 16, 2024, all transactions related to, the provision of financing for, and other dealings in the Petroleos de Venezuela, S.A. 2020 8.5% bond […] are authorized," the text of the license said.

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Risk of Full-Scale Escalation of Gaza War 'Real' Since October 7 - Sullivan

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - The risk of a full-scale global escalation of Israel's war on Gaza has been "real" since October 7, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Tuesday.

"Look, the risk was real from October 7 and the risk remains real today," Sullivan said at the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos.

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Second Defamation Trial by Carroll Against Trump Starts in New York

WASHINGTON, January 15 (Sputnik) - The second trial of Jean Carroll, who has accused former President Donald Trump of harassment and libel, began in US federal court in New York City on Tuesday.

In 2019, Carroll accused Trump of trying to rape her in either 1995 or 1996 in a dressing room in New York City. Trump rejected the allegations as false and said he never met Carroll.

Later in the year, Carroll filed another lawsuit against Trump, accusing him of damaging her reputation and career by calling her a liar. The first trial took place in 2023.

In May, a jury found Trump liable for battery based on Carroll's accusations and ordered him to pay $2 million in damages. It ruled that Carroll was not raped but was rather "sexually abused." The jury also found Trump liable for defamation, ordering him to pay $3 million in damages for publicly rejecting the accusations.

The day after the jury's decision, Trump pointed out that the jury found he did not rape Carroll and reiterated that he "didn't do anything else" to her.

Soon thereafter, Carroll amended her original lawsuit to seek additional compensation, citing Trump's new statements.

The jury selection process is currently taking place on Tuesday.

Trump and Carroll are already in the court, according to media reports.

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US Reserves Right to Take Further Action Against Houthis – Sullivan

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) – White House National Security Advsior Jake Sullivan said on Tuesday that the US reserves the right to take further action against Yemen's Houthis

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/17/2024 11:04:33 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/17/2024 11:04:33 AM

over their attacks on ships transiting through the Red Sea.

"We did not say when we launched our attacks they're going to end once and for all [the Houthi attacks] … We anticipated that the Houthis would continue to try to hold this critical artery at risk, and we continue to reserve the right to take further action," Sullivan said at the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos.

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Over 5,600 Flight Canceled, Delayed in US - Portal

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) – More than 5,600 flights were canceled or delayed in the US on Tuesday, as the Eastern cost of the country has been covered by snowfall, FlightAware.com web portal said.

"Total delays within, into, or out of the United States today: 3,989," the portal said.

Another 1,761 flights were canceled, it added.

The most impacted airport, LaGuardia in New York City, had to cancel over 200 flights and delay almost 380. Other New York airports, JFK and Newark Liberty International registered more than 200 cancellations and about 550 delays, according to the data.

Three major airports in the Washington, DC, area canceled 380 flights and delayed nearly 400.

Significant snowfall began in some parts of the east coast on Monday. The US National Weather Service warned that snowfall will continue in the region throughout the day.

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US Continuing to Develop Sanctions on Russian Economy - Sullivan

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - The United States continues to develop sanctions to target the Russian economy, White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Tuesday.

"We will build on our sanctions to ensure that… the economic costs for Russia continue to mount," Sullivan said during remarks at the World Economic Forum in Davos.

The US will support Ukraine's efforts to secure a peace deal with Russia that aligns with the principles of the United Nations charter, Sullivan said.

Ukraine is "steeled" for continued conflict, Sullivan said. The US is expanding training for Ukrainian troops and working to secure congressional support for further military aid, Sullivan said.

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Sullivan Says International System Entering New Era of 'Disruptive Change'

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - The global community is entering a new era of disruptive changes to the international system, White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Tuesday.

"Today, we're in the early years of a new era," Sullivan said during remarks at the World Economic Forum in Davos. "This age is one of disruptive change."

Countries are more interdependent than ever but engaging in stiff competition about the future of the international system, Sullivan said.

Some of the disruptive change has been positive, including in the realms of technology and development, Sullivan said. However, other change has been negative, such as "dangerous actors" testing the limits of the international system, Sullivan said.

The entry into a new era comes with an obligation and opportunity to "more wisely" choose the trajectory of the international system, Sullivan said.

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US Border Agents Claim Lax Consequences Encourage Illegal Migration - Joint Panel Report

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - The belief that there would be no consequences for unauthorized entry in the United States encourages the flow of illegal migration, the US House Oversight and Homeland Security committees said in a report on Tuesday.

The committees released the joint staff report on the US migration crisis, based on interviews with nine Border Patrol Chief Patrol Agents along the southwest border. US authorities encountered more than 2.4 million inadmissible immigrants in fiscal year 2023, including a record 302,000 in December 2024 alone, the report said.

"The belief that they are going to be released with no consequences is certainly something that many migrants tell our agents," one Border Patrol agent said.

The "most obvious" way to discourage illegal entry into the United States is to detain nearly every migrant who illegally crosses the border until they have a court hearing, another Border Patrol agent said.

Border Patrol personnel have expressed to leadership that they believe release into the US is an inadequate consequence for illegal entry, the agent added.

The report comes as the US House of Representatives considers impeaching Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas for allegedly failing to secure the United States borders. Republican members of Congress are also pushing for the inclusion of border security measures in government funding and foreign aid legislation.

US policymakers and elected officials should consider the expert opinions of Border Patrol

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agents when crafting options to address the migration crisis, the report said.

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Former Gov. Asa Hutchinson Says Suspends US Presidential Campaign After Iowa Caucus

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - Former Arkansas Asa Hutchinson announced on Tuesday that he suspended his 2024 presidential campaign after he had finished last in the Iowa Republican caucus.

"Today, I am suspending my campaign for President and driving back to Arkansas," Hutchinson said in a statement. "I congratulate Donald J. Trump for his win last night in Iowa and to the other candidates who competed and garnered delegate support."

On Monday, another Republican presidential primary candidate Vivek Ramaswamy confirmed he was dropping out of the presidential race and endorsed ex-President Donald Trump following the Iowa caucus vote for the Republican nominee in the upcoming presidential election.

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US Presidential Candidate Haley Calls for Next Debate With Trump or Biden

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) – US Republican presidential candidate Nikki Haley said Tuesday that she intends to hold her next debate with either former President Donald Trump or incumbent President Joe Biden.

"We've had five great debates in this campaign. Unfortunately, Donald Trump has ducked all of them. He has nowhere left to hide. The next debate I do will either be with Donald Trump or with Joe Biden. I look forward to it," Haley said in a social media post.

The next debate, hosted by ABC News and WMUR-TV, is planned for Thursday, ahead of the New Hampshire primary on January 23. It is unclear whether Trump will participate.

Haley finished in third place in the Iowa caucus held on Monday, closely behind Ron DeSantis, leading her to claim that the Republican primary was a "two-person race" between her and Trump.

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Houthi Attacks in Red Sea Cause Further Increase in Price of Food, Energy - Blinken

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WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - The attacks by Yemen's Houthis on commercial vessels in the Red Sea have contributed to a further increase in the price of food and energy, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday.

"In the Red Sea through, in which 15% of the world's commerce passes, Houthi attacks have forced ships to take longer, more expensive routes, further raising the price of food and energy," Blinken said.

In November 2023, the Houthis - formally known as the Ansar Allah movement - pledged to attack any ship associated with Israel until that country stops its military actions against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced the following month that a multinational operation was established to secure freedom of navigation in the Red Sea.

The United States and the United Kingdom last week carried out strikes on Houthi targets in Yemen, including in the capital of Sanaa.

The Red Sea is a vital maritime route for the whole world and Europe in particular and countries have the right to protect their ships from attacks, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said last week. Borrell called on the Houthis to show restraint and cease to attack ships passing in that region.

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US Must Move Quickly to Address AI Safety, Security Issues - White House AI Advisor

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - The United States must move quickly on safety and security issues related to the development of artificial intelligence (AI) technology, White House Special Advisor on AI Ben Buchanan said on Tuesday.

"One of the places where we know we have to move fast is on a lot of the safety and security issues," Buchanan said during an Aspen Institute event.

The US Congress must form AI-related regulation in 2024 or 2025, Buchanan said. It will be Congress' responsibility to fund the hiring of new US government AI personnel, Buchanan said.

The private sector will likely participate in conversations with lawmakers on AI regulation, Buchanan said. AI regulation will help the US innovate more quickly with the emerging technology, Buchanan said.

The US is willing to work with both allies and competitors on AI safety, Buchanan said.

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US House Cancels Votes Over Snow as Shutdown Deadline Looms

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) – The US House canceled votes on Tuesday due to snow in Washington, despite a partial government shutdown looming in three days.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 01/17/2024 11:04:33 AM

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"Members are advised that due to inclement weather conditions, votes are no longer expected in the House today. First votes this week are now expected at approximately 1:30 p.m. tomorrow, January 17th, on the rule," House Majority Whip Tom Emmer said in a statement.

The decision was made amid ongoing discussions about federal government funding. A partial government shutdown may occur on January 19 if the parties do not reach an agreement.

The snowfall has forced the closure of other federal offices too.

"Federal Offices in the Washington, DC area are Closed. Maximum Telework is in effect," the Office of Personnel Management said in a statement.

Up to 3 inches of snow has fallen in the capital area on Monday and early Tuesday, and another snowfall is expected overnight, according to media reports.

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Blinken, Sullivan Discuss Ukraine Aid, Economy at Davos Talks With Zelenskyy - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met with Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Davos on Tuesday to discuss the importance of continued global assistance to Ukraine and efforts to support its economic recovery, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said.

"They discussed the importance of continued global assistance to support Ukraine as it fights for its freedom and sovereignty," Miller said in a readout.

They also addressed efforts to assist Kiev's economic recovery, including through private sector investment.

In addition, the talks touched upon Ukraine's "anti-corruption reform efforts" aimed at bolstering the country's economic recovery and paving the way for its Euro-Atlantic integration, Miller continued.

The US officials also reiterated the US's "enduring support" for Ukraine, the release stated.

Russia has consistently warned against continued arms deliveries to Kiev, saying that they only prolong the conflict.

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Blinken Assures Zelenskyy US Determined to Continue Support for Ukraine

WASHINGTON, January 16 (Sputnik) - Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday reaffirmed the United States' commitment to continue its support for Kiev in its ongoing conflict with Russia, as discussion over new funding hit a stalemate in the US Congress.

"We're determined to sustain our support for, and we're working very closely with Congress in order to do that. I know our European colleagues are doing the same thing," Blinken said ahead of his meeting with Zelenskyy and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan in Davos.

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White House Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said earlier this month that the US has run out of funds for Ukraine unless Congress passes a new funding package. On December 27, the US unveiled its final military aid package for Kiev in 2023, worth $250 million. In October, the White House asked Congress to provide more than $100 billion in supplemental funds including more than $60 billion for Ukraine, but Republican lawmakers have refused to approve the request without measures to strengthen border security and restrict immigration. Russia has consistently warned against continued arms deliveries to Kiev, saying it will lead to further escalation of the conflict.

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