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Audio From Pentagon Chief's 911 Call Reveals Request for 'Subtle' Ambulance Response

The American defense secretary had earlier been hospitalized twice and undergone surgery; however, red flags were raised over the last weeks over a transparency failure that left much of the Pentagon and White House in the dark about the state of the defense chief.

Newly surfaced audio has captured the moment in which an aide for US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin made a 911 call for an ambulance, asking first responders to be "subtle" upon their arrival to the Pentagon chief's home.

The call came in on New Year's day, just after 7:00 p.m. local time.

"Can I ask- Can the ambulance not show up with lights and sirens? We're trying to remain a little subtle," the defense secretary's aide pleaded during the 911 call.

"Usually, when they turn into a residential neighborhood they'll turn them off," answered the 911 dispatcher, who added that the first responder is legally required to keep them on while transiting main roads.

The aide was then asked about the defense secretary's condition, asking if he was feeling like he was going to pass out or feel as though he would, to which the aide said "no." The secretary's assistant then asked if it would be possible to take Austin to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland.

US President Joe Biden was not informed of his defense secretary's hospitalization, which remained a secret for a reported four days. It was later revealed this was not the defense secretary's first health scare.

Austin first learned in early December that he had early-stage prostate cancer. He underwent general anesthesia for prostatectomy two days after returning from a tour of Middle Eastern capitals. According to reports, he had made plans to temporarily give his deputy Kathleen Hicks the responsibility of some of his duties.

The US' top defense official had undergone at least two hospitalizations and surgery following a prostate cancer diagnosis, but both the White House and the Pentagon remained in the dark—even during a January 4 US airstrike on Baghdad that had been recommended by Austin the previous week. Even Hicks was unaware the defense secretary had been put in intensive care until January 4.

Biden has since admitted that Austin's decision to conceal his health scare was a lapse in judgment, but the president expressed continued confidence in his defense chief. Some senior Republicans have called for Austin's dismissal.

Three investigations have since been launched into the incident. Austin, who was released from the hospital on Monday and is expected to make a full recovery, said he took full responsibility and "could have done a better job ensuring the public was appropriately informed."

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Johnson Throws Cold Water on Ukraine Funding, Prioritizing Border Security

"We need to know that Ukraine would not be another Afghanistan," said Johnson on Wednesday.

On Wednesday, US House Speaker Mike Johnson revealed his determination to continue with a stalemate between Democrats and Republicans regarding legislation that would pave the way for continued funding to Ukraine.

The deal is currently being worked on in the Senate with the aim to pair border and immigration policy changes (what Republicans want) alongside funding for Ukraine (what Democrats are asking for).

"I don't think now is the time for comprehensive immigrationreform because we know how complicated that is," Johnson said early Wednesday. "You can't do that quickly. I do think it's past time to secure the border."

Biden called for the top four congressional leaders and other lawmakers, including Johnson to the White House in an effort to move forward with an agreement on legislation for border security and funding for Ukraine. The Senate has been working for weeks in an effort to craft some common ground legislation, but some senators last week said significant disagreements remain an issue.

"With regard to Ukraine, we have needed, we have requested publicly and privately in every form, answers to critical questions: What is the end game and the strategy in Ukraine? How will we have accountability for the funds?" said Johnson, seeming to suggest that a bipartisan deal may not be enough to encourage their support of continued funding for Ukraine. "We need to know that Ukraine would not be another Afghanistan."

"And you see a lot of the American people scratching their heads, having real questions about why that would continue without these appropriate answers. So I'm going to push for those. But before we even talk about Ukraine, I'm going to tell the president what I'm telling all of you and we've told the American people: border, border, border, we have to take care of our own house," the house speaker said at a conference on Wednesday.

"We have to secure our own borders before we talk about doing anything else. And that's the message I've had since day one. It's the message we'll continue to have."

Senator Mitch McConnell—who was reported to be one of the people invited to Wednesday's meeting—said voting on the supplemental legislation could take place as soon as next week.

"I am more optimistic than ever before that we come to an agreement," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat, told reporters after Wednesday's meeting.

"There was a large amount of agreement around the table, that we must do Ukraine, and we must do border. There was tremendous focus on Ukraine, and an understanding that if we don't come to Ukraine's aid, that the consequences for America around the globe would be nothing short of devastating," Schumer said.

Johnson said that the meeting was "productive" and that he had emphasized that US border security should be prioritized before Ukraine.

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"We understand the necessity about Ukraine funding and we want to say that the status quo is unacceptable," Johnson said on Wednesday. "We need the Commander-in-Chief of this country, the President of the United States, to show strength on the world stage, and not weakness. We cannot continue with the current status quo."

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So Long, New Hampshire

“The next debate I do will either be with Donald Trump or with Joe Biden. I look forward to it,” said Haley.
The Republican primary debate that was scheduled for Thursday in New Hampshire was canceled after former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley pulled out. Haley said her reasoning behind the decision was based on former President Donald Trump’s absences from the previous debates. After Haley backed out, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis was the only candidate willing to participate.
“We’ve had five great debates in this campaign,” Haley said in a statement on Tuesday. “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.”
The now-canceled debate was to take place just days before the New Hampshire primary, and was to follow the caucuses in Iowa. On Monday, Haley placed third (19%) in the Iowa caucuses while DeSantis came in second (21%), and Trump finished in first (51%) by a wide margin.
DeSantis also came out to criticize Haley's decision, accusing her of being “afraid to debate because she doesn’t want to answer the tough questions.” And claimed her of “running to be Trump’s VP” adding that he looked “forward to debating two empty podiums in the Granite State this week.”
“The reality is that she is not running for the nomination, she’s running to be Trump’s VP,” said DeSantis on X(formerly Twitter). “I won’t snub New Hampshire voters like both Nikki Haley and Donald Trump, and plan to honor my commitments. I look forward to debating two empty podiums in the Granite State this week.”
Following news that Thursday’s debate was canceled, one which was scheduled for Sunday was also been canceled. Trump, who has skipped all of the debates thus far, said last month that he will debate one of his Republican opponents if the results in the New Hampshire primary are “very close”. In place of the debate, an American news broadcaster will host a town hall with Haley on Thursday in New Hampshire. They previously hosted one with DeSantis earlier this week.

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Princess of Wales Hospitalized as King Charles III Plans to Undergo Surgery Next Week

While the Princess of Wales' surgery was reported to be successful, palace officials have not disclosed the reason for her surgery nor her subsequent hospitalization.

Kate Middleton, the Princess of Wales has been hospitalized following abdominal surgery in London on Tuesday. She is to be hospitalized for nearly two weeks, according to Kensington Palace. They said the surgery was planned and "non cancerous" but did not give any further details.

The 42-year-old who is wife to William, the Prince of Wales has paused her schedule and does not plan on making any public appearances or attending private engagements. Her recovery will take about two to three months as Kensington Palace said she will be "unlikely to return to public duties until after Easter".

"Her Royal Highness The Princess of Wales was admitted to The London Clinic yesterday for planned abdominal surgery," said Kensington Palace, the home and office of the Prince and Princess of Wales. "The surgery was successful and it is expected that she will remain in hospital for ten to fourteen days, before returning home to continue her recovery."

"Based on the current medical advice, she is unlikely to return to public duties until after Easter," the palace added.

"The Princess of Wales appreciates the interest this statement will generate. She hopes that the public will understand her desire to maintain as much normality for her children as possible; and her wish that her personal medical information remains private," the statement said, adding that the princess has apologized for postponing her upcoming commitments.

The Prince of Wales, 41, will also step back from some of his duties while his wife is in the hospital, and he will continue to do so during the immediate period of her return home, said a source. He will also not travel abroad in the months following her surgery, the source added.

The princess is being treated at The London Clinic, a private institution in the Marylebone neighborhood of London which has treated other royal family members as well as celebrities including the actress Elizabeth Taylor.

Just an hour after it was announced that the Princess of Wales had undergone surgery, it was announced that her father-in-law, King Charles III, will undergo corrective surgery for an enlarged prostate. Buckingham Palace released a statement saying that the surgery will take place next week. The palace said he would postpone his engagements for a "short period of recuperation". The 75-year-old's condition is not cancerous and does not typically pose any serious health threat.

A palace official said that the king wished to make his treatment public in the hopes that it will encourage other men to get their prostates checked. According to Britain's National Health Service, benign prostate enlargement is common in men over 50 can be found in up to 90% of men over the age of 70.

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Next GOP Debate Canceled After Haley Said She'd Only Participate if Trump Does

The decision to cancel the debate follows Trump's recent win in Iowa, where he overtook DeSantis and Haley by a wide margin.

On Tuesday, the next GOP presidential debate was canceled after Nikki Haley, 51, said she would only participate if former President Donald Trump does. Her decision made Florida Governor Ron DeSantis the only candidate of the three willing to take part in the debate.

"I've done five debates," Haley told a political correspondent. "He's done none. I want him on that stage. I welcome him when he says he's going to do it. We'll be there. But until then, I'm not going to bother."

The debate was planned for Thursday, just days before the New Hampshire primary. On Monday, the former governor and US ambassador to the United Nations placed third in the Iowa caucuses. DeSantis came in second, and Trump finished in first by a wide margin.

"We've had five great debates in this campaign," Haley said in a statement during a campaign in New Hampshire. "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."

While campaigning, Haley argued that she was the best chance for Republicans to defeat Biden in November based on survey data. While Trump may have GOP voters in his pocket, Haley has attracted both Republicans, independents, and crossover Democrats.

On Tuesday, Trump's spokesperson Steven Cheung called Haley a "desperate globalist who wants higher taxes, open borders, and China to dominate the United States," Adding, "That's why the only people who are voting for her are Democrats who are trying to interfere in a Republican primary."

DeSantis also came out to criticize Haley's decision, accusing her of being "afraid to debate because she doesn't want to answer the tough questions." And claimed her of "running to be Trump's VP" adding that he looked "forward to debating two empty podiums in the Granite State this week."

The decision has cast doubt on whether another New Hampshire debate scheduled for Sunday will take place.

Following the Republican caucuses in Iowa, Haley flew to New Hampshire where she planned an event with New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu. Haley seems confident that the state will provide her with enough support to push her ahead of Trump and DeSantis. The Florida governor, though, chose not to fly straight to New Hampshire, but landed in the state of South Carolina first—Haley's home state of which she was governor—in preparation for their race in the state next month.

On Monday, businessman Vivek Ramaswamy dropped out of the 2024 presidential race after falling well behind the other candidates in Iowa. He then endorsed Trump, calling him to congratulate him on his victory. After his success in Iowa, Trump flew to New York for a defamation trial in just one of the many legal battles the former president finds himself embroiled in. He then held a rally in New Hampshire on Tuesday evening.

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NATO official Rob Bauer warned "the tectonic plates of power are shifting," at a meeting in Brussels on Wednesday amidst Russia's continued dominance in the Donbass region.

"We need a warfighting transformation of NATO," said the head of NATO's committee of military chiefs as the military bloc urges member states to devote more resources to weapons spending. However, cracks have emerged in the alliance's united front as Western sanctions designed to harm Russia have instead devastated European economies.

Despite its frequent portrayal as a defensive alliance, NATO played a key role in Western wars in Afghanistan, Libya, and Yugoslavia. The coalition also contributed to the clandestine "Operation Gladio" program which saw the CIA fund fascist and neo-Nazi fighters in Europe.

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Two international affairs experts spoke with Sputnik recently about how the United States coerces France and Germany to sink money into Ukraine's failing military effort as internal dysfunction has undermined American aid to the country.

"When the Americans set up their bases in Germany and decided to somehow, in one way or another, occupy Germany to stay there in order to make sure that Germany will not emerge as a superpower on the continent, they exercised a very huge influence over this country," explained analyst Adriel Kasonta. "If the United States is saying that Russia is an enemy, then Germany has to be the first country in Europe to beat the same drum and beat the drum of war and to sustain the supply."

Although the conflict and accompanying sanctions on Russia have greatly damaged their economies, expert Gilbert Doctorow explains that leaders have bought into Western narratives of their self righteous struggle too thoroughly to back down now. "Their control of their own domestic politics will be greatly compromised if they turn their back on the Ukraine propaganda narrative they have been promoting for the past two years."

The United States coerces France and Germany to sink money into Ukraine's failing military effort as internal dysfunction has undermined American aid to the country, two foreign affairs analysts told Sputnik.

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superpower on the continent, they exercised a very huge influence over this country," analyst Adriel Kasonta explained.

Although the conflict and accompanying sanctions on Russia have greatly damaged their economies, expert Gilbert Doctorow also stressed that leaders have bought into Western narratives of their self righteous struggle too thoroughly to back down now.

"Their control of their own domestic politics will be greatly compromised if they turn their back on the Ukraine propaganda narrative they have been promoting for the past two years," Doctorow emphasized.

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Former Ukrainian diplomat Andrii Telizhenko says Ukraine is on the brink of a coup against President Volodymyr Zelensky as people are fed up with his despotic governance and the country's defeat on the battlefield.

"This is a heartbreak for me as a Ukrainian, to say that we might lose our country because of the people who are in the government today in Ukraine," he said, "the regime which is killing its own people who want to fight for peace… throwing them to the front lines against Russia, one of the strongest armies in the world and a nuclear country."

Telizhenko claimed that people both in Ukraine and Washington would welcome a coup against the failed leader, although he fears such a development could lead the country to civil war. He added that the Ukraine conflict would only be ended by negotiations between Russia and the United States but lamented that Ukrainians would continue to die until US domestic politics allows such discussions to take place.

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NATO Official Sounds Alarm, Warns of 'Shifting' Global Powers

A Dutch admiral claimed the West faces "the most dangerous world in decades" and urged countries to enhance cooperation.
The head of NATO's committee of military chiefs urged the alliance's members to "expect the unexpected" and warned "the tectonic plates of power are shifting," at a meeting in Brussels Wednesday.
"In order to strengthen our collective defense… we need a whole of society approach," said Dutch Admiral Rob Bauer.

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"We need public and private actors to change their mindset from an era in which everything was plannable, foreseeable, controllable, focused on efficiency to an era in which anything can happen at any time… An era in which we need to focus on effectiveness."

Russia's special military operation in the Donbass played a key part in Bauer's address. "Today is the 693rd day," of the conflict he noted, adding, "Ukraine will have our support for every day that is to come."

Bauer portrayed the length of the military operation as a sign of Ukraine's effectiveness, even as the country's vaunted spring counteroffensive last year failed to reverse Kiev's declining fortunes on the battlefield.

Russia has also surprised Western observers with its economic resilience; the country's economy has continued to grow despite US-led sanctions that President Joe Biden claimed would deliver a "crushing blow to the Russian economy."

Meanwhile, European economies have faltered under the strain of skyrocketing energy prices resulting from the Western sanctions.

Bauer nevertheless insisted European countries should devote more funds to military spending, saying, "we need a warfighting transformation of NATO."

NATO Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoană agreed, noting "at last year's NATO Summit in Vilnius [Lithuania], our leaders agreed a new defense spending target of at least 2% of GDP."

"We will strengthen our collective defense, especially our air and missile defense. We will boost our support for Ukraine," added Geoană. The remark comes as observers prepare for a potential second Trump term as US president, planning for the eventuality that Europe may be forced to take over the provision of aid to Kiev as Trump cuts support or even seeks a peace deal with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

But internal divisions among European leaders are also threatening the continued shipment of lethal aid to the Zelensky regime. Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico announced his opposition to the sending of weapons to Ukraine last year. Disputes have emerged among Central European countries over the EU's free trade policy towards Kiev, which Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk recently complained was causing hardship for local farmers.

Bauer insisted it was NATO's task to spread the continent's values around the world, by force if necessary.

"Together, we have to make sure that political will is matched with military capabilities," he declared. "And with the rules-based international order being under immense pressure, the importance of this cannot be overstated."

"Together, more than 3 million service men and women uphold NATO's defensive shield," the admiral warned.

Despite NATO's frequent portrayal as a "defensive" alliance, the coalition played a key role in recent wars in Afghanistan, Libya, and Yugoslavia. NATO also collaborated with the US Central Intelligence Agency in a clandestine program known as Operation Gladio, which trained fascist and neo-Nazi fighters in an ostensible effort to prepare for a Soviet invasion of Europe. Some of these extremist groups would go on to carry out deadly terrorist attacks throughout the continent.

Even with the fear of Soviet military might throughout the Cold War, Russia never invaded any NATO member. On the contrary, it was the United States that invaded Russia shortly after the October Revolution in an effort to attempt to defeat the country's popular government.

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How US Coerces France & Germany to Fund Zelensky's Failing Conflict

Two international affairs experts spoke to Sputnik about how America convinces its European allies to sink money into Ukraine amidst its own internal dysfunction.

France and Germany announced recently they'd commit to continued support for Ukraine in 2024. As US aid has ground to a halt amidst political infighting, Washington has increasingly leaned on European powers to help make up the difference.

But after the failure of Kiev's 2023 counteroffensive, the writing is on the wall regarding the country's slim chance of success in European capitals as well, with some savvy leaders riding to power on promises to end weapons shipments. How then is the United States managing to keep some of Western Europe's largest economies on board for the effort? Sputnik spoke with two international affairs experts for insight.

"Germany is a very interesting country," said London-based analyst Adriel Kasonta. "Americans have a huge influence in Germany after the Second World War. And when the Americans set up their bases in Germany and decided to somehow, in one way or another, occupy Germany to stay there in order to make sure that Germany will not emerge as a superpower on the continent, they exercised a very huge influence over this country."

"In order to meet their commitments towards the western hegemon, the United States, Germany [has] to do or show an extra effort in whatever European countries are doing," explained the former chairman of the International Affairs Committee at the Bow Group think tank. "So if, for instance, the United States is objecting [to] the charges against Israel brought by South Africa, Germany has to be the first country to object after the United States."

"If the United States is saying that Russia is an enemy, then Germany has to be the first country in Europe to beat the same drum and beat the drum of war and to sustain the supply," he said.

Kasonta also claimed Germany benefits from the influx of Ukrainian migrants caused by the conflict, calling the country "the migrant economy." Cheap labor from throughout the continent is crucial to Germany's economic strength, especially as Western sanctions on Russia backfire by driving up energy costs. However, the policy does not come without consequences in the form of rising domestic opposition from the German public.

Russian affairs analyst Gilbert Doctorow also points out that the loss of Russian gas has had a "very damaging impact on the [competitiveness] of German industry and on investment in new production."

The international relations expert noted that France has a different relationship with the United States than Germany but nevertheless has its own reasons for continued support for Ukraine's military effort.

"Both are heavily invested in the Ukraine cause and in ensuring there is no Russian victory, which would be a major disaster for NATO and for the entire existing concept of European security that these countries share," he explained.

"Their control of their own domestic politics will be greatly compromised if they turn their back on the Ukraine propaganda narrative they have been promoting for the past two years," Doctorow

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added. “With Europe wide parliamentary elections coming in June, they could be heavily punished at the ballot box.”
Along with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, French President Emmanuel Macron has so thoroughly committed himself to the narrative of the conflict in the Donbass as an existential battle for Europe that he would have difficulty in suddenly backing away from his country’s support.
Kasonta claimed that the emergence of hostilities with Ukraine has been bad for the continent as a whole because it prevents Russia from uniting with the rest of the continent and forming a truly counter-hegemonic force.
“We will use you by putting you in trouble with your closest neighbor, which is Russia,” he said, summarizing the thinking of US policymakers. “We will put you in this situation that you will not be able to easily get out of the conflict because we have another fish to fry on the horizon. And this fish to fry on the horizon is the conflict with China.”
Kasonta added that the United States had already achieved one important objective of the conflict, which was to expand weapons sales by pressuring armed forces on both sides of the Atlantic to upgrade their arsenals.
Although their goal of dealing a significant blow to Russia has clearly failed, Kasonta argues Western governments are unable to admit their failure to the public. “The thinking in the capitals of these Western countries is that they can't admit that they are wrong because they, perhaps, believe that somehow this will get away, that somehow something will happen,” he said.
“The international community and especially people in Western Europe formed their own opinion about what is happening,” he added. “They formed the opinion about their own governments. They felt betrayed by their governments for a long time before the conflict in Ukraine started. But I think that the conflict in Ukraine is the final nail in the coffin of the current neoliberal establishment in the West.”
“As I've said, either way, the governments in the West have failed.”

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Ukraine on the Brink of a Coup as Zelensky Leads Country to Ruin

Andrii Telizhenko laments the state of his home country and explains how the situation there differs from what people in the West are told in mainstream media.
Former Ukrainian diplomat and whistleblower Andrii Telizhenko joined Sputnik’s Fault Lines program Wednesday, speaking powerfully about the “heartbreak” he feels as his country loses people and territory in an unnecessary conflict.
“Ukraine is losing and losing by hundreds of thousands of people, the men and women which are dying and which have been killed... this is already a big loss for everybody,” said the former Ukrainian government official to hosts Jamarl Thomas and Melik Abdul. “Ukraine is going to lose more territories if this attitude continues to fight and fight and fight.”
“He doesn't even want peace. He doesn't even talk about peace,” said Telizhenko of the country’s current leader President Volodymyr Zelensky. “This is a heartbreak for me as a

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Ukrainian, to say that we might lose our country because of the people who are in the government today in Ukraine, the regime which is killing its own people who want to fight for peace, which is killing its own people, throwing them to the front lines against Russia, one of the strongest armies in the world and a nuclear country."

The ex-diplomat said Zelensky's increasing unpopularity – at home and in Washington – could lead to his ousting as early as this year.

"There might be a coup in spring of this year in Ukraine, coordinated by the West, changing Zelensky as the president of Ukraine with somebody like [military chief] Zaluzhny or somebody else out there," said Telizhenko, speculating the regime change could even result in a civil war in the country.

"America does not always understand what's happening within Ukraine, even though they're trying to control it," he added. "And I think that's what's going to happen."

Telizhenko said the conflict would ultimately have to be resolved via negotiation between the US and Russia but, perversely, Ukrainians will likely continue to die until the political moment in the United Statesallows such discussions to take place. "So the United States and Russia sit down. But I think nobody's going to go for that in DC until the elections," he claimed. "So Ukraine is going to lose more and more territories.

Above all Telizhenko lamented the tragedy of Ukrainians being killed in a war they don't want to fight, effectively being sent on a suicide mission to battle against a more powerful army without the proper training.

"People are being thrown out, thrown from the streets, the buses," he said. "Ukrainians don't want to fight. And they, their laws are being broken by throwing them to military camps and then throwing them to the front lines right away, without any tactical experience at all."

"They basically made a boot camp out of Ukraine," he said, "not letting any men and women out and throwing them to the front lines without any experience, just to make their owners in Washington and Deep State happy… And this is going to continue to happen as Boris Johnson, who you mentioned before, promised to fight until the last Ukrainian. And that's what they're doing right now, keeping that promise, fighting to the last Ukrainian men and women."

Telizhenko explained that the crisis in Ukraine is personal for him not merely because he is Ukrainian, but also because he knows people who have fallen victim to the extremist government that took hold after 2014's Euromaidan coup. Making matters worse is that fact that people in the West don't understand the true nature of the Zelensky regime, but instead are fed lies about how the government there is fighting for "freedom" and "democracy."

"My country… was a prosperous country years before, before the coup, before everything happened in '14, Ukraine was prosperous," he explained. "His situation [Gonzalo Lira's] is the face of what is happening in Ukraine today, because there's thousands of people like Gonzalo Lira who we don't even know about. I had three friends who got shot in Ukraine because they are political and analytics experts – great, great guys that didn't work for anybody, that just had their point of view of peace and the truth, and they got killed in the first weeks of the conflict."

"The Secret Service of Ukraine came to their house and shot them. One of them got killed in the prison. And this is what's happening in Ukraine today… This is what's happened in a so-called democracy which the deep state is financing today in Ukraine."

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‘You’re Going to Be a Target’: Mercenaries Won’t Be Given a Pass by Russia

A military affairs expert spoke with Sputnik about why mercenary fighters seek to join Ukraine after a number of fighters from France were hit by a Russian strike.

Retired Lieutenant Colonel Earl Rasmussen spoke with Sputnik about Russia’s targeting of several French mercenary fighters in Kharkov Tuesday, warning that people thinking about freelancing for the Ukrainian military should expect to be treated the same as homegrown fighters.

“I think this follows through with what Russia's said all along,” said the international consultant on military affairs who spent over 20 years in the US Army. “Early on they said if there were mercenaries or foreign fighters, they were going to treat them as combatants. And I think this just reinforces that.”

Rasmussen recounted the story of one British fighter who was released by the Russians only to later return to battle against them. “He was captured, he got traded and they worked out an arrangement. He got released and traded, and now he's back. He's back over in the fighting with the Ukrainians again.”

In 2022 two British mercenaries Aiden Aslin and Shaun Pinner were captured by the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR), where they faced criminal charges. They were later released, and more recently have become part of Western propaganda efforts against Russia and the DPR.

“I think it [Tuesday’s attack] just clearly establishes the signal and that if you're going to volunteer, if you're going to be part of the Ukrainian force, you need to be considered that you're going to be treated as a combatant, and there shouldn't be any hesitation on that,” said Rasmussen. “And they need to fully realize that. And that's just basically what this is: hey, even if you're in a command center, you're potentially going to be a target.”

The former Army colonel speculated on the kinds of foreign fighters who decide to take up arms against Russia in the Donbass: “I would say there's many professionals, they may be former military. They may be pseudo military. In other words, they may be technically former, but they may still be on because sometimes we've had special operations, special forces type of people that technically go off the books… that's kind of a way to say that 'no, we don't have any active forces involved.’”

“And then you have people that are just former military,” said Rasmussen. “They're trained and they just miss combat. A lot of people have got issues when they're back home. And so it's much easier for them to stay in a combat environment emotionally. And then you've got people that just maybe are ultranationalist as well and ultra-’believe in whatever Ukraine's standing for.’”

Rasmussen speculated that there could be “another sponsor someplace” paying mercenaries given the “pittance of the pay that they're receiving from Ukraine,” but clarified he had no definitive proof.

Finally Rasmussen commented on the media environment surrounding the confrontation in Europe and the United States, saying some mercenaries may be convinced to join Ukraine because “the propaganda is very heavy over here.” He recounted instances of talking to friends

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who were shocked to hear his assessment of the conflict given the intensely Russophobic nature of media coverage in the West.

“You're getting fed what the news is telling us, which is straight from the White House, which is straight from the Ukrainian intelligence,” the expert said. “So we're getting a tainted story here. Things are censored. We don't get the full situation that's going there.”

“I think as more information becomes clear,” added Rasmussen, “that the situation is not as rosy as you're being told… perhaps you'll have second thoughts, and then when you hear about the government there in Ukraine, where there's no elections, there's no free press, there's no opposition parties, opposition leaders… the truth gets out that may cause people to have second thoughts as well. So, I think they'll have fewer volunteers.”

Rasmussen nevertheless speculated that several hundred to several thousand NATO advisors may be in Ukraine “helping fire these sophisticated weapons systems that are coming in, helping maintain them, [and] helping put together the targeting information.”

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US Concerned by Kyrgyz Gov’t Actions Against Independent Media – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, January 18 (Sputnik) – The United States is concerned by the recent actions of the Kyrgyz government against independent media outlets and journalists and encourages Bishkek to ensure press rights are protected, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Thursday.

"The United States is deeply concerned by reports of recent actions taken by the government of the Kyrgyz Republic against independent media outlets and journalists. These actions contribute to a pattern of government activity that appears aimed at stifling public debate and free expression. We encourage the Kyrgyz authorities to ensure journalists can operate without undue pressure or harassment," Miller said in a statement.

Earlier this week, Kyrgyz authorities conducted searches and arrested at least 10 journalists who were working with several media outlets in the country, including Temirov Live, Ayt Ayt Dese, Alga Media, Archa Media, and Politklinika, accusing them of "war propaganda" and "calls to mass disorder," according to media reports.

The country’s authorities said that the actions are part of a criminal investigation into the media outlets’ "calls to disobedience and mass riots" in Kyrgyzstan.

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Quebec Premier Asks Trudeau to Slow Influx of Asylum Seekers - Reports

WASHINGTON, January 18 (Sputnik) – Quebec Premier Francois Legault has asked Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to reduce the influx of asylum seekers entering Canada through

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the French-speaking province, The Canadian Press reported on Thursday.

"We are very close to the breaking point due to the excessive number of asylum seekers arriving in Quebec month after month. The situation has become unsustainable," Legault said in a letter to Trudeau, obtained by The Canadian Press.

Legault said that in 2022 Quebec took in more asylum seekers than the rest of Canada combined, and nearly 60,000 in the first months of 2023.

Although the closure of the unofficial Roxham Road crossing with the US last year helped to momentarily reduce the flow, the relief was short lived as the surge in arrivals continued through airports, the premier stated in the letter.

Moreover, asylum seekers waiting for work permits also receive financial assistance from the regional government, whose amount rose to C$33 million for 43,200 individuals in October, Legault recalled in the letter.

The premier wants the federal government to reimburse the C$470 million that Quebec spent on asylum seekers in 2021 and 2022 and wants it to do the same in the years to come.

Legault stressed that Quebec was no longer able to receive a "disproportionate" share of the nationwide intake of asylum seekers, the report said.

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US Speaker Declines to Commit House to Any Senate-Approved Immigration Deal

WASHINGTON, January 18 (Sputnik) – US Speaker Mike Johnson has declined to commit to floating a Senate-approved immigration deal in the House, citing ongoing uncertainty over border policy.

Johnson insisted that elements of the House-approved HR 2 was key to passing an immigration deal, even though this border bill had been rejected by the White House and Democrats.

"I don't yet know what they're going to propose. There's been lots of rumors about it, but I'm very hopeful that they will give us something meaningful that is very close to what we've sent over from the House," Johnson said in an interview with CNN on Wednesday.

Several House Republicans had said they would only approve of an immigration deal that is similar to HR 2. During an earlier meeting between congressional leaders and US President Biden at the White House, Johnson reportedly said that House Republicans did not expect the immigration deal to exactly replicate HR 2, but its key elements needed to remain intact.

Johnson told CNN that a compromise deal from the Senate that did not solve the immigration problem would not be acceptable in the House.

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Biden's Border Policy Benefits Criminal Organizations Amid Crisis - Border Patrol Union

WASHINGTON, January 18 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration's lax border security policies benefit criminal organizations seeking to expand their enterprises in the United States, US National Border Patrol Council Vice President Art Del Cueto told Sputnik.

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.

"A lot of these groups, what they'll do is they'll utilize the porous border to bring their criminal enterprise further into the United States look," Cueto said. "[Criminal organizations] They want to be here and run their enterprise as big as they can ... Unfortunately, under this administration, that's what they've created, they've almost created an entrepreneurship for a lot of these criminal activities from all over the world with a public invite to come to America."

Republicans and Democrats should unite on strengthening border security to prevent criminal organizations from exploiting the border crisis, Cueto said.

The crisis is distracting Border Patrol agents from adequately patrolling the border, Cueto added.

"It's frustrating right now because the majority of their time is done processing and transporting migrants," Cueto said. "All the while there's other gaps throughout the border where the cartels are utilizing that to bring in more dangerous drugs into the United States and they're utilizing to bring individuals that would not pass that initial [US] vetting system."

Migrants with serious criminal backgrounds may be getting through gaps left unsecured on the US southern border, Cueto said.

"That's why you see these huge caravans that come, or you hear about them coming, but then you don't see the volume of that caravan crossing all at once," Cueto said. "That's because it's controlled by the cartels. They break them up, knowing that that is the most productive way for them to be able to distract agents."

According to the US House Homeland Security Committee, criminal organizations in Mexico made an estimated $13 billion in 2021 from human smuggling on the US southern border. A CBP official previously said migrants pay cartels about $8,000 to $12,000 to smuggle them into the United States.

Republican US senators are currently negotiating with White House officials a deal to toughen US border security in exchange for support for Ukraine aid. The White House asked Congress to provide more than $100 billion in supplemental funds including more than $60 billion for Ukraine.

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

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Biden's Mishandling of US Southern Border 'Huge Frustration' - Border Patrol Union

WASHINGTON, January 18 (Sputnik) - US National Border Patrol Council Vice President Art Del Cueto told Sputnik it is very frustrating that President Joe Biden has not done anything meaningful to deal with the crisis on the US southern border and expects this topic will play a big role in the upcoming presidential election.

"I think it's a huge frustration because [Biden] he hasn't handled anything at all," Cueto said regarding the current border crisis. "When you hear the White House say that the border's secure or they say that there is no problem or they ignore some of the problems ... that's obviously a huge frustration because the American public's not getting the real story."

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.

Cueto said, citing Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, that over 85% of migrants that are being encountered by Border Patrol are being released into the United States after they're processed by US immigration officials.

"The majority of them were getting released just by saying that they're here for asylum," Cueto said about migrants arriving at the US-Mexico border.

The border crisis is a result of Biden's lax border policy, according to Cueto.

"The reason the numbers are high of people coming across right now is because they [migrants] ealize that there's no consequences. They just say asylum and they get released," Cueto said.

Moreover, Cueto highlighted that the crisis is leading to US Border Patrol losing agents at a "record pace."

Cueto said he believes former President Donald Trump's strong rhetoric on border security alone deterred illegal migration to the US southern border. Under the last administration, migrants were vetted correctly and not as many were claiming asylum, he added.

BORDER CRISIS EXPECTED TO HAVE BIG ROLE IN US ELECTIONS

Cueto expects the border crisis will be a big issue that will influence US voters in the upcoming presidential election.

"It definitely is, it's always played a big role here in the recent elections, and it will continue to play a big role," Cueto said. "It's frustrating because the sovereignty and the protection of our nation's borders and the protection of American citizens should not be something that would be going back and forth from one party to the other."

Cueto said he hopes Republicans and Democrats in the US government will work together to resolve the border crisis. He suggests sending more immigration judges and asylum officers to the US-Mexico border, vetting migrants correctly, and detaining migrants rather than immediately releasing them into the United States.

"That alone will drop the numbers," Cueto said about his recommendation.

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

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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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Trump Says Republicans Should Reject Border Deal Unless Everything Done to Stop 'Invasion'

WASHINGTON, January 18 (Sputnik) – Former US President Donald Trump suggested that Republicans should not agree to a border deal unless they "get everything" needed to stop an immigrant influx on the southern border.
"I do not think we should do a Border Deal, at all, unless we get EVERYTHING needed to shut down the INVASION of Millions & Millions of people, many from parts unknown, into our once great, but soon to be great again, Country!" Trump said on Truth Social on Wednesday.
He expressed confidence that House Speaker Mike Johnson will only make a border deal that is "perfect."
"Remember, without Strong Borders and Honest Elections, we don't have a Country!!!" Trump added.
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.
In October, the Biden administration requested supplemental funding from Congress to provide aid to Ukraine and Israel. The request also included some border security measures, but Republican lawmakers have insisted on the inclusion of more stringent measures to address migration at the United States' southern border.
On Wednesday, US President Joe Biden hosted congressional leaders, including Johnson, at the White House to discuss the vital need to pass his national security supplemental request.

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Biden Campaign to Highlight Abortion Rights Ahead of Roe vs. Wade Anniversary – Reports

WASHINGTON, January 18 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden plans to highlight abortion rights in his reelection campaign ahead of the 51st anniversary of the landmark Supreme Court Roe vs. Wade ruling on January 22, CBS reported on Thursday.
The campaign includes television and online ads, op-eds, rallies, and other events across the US in conjunction with the Democratic National Committee.
Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris will hold a rally on January 23 in Northern Virginia, with their spouses in attendance. The rally will focus on attempts in the state and in other parts of the country to restrict reproductive rights following the Supreme Court's overturning of Roe vs. Wade in 2022.

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The events are part of the Biden reelection campaign strategy of associating Republican-led restrictions on abortion rights with rival presidential candidate Donald Trump.

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Blinken to Visit Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Angola on January 21-26 - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, January 18 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will travel to Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria, and Angola from January 21-26, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Thursday.

"Throughout the trip, the Secretary will highlight how the United States has accelerated the U.S.-Africa partnership since the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, including in areas such as climate, food, and health security," Miller said in a statement.

Blinken will also emphasize the "future-focused economic partnership" with Africa, and how the United States is investing in infrastructure on the continent, Miller added.

In addition, Blinken will discuss security, human rights, democracy, and expansion of the rule of law.

"He will reaffirm U.S. commitment to our coastal West African partners through the Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability, U.S. partnership with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to address regional challenges, and U.S. efforts to support African leadership in de-escalating tensions and adopting diplomatic solutions to the conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo," Miller said.

The US reaffirms its sustained commitment to high-level engagement with Africa, the State Department said.

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US Navy Orders $102Mln in Anti-Sub Upgrades on 10 Boeing Poseidon P-8As - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, January 18 (Sputnik) - The US Navy has given Boeing a more than $100 million order to modernize and upgrade 10 Poseidon P-8As to be equipped with anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capabilities, the Department of Defense announced in a press release.

"The Boeing Company [of] Seattle, Washington is awarded a $102,729,951 ...modification ...order ...for the production and delivery of ten P-8A increment three retrofit A-kits ... in support of anti-submarine warfare capabilities upgrades for the Navy," the release said on Wednesday.

Work on the project will be performed in Jacksonville, Florida (79.6%); St. Louis, Missouri (10.9%); and Mesa, Arizona (9.5%) over the next three years and is expected to be completed in November 2026, the Defense Department said.

The twin-engined P-8 has a range of almost 1,400 miles and is planned to be upgraded with a new High-Altitude Anti-Submarine Warfare Weapon Capability (HAAWC) Air Launch Accessory

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(ALA), turning a Mark 54 torpedo into a glide bomb for deploying from up to 30,000 ft (9,100 m), according to published sources.

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US Launches New Round of Strikes on Houthi Targets in Yemen - Reports

WASHINGTON, January 18 (Sputnik) - The United States has launched another round of strikes on Houthi targets in Yemen, CBS reported citing a US official.

The report said on Wednesday that the US military targeted sites where the Houthis were preparing to launch new attacks.

Earlier in the day, US Central Command (CENTCOM) said Houthi rebels hit a US-owned and operated commercial vessel Genco Picardy in the Gulf of Aden. There were no injuries, and the ship was still operable despite sustaining some damage from the attack, according to CENTCOM.

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Biden Met With Congressional Leaders to Address Urgent Support for Ukraine - White House

WASHINGTON, January 18 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden met with Congressional figures to address the necessity for support to Ukraine, the White House said in a statement.

"Today, President Biden convened Congressional Leadership and the Chairs and Ranking Members of the House and Senate Intelligence, Armed Services, and Appropriations Committees, and the Senate Foreign Relations and House Foreign Affairs Committees to discuss the urgent need for Congress to continue supporting Ukraine," the statement said on Wednesday.

The statement said that during the meeting, President Biden emphasized the importance of Congress ensuring Ukraine has necessary resources, including air defense and artillery capabilities.

"The President discussed the strategic consequences of inaction for Ukraine, the United States, and the world. He was clear: Congress's continued failure to act endangers the United States' national security, the NATO Alliance, and the rest of the free world," the statement said.

The statement added that the President urged Congress to promptly allocate extra funds for Ukraine, emphasizing the need for a robust US stance.

In October, the Biden administration requested supplemental funding from Congress to provide aid to Ukraine and Israel. The request also included some border security measures, but Republican lawmakers have insisted on the inclusion of more stringent measures to address migration at the United States' southern border.

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CENTCOM Confirms US-Owned Bulk Carrier Ship Attacked by Houthis in Gulf of Aden

WASHINGTON, January 18 (Sputnik) - The US Central Command (CENTCOM) confirmed that a US-owned bulk carrier was struck by Yemen's Houthis in the Gulf of Aden.

"At approximately 8:30 pm (Sanaa time) Jan. 17, an assessed one-way attack UAV [drone] was launched from Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen and struck M/V Genco Picardy in the Gulf of Aden. M/V Genco Picardy is a Marshall Islands-flagged, US-owned and operated bulk carrier ship," CENTCOM said via the social media platform X on Wednesday.

The ship remained seaworthy and continued its trip with no injuries, but some material damage was reported, CENTCOM said.

Earlier on Wednesday, Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree said the missile attack on the Genco Picardy resulted in multiple direct hits.

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Iraqi Foreign Minister Says Met With Arab Counterparts in Davos to Condemn Iran

DAVOS, January 18 (Sputnik) - Iraqi Foreign Minister Hussein Fuad announced that he met with his counterparts from other Arab nations to condemn Iran for its attacks in Iraqi Kurdistan.

"That's why today, I held a meeting with all the Arab ministers … and there will be a strong condemnation by all countries against this aggression," Fuad said on Wednesday during an event of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

The Iraqi government feels that Iran is suffering from a security crisis within its state, which was felt after the attacks in Kerman, Fuad said.

Iran feels like it cannot control its own security and therefore wants to export the crisis outside, particularly in Iraqi Kurdistan, Fuad said.

The foreign minister made the remarks during a speech at Kurdish House on Main Street in Davos.

On Tuesday, Iran fired missiles at what it said was the Israeli intelligence agency Mossad's headquarters in the Iraqi Kurdistan region.

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Biden Admin. Announces Over $104Mln for Net-Zero Federal Projects - US Energy Dept.

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WASHINGTON, January 18 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration has set aside $104 million for energy conservation and clean energy projects at 31 federal facilities in the United States, the US Department of Energy announced.

This is the first of three disbursements from a $250 million funding for President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and will be provided by the Energy Department's Assisting Federal Facilities with Energy Conservation Technologies program, known by the acronym AFFECT.

"Funding from [the] Bipartisan Infrastructure Law supports energy conservation measures at 31 facilities, saving taxpayers $29 million in the first year and drastically reducing the federal carbon footprint," a DOE statement said.

AFFECT, established in 1992, helps agencies cut energy consumption through building electrification, geothermal heat pumps, on-site solar generation and battery energy storage, among other initiatives.

The projects announced for funding on Wednesday align with Biden's December 2021 executive order that called for a 65% reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions from federal operations by 2030, 100% zero-emission vehicle acquisitions by 2035 and a net-zero building portfolio by 2045.

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US House Approves Resolution Condemning Biden's 'Open-Borders' Policy on US-Mexico Border

WASHINGTON, January 18 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives adopted a resolution condemning President Joe Biden's policies on the US southern border.

The House approved the resolution on Wednesday in a 225-187 vote.

The resolution calls on Biden to end his "open-borders policies."

At least 14 Democrats voted with Republicans on the resolution to condemn Biden's border policies.

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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Schumer After Biden Meeting Says More Optimistic About A Deal on Ukraine Aid-Border Bill

WASHINGTON, January 18 (Sputnik) - US Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer after meeting with President Joe Biden and Republican congressional leaders said he is more optimistic they will reach a deal on the supplemental request to fund more security assistance for Ukraine, Israel, and to strengthen border security.

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"I am more optimistic now that we can come to an agreement on the border and Ukraine in one package, along with aid to Israel," Schumer said on Wednesday.

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Texas Will Continue to Block Feds Access to Portion of Southern Border - Attorney General

WASHINGTON, January 18 (Sputnik) - Texas officials will continue to restrict US Border Patrol's access to a stretch of land on the US southern border despite a demand from the federal government to cease its actions, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton said in a letter.

Earlier this week, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) demanded that Texas stop blocking US Border Patrol agents from patrolling a stretch of land on the US-Mexico border in Eagle Pass, Texas.

"The State will continue utilizing its constitutional authority to defend her territory, and I will continue defending those lawful efforts in court," Paxton said in the letter to DHS on Wednesday.

Paxton further said the Biden administration should stop wasting "scarce" time and resources taking legal actions against Texas, and start enforcing the US immigration laws.

Last week, the US Justice Department asked the US Supreme Court to intervene and prevent Texas officials from restricting access to US Border Patrol.

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."

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 House Speaker Says Houthi Terrorist Designation Constitutes Iran 'Appeasement'

WASHINGTON, January 18 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration's decision to designate the Houthis as a Specially Designated Terrorist Group (SDTG) instead of a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) constitutes further appeasement of Iran, US House Speaker Mike Johnson said in a statement.

The SDTG designation carries weaker restrictions and penalties than an FTO designation. The Biden administration removed an FTO designation for the Houthis in February 2021.

"[The Biden administration's] decision today not to redesignate the Houthis as an FTO amounts

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to continued appeasement of Iran and is emblematic of how this administration has been wrong on nearly every national security issue to date," the statement said on Wednesday.

President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken's decision to remove the Houthis' FTO designation was an example of weakness and poor judgment, the statement said. Johnson urges Biden to change course, the statement added.

The Biden administration's decision to designate the Houthis as an SDTG will deny the group access to the United States' financial system and enable sanctions against actors that support them, the US State Department said on Wednesday.

The designation comes following Houthi attacks on vessels in the Red Sea, which the group has said it will carry out until Israel ends military operations in the Gaza Strip. In response, the US formed a multinational coalition of countries to protect navigation in the area and launched strikes on Houthi targets in Yemen alongside the United Kingdom.

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US House Speaker After Biden Meeting Says Status Quo on Ukraine Unacceptable

WASHINGTON, January 18 (Sputnik) - US House Speaker Mike Johnson after attending a meeting with President Joe Biden on his supplemental request told reporters that the United States' status quo on Ukraine is unacceptable.

"We understand the necessity about Ukraine funding and we want to say that the status quo is unacceptable," Johnson said on Wednesday. "We need the Commander-in-Chief of this country, the President of the United States, to show strength on the world stage,and not weakness. We cannot continue with the current status quo."

Johnson further said Congress needs a clearer explanation from the Biden administration about its strategy in Ukraine, the endgame, and accountability for US funds. He also added that US border security must be the top priority.

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US-Iran Tensions Being 'Reflected on Iraqi Soil' - Foreign Minister

DAVOS, January 18 (Sputnik), Lenka White - The tensions between the United States and Iran are very much felt on the ground in Iraq, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hussein Fuad said during an event at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

"The tensions between Washington and Tehran are reflected on Iraqi soil," Fuad said during the event on Wednesday.

For Iraq it is better if the United States and Iran sat down at the negotiating table and negotiated their differences, Fuad added.

The Iraqi Foreign Minister made the comments during a speech at Kurdish House on the Main

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Street in Davos.

Fuad is one of the approximately 2,800 participants in this year's WEF, which is taking place from January 15–19. Other participants in the WEF gathering include US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, French President Emmanuel Macron, philantropist Bill Gates and the newly-elected Argentinian President Javier Milei, among others.

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Pentagon Says Tracking Reports of Missile Attack on US Cargo Ship in Gulf of Aden

WASHINGTON, January 18 (Sputnik) – The US Department of Defense is tracking reports of another missile attack on a US cargo ship in the Gulf of Aden, Pentagon press secretary Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder said during a press briefing.

"I am tracking reports coming out of the region. We are working with Central Command now to get more information on that," Ryder said on Wednesday.

Earlier on Wednesday, Yemen's Ansar Allah (Houthi) movement claimed another missile attack targeting a US cargo ship identified as Genco Picardy in the Gulf of Aden resulting in multiple direct hits of the vessel, according to a post on X by the group's spokesman Yahya Sarea.

In his post, Yahya Sarea noted that "a retaliation to the American and British attacks is unavoidable," and that no future attack will go unpunished.

According to marine traffic data, the bulk carrier Genco Picardy was heading to the port of Thoothukudi in India from Egypt under the flag of the Marshall Islands.

On Wednesday, the Biden administration announced its decision to redesignate Ansar Allah from Yemen, also known as the Houthis, as a specially designated global terrorist in light of their attacks on commercial ships passing through the Red Sea. The designation will take effect on February 16.

The move comes following a series of Houthi attacks on vessels in the Red Sea, in response to Israel's military operations in the Gaza Strip. Israel began the operation in response to an attack on the country by Hamas on October 7, since which over 1,200 Israelis and more than 24,000 Palestinians have been killed.

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Pentagon Says Not Aware of Request by Iraq for US Forces to Depart Country

WASHINGTON, January 18 (Sputnik) - The US Department of Defense (DoD) is not aware of an official request by the Iraqi government to have US forces depart the country, Pentagon spokesperson Patrick Ryder said.

"At this time, I'm not aware of any official request by the government of Iraq for DoD forces to depart," Ryder said during a press briefing on Wednesday. "US forces are there at the invitation

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of the government of Iraq focused on the defeat ISIS [Islamic State terror group, outlawed in Russia] mission."

The United States continues to regard the Islamic State as being an international and regional threat, Ryder added.

Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed al-Sudani recently told the Wall Street Journal that the US-led coalition present in Iraq in order to fight the Islamic State is no longer needed.

Sudani also said that he was no longer worried that the departure of the coalition forces would undermine Iraq's military capabilities.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, January 18 (Sputnik) -

ISRAEL INVASION OF GAZA

* Releasing Russian hostages held by Hamas in the Gaza Strip is a priority for Moscow during its contacts with the Palestinian movement, the Russian Foreign Ministry said on Wednesday.
* Iraq is asking Israel's allies to press Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to stop the war in Gaza, Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein told Sputnik.
* A Jordanian field hospital in the city of Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip was heavily damaged as a result of Israeli shelling, the Jordanian armed forces said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* The Russian military has destroyed with a precision strike a building in Kharkiv that hosted French mercenaries, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Wednesday.
* The Ukrainian armed forces lost up to 290 soldiers in the Donetsk direction in the past day, the Russian Defense Ministry said.
* The negotiations on a long-term truce in Ukraine are not even close to beginning, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said.

US SANCTIONS AGAINST HOUTHIS

* The United States is designating Ansar Allah from Yemen, also known as the Houthis, as a specially designated global terrorist in light of their attacks on commercial ships passing through the Red Sea with the designation taking effect on February 16, a senior Biden administration official said during a press briefing.
* The United States stands ready to remove the Houthis from its list of designated global terrorists if the group ceases attacks on commercial and US ships in the region, a senior Biden administration official said.
* The US Treasury Department issued five general licenses authorizing certain transactions with Yemen's Houthis after Washington designated the group as a global terrorist organization.

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IRAN'S STRIKES IN PAKISTAN

* Iran targeted a "terrorist group" in Pakistan and respects the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said on Wednesday.
* Amirabdollahian held a phone conversation with his Pakistani counterpart, Jalil Abbas Jilani, and said that Tehran respects Islamabad's sovereignty, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said.
* Islamabad has informed the Iranian government about its decision to recall its ambassador in Tehran in light of the recent attacks on the Pakistani territory, the Pakistani Foreign Ministry said.

OPEC REPORT

* OPEC has kept its estimate for global oil demand for 2023 unchanged, recording an increase by 2.5 million barrels per day to 102.11 million barrels per day, according to its fresh monthly report published on Wednesday.
* OPEC expects Russia's crude oil and condensate production to decrease by 80,000 barrels per day to average 10.4 million barrels per day in November 2023, according to the report.
* OPEC's oil production increased by 73,000 barrels per day in December compared to the November data and amounted to 26.7 million barrels per day, according to the report.

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Pentagon Says Not Tracking Any US Military Forces on Ground in Yemen

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - Pentagon Press Secretary Pat Ryder said on Wednesday that he is not aware of any US military forces operating on the ground in Yemen, amid strikes by the United States on Houthi militants in the country.

"I'm not aware of any US forces on the ground," Ryder said during a press briefing.

Last week, the United States and United Kingdom conducted strikes on Houthi targets in Yemen, in response to attacks by Houthis on vessels in the Red Sea.

The Pentagon has no announcements on force posture changes in the Middle East, Ryder added.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Biden administration announced that it will designate the Houthis as a global terrorist organization, enabling sanctions measures and cutting the group off from the US financial system.

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NASA Still Can't Project Cost of Artemis III Moon Mission Now Delayed to 2026 - Report

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - NASA still has not offered a projection for the eventual costs of its Artemis Program to return US astronauts to the surface of the Moon in 2026, 54 years after the previous US lunar landing, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) said in a

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report on Wednesday.

"NASA has not yet determined how much Artemis III and future Artemis missions are likely to cost, limiting critical information needed by decision-makers about the lunar mission," the report said. "Completing the lunar landing mission remains challenging. NASA needs to continue to find ways to better manage the cost of its most complex programs."

In January, NASA adjusted the launch date to September 2026 to allow contractors time to complete a significant amount of remaining complex work, the report recalled.

"While NASA requested $6.8 billion to support Artemis III programs in its fiscal year 2024 budget request, decision-makers have limited knowledge into the full scope of Artemis III mission costs," the report said.

NASA still has to resolve problems with the Artemis Program including meeting the ambitious schedule that the agency has set to launch Artemis III, a lack of transparency into Artemis missions and program costs, and other acquisition management challenges, the GAO said.

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Georgieva Says Discussed Argentina's Economic Challenges With Milei in Davos

WASHINGTON, January 18 (Sputnik) – International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said on Wednesday that she held a "very good meeting" with Argentine President Javier Milei on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos to discuss the nation's economic challenges.

"We talked about Argentina's deep economic & social challenges and decisive steps underway to bring down inflation, promote private sector led growth, and use scarce public money to help the most vulnerable people," Georgieva said on X.

The IMF said last week that it has reached an understanding with Argentina on policies to restore economic stability in the country. The agreement is subject to approval by the fund's Executive Board in several weeks.

Argentina could have access to approximately $4.7 billion consistent with some rephasing within the program envelope, the IMF also said. The proposed disbursement is intended to support the new policy efforts and help the country to meet its balance of payment needs, the IMF said.

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White House Says Purpose of Biden's Meeting With Congressional Leaders to Discuss Ukraine

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said that the goal of President Joe Biden's meeting with congressional leaders later on Wednesday is to discuss Ukraine.

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When asked about how Biden is going to navigate US House Speaker Mike Johnson's position that they are not going to talk about Ukraine before issue of the US southern border is addressed, Jean-Pierre said, "He [Johnson] is not the only person that will be in the room today, there will be other congressional members."

"The president has been very clear he wants to talk about Ukraine, the urgency of making sure we continue that assistance to Ukraine," Jean-Pierre said.

Earlier on Wednesday, Johnson said that he would continue to request answers from the Biden administration on its goals for the conflict in Ukraine and on accountability for US aid to that country. Johnson also said he will relay his position to Biden during the meeting and will reiterate that the United States must secure its own borders before attempting to do anything else, Johnson added.

The Senate supplemental funding bill is designed to both pass the Republican-majority House of Representatives and receive President Joe Biden's approval.

In October, the Biden administration requested supplemental funding from Congress to provide aid to Ukraine and Israel. The request also included some border security measures, but Republican lawmakers have insisted on the inclusion of more stringent measures to address migration at the United States' southern border.

Senators have not yet finished negotiating the supplemental funding legislation, but are closer than they have ever been, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said earlier on Wednesday.

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NASA's $964Mln Mission Will Probe Plankton in Oceans for Clues to Climate Change

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - NASA's upcoming Plankton, Aerosol, Cloud, ocean Ecosystem (PACE) mission will explore the patterns and behavior of plankton in the world's oceans and their impact on current major changes in the planet's climate, senior agency officials told a press conference on Wednesday.

"PACE holds the promise of deepening our understanding of microscopic plankton," NASA Deputy Administrator Pam Melroy said. "[It] could provide us with insight into extreme weather events ...[and be] a crucial step forward into unraveling the mysteries of our climate."

PACE is scheduled to launch no earlier than February 6 on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from Space Launch Complex 40 at Cape Canaveral Space Force station in Florida, NASA said.

The $964 million mission is expected to last for three years. However, the aircraft will carry enough propellant to allow the mission to operate for up to 10 years, project scientist Jeremy Werdell said.

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US Hopes for Peaceful Resolution After Iranian Missile Strike in Pakistan - State Dept

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - The United States expresses hope for a peaceful resolution in the wake of Iran's unprecedented missile strike in Pakistan, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Wednesday.

"We hope that's an issue that can be peacefully resolved," Miller said during a press briefing.

The remarks were in response to a reporter's question about whether Miller believes the strike could escalate tensions.

On Tuesday, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps launched ballistic missiles and drones at a base of terrorist group Jaish al-Adl in Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan region in retaliation for terrorist attacks on its own territory.

This was the first missile strike by the Iranian armed forces on Pakistani territory. Islamabad said that the attack left two children killed and three people injured, condemned Iran's actions and voiced concerns over Tehran not forewarning Islamabad about the strikes via existing communication channels.

In a call with his Pakistani counterpart on Wednesday, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said that Tehran respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan. He also expressed hope that the two countries would continue cooperation, particularly on security.

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Canada to Lead Task Force Ensuring Maritime Safety in Gulf of Oman - National Defense

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - The Royal Canadian Navy has assumed the command of the Combined Task Force 150 (CTF 150), which ensures safe navigation in the Gulf of Oman and the North Arabian Sea, National Defense said on Wednesday.

"Today, Canada assumed command of Combined Task Force 150 (CTF 150) from France at a ceremony held earlier today in Bahrain," National Defense said in a statement. "Captain (Navy) Collin Matthews of the Royal Canadian Navy has assumed command of the multinational coalition tasked with conducting maritime security operations and capacity building in the Gulf of Oman and North Arabian Sea, until July 2024."

The CTF 150 is part of a broader five combined task forces operating under the Combined Maritime Forces, a large multinational seafaring partnership consisting of 39 countries whose aim is to counter "illicit actors" on the high seas such as criminal and terrorist organizations and other non-state threats.

With today's rotation, Canada will have held the command of the CTF 150 for the sixth time. The Royal Canadian Navy contingent will be assisted by military personnel from the Australian and New Zealand defense forces.

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Some of Ukraine's Munitions Will Last for Months, Others Will Run Out Quickly - Kirby

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - Ukraine has some munitions in stockpiles that will last the next few months, while other types of munitions will run out more quickly, White House Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Wednesday.

"I mean, there are some, there are some munitions that they have ample stores of, enough to get them into, you know, the next couple to three months. There are others where they don't have that kind of time," said Kirby during a White House press briefing.

Last week, the White House said that it does not currently have another military aid package in the works for Ukraine as the funding from previous packages starts to run dry.

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 address the border crisis.

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US Senate Democrats Discussing Possible Conditions on Aid For Israel - Schumer

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - US Senate Democrats are discussing possibly placing conditions on security assistance for Israel, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said on Wednesday.

"Let me say this on conditions: our caucus is discussing it and we'll continue to look for the best way forward," Schumer said during a press conference.

Schumer laid out the four goals lawmakers have been focused on when it comes to the war in Gaza — reducing the threat from Hamas, securing the release of hostages held by Hamas, getting humanitarian aid to the Palestinians in Gaza, and getting Israel to reduce the number of civilian casualties.

On October 7, 2023, Palestinian movement Hamas launched a large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip while its fighters breached the border, attacking both civilian neighborhoods and military bases. 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 24,200 people have been killed so far in Gaza as a result of Israeli strikes, according to local authorities.

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SpaceX Delays Axiom-3 Launch to ISS Till Thursday to Allow More Checks, Data Analysis

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - SpaceX has delayed the planned launch of the Axiom-3 four-man commercial astronaut mission to the International Space Station (ISS) by 24 hours and is now projecting a Thursday launch date, the company announced on Wednesday.

"Now targeting Thursday, January 18 for launch of the Ax-3 mission to the space station," SpaceX said in a post on X, formerly known as Twitter. "The additional time allows teams to complete pre-launch checkouts and data analysis on the vehicle."

The Ax-3 mission will be SpaceX's third commercial spaceflight in cooperation with Axiom Space.

The mission will launch four private astronauts to the ISS from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida on a SpaceX Falcon 9 booster. Liftoff is now scheduled for 4:49 pm Eastern Standard Time (EST) on Thursday, SpaceX said.

The Ax-3 mission is commanded by former NASA astronaut Michael Lopez-Alegria of Axiom Space with Walter Villadei of the Italian Air Force serving as pilot. The team also includes Turkey's first astronaut, Alper Gezeravc, and European Space Agency (ESA) reserve astronaut Marcus Wandt serving as mission specialists.

The crew is scheduled to spend at least two weeks in space.

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Canada Appoints Carolyn Bennett As New Ambassador to Denmark – Trudeau's Office

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) – The Canadian government has appointed Carolyn Bennett as Ottawa's new Ambassador to Denmark, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Office said on Wednesday.

"Carolyn Bennett has dedicated her entire life to community and service. As Canada's Ambassador to Denmark, she will deepen the relationship between our two countries, including by advancing our shared commitment to protect the Arctic, take climate action, create good middle-class jobs, and build a better future for everyone," Trudeau said as quoted by the statement.

Bennett previously held the role of Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health. She has also overseen the Ministry of Indigenous and Northern Affairs as well as Ministry of Crown-Indigenous Relation, among others.

Trudeau expects that as Ambassador, Bennett will advance common priorities to Canada and Denmark, notably transatlantic security, the expansion of trade and investment, and climate action.

Both countries remain committed under NATO's framework to work on enhancing defense cooperation, including in Arctic security and in preserving the "rules-based" order.

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US Senate May Begin Working on Supplemental Funding Bill Next Week - McConnell

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - The US Senate may begin advancing supplemental funding legislation next week, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said on Wednesday.

"I'm among a number of people who've been invited down to the White House this afternoon, I believe to discuss the supplemental," McConnell said during a press conference. "My assumption is we're likely to be on that in the Senate next week."

The Senate supplemental funding bill is designed to both pass the Republican-majority House of Representatives and receive President Joe Biden's approval.

The legislation will address both national security and border security in a "credible" manner, McConnell said.

In October, the Biden administration requested supplemental funding from the US Congress to provide aid to Ukraine and Israel. The request also included some border security measures, but Republican lawmakers have insisted on the inclusion of more stringent measures to address migration at the United States' southern border.

Senators have not yet finished negotiations on the supplemental funding legislation, but are closer than they have ever been, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said on Wednesday.

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Maine Court Puts Trump Ballot Disqualification on Hold Until SCOTUS Rules on Colorado Case

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - Maine's superior court has ordered state election officials to wait on deciding to disqualify former President Donald Trump from the 2024 ballot until the US Supreme Court has made a decision about the Colorado case, a court document filed on Wednesday showed.

"As part of this remand, the Secretary is ordered to await the Supreme Court's Decision in Anderson, and no later than thirty days after Anderson's issuance, to issue a new Ruling modifying, withdrawing, or confirming her prior Ruling," Maine Superior Court Justice Michaela Murphy wrote.

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Israel Never Told US Palestinians Would Be Blocked From Returning Home – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - Israel has never communicated to the United States that its alleged policy is to block Palestinians from returning to the north of the Gaza Strip until a new hostage deal is struck, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Wednesday.

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"No, it was not," Miller said when asked if it has ever been communicated to the US that Israel's policy was not to permit people to return in order to leverage hostage talks.

According to Miller, Israel has communicated to Washington that it does not want to see Palestinian people displaced from their homes and that it would welcome a UN Gaza assessment mission so people could return to their homes.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said earlier in January that that an agreement had been reached with Israel on a plan for the United Nations to conduct an assessment mission in the Gaza Strip to prepare for the potential return of Palestinians to the north of the enclave.

On October 7, 2023, Palestinian movement Hamas launched a large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip while its fighters breached the border, attacking both civilian neighborhoods and military bases. 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 24,200 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. More than 100 hostages are still believed to be held by Hamas in Gaza.

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Judge Threatens to Kick Trump Out of Court During E. Jean Carroll Trial - Reports

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - A New York Federal Judge threatened to remove former president Donald Trump from court for making allegedly disruptive comments during Carroll's testimony, CNBC reported on Wednesday.

"Mr. Trump I hope I don't have to consider excluding you from the trial, I understand you are very eager for me to do that," Judge Lewis Kaplan is quoted as saying to Trump in the report.

Trump reportedly replied to Kaplan: "I would love it, I would love it,"

The exchange came as E. Jean Carroll was to testify about the reputational and emotional harm she suffered from Trump's defamatory statements as president in 2019, said the report.

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. 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.

Trump has denied ever having met Carroll, and has maintained that Carroll made up the allegations in order to sell a book she was writing.

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US Vice President Kamala Harris 'Scared as Heck' if Trump is Elected - TV Comment

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - Vice President Kamala Harris is "scared as heck" of the consequences to the United States if former President Donald Trump, who won the Iowa caucuses on Monday night is re- elected back in to office for a second term in November, she told a national television audience on the ABC talk show "The View." on Wednesday.

"I am scared as heck if Trump is reelected," Harris said."We have a former president running for office openly promising to be a dictator," she said.

People needed to come together in order to unify the country but the upcoming election was going to be about defending the existence of democracy in the United States, Harris said.

"[This] election is about defending democracy and freedom. ...It is about respecting democracy versus chaos," she said.

Recent polls showed Trump leading President Joe Biden nationwide and in some key battlefield swing states likely to decide the election in the Electoral College. Trump has been criticizing the Biden-Harris administration's records on defending the border, failing to prevent soaring prices and out of control crime levels and weakening US prestige and influence around the world.

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US Terrorist Designation of Houthis Denies Financial Access, Enables Sanctions - Miller

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration’s decision to designate the Houthis as a global terrorist group will deny them access to the United States’ financial system and enable the imposition of further sanctions, US State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Wednesday.

"The effect that we think [the designation] will have will be to allow us to deny the Houthis access to the US financial system," Miller said during a press briefing.

The designation will also enable sanctions on other actors who support the Houthis, including groups or private individuals, Miller said.

Moreover, the designation provides an additional basis for US law enforcement action, Miller added.

The designation comes following a series of Houthi attacks on vessels in the Red Sea, in response to Israel’s military operations in the Gaza Strip. Israel began the operation in response to an attack on the country by Hamas on October 7, since which over 1,200 Israelis and more than 24,000 Palestinians have been killed.

In February 2021, the Biden administration removed the Houthis from the US’ list of designated terrorist groups.

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UN Northern Gaza Assessment Mission 'High Priority' for US - State Department

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - The United States considers a UN assessment mission in the northern Gaza Strip a high priority, US State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Wednesday.

"It is a high priority for us that that UN assessment mission be launched as soon as possible and that it be completed," Miller said during a press briefing.

The US officials continue to work through the details of the mission with the UN and Israel, Miller said.

There are a number of preliminary steps to take before launching the mission, Miller said. There is unexploded ordnance and booby traps in the northern Gaza Strip, Miller said.

On October 7, Hamas launched an attack on Israel, prompting the country to begin military operations in the Gaza Strip. Tens of thousands of Palestinians and Israelis have since died as a result of the fighting.

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Blinken to Arrive in US Later on Wednesday, Replacement Plane Inbound - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is set to arrive in the United States later on Wednesday as the US Air Force dispatches a replacement plane for him, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Wednesday.

"The Air Force has a replacement plane inbound. We are expecting him [Blinken] back tonight but several hours later than originally planned," Miller said during a press briefing.

According to reports, Blinken got stranded in Davos, Switzerland, and was unable to fly back to the United States because the Boeing 737 airplane had an oxygen leak that could not be fixed.

A smaller airplane was dispatched from Brussels to Zurich to transport Blinken back to the United States, while the rest of his delegation had to take a commercial flight, the reports said.

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UN on US Designation of Houthis: Unilateral Sanctions Can Impact Civilians

UNITED NATIONS, January 17 (Sputnik) - Unilateral sanctions could have an unintended impact on civilians, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Wednesday, after the United States redesignated Yemen's Houthis as a global terrorist group.

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"Unilateral sanctions in any context can have an impact, often unintended, on the well-being of civilians," Dujarric told reporters.

He pointed out that the designation was made by one member state, and the UN was not involved in the process.

"We are committed to continuing to support the people of Yemen with our humanitarian work in line with our principles of impartiality, neutrality, and independence of our work," Dujarric said, adding that Yemen remains highly dependent on commercial imports and humanitarian aid.

A senior US administration official said earlier in the day that the designation will become effective on February 16. The US Department of the Treasury, meanwhile, issued five general licenses authorizing certain transactions with the Houthis related to the provision of food, medical devices, and medicines, fuel, personal remittances, operations of airports and ports.

In February 2021, the Biden administration removed the Houthis from the US list of designated terrorist groups to persuade and encourage the group to enter peace talks amid the country's long civil war.

Since mid-November this year, the Houthis have attacked more than two dozen commercial ships allegedly linked to Israel with speed boats, drones and missiles. They warned they will continue the attacks until Israel stops its military actions in Gaza.

In December, the US announced the establishment of a multinational operation to secure navigation in the Red Sea. Last week, the US and the United Kingdom conducted a series of strikes against Houthi positions in Yemen.

Following the strikes, Khaled Khiari, UN assistant secretary-general for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, warned of consequences of further escalation and urged restraint by all parties concerned.

The official warned that an ongoing cycle of violence risks reversing recent humanitarian improvements in Yemen and undermining progress toward reaching a political settlement.

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Canada Mulling Following in US Steps, Listing Houthis As Terrorist Group. – Reports

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) – Ottawa is mulling whether to follow in Washington's steps and designate Yemen's Houthis as a terrorist organization under Canadian legislation, Global News reported on Wednesday.

It can be confirmed that Canadian security and intelligence agencies are assessing the possibility of listing the Houthis as a terrorist entity under the country's law, Public Safety Minister press secretary Jean-Sebastien Comeau said according to the report.

Earlier on Wednesday, a senior Biden administration official said during a press briefing that the United States would be redesignating Ansar Allah from Yemen, also known as the Houthis, as a specially designated global terrorist in light of their attacks on commercial ships passing through the Red Sea.

The designation will take effect on February 16, but the United States will provide sanction waivers to ensure the Yemeni people can continue to receive food, medicine, and fuel, the

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official added.

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US Universities Stepping Away From Chinese Scientists 'Step Too Far' - Moderna Co-Founder

DAVOS, January 17 (Sputnik), Lenka White - US universities distancing themselves from Chinese scientists marks a "step too far," Moderna co-founder Noubar Afeyan said during an event of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland, on Wednesday.

"I think if people use that science in a way that's not commercially fair, we should also pay attention to that societally and IP laws and other forms of restrictions may be due, if objectively there are such cases. ... But the notion that in the United States, for example, universities should somehow distance themselves from Chinese scientists - I think that would be a step too far," Afeyan said.

In addition, Afeyan noted that being a scientist, he fully backs the principle that "science should be for everyone."

Afeyan is one of the 2,800 attendees of the 2024 World Economic Forum, which is is taking place in Davos from January 15-19.

The participants come from some 120 countries and include prominent figures from business, political and academic circles.

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Over One-Third of US Voters Believe Austin Should Resign Over Health Problems - Poll

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - More than one-third of likely voters in the United States believe that US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin should resign due to recent health problems, according to a Rasmussen Reports poll released Wednesday.

Thirty-four percent (34%) of likely US voters believe that Austin should resign, the poll report said. A plurality of respondents, 46%, think Austin should stay in his role and 20% are unsure, the poll report said.

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

One of Austin's aides told emergency dispatchers to arrive without lights or sirens in an attempt to "remain a little subtle," US media reported on Tuesday, citing 911 call transcripts.

The poll surveyed 1,077 likely US voters on January 10-11 and 14. The poll maintains a margin of error of plus-or-minus three percentage points with a 95% confidence level.

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Trudeau Declines to Clarify Canada's Stance if Israel Found Guilty of Genocide at ICJ

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) – Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Wednesday declined to elaborate on what Ottawa would do in the event that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) finds Israel guilty of genocide following the proceedings initiated by South-Africa.

"I will not comment on decisions that might be taken by the International Court of Justice before they become known," Trudeau said in French when questioned on the matter.

The Prime Minister reiterated previous comments made on Friday, saying that although Canada supports the ICJ and its processes, it does not agree with the premise of the genocide case brought forward by South Africa.

"We are watching carefully as all the steps unfold," he added.

South Africa filed a lawsuit accusing Israel of genocidal intent in Gaza at the ICJ on December 29 in response to a rising civilian death toll in the besieged Palestinian enclave. It seeks to prove that Israel's military campaign is genocidal in nature and targets Gazans as a part of the broader Palestinian people.

On January 11-12, the top United Nations court in The Hague held public hearings on South Africa's suit. In its address, South Africa's representatives urged the ICJ to obligate Israel to end its military operation in the Gaza Strip, ensure that the enclaves' residents have access to food, water and humanitarian aid, and abstain from actions that could worsen the situation. Israel, for its part, argued that the escalation of conflict in the Gaza Strip started with Hamas's October 7 attack and insisted on its right to self-defense.

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Trudeau Says 'All Rules Were Followed' Amid Criticism of $63,000 Jamaica Xmas Vacation

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Wednesday that his $7,000 per night stay at a luxury villa in Jamaica gifted by his family friends complies with all rules.

"Like many Canadians, we went to stay at some friends over the Christmas holidays," Trudeau said in French during a press conference from New Brunswick's city of Saint John. "All the rules were followed."

The prime minister had been asked whether he thought the nine night stay worth $63,000 gifted to him and his family could be negatively seen by Canadians, who are increasingly feeling strained by financial challenges.

In early January, media reported that the prime minister's office had not previously disclosed the exact location of Trudeau's stay in Jamaica, information that came to light after pictures of their trip on social media showed two relatives by the poolside at the Frankfort villa, part of the

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Prospect Estate resort.
The resort is owned by businessman Peter Green, who has ties to the Trudeau family dating back to the 1970s.

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No Changes to US Force Posture in Syria Amid Reports Troops Evacuated Hemo Base - Official

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - There have been no changes to the United States or coalition force posture in Syria and Iraq, a US Defense Department official told Sputnik on Wednesday.
On Tuesday, Iranian news agency Tasnim reported, citing Syrian sources, that the United States is evacuating its Hemo military base located near the airport of the city of Qamishli in northeastern Syria after repeated attacks by "Iraqi resistance" forces.
"We don't have any updates or changes to US or coalition force posture or presence in Iraq and Syria at this time," the official said when asked about reports about US troops being evacuated from the Hemo base in Syria.
The US-led coalition remains focused on advising its partner forces and preventing the resurgence of the Islamic State terror group (outlawed in Russia) throughout Iraq and Syria, the official said.
Last week, Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei called on the Shiite resistance front in various countries to "strike the enemy" wherever it may be. Shiite groups within the Islamic Resistance in Iraq announced strikes on the Hemo military base near the Qamishli airport.
Iraqi armed groups also said they conducted strikes against another US military base at the Conoco field in Deir ez-Zor in eastern Syria. Moreover, several drones were recently shot down in the vicinity of Erbil International Airport in northern Iraq, which houses the US-led coalition forces.

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US Sanctions Former Guatemalan Energy and Mining Minister for Alleged Corruption –Treasury

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) – The US Treasury announced Wednesday that it is imposing sanctions on a former Guatemala energy and mining minister for alleged corruption, according to a release.
“Today, the Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned Alberto Pimentel Mata (Pimentel) for his role in exploiting the Guatemalan mining sector through widespread bribery schemes, including schemes related to government contracts and mining licenses,” the release stated.

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Pimentel became the minister of energy and mining in January 2020 and resigned in July 2023. The US contends that Pimentel engaged in numerous corruption schemes related to government contracts and licenses during his tenure.

Pimental reportedly accepted bribes in several instances to facilitate private contracts. This includes large monthly payments to facilitate the acquisition of necessary permits and licenses for a Guatemalan energy and mining private company; a large illicit payment to begin the consultation process with local communities in El Estor, Izabal for the benefit of private entities; and bribes of more than $1 million from mining industry groups in Guatemala in exchange for mining licenses.

He also allegedly agreed with a private company in Guatemala to write the terms of reference for an upcoming tender to favor the prospective bidder and took payments in exchange for accepting a bid for a contract from a local company with no experience in the project activities. Additionally, Pimentel reportedly engaged in retaliation against companies operating in the Guatemalan energy and mining sector that would not pay him bribes.

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NASA Official Tells Congress Infrastructure of All Its Centers 'Very Much Aging'

WASHINGTON, January 18 (Sputnik) - The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) infrastructure at all its centers is "very much aging," NASA Exploration Systems Development Mission Directorate Associate Administrator Catherine Koerner said in a congressional hearing on Wednesday.

“The infrastructure at the Kennedy Space Center as well as at all of our centers is very much aging and we are aware of that within the agency,” Koerner told the US House Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee.

The panel is holding a hearing about NASA's Artemis program, which is the space agency's comprehensive effort to place astronauts on the lunar surface and develop an ongoing presence there.

Koerner said that NASA was “investing heavily" in the capabilities needed to support the Artemis missions.

Koerned also noted the NASA 2040 initiative to examine its infrastructure and mission support functions, including the Kennedy Space Center, and ensure the space agency was prepared for missions by year 2040.

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Trudeau Accuses Political Parties of Instrumentalizing Intolerance for Political Purposes

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) – Some political parties across Canada have chosen to instrumentalize intolerance for their political advantages, Canadian Prime Minister Justin

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Trudeau said on Wednesday.

"I think Canada is the best country in the world in part because Canadians respect each other and in Canada, people are free to be who they are to love whom they love," Trudeau told reporters. "Unfortunately, we are seeing in certain parts of the country and certain political parties, try to instrumentalize divisions or intolerance into political advantage".

Trudeau said that the Liberal Party would always stand with its citizens and their rights to be "who they are", adding that he believes that is something Canadians expect of their governments.

"We're a government that will always stand up for people's rights," Trudeau said.

Throughout 2023, New Brunswick's Prime Minister Blaine Higgs and his counterpart from Saskatchewan Prime Minister Scott Moe were very outspoken in affirming parental rights when it comes to gender-related matters involving their children, notably in academic environments.

The topic ignited strong provincial and national debates among supporters of parental rights and its detractors.

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Blinken Stranded After Blowing Plane Breaks Down on Davos Trip - Bloomberg News

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken got stranded in Davos and was unable to fly back to the United States due to a critical error affecting his Boeing aircraft, Bloomberg News reported on Wednesday.

According to the report, Blinken and his delegation were informed that the Boeing 737 had been deemed "unsafe to fly" because of an oxygen leak that could not be fixed.

The report added that a smaller plane was dispatched from Brussels to Zurich to transport Blinken back to the US, while the rest of his delegation had to take a commercial flight.

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Canada Awards $1.9Bln Contract for Servicing Active RCAF CH-146 Griffon Fleet – Ministry

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) – The Canadian government has awarded a $1.9 billion contract for servicing the Royal Canadian Air force (RCAF) active fleet of CH-146 Griffon helicopters, Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) said on Wednesday.

"Today, the Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Public Services and Procurement, announced that the Government of Canada has awarded a $2.28-billion contract to Bell Textron Canada Limited (BTCL) to provide in-service support for the Royal Canadian Air Force's active fleet of CH-146 Griffon helicopters," PSPC said in a statement.

Accordingly, the contract will allow for the in-service support of the helicopter fleet until the mid-2030's, allowing to sustain continued international and domestic flight missions.

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The contract which is set to become valid in April will provide program management, engineering, technical and design change services, component repair and overhaul, procurement of spares and heavy maintenance services, the statement said.

All in-service work will be done in Canada in the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland and Labrador, the statement said, further adding that it would create some 1,130 jobs nationwide.

PSPC noted that BTCL pledged to provide investments equal to the contract's value, with an expected annual contribution of least $93 million into Canada's GDP, throughout the contract's life cycle.

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Trudeau Says Aware Residents Worried 'Promise of Canada' Does Not Hold as Before

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Wednesday that he and his government are aware that the "promise of Canada" does not hold for many residents given that it has become harder to progress amid the country's housing challenges.

"We know that people are worried that the promise of Canada doesn't hold the way it used to, that promise that every generation should be able to succeed even better than the one before," Trudeau said.

Acknowledging that Canadians are worried about worldwide and domestic challenges making it harder for them to succeed, Trudeau said his goal was to build a better country for everyone by securing the pathway to greater success through affordable housing.

Trudeau made the remarks while making a housing announcement in the city of St-John in New Brunswick. He also said the government was working on securing the so-called "promise" by making the necessary investments in home building.

The remarks come nearly a week after the media reported that a 2022 analysis by the Ministry of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship on the consequences that immigration could have on the Canadian economy, housing and services, showed the country's population growth was outpacing new housing.

Government officials have since been warned by federal public servants that rapid demographic growth would add heightened pressure on the country's health care and housing affordability at a time when the population increase was already outpacing the supply of new housing.

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Artemis Program Unrealistically Priced, Risks Crew Safety - Ex-NASA Head

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WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - The Artemis program is unrealistically priced and threatens the safety of its crew and should therefore be restarted, not kept on track, Michael Griffin, a former NASA administrator and ex-under secretary of defense said during a House hearing on Wednesday.

"In my judgment, the Artemis program is excessively complex, unrealistically priced, compromises crew safety, poses very high mission risk of completion and is highly unlikely to be completed in a timely manner even if successful," Griffin, the co-founder and co-president of the high-end consulting company LigiQ, Inc., told the House Science Committee.

Griffin added that it was unacceptable for the United States not to be on the moon when other nations are there.

"We need a program that is consistent with that theme, Artemis is not that program," he said. "We need to restart it, not keep it on track."

NASA Administrator Bill Nelson announced earlier in January that the space agency has delayed the first US manned mission to the Moon in more than half a century until September 2026 "to work through the challenges" on developing and integrating the spacecraft systems in the Artemis program.

NASA officials explained that it delayed both its planned Artemis II mission to fly around the Moon and back and subsequent Artemis III manned landing at the lunar South Pole to give time to deal with unanticipated problems.

These involved the development of new spacesuits, unanticipated detachment of material from the reentry heat shield on the unmanned Artemis I mission last year and failures with the Orion spacecraft life support system and new abort ejection mechanism for its astronauts.

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FAA Says First 40 Inspections of Boeing 737-9 MAX Conducted After Alaska Airlines Incident

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) said on Wednesday that the first 40 inspections of the Boeing 737-9 MAX aircraft have been completed after a door panel blew out midair during an Alaska Airlines flight.

On Friday, the FAA announced requirements for a rigorous inspection and maintenance process as a precondition for the agency to contemplate any further steps in the process to return the Boeing 737-9 MAX to service.

"The first 40 inspections that are part of that process are now complete, and the FAA will thoroughly review the data from them," the FAA said in a statement. "All 737-9 MAX aircraft with door plugs will remain grounded pending the FAA's review and final approval of an inspection and maintenance process that satisfies all FAA safety requirements."

On January 5, Alaska Airlines Flight 1282 with 171 passengers and six crew members on board made an emergency landing in the US state of Oregon after a chunk of the fuselage, including one window, detached midair. No injuries were reported at the time, but several days later, some passengers filed a lawsuit against the jet-producing company, demanding compensation for the physical, emotional and economic harm. The FAA ordered the grounding

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of all 171 Boeing 737-9 MAX planes in the United States.

This is the second incident involving MAX aircraft recently. In late December, Boeing asked operators to inspect its 737 MAX airplanes for a "possible loose bolt" that is part of the rudder control system after discovering a bolt with a missing nut during routine maintenance.

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Iraq Asks Allies of Israel to Press Netanyahu to Stop War in Gaza - Foreign Minister

DAVOS, January 17 (Sputnik) - Iraq is asking allies of Israel to press Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to stop the war in Gaza, Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein told Sputnik.

"I cannot predict [how the conflict will evolve]. We are working to stop this war because the Palestinian people and the population in Gaza, they are suffering very much and our position, Iraqi position, is clear. We are against this war. So in our connections with outside world, with foreign ministers from other countries, we are asking them, those who have a good relationship with the Israelis, to put pressure on Netanyahu so that he will stop this war against Palestinian people," Hussein said on the margins of the World Economic Forum in Davos.

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US House Speaker Says Will Continue to Press Biden on Ukraine Accountability, Endgame

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - US House Speaker Mike Johnson said on Wednesday that he will continue to request answers from the Biden administration on its goals for the conflict in Ukraine and efforts to maintain the accountability of US aid.

"With regard to Ukraine: we have needed, we have requested — publicly, privately, in every forum — answers to the critical questions," Johnson said during a press conference. "What is the endgame and the strategy in Ukraine? How will we have accountability for the funds? We need to know that Ukraine would not be another Afghanistan."

Johnson said that he will express his position to US President Joe Biden during a meeting later on Wednesday.

The United States must secure its own borders before attempting to do anything else, Johnson added.

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Johnson Says US House Will Not Fund Federal Government With Omnibus Spending Bill

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WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives will not fund the federal government with an omnibus spending bill, House Speaker Mike Johnson said on Wednesday

"Certainly, we're not going to have an omnibus," Johnson said during a press conference.

House Republicans will not get everything they want in negotiations due to their slim majority in the lower chamber of Congress, Johnson said.

In November, Congress passed a so-called "laddered" continuing resolution, which extended funding for two separate portions of the government through January 19 and February 2. Lawmakers are now considering another continuing resolution that would further extend funding until March 1 and 8.

Johnson said he is hopeful that lawmakers will pass 12 separate appropriations bills before the next set of government funding deadlines.

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US Authorizes Certain Transactions With Houthis Amid Expected Designation - Treasury Dept.

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) – The US Treasury Department on Wednesday issued five general licenses authorizing certain transactions with Yemen's Houthis after Washington designated the group as a global terrorist organization.

General License 22 provides exceptions for transactions with the Houthis related to the provision of agricultural goods, medicine, medical devices, and software updates.

General License 23 authorizes transactions related to telecommunications mail and certain internet-based communications.

General Licenses 24 and 25 authorize transactions related to personal remittances, as well as refined petroleum products in Yemen.

General License 26 greenlights transactions with the Houthis related to port and airport operations.

All five licenses will take effect on February 16, the same day the terrorist designation takes place.

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US House Will Advance Contempt Charge if Hunter Biden Delays Deposition - Emmer

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives will move forward with contempt of Congress charges against Hunter Biden if he further delays appearing for a deposition with lawmakers, House Majority Whip Tom Emmer said on Wednesday.

"If Hunter Biden tries to delay or pull another PR [public relations] stunt, we can and will move forward with holding him in contempt," Emmer said during a press conference.

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The US House of Representatives is investigating alleged criminal activity involving the Biden family as part of an impeachment inquiry into US President Joe Biden. However, Hunter Biden failed to appear for a scheduled deposition and instead held a press conference to explain his refusal.

Biden is a material witness to House lawmakers' inquiry, whose deposition is critical to the fact-finding process, Emmer said. Biden will work with House lawmakers to ensure a swift deposition if he has nothing to hide, Emmer said.

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US Keeping Diplomacy Open With Houthis Despite Tensions - Senior Official

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - The United States will keep diplomatic engagement on the table to resolve issues with Yemen's Houthi rebels despite rising tensions, a senior US administration official told reporters.

"We would urge the Houthis to cease their attacks and we would like to be able to continue to think about our engagement in a way that directs us toward the durable peace in Yemen," the official said. "So that's not something that we're turning away from with this designation. I do think we think of it as part of a broader strategy."

The United States redesignated the Houthis as a global terrorist organization following the group's ongoing attacks against commercial vessels in the Red Sea, according to the official.

The designation will take effect on February 16, but the United States will provide sanction waivers to ensure the Yemeni people can continue to receive food, medicine, and fuel, the official added.

The Biden administration in February 2021 revoked the US terrorist designation of the Houthis over concerns that sanctions would worsen Yemen's humanitarian crisis.

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US May Consider Delisting Houthi Designation Should Group Cease Their Attacks – Official

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) – The United States stands ready to remove the Houthis from its list of designated global terrorists if the group ceases attacks on commercial and US ships in the region, a senior Biden administration official said during a press briefing.

"If the Houthis cease their tasks, we can consider delisting designation. We will continue to monitor the situation and assess the group's actions to inform our position going forward," the official said on Tuesday.

Should the Houthis stop their attacks tomorrow, the Biden administration is ready to reconsider its designation of the group as the main aim of the move is to stop attacks on ships in the Red Sea and not a broader suite of behavior, the official said.

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China Refused to Meet With Ukrainian Officials in Davos Despite Kiev's Request - Reports

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) - Beijing has rejected Kiev's request to hold a meeting between the Ukrainian and Chinese delegations on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Politico reported on Wednesday, citing unnamed US officials.

The Ukrainian delegation, including President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, left Davos without meeting with the Chinese delegation led by Premier Li Qiang, although Kiev clearly expressed its intent to hold such a meeting, the report said.

According to a US official cited in the report, Kiev requested a meeting with the Chinese delegation in Davos but was refused.

However, the report also cites an unnamed Ukrainian official who refutes this account by saying that Zelenskyy's team never asked for a meeting with their Chinese counterparts.

Another US official claimed that Russia asked China to cease diplomatic encounters with Ukraine and that was the main reason that a meeting was not held in Davos.

The World Economic Forum gathering is taking place from January 15-19 and includes about 2,800 participants from some 120 countries.

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US Designating Houthis as Global Terrorist Group With 30-Day Delay – Senior Official

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) – The United States is designating Ansar Allah from Yemen, also known as the Houthis, as a specially designated global terrorist in light of their attacks on commercial ships passing through the Red Sea with the designation taking effect on February 16, a senior Biden administration official said during a press briefing.

"[T]he United States will designate Ansar Allah, more commonly known as the Houthis, as a specially designated global terrorist," the official said on Tuesday. "That designation will become effective 30 days from today, which is approximately February 16."

The official underscored that the designation of the Houthis will not affect commercial shipments into Yemeni ports on which the Yemeni people rely for food, medicine, and fuel.

During the 30 days, the US Department of the Treasury will issue five additional broad general licenses that authorize certain transactions related to the provision of food, medical devices, and medicines, fuel, personal remittances, operations of airports and ports to ensure that the Yemeni people are not harmed in any way, the official added.

In February 2021, the Biden administration removed the Houthis from the US list of designated terrorist groups to persuade and encourage the group to enter peace talks amid the long-lasting civil war in the country.

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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 establishment of a multinational operation to secure navigation in the Red Sea. Last week, the United States conducted a series of strikes against the Houthis position in Yemen.

Russia condemned the US attacks against the sovereign state of Yemen in the absence of a UN mandate, calling them a direct threat to global peace and security.

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Number of US Police Killings in 2023 Rises to 1,329 – Database

WASHINGTON, January 17 (Sputnik) – The number of people killed by police in the United States continued its rise in 2023 to 1,329, according to data collected by the Mapping Police Violence project.

This marked an increase from the 1,250 people killed by police in 2022. The numbers have been steadily increasing since the 1,107 people recorded by the project in 2019.

Mapping Police Violence found that there were only 14 days in 2023 when the police did not kill anyone.

The project, one of the few non-governmental databases of police killings in the US, aims to document all police killings regardless of whether a firearm is used.

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