

**1/22/24 Monday**

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Yemen Could Become Algeria For the US

After ten days of sustained bombing in Yemen failed to stop Houthi attacks on shipping vessels in the Red Sea, the administration of US President Joe Biden is reportedly developing plans to expand the conflict into a sustained military campaign.

The campaign, which still has not been authorized by Congress, was instigated by the Biden administration in response to Houthi forces attacking shipping vessels they claim are connected to Israel. After the initial US airstrikes on Yemen, Houthi forces announced that it would respond in kind.

Houthis are demanding that Israel halt its military campaign in Gaza. Award-winning broadcaster and Lebanon-based journalist Laith Marouf [told Sputnik's Critical Hour](#) that the conflict could end up worse than Vietnam and may more closely resemble Algeria.

"Algeria was the last [throes] of the French imperialist era and France [was] retreating to its borders... it took 6 million dead, martyred Algerians for France to end its imperialist vision," Marouf explained. "Palestine definitely will require a higher price in human numbers than the liberation of Algeria because Israel as a colony is the cornerstone and the jewel of American imperialism."

"It [would] be stupid to think that the United States will let go of its imperialist era for a cheaper price than 6 million people."

Marouf notes that it would have been much less costly for the West just to allow the Houthis to target Israeli ships, noting that ships from other countries are adding "No Israel/US connection" to their tags.

This loyalty to Israel, Marouf claims, comes from the Western elite's religious Zionism.

"It's the elite in the West saying that their God is Zionism, their religion is Zionism, and they're pledging their allegiance," Marouf told hosts Garland Nixon and Wilmer Leon. "We know Biden is going to have to face Trump, and both of them are going to have to champion, show that they are more Zionist than the other."

"I think this is the United States doing that, and they will sacrifice American soldiers for this pledge of allegiance," Marouf warned.

Marouf was then asked about a recent report that Israeli [military officials ordered troops](#) to shoot Israeli captives on October 7, as part of an implementation of the Hannibal directive, though the name of the directive was never said by officials. Marouf noted that Hamas could not have known about the musical festival, which took place near the border and an Israeli military base, because it was extended for a day during the event. "They didn't even know the rave was happening," Marouf explained. "Israeli helicopters came in and carpet bombed their own rave revelers that went and were trying to escape with their own cars. So we have these tens of cars, if not hundreds of cars, that are piled up on the side of Gaza from that rave that were burnt to a crisp with these missiles. The Israeli military killed the rave-goers by themselves."

The humanitarian conditions in Gaza, including a lack of food, water and medicine and the spreading of disease, will lead to even more deaths while forcing the “axis of resistance to speed up their engagement,” Marouf said, referring to the countries and forces in the Middle East that have opposed Israel’s campaign in Gaza.

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DeSantis Was a Good Candidate With a Bad Campaign

With Florida Governor Ron DeSantis officially out of the race for President, the Republican primary has officially become a two-person race between former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley and former US President Donald Trump.

As the election calendar moves onto the second state to allocate their delegates, many are asking what caused the DeSantis campaign, which was long presumed to be Trump’s greatest threat in the primary, to drop out after only one state picked their nominee.

Armen Kurdian, a retired US Navy captain and entrepreneur, spoke with Sputnik’s Fault Lines to explain what he thinks went wrong with the governor’s campaign. “[DeSantis] was quite capable of being a very good candidate,” Kurdian explained. “You could be a great person, you can have great ideas, you can have all the positive characteristics of an individual. If your campaign isn’t properly organized, or your campaign makes a lot of mistakes, you know, campaigns win elections more often than candidates win elections. A good candidate can drive a good campaign, but a bad campaign can’t really drive a good candidate.”

DeSantis’ campaign got off to a rocky start when he made his announcement during an audio-only X (formerly Twitter) Spaces chat with X CEO Elon Musk. Fault Lines Co-host Melik Abdul asked if that decision was a mistake, noting the bevy of technical issues that occurred during the event.

“The kick-off did not help at all,” Kurdian explained. “A big rally with a large crowd in front, with cameras and news media. I’m sorry, that’s just how you do it. Then you can go and do all the social media and have these town halls and engagement.”

“This should have been a two-person race between Donald Trump and Ron DeSantis and he had the chance to gain a tremendous amount of momentum going forward,” Kurdian said.

“It could have been a competitive race through Super Tuesday considering all the money that went to Ron DeSantis,” Kurdian added, noting that the Governor raised more than \$200 million between his campaign and related PACs. “That is just out of control for a primary when you think about it.”

As for Trump’s remaining opponent, Kurdian does not think Haley has much of a chance of snatching the nomination. “I like Nikki Haley, but I don’t really see a path for her if you have to spend that much money in order to come in second place. Those donors are going to want to keep the rest of their powder dry for November.”

Later, Kurdian noted that a recent poll showed that most of Haley’s supporters are anti-Trumpers, adding that it will be interesting to see if she encourages them to get behind

Trump in the general election. “[The Republicans] can’t rest on their laurels... because Democrats are very good at getting the vote out.”

But it is that reliance on the anti-Trumpers that is likely to doom Haley’s campaign, David Pyne, an active GOP member and campaigner told Sputnik in an email. Describing Haley as representative of the Neo-Conservative faction of the Republican party and Trump as the embodiment of the American First branch, Pyne explained that Haley is representing a rapidly shrinking portion of the electorate.

“Nikki Haley and the tired old neoconservative Bush Republican faction of the party have no chance to prevent Trump from winning the Republican presidential nomination in 2024,” he explained. “I suspect the New Hampshire election contest will prove to be her high-water mark ... it is very possible she may not win a single state given her anemic position in the national GOP primary polls.”

Pyne noted that there was a stark difference in the foreign policies of Trump and Haley and that Trump’s is more in line with the majority of the Republican party.

“Nikki Haley has never met a war she didn’t want the US to get involved in,” Pyne explained.

“She has offered her full support for Biden’s proxy war against Russia in Ukraine including Biden’s \$61 billion proposal for additional arms and financial [support to Ukraine](#) whereas Trump has been calling for an immediate cease-fire and peace agreement ending the war in Ukraine to avert a potential Third World War.”

Pyne noted that only 3.5% of attendees at the conservative America Fest 2023 Convention said in a straw poll that they support giving humanitarian aid to Ukraine “let alone military assistance.”

The New Hampshire primary will be held on Tuesday, January 23.

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AfD Leader Calls for German ‘Dexit’ Vote to Break From EU

The Alternative for Germany party promotes direct voting on legislation and strict immigration controls. It was the subject of nationwide protests last week after some of its members were spotted at a meeting that advocated for mass deportation of immigrants in Germany, including those with German passports.

Britain was “dead right” to leave the European Union and Germany should consider its own “Dexit,” the leader of the right-wing populist party Alternative for Germany (AfD) Alice Weidel said in an article published in US media on Monday.

“If reform isn’t possible, if we fail to rebuild sovereignty of the EU member states, we should let the people decide, just as Britain did,” she said, adding that “we could have a referendum on ‘Dexit’ - a German exit from the EU.”

A recent poll found that only 45% of AfD members would currently vote to leave the EU and only 10% of the general population said they would. It is worth noting that opinions can shift rapidly. In late 2014, only 36% of Britons said they would support the UK leaving the EU; less than two years later, more than half voted for “Brexit.”

The AfD is leading the polls in five East German states and is polling second nationally at 22%. The party hopes to make gains at both the European Parliamentary elections in June and the regional elections in September.

However, AfD's high polling numbers may not reflect how much power the party will have in the near term. Establishment parties, including conservative-leaning ones, have ruled out forming a coalition with the AfD, limiting its potential power.

Weidel admitted that the issue will limit her party's power in the short term but believes the "firewall" will not last forever, pointing to the conservative establishment CDU party, which includes former chancellor Angela Merkel, as the first likely to break.

"The CDU will not be able to maintain its firewall in the long term," Weidel said. She added that the last year proved "that we can form a clear right-wing majority. And the CDU can't refuse to accept that in the long term, especially in the eastern states."

Weidel admitted her party is unlikely to take control until 2029 at the earliest. It is currently polling only behind the CDU but is ahead of every other party, including Chancellor Olaf Scholz's three coalition parties.

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'Oppenheimer' Leads 2024 Oscars With 13 Nominations – Academy

(Adds paras 3-6)

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik) – "Oppenheimer" is leading the pack of Oscar 2024 contenders with 13 nominations, including for best picture, actor, supporting actor, and supporting actress, according to the US Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences awards nominations ceremony on Tuesday.

The biopic of J. Robert Oppenheimer, the American theoretical physicist credited with spearheading the development of the atomic bomb in the Manhattan Project, was also nominated in the categories for cinematography; costume design; directing; film editing; makeup and hairstyling; music (original score); production design; sound; and writing (adapted screenplay).

Several films also received a high number of nominations: "Poor Things" (11); "Killers of the Flower Moon" (10); "Barbie" (8); and "Maestro" (7). In addition, "The Zone of Interest"; "American Fiction"; "The Holdovers"; and "Anatomy of a Fall" each received five nominations.

All of these films were also nominated for Best Picture; additionally, "Past Lives" rounded out the 10 nominees in this category.

The Best Actor nominees include Bradley Cooper ("Maestro"); Colman Domingo ("Rustin"); Paul Giamatti ("The Holdovers"); Cillian Murphy ("Oppenheimer"); and Jeffrey Wright ("American Fiction").

The Best Actress nominees include Annette Bening ("Nyad"); Lily Gladstone ("Killers of the Flower Moon"); Sandra Hüller ("Anatomy of a Fall"); Carey Mulligan ("Maestro") and Emma Stone ("Poor Things").

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Ukraine Issue 'Pretty Much Sidelined' in US - Ex-Assistant Treasury Secretary

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik) - The issue of Ukraine is no longer one of importance to the public in the United States, former US Assistant Treasury Secretary Paul Craig Roberts told Sputnik.

"In the United States, Ukraine is pretty much sidelined," Roberts said. "The puzzle that remains is: Why [Russian President Vladimir] Putin does not use force to bring the war to an end."

Roberts said he believes the issue of continuing to provide military and other aid to Ukraine will be a factor in the upcoming US presidential elections in November.

"The majority of the voting public is fed up with the vast sum of money Biden wasted on Ukraine," Roberts said. "Moreover, the younger element among the Democrat Party voters is disgusted with Biden's support for Israel's massacre of Palestinians. The Republican candidates for the nomination have generated no public interest."

Congress and the Biden administration have negotiated for weeks in an effort to reach a deal on the requested supplemental funds of \$106 billion, which include \$60 billion for Ukraine and acute problems like border protection.

Republican lawmakers have made clear they will only support Biden's supplemental funding request if it includes meaningful policy changes to stop the record influx of illegal immigrants arriving mostly via the US border with Mexico.

US House Speaker Mike Johnson said after meeting with Biden that the status quo regarding US aid for Ukraine is unacceptable.

However, Johnson said the Biden administration needs to provide Congress a clearer explanation about its strategy in Ukraine, what is its endgame there and also guarantee accountability for US funds. Johnson emphasized that strengthening US border security is a top priority.

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screenplay).

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Austin Says No 'Credible Evidence' of Ukraine Military Aid Misuse

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik) – Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said on Tuesday that the United States has not seen "credible evidence" of American military assistance to Ukraine being misused or diverted.

"We have seen no credible evidence of the misuse or illicit diversion of American equipment provided to Ukraine," Austin said at a virtual meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group.

The US continues to "work hard" to account for US security assistance, he added.

In a new audit report earlier this month, the Department of Defense Office of Inspector General said that the Pentagon has failed to properly track more than \$1 billion in weapons sent to Ukraine

The audit did not address the question of whether any military assistance to Ukraine was diverted.

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Austin Urges Allies to Provide Ukraine With More Air Defense Systems, Interceptors

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin urged allies on Tuesday to provide Ukraine with additional air defense systems and interceptors.

"I urge this group to provide Ukraine with more life-saving ground-based air defense systems and interceptors," Austin said at a virtual meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group.

The Pentagon chief warned partners that failing to support Ukraine and "deter" Russia would lead to more chaos in Europe. He argued that assisting Kiev makes other countries more secure.

"A sovereign and secure Ukraine is critical for global security, and we must not waiver in our support for Ukraine," Austin stated.

White House Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said earlier this month that the US has run out of funds for Ukraine unless Congress passes a new funding package. On December 27, the US unveiled its final military aid package for Kiev in 2023, worth \$250 million.

In October, the White House asked Congress to provide more than \$100 billion in supplemental funds, including more than \$60 billion for Ukraine, but Republican lawmakers have refused to approve the request without measures to strengthen border security and restrict immigration.

Russia has consistently warned against continued arms deliveries to Kiev, saying it will lead to further escalation of the conflict.

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US Kills 3 Al Shabab Members in Somalia Airstrike – Africa Command

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik) – The US Africa Command killed three Al-Shabab terrorists in Somalia in an airstrike over the weekend, according to a release Tuesday.

"At the request of the Federal Government of Somalia, US Africa Command conducted a collective self-defense airstrike with two engagements against the al Shabaab terrorist group on Jan. 21," the release stated.

The initial assessment shows that the US strike killed three al Shabab terrorists and that no civilians were injured or killed, it added.

The strike was conducted in a remote area of Somalia, approximately 22 miles northeast of Kismayo.

Al-Shabab is affiliated with the Al-Qaeda terrorist group (banned in Russia).

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Senate Committee Spars Over Bill to Transfer Russian Assets to Ukraine – Reports

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik) - The Senate Foreign Relations Committee is caught up in infighting over a new bill to transfer Russian assets to Ukraine, Politico reported, citing two unnamed sources.

The committee has scheduled a mark-up session for Wednesday. Chairman Ben Cardin reportedly plans to suggest an amendment that could water down the bill, which was proposed by the top Republican Senator Jim Risch to transfer seized funds from Russia's Central Bank and other institutions to Ukraine for reconstruction needs.

Cardin's amendment seeks to permit asset transfer only upon the agreement of all G7 member nations, the report said on Monday. That would add extra complexity to an already dicey legal and logistical issue, the report said, citing two people familiar with the closed-door discussion.

Moscow has maintained that any attempt to confiscate its frozen assets would violate international law. The Russian Foreign Ministry has dismissed the freezing of Russian assets as theft.

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US Ready to Take More Action to Neutralize Threats to Shipping in Red Sea - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik) - The United States stands ready to take further action to neutralize threats to commercial shipping in the Red Sea, a senior US Defense Department official told reporters.

Earlier on Monday, the Defense Department announced that the United States and the United Kingdom carried out joint strikes against Houthi targets in Yemen at eight different sites.

"We stand ready to take further actions to neutralize threats or respond to attacks, ensuring the stability and security of the Red Sea region and international trade routes," the official said on Monday evening.

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RPT: PREVIEW - Trump Seeks to Further Secure Lead in Republican Primary on Tuesday in New Hampshire

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump aims to further solidify his dominance in the Republican primary when the state of New Hampshire votes for their preferred GOP nominee in the US presidential election, according to experts.

The state of New Hampshire will hold the first primary vote in the nation on Tuesday. The last polls are set to close at 8 p.m. Eastern Time (1:00 GMT on Wednesday).

Trump and his former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley will battle one-on-one in New Hampshire after Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, former Governor of Arkansas Asa Hutchinson, and US entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy suspended their Republican presidential bids following poor performances in the Iowa caucus.

Fair Vote President and CEO Rob Richie told Sputnik that if Trump wins in the New Hampshire Republican primary vote, he is also likely to win in the remaining states where he is on the ballot.

"Absent a Trump-shattering event, health or a legal issue that matters to GOP voters, New Hampshire is the last stand for his primary opponents," Richie said. "Even a Haley win is unlikely to slow him down."

#### TRUMP TAKES EARLY LEAD BY WIDE MARGIN

Trump won easy in the Iowa caucus with a record-setting 51% of the vote, followed by DeSantis at 21% and Haley at 19%.

On Saturday, Trump called on the Republican Party to come together in a bid to oust President Joe Biden from the White House.

"As you know, earlier this week we had a historic victory in IOWA. Now is the time for the Republican Party to UNIFY," Trump said in a statement. "Instead of wasting hundreds of millions of dollars attacking Trump, we need to COME TOGETHER and focus all of our energy and resources on defeating Crooked Joe Biden!"

Most recently, DeSantis, Ramaswamy, and Republican Sen. Tim Scott, who ended his presidential bid in November, endorsed Trump for the Republican nomination while Hutchinson gave his support to Haley. Former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie also endorsed Haley after suspending his presidential bid earlier this month, but he was caught saying that Haley is

"going to get smoked" in a race against Trump.

According to RealClearPolitics, which aggregates several polls, Trump leads Haley in New Hampshire 54% to 37%. In the national average, Trump holds a 55-point lead over Haley.

Rising Tide Foundation Vice President, historian and political commentator Matthew Ehret told Sputnik that Republicans still in the running for the Republican nomination "must accept the fact that their chances of coming out as anything but a distant second behind Trump is preordained."

Trump's support base has been entirely energized and his claim to the Republican nomination is pretty much guaranteed, Ehret added.

US constitutional historian and political commentator Dan Lazare said there's no doubt Trump will be the Republican nominee in the upcoming presidential election.

"The [Republican] convention will be little more than a coronation, and that the MAGA faithful will turn out in full force starting in September," Lazare told Sputnik. "I'm also pretty sure Trump will win in November since I regard Biden as a spent force as well."

Trump previously said Haley is "not tough enough, not smart enough, or capable enough" to be US president. Trump has also accused Haley of being "in the pocket of" establishment donors.

Meanwhile, Haley has suggested that Trump is on a mental decline after he confused her for former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi when he was making remarks about the riot at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021.

#### DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY VOTE

The Democratic National Committee (DNC) has marked the state of South Carolina as the first official Democratic primary vote on February 3 since President Joe Biden is not on the ballot in the New Hampshire primary. Biden is up against US Congressman Dean Phillips and US author Marianne Williamson in the Democratic primary field.

The DNC went forward with its Biden-backed plan to make South Carolina the first official Democratic primary vote because it will have a more demographically diverse voice among voters.

"Too often over the past fifty years, candidates have dropped out or had their candidacies marginalized by the press and pundits because of poor performances in small states early in the process before voters of color cast a vote," Biden wrote in a letter to the DNC in 2022.

Earlier this month, media reported that Biden allies are planning to suppress third-party votes that threaten his reelection, such as Independent candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

Barry Friedman, a retired assistant economics professor at Brown University, told Sputnik that third-party candidates could exploit divisions among Democratic voters.

#### HOT TOPICS

According to retired FBI agent and former Minneapolis Division Legal Counsel Coleen Rowley, the US elections may distract the US public from other issues.

"Our bought and owned mainstream media uses such horse races to distract and divert their audiences from far more important topics," Rowley told Sputnik. "Such as both parties' lying us into over two decades of US-NATO's unlawful 'war on terror' that have taken over four million lives in several countries and the ongoing US-Israel genocide of Palestinians."

However, Friedman expects hot domestic issues will boost the US public's support for Trump.

"As the year goes on, there is a chance that the economic data would turn gloomy, and that failure to get a good compromise deal on the border and immigration will give Trump some issues to divert attention from his legal situation," Friedman said.

White House and Senate negotiators have been in discussions for weeks on Biden's supplemental request that includes more than \$60 billion for Ukraine. Republican senators have refused to support it unless Biden commits to making meaningful changes to US border policy in order to mitigate the crisis on the southern border.

Last week, Biden indicated that he is willing to make significant changes to his border policy. Friedman further said that Trump may also benefit from any kind of win in court or in appeals, but in the end his charisma may be enough to keep him in the lead.

"Perhaps his emotional appeal, cultural/tribal identity, conspiracy theories, lies and entertainment are bigger than any issue, especially for the primaries," Friedman said.

Axios reported that Haley intends to participate in the Republican primary vote in South Carolina on February 24 regardless of the outcome in New Hampshire according to her campaign team. Although Haley is the former governor of South Carolina, lawmakers such as Sen. Scott and Congresswoman Nancy Mace have sided with Trump.

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US to Boost Security Aid to Ecuador Amid Violent Unrest in Country - White House

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik) - The United States is bolstering its security assistance for Ecuador as the country grapples with an uptick in violence from criminal organizations in the country, the White House said in a press release.

Earlier this month, violent unrest erupted in Ecuador after the prison break out by the leader of the Los Choneros gang, Jose Adolfo Macias Villamar, also known as Fito, who is considered the most dangerous criminal in the country. Fabricio Colon Pico, the leader of Ecuador's second-largest criminal gang, Los Lobos, has also escaped from prison. On January 9, Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa declared a state of internal armed conflict and ordered Ecuador's army to neutralize the criminal groups operating in the country.

"This week, the United States is facilitating the delivery of over 20,000 bullet proof vests and more than \$1 million worth of critical security and emergency response equipment, including ambulances and defense logistic support vehicles," the release said on Monday. "The United States also announced that, in the coming days, the FBI will increase its personnel in-country to support the Ecuadorian National Police and Attorney General's Office."

Moreover, President Joe Biden's Special Advisor for the Americas Christopher Dodd and Commander of US Southern Command Gen. Laura Richardson met today with Noboa and will meet with other senior Ecuadorian government officials on Tuesday to show US support for the country in the wake of a surge in violence, according to the release.

The meetings between US and Ecuadorian officials will include discussions about ways to deepen bilateral cooperation, including with respect to security, counter-drug cooperation, migration, and economic development, the release said.

The United States is also deploying personnel to Ecuador to support the ongoing training of the police and prosecutors, and to strengthen their investigation capabilities, the release added.

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Police Says Searching for Gunman Who Allegedly Killed 7 People in State of Illinois

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik) - US law enforcement is searching for a gunman who allegedly killed seven people in the city of Joliet in the US state of Illinois, Joliet Police Department Chief William Evans told reporters.

"A total of seven people were found shot to death in these two locations," Williams said on Monday evening.

Evans added that authorities are still searching for the suspect allegedly responsible for the homicide.

The suspect was identified as 23-year-old Romeo Nance, Evans said.

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Texas Will Defend Sovereignty After US Court Border Barrier Ruling - Attorney General

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik) - Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton said in a statement that Texas will defend its sovereignty in the wake of the US Supreme Court's decision to temporarily allow the Biden administration to remove physical barriers at the state's border with Mexico.

"The Supreme Court's temporary order allows Biden to continue his illegal effort to aid the foreign invasion of America," Paxton said on Monday via social media platform X. "This fight is not over, and I look forward to defending our state's sovereignty."

Earlier on Monday, the US Supreme Court issued a temporary order allowing federal Border Patrol agents to remove razor wire barriers placed by Texas officials on the state's border with Mexico.

The destruction of Texas' border barriers neither helps enforce the law nor keeps people safe, Paxton said.

The ruling comes amid negotiations in the US Congress on border security measures, which have been tied to supplemental funding legislation. US House lawmakers are also considering impeaching US Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas for allegedly failing to secure the United States' borders.

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However, Johnson said the Biden administration needs to provide Congress a clearer explanation about its strategy in Ukraine, what is its endgame there and also guarantee accountability for US funds. Johnson emphasized that strengthening US border security is a top priority.

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US Strikes on Houthis Not to Expand Beyond Degrading Maritime Attack Capability - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik) - US strikes on Houthi targets in Yemen will not expand beyond degrading their maritime attack capability at this present moment in order to avoid any potential further escalation, a senior US Defense Department official told reporters.

Earlier on Monday, the United States and the United Kingdom, with support from other allies, carried out additional strikes against Houthi targets in Yemen at eight different sites.

"We're specifically avoiding escalation by selecting these locations and individual targets that will remove capability used in maritime attacks," the official said on Monday. "We are not at this time expanding beyond that target set."

The United States and allied strikes on Monday targeted Houthi missiles, unmanned aerial systems and weapons storage areas, the official said, adding that early assessments show that the strikes achieved the desired effect of degrade the Houthis' capabilities.

The official noted that the United States conducted the strikes with Tomahawk land attack missiles, manned aircraft from the US Navy and the UK armed forces, and precision-guided munitions to destroy the set targets and also to minimize collateral damage.

The United States is ready to take further action if deemed necessary, according to the Defense Department.

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UPDATE - Robocall Prompts Investigation into Voter Suppression in New Hampshire - Justice Dept.

(Updates with more details in para 4-6)

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik) - The New Hampshire Attorney General's Office is looking into complaints about a recorded robocall message that mimics President Biden's voice, urging voters to skip tomorrow's Presidential Primary elections, the New Hampshire Justice Department said in a statement.

"The Attorney General's Office has received complaints regarding a recorded message encouraging voters not to vote in the January 23, 2024, New Hampshire Presidential Primary Election. The message, which was sent on January 21, 2024, stated 'your vote makes a difference in November, not this Tuesday.' Although the voice in the robocall sounds like the voice of President Biden, this message appears to be artificially generated based on initial indications," the statement on Monday.

According to the statement, the message was manipulated to falsely claim it was the treasurer of a political committee supporting the New Hampshire Democratic presidential primary write-in efforts for President Biden.

"These messages appear to be an unlawful attempt to disrupt the New Hampshire presidential primary election and to suppress New Hampshire voters. New Hampshire voters should disregard the content of this message entirely. Voting in the New Hampshire presidential primary election does not preclude a voter from additionally voting in the November general election," the statement said.

A spokesperson for New Hampshire General Attorney's Office told Sputnik in a statement that the scope of individuals who received these messages remains unclear.

"We do know: (1) how many people took the step of calling to request to be removed from future calls (approximately a dozen); and (2) how many people sent a complaint to us or the New Hampshire Secretary of State's Office (approximately half a dozen)," the statement said.

The state of New Hampshire will hold the first primary vote in the nation on Tuesday. The last polls are set to close at 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time (1:00 GMT on Wednesday).

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Houthi Casualties From Latest US Strikes in Yemen Unknown - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik) - The US Defense Department continues to assess whether the latest round of strikes on Houthi targets in Yemen resulted in any casualties, a

senior US Defense Department official said.

"Unknown at this time," the official said on Monday when asked about Houthi casualties. "They [the strikes] were not intentionally selected for casualties. They were going after weapons systems."

The United States was not concerned about civilian casualties at the sites of the strikes given that the targets were carefully vetted for collateral damage concerns, the official said.

The United States struck eight Houthi weapons storage sites, including missiles and unmanned aerial systems, the official also said.

The United States continues to collect battle damage assessments but believes the strikes were successful, the official added.

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Pentagon Says New US, Allied Strikes in Yemen Successful, Still Assessing Battle Damage

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik) - New US and allied strikes on Houthi targets in Yemen were successful but military officials continue to assess battle damage, a senior US military official told reporters.

"We observed good impacts and effects at all eight locations, assessing that we did in fact destroy missiles, unmanned aerial systems and weapons storage areas," the official said on Monday. "We continue to collect battle damage assessments, and we'll have a better assessment going forward, but at this point we do assess that the strike was successful and achieved the desired effect of removing these capabilities from the Houthis."

The official noted that the United States conducted the strikes with Tomahawk land attack missiles, manned aircraft from the US Navy and the UK armed forces, and precision-guided munitions were used to destroy the targets and also to minimize collateral damage.

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US Ready to Take More Action to Neutralize Threats to Shipping in Red Sea - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik) - The United States stands ready to take further action to neutralize threats to commercial shipping in the Red Sea, a senior US Defense Department official told reporters.

Earlier on Monday, the Defense Department announced that the United States and the United Kingdom carried out joint strikes against Houthi targets in Yemen at eight different sites.

"We stand ready to take further actions to neutralize threats or respond to attacks, ensuring the stability and security of the Red Sea region and international trade routes," the official said on Monday evening.

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Houthis Carried Out 33 Attacks on Commercial Vessels Since November 19 - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik) - Yemen's Houthis have carried out 33 attacks against commercial vessels in the southern Red Sea region since November 19, a senior US Defense Department official told reporters.

"Since November 19 2023, Houthi rebels have launched attacks on at least 33 commercial vessels using a range of weaponry, including anti-ship ballistic missiles, close range ballistic missiles, land attack cruise missiles, uncrewed aerial vehicles and unmanned surface vehicles," the official said on Monday.

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Robocall Prompts Investigation Into Voter Suppression in New Hampshire - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik) - The New Hampshire Attorney General's Office is looking into voter complaints about a recorded robocall message that mimics President Joe Biden's voice and urges voters to skip tomorrow's presidential primary vote, the New Hampshire Justice Department announced.

"The Attorney General's Office has received complaints regarding a recorded message encouraging voters not to vote in the January 23, 2024, New Hampshire Presidential Primary Election. The message, which was sent on January 21, 2024, stated 'your vote makes a difference in November, not this Tuesday.' Although the voice in the robocall sounds like the voice of President Biden, this message appears to be artificially generated based on initial indications," the Justice Department said in a statement on Monday.

The message was manipulated to falsely claim that it was the treasurer of a political committee supporting the New Hampshire Democratic Presidential Primary write-in efforts for President Biden, the statement said.

"These messages appear to be an unlawful attempt to disrupt the New Hampshire Presidential Primary Election and to suppress New Hampshire voters. New Hampshire voters should disregard the content of this message entirely. Voting in the New Hampshire Presidential Primary Election does not preclude a voter from additionally voting in the November General Election," the statement said.

Individuals who received the message are urged to submit an email to the Department of Justice Election Law Unit, the statement added.

The state of New Hampshire will hold the first primary vote in the nation on Tuesday. The last polls are set to close at 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time (1:00 GMT) on Wednesday).

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US, Allies Conduct New Strikes Against 8 Houthi Targets in Yemen – Joint Statement

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik) – The United States and its allies, including the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Bahrain, and the Netherlands, conducted new strikes against eight Houthi positions in Yemen in response to continued attacks on ships in the Red Sea, according to a joint statement published by the Pentagon.

“Today, the militaries of the United States and United Kingdom, at the direction of their respective governments with support from Australia, Bahrain, Canada, and the Netherlands, conducted an additional round of proportionate and necessary strikes against 8 Houthi targets in Yemen in response to the Houthis' continued attacks against international and commercial shipping as well as naval vessels transiting the Red Sea,” the statement said on Monday.

The new strikes targeted a Houthi underground storage site as well as other locations housing Houthi's missile and air surveillance capabilities, the statement said.

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Nikki Haley Hopes to Win Support as She Holds Final Meetings With New Hampshire Voters

MANCHESTER, NH, January 23 (Sputnik) - US Republican presidential candidate Nikki Haley is attempting to win last-minute support from the electorate in the US state of New Hampshire as she is wrapping up a series of meetings with voters ahead of Tuesday's Republican presidential primary in the state while residents are predicting a win for former President Donald Trump, a Sputnik correspondent reports from the scene.

Haley is scheduled to speak at five voter meetings across the state on Monday. She has already visited Franklin, Concord, and Manchester. She also has meetings scheduled with voters in Windham and Salem before the end of the day.

However, despite the busy schedule on the last day before the primary, residents predicted that Haley would lose on Tuesday.

“I don't think she (Haley) stands a chance. It's a tough game,” the report cited Sydney, a Manchester taxi driver as saying. He added that in his view Trump will be the winner.

Many residents of Manchester agree with Sydney and predict a victory for Trump with “80 to 20” chances, but add that Haley will likely be able to stay in the primary run “for a while.”

Trump has every chance of a landslide victory in New Hampshire, as he already did in 2020 when he was able to win the favor of 84% of Republican voters as well as in 2016 when he got 35%.

According to a Monmouth University-Washington Post Poll published on Monday, Trump maintains a significant advantage over former US Ambassador Nikki Haley

Trump maintains a significant advantage over former US Ambassador Nikki Haley as the New

Hampshire presidential primary nears and the Republican race for the nomination is down to just two candidates. As many as 52% of potential voters said they were planning to choose Trump and 34% Haley.

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Soviet Veteran of Meeting With US Troops on Victory Day in 1945 Dies in New York at Age 99

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik) - Nikolay Zaitsev, the Soviet veteran of the Great Patriotic War who met with US troops in Czechoslovakia on May 9, 1945, died in New York at the age of 99, a coordinator of the Immortal Regiment in New York and Russian Youth of America Vice President Marina Ivannikova told Sputnik.

"He just woke up in the morning, got up and his heart stopped beating," Ivannikova said.

Zaitsev, who held the rank of colonel (retired), was an active member of the Immortal Regiment and led Victory Day marches since 2015.

"We became bolder and more united thanks to his support and participation. He promised to join our ranks during the 80th anniversary of the great victory over the Nazis in May 2025, but now that is impossible," she added.

Ivannikova pointed out that Zaitsev, despite his age, was the most energetic and young participant of the Russian Youth of America. "He was life-lover, our Everest, gentleman, rock, humorist and singer," she said.

Zaitsev was born in December 1924 in the Altai region of the Soviet Union and joined the Second World War at the Volkhov Front in 1943. Throughout the next two years, he participated in the battles for Leningrad as well as in the Red Army's military operations in Hungary and Austria.

On May 7, 1945, a reconnaissance group under Zaitsev command was ordered to cross the Danube River and meet with the US allies in Czechoslovakia as soon as possible.

Zaitsev said in an earlier interview with Sputnik that on May 9, 1945, he and other Soviet soldiers fraternized with US tank personnel "not far from Prague."

Ivannikova said that members of the Russian Youth of America will commemorate Zaitsev by holding a special meeting which, according to Russian tradition, occurs on the 40th day after a person dies.

"Now we are collecting notes and photos from all the people," Ivannikova added.

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Biden, Sunak Hold Call on Red Sea Attacks, Gaza Aid, Support for Ukraine - White House

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik)- US President Joe Biden held a phone call with UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, to discuss the ongoing Houthi attacks in the Red Sea, humanitarian aid for

Gaza and support for Ukraine, the White House said in a statement.

"Biden, Jr. spoke this afternoon with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak of the United Kingdom. The President and Prime Minister discussed ongoing Iranian-backed Houthi attacks against merchant and naval vessels transiting the Red Sea," the statement said on Monday.

According to the statement, Biden and Sunak expressed their dedication to freedom of navigation, international commerce and safeguarding mariners from "illegal and unjustifiable attacks."

"The President and Prime Minister discussed the importance of increasing humanitarian aid and civilian protections for people in Gaza, and securing the release of hostages held by Hamas," the statement said.

The statement added that the Biden and Sunak also reiterated their support for Ukraine. The Houthis vowed in November 2023 to attack any ships associated with Israel until the country halts military actions in the Gaza Strip. US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin in response announced the creation of a multinational operation to secure navigation in the Red Sea.

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Trump Trial in E. Jean Carroll's Defamation Case to Resume Wednesday - Court Official

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump's trial in E. Jean Carroll's defamation case in New York will resume on Wednesday, a court spokesperson told Sputnik.

"Adjourned until Wednesday," the spokesperson said on Monday about the new date for Trump's trial.

Earlier on Monday, media reported that US District Judge Lewis Kaplan postponed a hearing in the trial after a member of the jury became ill.

Trump lawyer Alina Habba also said she was not feeling well and told Kaplan that her parents have COVID-19, but since then she has tested negative for the coronavirus, according to the reports.

Concerns that the trial would be delayed until Tuesday coincide with the issue of the primary elections being held in the state of New Hampshire. Trump will square off in the primary against former US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley, in an effort to retain momentum toward the Republican party presidential nomination.

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Wall Street Indexes Hit Record Highs on Pre-Federal Reserve Rally

NEW YORK, January 23 (Sputnik) - Wall Street's key stock indexes extended their record highs on Monday as speculation over impending US interest rate cuts sent the nation's equity markets rallying ahead of the first Federal Reserve meeting for 2024.

The S&P 500, which tracks the blue-chip stocks of top 500 US corporations, registered its second record closing high in as many days, settling at 4,850.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average finished at 38,002, for its first ever close above 38,000.

The Federal Reserve will announce its first rate decision for the current year on January 31.

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US Budget Tussle Means Risk of Avoiding Govt. Shutdown Only Temporary - Fitch

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik) - The United States has avoided a partial government shutdown with a fourth budget-related fiscal resolution passed in just over six months, but a divided Congress means any comfort for the nation would be temporary, Fitch Ratings said.

"The passage of another continuing resolution avoids a partial U.S. government shutdown, but does not signal improvement in budget policymaking," Fitch said in a statement on Monday.

In January 18, Congress passed legislation to keep on funding federal government departments at existing levels. Deadlines to avoid a shutdown have been pushed to March 1 and March 8, while there are ongoing efforts to agree on appropriations bills for this fiscal year, which began on October 1 last year.

The latest continuing resolution follows last-minute agreements to suspend the debt ceiling in June 2023 and continuing resolutions in September and November to avert partial government shutdowns, Fitch said.

"This shows some capacity for bipartisan agreement on funding, avoiding a shutdown's economic and social consequences. However, it underscores how divided government has made reaching consensus on fiscal matters challenging. The 2023 general government deficit may have exceeded 9% of GDP, highlighting the inability of stopgap policymaking to address fiscal deterioration," Fitch said.

Current developments indicate that political dynamics will continue to dictate budget discussions at least until the November 2024 elections, Fitch said.

"We do not expect any significant fiscal consolidation measures to be passed before then. Possible supplementary spending bills, for example to provide additional support to Ukraine or Taiwan or on border security, could increase spending further. It is unclear how far brinkmanship will ease after the elections given high political polarization," Fitch said.

Such outcomes, and whether divided government continues, will also be important for any new legislation, including possible extension of the tax cuts in the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, and the resolution of the debt limit in January 2025, it said.

Fitch observed that steady deterioration in governance over the past 20 years, including on fiscal matters, was a key driver of our August 2023 downgrade of the United States to AA+/Stable, combined with expected fiscal deterioration over the next three years, and high and

growing general government debt.

"Only twice in the past 13 years has Congress passed all required spending bills before Oct. 1, often relying on continuing resolutions. Brinkmanship has hindered progress tackling medium-term challenges from prior tax cuts and rising social security and Medicare costs," Fitch said.

Meanwhile, fiscal challenges have been compounded by higher interest rates, highlighted by the 49% increase in net interest payments in public debt in the fourth quarter of 2023 from a year earlier. Rising interest costs contributed to the federal government deficit doubling in calendar year 2023, to an estimated 7.8% of GDP, as did higher Social Security outlays and deposit insurance costs, after fiscal adjustments to the impact of student loan forgiveness in 2022 and 2023, it said.

Fitch said its latest fiscal forecasts are for the US general government deficit to exceed 8% of GDP annually in 2023-2025.

"This is much higher than at our August downgrade, when we forecast deficits of 6.3%, 6.6%, and 6.9% of GDP in 2023, 2024 and 2025, respectively," Fitch said.

All these pose additional risks for the nation to avoid further shutdown scenarios, given the inability of Congress to agree on medium-term fiscal measures, Fitch also said.

"This could present risks to the US debt trajectory. High deficits already contribute to general government debt/GDP rising above 120% in 2025 under our current forecast," Fitch added.

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Schumer Says US Senate Continues to Negotiate Supplemental Funding Legislation

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik) - US lawmakers continue to negotiate on supplemental funding legislation for border security and foreign aid, US Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said during floor remarks.

"Over the weekend, Senate Democrats and Republicans, and the White House, continued negotiations on the national security supplemental," Schumer said on Monday.

Republican lawmakers have insisted on the inclusion of more stringent border security measures in the supplemental funding legislation, which also includes aid for Ukraine and Israel.

Biden has made clear that he is willing to work with Republicans on border security in a "big way," Schumer said. However, negotiators have yet to reach a deal, Schumer said.

The safety of Israel and the future of the Ukraine conflict hinge on Congress' actions, Schumer said.

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## PREVIEW - Trump Seeks to Further Secure Lead in Republican Primary on Tuesday in New Hampshire

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump aims to further solidify his dominance in the Republican primary when the state of New Hampshire votes for their preferred GOP nominee in the US presidential election, according to experts.

The state of New Hampshire will hold the first primary vote in the nation on Tuesday. The last polls are set to close at 8 p.m. Eastern Time (1:00 GMT on Wednesday).

Trump and his former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley will battle one-on-one in New Hampshire after Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, former Governor of Arkansas Asa Hutchinson, and US entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy suspended their Republican presidential bids following poor performances in the Iowa caucus.

Fair Vote President and CEO Rob Richie told Sputnik that if Trump wins in the New Hampshire Republican primary vote, he is also likely to win in the remaining states where he is on the ballot.

"Absent a Trump-shattering event, health or a legal issue that matters to GOP voters, New Hampshire is the last stand for his primary opponents," Richie said. "Even a Haley win is unlikely to slow him down."

### TRUMP TAKES EARLY LEAD BY WIDE MARGIN

Trump won easy in the Iowa caucus with a record-setting 51% of the vote, followed by DeSantis at 21% and Haley at 19%.

On Saturday, Trump called on the Republican Party to come together in a bid to oust President Joe Biden from the White House.

"As you know, earlier this week we had a historic victory in IOWA. Now is the time for the Republican Party to UNIFY," Trump said in a statement. "Instead of wasting hundreds of millions of dollars attacking Trump, we need to COME TOGETHER and focus all of our energy and resources on defeating Crooked Joe Biden!"

Most recently, DeSantis, Ramaswamy, and Republican Sen. Tim Scott, who ended his presidential bid in November, endorsed Trump for the Republican nomination while Hutchinson gave his support to Haley. Former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie also endorsed Haley after suspending his presidential bid earlier this month, but he was caught saying that Haley is "going to get smoked" in a race against Trump.

According to RealClearPolitics, which aggregates several polls, Trump leads Haley in New Hampshire 54% to 37%. In the national average, Trump holds a 55-point lead over Haley.

Rising Tide Foundation Vice President, historian and political commentator Matthew Ehret told Sputnik that Republicans still in the running for the Republican nomination "must accept the fact that their chances of coming out as anything but a distant second behind Trump is preordained."

Trump's support base has been entirely energized and his claim to the Republican nomination is pretty much guaranteed, Ehret added.

US constitutional historian and political commentator Dan Lazare said there's no doubt Trump will be the Republican nominee in the upcoming presidential election.

"The [Republican] convention will be little more than a coronation, and that the MAGA faithful will turn out in full force starting in September," Lazare told Sputnik. "I'm also pretty sure Trump will win in November since I regard Biden as a spent force as well."

Trump previously said Haley is "not tough enough, not smart enough, or capable enough" to be US president. Trump has also accused Haley of being "in the pocket of" establishment donors. Meanwhile, Haley has suggested that Trump is on a mental decline after he confused her for former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi when he was making remarks about the riot at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021.

#### DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY VOTE

The Democratic National Committee (DNC) has marked the state of South Carolina as the first official Democratic primary vote on February 3 since President Joe Biden is not on the ballot in the New Hampshire primary. Biden is up against US Congressman Dean Phillips and US author Marianne Williamson in the Democratic primary field.

The DNC went forward with its Biden-backed plan to make South Carolina the first official Democratic primary vote because it will have a more demographically diverse voice among voters.

"Too often over the past fifty years, candidates have dropped out or had their candidacies marginalized by the press and pundits because of poor performances in small states early in the process before voters of color cast a vote," Biden wrote in a letter to the DNC in 2022.

Earlier this month, media reported that Biden allies are planning to suppress third-party votes that threaten his reelection, such as Independent candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

Barry Friedman, a retired assistant economics professor at Brown University, told Sputnik that third-party candidates could exploit divisions among Democratic voters.

#### HOT TOPICS

According to retired FBI agent and former Minneapolis Division Legal Counsel Coleen Rowley, the US elections may distract the US public from other issues.

"Our bought and owned mainstream media uses such horse races to distract and divert their audiences from far more important topics," Rowley told Sputnik. "Such as both parties' lying us into over two decades of US-NATO's unlawful 'war on terror' that have taken over four million lives in several countries and the ongoing US-Israel genocide of Palestinians."

However, Friedman expects hot domestic issues will boost the US public's support for Trump. "As the year goes on, there is a chance that the economic data would turn gloomy, and that failure to get a good compromise deal on the border and immigration will give Trump some issues to divert attention from his legal situation," Friedman said.

White House and Senate negotiators have been in discussions for weeks on Biden's supplemental request that includes more than \$60 billion for Ukraine. Republican senators have refused to support it unless Biden commits to making meaningful changes to US border policy in order to mitigate the crisis on the southern border.

Last week, Biden indicated that he is willing to make significant changes to his border policy. Friedman further said that Trump may also benefit from any kind of win in court or in appeals, but in the end his charisma may be enough to keep him in the lead.

"Perhaps his emotional appeal, cultural/tribal identity, conspiracy theories, lies and entertainment are bigger than any issue, especially for the primaries," Friedman said.

Axios reported that Haley intends to participate in the Republican primary vote in South Carolina on February 24 regardless of the outcome in New Hampshire according to her campaign team. Although Haley is the former governor of South Carolina, lawmakers such as Sen. Scott and Congresswoman Nancy Mace have sided with Trump.

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#### SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, January 23 (Sputnik) –  
ISRAELI INVASION IN GAZA

\* Nearly two dozen US citizens have been killed as a result of the Israel-Hamas conflict, US State Department Principal Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel said on Monday.

\* The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) have destroyed 115 homes of Palestinians in the West Bank since October 7, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said.

\* The European Union has not provided the Palestinian delegation to the EU Foreign Affairs Council with its plan for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict settlement, Riyad al-Maliki, the foreign minister of the Palestinian authority, said.

\* The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) reported on Monday about Israeli tanks outside its hospital in the Al-Amal Hospital in the city of Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip, adding that it has lost contact with its team.

#### HOUTHIS ATTACKS

\* The foreign ministers of the European Union member states have "agreed in principle" to establish maritime security operations in the Red Sea, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said on Monday.

\* Yemen's Ansar Allah movement, also known as the Houthis, attacked a US military cargo ship in the Gulf of Aden, Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree said.

\* The United States Central Command (CENTCOM) said a report by Houthis of an operation carried out against the Ocean Jazz, a US military cargo ship is "patently false".

#### CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

\* Switzerland stands ready to support dialogue and initiatives aimed at reaching a peace settlement in the Ukraine conflict, Swiss Ambassador to the United Nations Pascale Baeriswyl said on Monday.

\* Hungary will not participate in financing arms supplies to Ukraine from the European Peace Facility (EPF), but cannot interfere with other countries, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto said.

\* Poland has joined the G7 declaration of support for Ukraine adopted at the NATO summit in Vilnius, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said.

\* The Ukrainian armed forces lost up to 320 soldiers in the Donetsk direction in the past day, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

#### UN SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING ON UKRAINE

\* Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov during a UN Security Council in New York said US aid to Ukraine resembles not the financing of military operations, but a profitable business project, with 90% of the funds remaining in the United States.

\* Moscow has never given up on a peaceful resolution to the Ukraine conflict and is ready for negotiations, Lavrov told a UN Security Council in New York.

\* The blood of the civilians killed in Ukraine's deadly attack on the city of Donetsk is on the

consciousness of those who are supplying weapons and munitions to Ukraine, Lavrov said.

\* Any transfer of weapons related to the Ukraine conflict must take place in line with international legal framework, including UN Security Council resolutions, UN Deputy to the High Representative of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs Adedeji Ebo said.

\* China called at the United Nations for resuming negotiations to end the conflict in Ukraine.

#### SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA

\* There were proposals to include ban on export of equipment that could be used in military industry to Russia during the recent EU foreign affairs council, but all these proposals are made just to make the union "look busy," Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto said on Monday.

\* The European Union has reached a "political agreement" regarding the use of immobilized Russian assets for aid to Ukraine, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Josep Borrell said.

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Top US Court Allows Border Patrol to Remove Texas Razor Wire Fencing on Southern Border

WASHINGTON, January 22 (Sputnik) - The US Supreme Court issued an order temporarily allowing federal Border Patrol agents to remove razor wire fencing Texas officials placed on the state's southern border with Mexico, a court filing revealed on Monday.

Texas law enforcement placed razor wire fencing along the state's border with Mexico in order to deter the record level of migrants illegally coming into the United States that are overwhelming local resources and communities struggling to cope with the crisis.

"The application to vacate injunction presented to Justice Alito and by him referred to the Court is granted," the filing stated. "The December 19, 2023 order of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit ... is vacated."

Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Amy Coney Barrett were the only two conservatives to side with the three liberal Justices on the court's panel.

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.

The White House is reportedly willing to work with Senate Republicans to significantly tighten immigration policies as a means to deter record migration at the US-Mexico border.

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US Allies May Reconsider Support to Ukraine If Washington Further Delays Aid - White House

WASHINGTON, January 22 (Sputnik) - White House Strategic Communications Coordinator John Kirby said in a press briefing on Monday that it is absolutely possible that other countries may reconsider their support for Ukraine if Washington continues to delay new aid for the country.

"I think it's entirely possible we should expect some of our allies and partners might have to make different decisions if they see American leadership falter here, or the United States pulls back from supporting Ukraine," Kirby said when asked whether there was a danger that European states may withdraw their support for Ukraine if there is a further delay of aid from the United States.

Kirby went on to say that President Joe Biden is mindful that other countries are watching what Washington is doing, including Russia and China as well as US allies.

US Senators and Biden administration officials have been negotiating for weeks to reach a deal to provide the White House with more than \$100 billion in supplemental funds for Ukraine, Israel, and other priorities, including US border security.

Republican lawmakers have made it clear they will only support Biden's supplemental request if it includes meaningful policy changes to stop the influx of migrants arriving at the US southern border.

US House Speaker Mike Johnson, after attending a meeting with Biden earlier this week, told reporters that the current status quo on Ukraine is unacceptable.

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

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White House Says ABC Poll Findings on Biden's Low Sharpness, Physical Health 'Confusing'

WASHINGTON, January 22 (Sputnik) - White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said in a press briefing on Monday that the poll's findings of U.S. President Joe Biden's low sharpness and physical health are confusing taking into account what he had achieved in the last three years.

"I have to say that's a little confusing for me because if you look at what this President has done in the last three years," Jean-Pierre said. "There's the 'Chips and Science Act' there is the 'Inflation Reduction Act'. These are legislation that is going to have a difference for generations to come... and this is something that this president has done."

"That's pretty sharp for this president to have been able to do that," she added.

The January poll conducted by ABC News/Ipsos showed that 28% of Americans believe that Biden has the mental sharpness required to serve as President, 28% said they think Biden has the physical health needed to serve as leader of the country.

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US Expects 6G Wireless Technology to Begin Rolling Out Around 2030 - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, January 22 (Sputnik) - The United States expects sixth-generation (6G) wireless network technology to begin rolling out around 2030, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Information and Communications Policy Steve Lang said on Monday.

"6G is the next generation that we're expecting, I think around 2030 to begin to roll out," Lang said during remarks at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington.

The United State is now identifying frequencies for 6G technology, Lang also said.

Fifth-generation (5G) technology has been largely rolled out in the United States and continues to be introduced around the world, Lang added.

The development of wireless technologies has been divided into several generations, based on technical advancements, such as mobile internet access and improved data transfer speeds.

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State Dept. Says Unaware of US Citizen Gonzalo Lira's Case Who Died in Ukrainian Prison

WASHINGTON, January 22 (Sputnik) – The US State Department on Monday once again provided a self-contradictory statement concerning American citizen Gonzalo Lira by claiming that it is not aware of his case and referred to Ukrainian authorities.

"I am not aware of that case. I refer you to Ukrainian authorities," State Department deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel said during a press briefing when asked if Washington would initiate a probe into Lira's death.

Earlier on Monday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said at a UN Security Council in New York that Western officials including those in the United States lack the courage to comment on the death of US citizen Gonzalo Lira.

The State Department in January confirmed to Sputnik that Lira had died in a Ukrainian prison following a lengthy detention in Ukraine.

A dual citizen of the United States and Chile, blogger Gonzalo Lira was arrested by the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) on May 5 on charges of justifying Russia's military operation in Ukraine and allegedly disseminating pro-Russian propaganda. He was released in July and later arrested again after he attempted to leave Ukraine by crossing the border with Hungary on a motorcycle.

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## Bay Area Deals with Aftermath of Heavy Rain, Flooded Roads, Downed Trees - Reports

SAN FRANCISCO, January 22 (Sputnik)- The Bay Area is facing the aftermath of heavy rain, encountering flooded roads, fallen trees, and mudslides, the Patch reported on Monday.

According to the report, while flood warnings and advisories have ended, the consequential impact of collected rainfall continues, causing disruptions across the Bay Area.

The report said that Santa Cruz County's roads are closed due to fallen trees and soil slides caused by wet weather, with State Highway 152 east of Mt. Madonna experiencing a mudslide and implementing one-way traffic control.

The Guerneville School District in Sonoma County has announced its closure on Monday due to a creek flooding impacting nearby roads in Guerneville, the report said.

Furthermore, the report said that the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office advised residents in Guerneville to be prepared for potential evacuation.

The report added that in San Mateo, a fallen tree obstructed traffic, with the affected road anticipated to remain closed until approximately until the tree is cleared.

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## US CENTCOM Says Houthi Report of Attack on Military Cargo Vessel 'Patently False'

WASHINGTON, January 22 (Sputnik) – The United States Central Command (CENTCOM) said a report by Houthis of an operation carried out against the Ocean Jazz, a US military cargo ship is “patently false”.

“The Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists' report of an alleged successful attack on M/V Ocean Jazz is patently false,” CENTCOM statement said. “NAVCENT has maintained constant communications with M/V Ocean Jazz throughout its safe transit”.

Earlier on Monday, a spokesman for Yemen's Ansar Allah movement, also known as the Houthis, said that the group had attacked a US military cargo ship in the Gulf of Aden.

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## Lebanon Foreign Minister Says Fighting on Border Will Stop if Agreement on Gaza Reached

WASHINGTON, January 22 (Sputnik) - The fighting on the Lebanese-Israel border between the Israeli Defense Forces and Hezbollah would stop if a ceasefire agreement on Gaza is reached, Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdallah BouHabib said on Monday.

"If they really reach an agreement in Gaza, this will stop immediately and automatically. It will stop in southern Lebanon or northern Israel," BouHabib said.

BouHabib characterized the skirmishes on the Lebanese-Israel border as "minor fighting."

"I don't think the intention is to have a big war. It has to do with what's going on in Gaza, which

is not acceptable," BouHabib said.

The situation in southern Lebanon deteriorated after the start of Israel's indiscriminate bombardment and invasion of Gaza in which more than 26,000 Palestinians have been killed and well over 60,000 have been wounded. The IDF and Hezbollah regularly exchange fire in areas along the border.

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US State Department Says Russia Not Getting Alaska Territories Back After Kremlin Decree

WASHINGTON, January 22 (Sputnik) - The Russian Federation will not gain back territory in Alaska that was sold to the United States, US State Department Principal Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel said on Monday.

Last week, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree allocating funds to identify and protect properties in former Russian and Soviet territories. However, it remains unclear exactly how the decree will be applied.

"Certainly he [Putin] is not getting it back," Patel said during a press briefing, when asked about the decree and its potential impact on Alaska.

The Russian Empire sold Alaska to the US in 1867 for \$7.2 million, after establishing colonies in the territory since the 1700s.

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UN Chief 'Very Concerned' About Israel Airstrikes on Damascus - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, January 22 (Sputnik) - US Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is "very concerned" about Israel's latest airstrikes on Damascus, United Nation spokesperson Stephan Dujarric said on Monday.

"It is yet another demonstration of the risk of spillover. He [Guterres] is very concerned about these airstrikes that took place in Damascus," Dujarric said during a press briefing.

On Saturday, Iranian media reported that Israeli airstrikes on Damascus killed five military advisers of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, including the commander of the Quds Force's intelligence service. The Syrian Defense Ministry said several civilians were also killed and injured as a result of the strike.

Dujarric pointed out that the airstrikes affected a residential area where UN premises are located. and the United Nations is very concerned about potential civilian casualties.

"We are very happy that all our staff is accounted for," Dujarric said.

The United Nations calls on all sides to exercise the maximum possible restraint, keep their obligations under international law and avoid attacks that could lead to civilian casualties,

Dujarric added.

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US State Dept. Says Takes Foreign Mission Security Seriously Amid Russian Mission Concerns

WASHINGTON, January 22 (Sputnik) - US State Department Principal Deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel said on Monday that the United States takes diplomatic security seriously, after the Russian Embassy in the United States sent a request to strengthen security around its missions and consulates.

"We take our responsibilities of foreign missions that we host in our country quite seriously, including the safety and security of relevant diplomats from foreign nations who may work and operate outside of the United States," Patel said during a press briefing in response to a question from Sputnik.

However, Patel declined to confirm the receipt or response to the Russian request.

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US State Department Says Can Confirm 23 American Deaths in Israel-Hamas Conflict

WASHINGTON, January 22 (Sputnik) - Nearly two dozen US citizens have been killed as a result of the Israel-Hamas conflict, US State Department Principal Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel said on Monday.

"As a result of continued violence after October 7, we can share the confirmed deaths of 23 American citizens," Patel said during a press briefing.

Twenty one of the 23 citizens served in the Israel Defense Forces, and one served in the Israeli National Police, Patel said. A 17-year-old US citizen, Tawfic Abdel Jabbar, was killed in the West Bank, Patel also said.

The United States continues to engage with the Israeli government to gather information on Jabbar's death and has called for an investigation to determine the circumstances of his death and any accountability, Patel said.

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UN General Assembly President Condemns Deadly Shelling of Donetsk - Office

UNITED NATIONS, January 22 (Sputnik) - UN General Assembly President Dennis Francis denounces yesterday's attack on Donetsk, spokeswoman Monica Grailey told Sputnik on

Monday.

"The PGA condemns any attack against civilians and civilian infrastructure, including in the city of Donetsk. President Francis expresses deep concern about the loss of life and suffering experienced by many people due to the war. He calls for full respect of the international law, including international humanitarian law," Grailey said.

Donetsk People's Republic leader Denis Pushilin said that at least 27 civilians were killed and 20 others were injured, including two children, in a Ukrainian strike on a market in a bustling district of Donetsk on Sunday morning.

Speaking at a UN Security Council in New York on Monday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that the blood of the civilians killed in Ukraine's attack is on the conscience of those supplying weapons and munitions to Kiev.

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Switzerland Supports Dialogue Aimed at Achieving Peace in Ukraine - Envoy to UN

(Updates with background in paras 3, 4)

UNITED NATIONS, January 22 (Sputnik) - Switzerland stands ready to support dialogue and initiatives aimed at reaching a peace settlement in the Ukraine conflict, Swiss Permanent Representative to the United Nations Pascale Baeriswyl said on Monday.

"We are ready to support any initiative and dialogue aimed at achieving peace in accordance with the UN Charter," Baeriswyl said.

Russian envoy to the UN Office in Geneva Gennady Gatilov said earlier that Switzerland has abandoned its status as a neutral country by siding with Kiev and its NATO sponsors since the beginning of Russia's special military operation in February 2022. In addition, Switzerland's position on Ukraine has had a negative impact on Bern's international role.

Russian Foreign Ministry Information and Press Department Deputy Director Ivan Nechaev said that Switzerland had actually lost its status as a neutral country.

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Biden Calls Deaths of Two Navy Seals Off Coast of Somalia 'Tragic, Mourns Their Passing

WASHINGTON, January 22 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden said on Monday that he was mourning the “tragic” loss of two Navy Seals who died during an operation off the coast of Somalia to intercept an alleged Iranian weapons shipment to the Houthis.

“Jill and I are mourning the tragic deaths of two of America's finest — Navy SEALs who were lost at sea while executing a mission off the coast of East Africa last week,” Biden said in a statement, noting that the deceased Seals were the embodiment of the best the US has to offer.

Earlier on Monday, US Central Command (CENTCOM) said it had not yet found the bodies of the two Navy SEALs who fell into the water in the Gulf of Aden off the coast of Somalia after 10 days of searches and updated their status to “deceased.”

Last week, CENTCOM said the two Navy SEALs were lost at sea during an operation to seize a dhow that allegedly contained Iranian weapons for Yemen's Houthis. One of the soldiers reportedly slipped from a ladder and the second dived in after the first.

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Family of US Mercenary Killed In Ukraine Can Not Return His Remains Back Home - Reports

WASHINGTON, January 22 (Sputnik) – The family of a US mercenary who was killed in Ukraine over a month ago still can not return his body back to home, the Springfield News-Leader said on Monday.

Former Marine Ethan Hertweck was killed in Ukraine in early December, just several days before the end of his contract, the report said. However, his remains are still in the same place where he died during the attack of the Russian forces near the city of Avdeevka.

Hertweck's body still lays under rubble and ice, it added.

The mercenary's mother, Leslie Hertweck, said that, officially, her son is on record as missing in action (MIA). However, the report pointed out that there is at least one witness who saw how he died.

The family said they made multiple attempts to receive Ethan's body, but all of them were unsuccessful. Relatives do not rule out that Ukraine will have to get his body during an exchange with Russia in order to send it back to the US. The report stressed that this process

may take months.

Hertweck, 37, began serving in Ukraine in early 2023. He served as a military medic, according to the report.

The report also said that he is not the only US mercenary that died in Ukraine since Russia began its military operation in February 2022, There are “dozens” of US citizens who have reportedly died in the battlefield, it added.

Russia has been conducting a special military operation in Ukraine since February 24, 2022. President Vladimir Putin has said the operation aims to "protect people subjected to genocide by the Kiev regime for eight years." According to the president, the ultimate goal of the operation is to liberate Donbas and create conditions that guarantee Russia's security.

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"We are ready to support any initiative and dialogue aimed at achieving peace in accordance with the UN Charter," Baeriswyl said.

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US Officials Lack Courage to Comment on Death of American in Ukrainian Prison - Lavrov

UNITED NATIONS, January 22 (Sputnik) - Western officials including those in the United States lack the courage to comment on the death of US citizen Gonzalo Lira, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said at a UN Security Council in New York on Monday.

“Has anyone in the West, especially the United States or any officials, said anything about this death? No.” Lavrov said. “And the Western delegations today and the representative of the Kiev regime will probably not find the courage to comment on this and other outrageous crimes by Zelenskyy and his colleagues.”

The State Department in January confirmed to Sputnik that Lira had died in a Ukrainian prison following a lengthy detention in Ukraine.

A dual citizen of the United States and Chile, blogger Gonzalo Lira was arrested by the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU) on May 5 on charges of justifying Russia's military operation in Ukraine and allegedly disseminating pro-Russian propaganda. He was released in July and later arrested again after he attempted to leave Ukraine by crossing the border with Hungary on a motorcycle.

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Trump Says Legal Cases 'Political Scams' After E. Jean Carroll Trial Delay in US Court

WASHINGTON, January 22 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump said on Monday that the legal cases against him are political scams designed to interfere in the 2024 presidential election, after a US court postponed proceedings in the E. Jean Carroll sexual assault trial.

"Despite the fact that I was there, on time and on schedule, it was just learned that one of the jurors is, unfortunately, not feeling well, and for that reason, today's session of the trial, having to do with a woman I know absolutely nothing about, has therefore been canceled with a new date to be determined," Trump said in a statement via Truth Social. "These are political scams designed for high level election interference."

US District Judge Lewis Kaplan will later decide whether to resume proceedings on Tuesday or Wednesday. Trump's attorneys are requesting that the court postpone the proceedings until Wednesday so that he can participate in New Hampshire primary events the day before.

Legal cases against Trump could have begun years ago or in the years ahead, but not during the 2024 election season, the statement said.

Trump will comply with legal obligations but requests fair judges and juries, the statement added.

Trump characterized the cases as "Joe Biden-inspired witch hunt trials" and called the 2024 election the most important in the history of the United States.

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Lavrov Says US Military Aid to Ukraine Resembles Profitable Business Project

UNITED NATIONS, January 22 (Sputnik) - Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov during a UN Security Council in New York on Monday said US aid to Ukraine resembles not the financing of military operations, but a profitable business project, with 90% of the funds remaining in the United States.

"Blinken, the US Secretary of State, emphasizes that continued assistance to Ukraine is a guarantee of creating new jobs in the United States. It is as though he is talking not about financing a war that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives in Ukraine, but about some kind of profitable business venture," Lavrov said.

Lavrov said senior administration officials are "cynical" in their effort to get Congress to agree to fund new assistance for Ukraine,

"We know from what they say, for example, that 90 percent of the military budget which is being given by the US to the Kiev regime remains in the United States and is used to develop the military industry of the country and to update US weaponry. The old ancient junk is being used in Ukraine," Lavrov said.

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US Imposes New Sanctions on Hamas, Kata'ib Hezbollah, IRGC Quds Force - Treasury  
(Updates with more details in paras 2-10; modifies lede)

WASHINGTON, January 22 (Sputnik) - The United States has announced a new round of sanctions that target individuals and entities linked to Hamas, Kata'ib Hezbollah and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force (IRGC-QF), the Treasury Department said in a press release on Monday.

"Iran and its proxies have sought to abuse regional economies and use seemingly legitimate businesses as cover for funding and facilitating their attacks," Treasury Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Brian Nelson said in the release.

The sanctions target Iraqi airline Fly Baghdad and its CEO for providing assistance to the IRGC-QF and its proxy groups in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. The sanctions also target three leaders and supporters of one of the IRGC-QF's main Iran-aligned militias in Iraq - Kata'ib Hezbollah, as well as a business that moves and launders money for the organization.

In conjunction with Australian and UK authorities, the United States also targeted several networks of Hamas-affiliated financial exchanges in the Gaza Strip, their owners and associates, and particularly financial facilitators who have played key roles in fund transfers from the IRGC-QF to Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in the Gaza Strip, the release said.

Fly Baghdad has supported the operations of the IRGC-QF and its proxies, including the Syrian Arab Republican Guard, Lebanese Hezbollah, Kata'ib Hezbollah and the Abu al-Fadl al-Abbas Brigade, by delivering materiel and personnel throughout the region, the release said.

Kata'ib Hezbollah has also been using Fly Baghdad to transport fighters, weapons and money to Syria and Lebanon to prop up the Syrian government, the release said.

In addition, the United States has sanctioned Fly Baghdad CEO Basheer Abdulkadhim Alwan al-Shabbani and two Iraq-registered aircraft owned by it, the release said.

Among the sanctioned Kata'ib Hezbollah members are Hossein Moanes al-Ibudi, who heads its political party, Harakat Hoquq and Awqad Muhsin Faraj al-Hamidawi, the youngest brother of the already-sanctioned Secretary-General Ahmad al-Hamidawi, the release said.

Joint sanctions have also been imposed on Hamas-affiliated financial facilitators, including the Shamlakh family network; Gaza-based moneychanger Zuhair Shamlakh and his companies Al-Markaziya Li-Siarafa and Arab China Trading Company; the military wing of Hamas financial facilitators Ahmed Shamlakh, Alaa Shamlakh and Imad Shamlakh, the release said.

In addition, the joint sanctions also target the Gaza-based Hirzallah Exchange and General Trading Company for allegedly working with Hamas to facilitate transactions, the release added.

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## Canada Ready for Any Outcome of US Presidential Race - Joly

WASHINGTON, January 22 (Sputnik) – Canada is pursuing a pragmatic approach and will be ready for any outcome of the 2024 US presidential election, Minister of Foreign Affairs Melanie Joly said on Monday.

"This year, half of the planet will be going through elections, including in the US. And we will be ready. We will have a pragmatic approach even when it comes to the US, and even when it comes of course to our best friend and ally," Joly told reporters.

Joly stressed that regardless of the choice made by US voters, including one that would mean the return of former President Donald Trump, Canada would be ready to work with any US president.

US and Canadian governments have always worked through their relationship regardless of Democratic or Republican leaders being elected to office, she added.

On Saturday, Canadian Ambassador to the US Kirsten Hillman urged Ottawa to reinvigorate relations with the team of former President Trump so as to be ready to work together if he wins this year's election, given the US's importance as Canada's closest economic partner and ally.

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## Russia Never Gave Up on Peaceful Resolution to Ukraine Crisis, Ready to Negotiate - Lavrov

UNITED NATIONS, January 22 (Sputnik) - Moscow has never given up on a peaceful resolution to the Ukraine conflict and is ready for negotiations, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told a UN Security Council in New York on Monday.

"We never gave up on the peaceful resolution, we are always ready to negotiate — negotiate not about how to keep the leadership of the Kiev regime in place but about overcoming the inheritance of a decade-long destructive looting of the country and violence against the people, removing the reasons for the tragic Ukrainian situation," Lavrov said.

The minister added that the plans of both Kiev and its "masters" have nothing to do with peace.

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## US Congresswoman Mace, House Freedom Caucus Chair Endorse Trump's 2024 Reelection Bid

WASHINGTON, January 22 (Sputnik) - US Congresswoman Nancy Mace said on Monday that she is endorsing former President Donald Trump's 2024 reelection bid, ahead of the New Hampshire primary on January 23 and South Carolina Republican primary next month.

"Today I'm endorsing Donald J. Trump for President. I don't see eye to eye perfectly with any candidate. And until now I've stayed out of it. But the time has come to unite behind our

nominee," Mace said in a statement via social media platform X.

Mace endorsed Trump despite representing the state of South Carolina, where 2024 candidate and former US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley served in the state legislature and as governor. Last week, US Senator for South Carolina Tim Scott also endorsed Trump.

On Sunday, US House Freedom Caucus Chairman Bob Good endorsed Trump as well and called on all other Republicans to do the same.

"We need President Trump to secure our border, strengthen our military, re-establish our energy dominance, and reinvigorate our economy. I am committed to doing everything I can to help ensure he is reelected President," Good said in a statement.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis also dropped out of the presidential race on Sunday and endorsed Trump, leaving Haley as his only competitor.

The South Carolina Republican primary is scheduled for February 24. Republicans will also hold caucuses in Nevada and the Virgin Islands on February 8.

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Blood of Civilians Killed in Donetsk Falls on Those Supplying Weapons to Ukraine - Lavrov

UNITED NATIONS, January 22 (Sputnik) - The blood of the civilians killed in Ukraine's deadly attack on the city of Donetsk is on the consciousness of those who are supplying weapons and munitions to Ukraine, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said during a meeting of the UN Security Council on Monday.

"The merchants of death are not put off by the fact that their weapons, including cluster and depleted uranium munitions, are being used methodically, mercilessly and intentionally to knowingly strike civilian infrastructure. This was the case during the strikes on residential areas in Belgorod on December 13 and yesterday on the market and shops in Donetsk. The blood of dozens of killed civilians is on the consciousness of those who are arming [the regime of Ukrainian President Volodymyr] Zelenskyy," Lavrov said.

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Haley Continues to Trail Trump by Wide Margin Ahead of New Hampshire Primary - Poll

WASHINGTON, January 22 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump maintains a significant advantage over former US Ambassador Nikki Haley as the New Hampshire presidential primary nears and the Republican race for the nomination is down to just two candidates, according to a Monmouth University-Washington Post Poll out Monday.

"When asked for whom they would vote in Tuesday's Republican presidential primary, 52% of potential voters choose Trump and 34% pick Haley," the poll said.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, who dropped out of the race on Sunday, got 8%. All other

former candidates gained only 2% in total.

Primaries in New Hampshire are scheduled for January 23.

Trump's leadership in the race remains clear even though Haley's support has almost doubled since November, when she had only 18%. However, the former president's backing has also improved from 46%, according to the survey.

"He receives backing from large majorities of voters who describe themselves as MAGA supporters (82%) or very conservative (78%), as well as white evangelicals (69%) and those without a college degree (60%). Haley has increased her share of the college graduate vote (43%, up from 29% in November), but it has not come at Trump's expense (39%, up from 32%)," it added.

Over two-thirds of Trump supporters said they are extremely motivated to vote in the primaries, while only 55% of Haley backers have the same determination.

The survey also revealed that Trump has a huge advantage over Haley on immigration policy (62% against 26%), economic policy (58% against 29%), and foreign policy (57% against 32%).

The poll was conducted by telephone and online from January 16 to 20 among 712 potential Republican presidential primary voters in New Hampshire.

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China Calls for Resuming Negotiations to End Ukraine Conflict – UN Ambassador

UNITED NATIONS, January 22 (Sputnik) – China called on Monday at the United Nations for resuming negotiations to end the conflict in Ukraine.

"Negotiations must be resumed as soon as possible. There are no winners in conflict or war," Chinese Ambassador Zhang Jun said at a UNSC meeting.

He added that parties needed to "remain highly vigilant about nuclear safety risks" and "diplomatic efforts must not be abandoned or given up under any circumstances."

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All Parties to Ukraine Conflict Must Comply With Int'l Legal Framework on Weapons - UN

UNITED NATIONS, January 22 (Sputnik) - Any transfer of weapons related to the Ukraine conflict must take place in line with international legal framework, including UN Security Council resolutions, UN Deputy to the High Representative of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs Adedeji Ebo said on Monday.

"Needless to say, and as has been several times stressed by the high representative any transfer of weapons must take place within the applicable international legal framework, including relevant Security Council resolutions," Ebo told a UN Security Council meeting on

Ukraine.

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Most Non-Biased Experts See West's Support of Kiev as Obstacle To Peace - Lavrov

UNITED NATIONS, January 22 (Sputnik) - The majority of impartial experts see that the West's continued support of Kiev impedes peace, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said at the UN Security Council in New York on Monday.

"Today, it is completely obvious to the overwhelming majority of non-biased experts that the key factor that impedes the search for paths to a peaceful resolution of the Ukrainian crisis is the ongoing Western support of the Kiev regime," Lavrov said at a UNSC meeting.

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UN Chief Calls Transfer, Use of Cluster Munitions in Ukraine 'Very Concerning' - Official

UNITED NATIONS, January 22 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres reiterated his call to end the use of cluster munitions in conflicts and finds the reports on their use in Ukraine "very concerning," Adedeji Ebo, deputy to the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs High Representative, said on Monday.

"The Secretary-General has repeatedly called for an immediate end to the use of cluster munitions" and finds the reports on the "transfer and use of cluster munitions throughout the conflict, very concerning," Ebo told a UN Security Council meeting on Ukraine.

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Biden in Fake Call Tells Democrats Not to Vote in New Hampshire Primary Tuesday - Reports

WASHINGTON, January 22 (Sputnik) - Someone faked US President Joe Biden's voice in phone calls to New Hampshire Democrats to sway them from voting in Tuesday's presidential primary, NBC News reported on Monday.

A prominent state Democrat is preparing to file a complaint with the New Hampshire top attorney over the incident, the report said.

"Voting this Tuesday only enables the Republicans in their quest to elect Donald Trump again. Your vote makes a difference in November, not this Tuesday," the report cited the fake message as saying.

Both, Republicans and Democrats will hold their primaries in New Hampshire on January 23.

Biden will not appear on the state's ballot among other 21 candidates following a scheduling conflict between the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and local officials, who claim that state law requires them to hold primaries at least seven days prior to any other state and not on February 6 or three days after the South Carolina's primary.

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US Court Delays E. Jean Carroll Trial Against Trump - Reports

(Adds details in para 4)

WASHINGTON, January 22 (Sputnik) - US District Judge Lewis Kaplan postponed a trial in New York against former US President Donald Trump for allegedly sexually assaulting writer E. Jean Carroll, Politico reported on Monday.

Kaplan canceled court due to a member of the jury falling ill, the report said. Trump lawyer Alina Habba also was not feeling well and told Kaplan that her parents have COVID, the report said.

If delayed until Tuesday, court proceedings would coincide with primary elections in the state of New Hampshire. Trump will square off in the primary against former US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley, in an effort to retain momentum toward the Republican Party nomination, after winning the Iowa caucus earlier this month.

Habba reminded the court of the potential overlap and requested it delay proceedings until Wednesday, the report said. Kaplan reserved decision on the matter, the report said.

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## Canada to Enforce Two-Year Cap on International Student Intake – Immigration Minister

WASHINGTON, January 22 (Sputnik) – The Canadian Government will enforce a two-year cap on the intake of international students to the country, Minister of Immigration Marc Miller said on Monday.

“We are setting a national application intake cap for a period of two years. For 2024, the cap is expected to result in approximately 364,000 approved study permits, a decrease of 35% from 2023,” Miller said during a press conference.

The minister added that in order to remain “fair,” the permit’s cap would be based on a province’s population. Thus, some provinces will see more significant reductions in their international student intake.

Miller said Ottawa would continue working with provinces and territories to establish measures to determine the distribution of the cap among academic institutions under their jurisdiction.

The minister also announced that effective immediately, applicants will be required to provide a provincial attestation with their study permit application. Miller however stressed that master’s and doctoral students would not be affected by the cap.

In line with this announcement, the minister said that open work permits would only be available only for the spouses of individuals enrolled in master’s and doctoral programs or professional programs such as law or medicine, a measure that is set to be announced in the coming weeks.

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## US Supreme Court Agrees to Hear Oklahoma Death Row Inmate Glossip’ Appeal - Document

WASHINGTON, January 22 (Sputnik) - The US Supreme Court on Friday agreed to hear the appeal by Oklahoma death row inmate Richard Glossip to overturn his conviction for murder, the court document said on Monday.

"The motion of petitioner for leave to proceed in forma pauperis and the petition for a writ of certiorari are granted," the document said.

The parties are directed to brief and argue whether the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals' holding that the Oklahoma Post-Conviction Procedure Act precluded post-conviction relief is an adequate and independent state-law ground for the judgment, the document said.

In May, the Supreme Court ordered that the scheduled execution of Oklahoma death row inmate Richard Glossip be halted while it examines his petition to review his case.

The order explained that the stay of execution will automatically terminate should both petitions for writs of certiorari be denied. In case one of the petitions is denied while the other is granted, it will be up to the mandate of the Supreme Court to decide on the stay termination.

Glossip, 60, was set to be executed on May 18 at the Oklahoma state penitentiary in McAlester. In 1997, he was convicted of ordering the death of Barry Van Treese, who owned a motel where Glossip worked. Van Treese was murdered by Justin Sneed, who pleaded guilty and testified that Glossip hired him to get rid of his boss. Sneed’s guilty plea helped him avoid the death

penalty.

Glossip maintains he was not involved in the murder of his boss, according to media reports.