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Hardline Netanyahu Ministers Attack US as Israel Causes Headaches for Biden

The US president walks a fine line attempting to assuage the concerns of many Democratic Party voters while not alienating pro-Israel constituencies.

Hardline ministers in Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government are causing headaches for Washington with their outspoken criticism of US President Joe Biden, according to reports in US media.

Two figures in particular threaten to damage Israeli relations with their crucial American ally even as the White House attempts to decrease tensions on all sides.

National security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir and finance minister Bezalel Smotrich have long been considered the most controversial members of Netanyahu's cabinet. Hailing from ultranationalist Zionist parties, the two figures are considered among the most extreme figures in Israeli politics. They've both been panned for comments widely seen as racist and anti-Arab, with Smotrich once remarking that a Palestinian village in the occupied West Bank should be "wiped out."

Smotrich and Ben Gvir have frequently criticized President Biden in recent weeks as the US leader struggles to politically navigate Israel policy.

Ben-Gvir criticized Biden for attempts to facilitate the transfer of aid to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, whose inhabitants are facing widespread hunger. Smotrich accused the US president of leading an anti-Semitic campaign when the White House placed sanctions on a handful of Israeli settlers engaged in West Bank violence.

The two figures have each played a role in justifying Israeli colonization of internationally-accepted Palestinian territory, with Ben-Gvir even distributing thousands of rifles to Israeli settlers. Both have expressed strong opposition to White House support for a so-called "two state solution" in the region, which would return a portion of historic Palestinian lands to their original inhabitants.

The inclusion of Smotrich and Ben-Gvir in Netanyahu's cabinet, which allows him to rule with a narrow parliamentary majority, was a key concern for thousands of Israelis who launched protests in 2022 over the Israeli Prime Minister's efforts to weaken judiciary oversight.

Former Israeli government minister Shulamit Aloni once admitted that accusations of anti-semitism are used cynically and indiscriminately against critics of Israel, confessing "it's a trick," in an interview with US media.

"We always use it," said Aloni in a discussion with US journalist Amy Goodman. "When from Europe somebody is criticizing Israel then we bring up the Holocaust. When in this country people are criticizing Israel then they are 'anti-semitic.'"

"The organization is strong and has a lot of money," said Aloni, referring to pro-Israel organizations in the United States.

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Hardline ministers in Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government are causing headaches for Washington with their outspoken criticism of US President Joe Biden.

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National security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir and finance minister Bezalel Smotrich have long been considered the most controversial members of Netanyahu's cabinet, often making comments widely panned as racist and extremist. In recent weeks the ultranationalist figures have criticized US efforts to transfer aid to Gaza, while Smotrich accused the US president of leading an "anti-Semitic campaign" when the White House placed sanctions on a handful of Israeli settlers engaged in West Bank violence.

Former Israeli government minister Shulamit Aloni once admitted that accusations of anti-semitism are used cynically and indiscriminately against critics of Israel, confessing "it's a trick," in an interview with US media.

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NTSB Believes Boeing Door Plug Blowout Was Likely Due to Missing Bolts

The preliminary findings help to unravel the terrifying incident that took place last month when a brand new Boeing airplane's food plug blew out mid-flight.

On Tuesday, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) released findings from its investigation on the Boeing 737 Max 9 jet incident, during which a cabin panel blew off mid-flight. In their 19-page report, which included photographic evidence, the NTSB says that four bolts which were supposed to hold the door plug in place were not recovered.

"...the four bolts that prevent upward movement of the [mid exit door] plug were missing," they wrote.

The door plug was first installed by the contractor Spirit AeroSystems in the US state of Kansas before being shipped to Boeing's factory in the US state of Washington.

According to the board, the four bolts were removed last year when workers from Spirit AeroSystems repaired damaged rivets they discovered while at Boeing's factory in Washington. A photo that was taken during the repairs shows at least three bolts had not been put back. However, the report does not specify who is at fault for failing to reinstall the bolts. But Boeing's CEO expressed that the company was "accountable" for the recent door plug incident.

"Whatever final conclusions are reached, Boeing is accountable for what happened," Dave Calhoun, the CEO of Boeing, said in a statement. "An event like this must not happen on an airplane that leaves our factory. We simply must do better for our customers and their passengers."

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The NTSB investigation will continue and could take a year or more for the release of a final report.
In early January, an Alaska Airlines flight was soaring at about 16,000 feet after taking off from the US state of Oregon when one of its door plugs blew out, leaving a gaping hole in the side of the plane. The flight was carrying 177 people at the time.
Boeing's Max 9 planes were grounded for several weeks afterwards. They have since been allowed to return to service after being inspected, but the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has said it will not allow for any further production of the Max program.

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Our Shrinking Moon Could Be a Problem, Scientists Warn

The study raises awareness of a restless Moon that is experiencing "moonquakes", some of which may be relatively large, and could threaten future explorations.
Our moon has been shrinking for hundreds of millions of years. This could become a problem for a potential site that NASA has had its eyes on for a future manned mission to the Moon. The area is thought to have water deposits that could sustain life, but a new study says the area has been impacted by seismic activity.
According to a new study which was published in the Planetary Science Journal, an area near the lunar south pole could be impacted by this seismic activity or "moonquakes".
"A concept that I think that many people have is that the moon is this geologically dead body, that something on the moon never changes," said Tom Watters, a senior scientist emeritus in the National Air and Space Museum's Center for Earth and Planetary Studies and the lead author of the study. "[But] the moon is a seismically active body."
Over the last few hundred millions years the earth has shrunk about 150 feet (45 meters) in diameter. This is the result of the natural cooling of its molten core, as well as the exertion of tidal forces from Earth. As the Moon's interior cools, its surface contracts and changes to adjust to its new volume. This shrinking process also results in the ridges known as thrust faults, which are made up of the pushed together crust.
Using data from NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO) which was first launched in 2009, the authors of the study found that an area in the south polar region was impacted by one of the strongest seismic events recorded by seismometers that were left there during NASA's Apollo program.
The news from this study is significant because the Moon has become the location of an international space race, especially since India's Chandrayaan-3 lander successfully touched down on the Moon in August. Scientists believe that ice can be found in large craters in the Moon's south pole region, which is permanently hidden in a cool shadow. And NASA is planning to land their Artemis III mission in an area in that region by late 2026 at the earliest.
"Our modeling suggests that shallow moonquakes capable of producing strong ground shaking in the south polar region are possible from slip events on existing faults or the formation of new thrust faults," said Watters.

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"The global distribution of young thrust faults, their potential to be active, and the potential to form new thrust faults from ongoing global contraction should be considered when planning the location and stability of permanent outposts on the Moon," Watters added.
“The idea is not to discourage anyone from exploring the south pole of the moon, but just to make sure that it’s understood that it’s not a benign environment.”

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‘Political Maneuver': Biden Threatens to Veto House GOP Israel Aid Bill

The president’s response comes on the heels of a statement made by Johnson, who said that the House would reject a large bipartisan Senate bill that lawmakers have been working on for months.
US President Joe Biden has threatened to veto a proposed standalone aid package for Israel, the White House announced on Monday. The House Republican bill would provide $17.6 billion in aid to Israel, but would reject a bipartisan Senate border deal that lawmakers have been working on for months which includes funding for Ukraine and the US-Mexico border.
“The Administration spent months working with a bipartisan group of Senators to reach a national security agreement that secures the border and provides support for the people of Ukraine and Israel, while also providing much-needed humanitarian assistance to civilians affected by conflicts around the world,” the White House wrote in a statement.
“Instead of working in good faith to address the most pressing national security challenges, this bill is another cynical political maneuver.”
On Saturday, House Speaker Mike Johnson said that Republicans would offer their Israel-only funding bill (H.R. 7217) as a rejection to a larger bipartisan bill that was unveiled over the weekend. The bipartisan bill proposed $118.3 billion in spending, including: $20 billion for border security, $60 billion in funding for Ukraine, and $14.1 billion for Israel.
“The Administration strongly opposes this ploy which does nothing to secure the border, does nothing to help the people of Ukraine defend themselves against [Russian leader Vladimir] Putin’s aggression, fails to support the security of American synagogues, mosques, and vulnerable places of worship, and denies humanitarian assistance to Palestinian civilians, the majority of whom are women and children,” the Biden administration said.
Representative Ken Calvert (R-CA), who spearheaded the legislation is H.R. 7217, reportedly said he was “disheartened” by the Biden administration’s announcement.
“I believe there is broad, bipartisan support for standing with Israel and supporting them in their campaign to protect its civilians from those responsible for the October 7th attack,” the representative wrote.
“I am disappointed by the President’s veto statement but I am hopeful that, for the sake of the American and Israeli hostages, the safety of our troops in the region and for our ally Israel, he will have a change of heart when the bipartisan bill comes to his desk.”
"The president’s veto threat is an act of betrayal," Johnson added on Monday evening.

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Biden's popularity among young voters has plummeted since the conflict between Israel and Palestine first began. Nearly three quarters of voters between the ages of 18 and 29-years-old disapprove of US support for Israel.

And more recently, a poll revealed that half of US adults believe Israel's military campaign in Gaza has "gone too far". That same poll shows that just 31% of US adults approve of Biden's handling of the conflict, which has claimed the lives of nearly 27,500 Palestinians.

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'Houthis Can Play the Long Game': Suez Canal Shipping Revenues Cut Nearly in Half

The total income for shipping firms last month dropped to $428 million in comparison to $804 million for the same period in 2023.

Following the conflict between Palestine and Israel, Yemen's Houthis have launched a series of attacks on ships in solidarity with Palestine. Since then, revenue for Egypt's Suez Canal has dropped by almost half in January, a recent report notes. Meanwhile, the number of ships now using the canal fell by 36%.

But Osama Rabie, the Suez Canal Authority chief, says that the Suez Canal remains the "best, fastest and safest" route while the alternative—the Cape of Good Hope—does not offer services to ships if they break down, is unsustainable and difficult to navigate. The US and the UK have launched airstrikes at the Houthis, but it appears that the Shia Islamist organization's actions won't end any time soon.

Thomas C. Mountain, a historian and independent journalist, says that while Egypt is experiencing economic instability, the Houthis are attacking shipping "symbolically".

"There's two strategically critical choke points in this European-Asian trade route. One is the Bab al-Mandab between the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, which Ansarallah is controlling, and the other is the Suez Canal," said Mountain. "Egypt has just been staggering from year to year; from one emergency bailout by the IMF to the other, the Islamic attacks on their tourism infrastructure, there's been a major dampener on foreign policy reserves—which they've never fully recovered from—and then the COVID-19 shutdown pretty much hammered them as well."

"So Egypt is between a rock and a hard place. I've been saying this for a while, but it seems to be the screws are tightening in the blockade of the Red Sea by the Houthis who have got them on the back foot."

Sputnik's Garland Nixon then asked Mountain about the geostrategic importance of the Red Sea. Mountain believes there has been a military blockade of the Houthis for a "long time".

"The Houthis themselves have been pretty much symbolically attacking shipping—they fire one missile. If you want to seriously damage a ship and get through the US defenses, you have to fly six or eight at one time and then a few will get through. So this has been more of a symbolic attack rather than serious military attacks," Mountain stressed.

"Of course, I think they've exaggerated the extent to which the Houthis actually have a major missile force. I think they're in it for the long game. There's been a military blockade of the

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Houthis for a long time," said Mountain, adding that the Houthis are pressuring the US "very effectively".

"How long can the US keep these ships on post? They can't sit there forever, they have to rotate them out, they're going to be breaking down under distress they're not used to. They have to reload missiles."

Sputnik's Wilmer Leon noted that the ongoing incident is part of a "bigger mess" as US President Joe Biden himself has admitted that airstrikes launched by the US and the UK will not be enough to deter the Houthis' actions.

"Yeah, the incompetence of US foreign policy so-called 'experts' has been on display now for some time," said Mountain. "It's like trying to fight a war with the Houthis, which have been through a seven-year war with the Saudis (which is armed by the US) and now they're going to come in and bomb the Houthis."

"The Houthis have developed all the defenses underground throughout the Saudi bombardment. So they're not going to be very effective against them," he continued.

"And the Houthis don't really have to do much damage. All they have to do is occasionally hit a ship or get close to a ship and scare the h*** out of the insurance companies to force them to go around the Cape of Good Hope in southern Africa, which is, again, a very dangerous route: there are no facilities if any ships break down to repair them out there. So [if] one of these big tankers breaks down in the middle of the Indian Ocean, or off the southern Atlantic, what are they going to do?"

"The Houthis can play the long game. I see Egypt has been like the policeman on the Suez Canal, and the Americans fund the Egyptian military to the tune of $1.5 billion a year, that's basically the salaries of the Egyptian military," Mountain explained.

"They have a conscript army, but their officer core---whose loyalty to [Egyptian] President [Abdel Fattah] al-Sisi is critical---US control of the Suez Canal has to be bought and paid for. So Egypt is shaky, and I think Egypt is looking around to try to get out of this IMF death trap they've fallen into, and they're reaching out to the BRICS to try to get financing for the BRICS bank, but in the meantime the pressure of the shutdown of the Suez Canal is really hammering them."

This summer, it was reported that Egypt had hoped its inclusion in the BRICS bloc would ease its shortage of foreign currency. However, analyst said the economic shift for Egypt would not happen in the near term.

The Egyptian pound recently experienced a significant appreciation, growing by 39% against the US dollar in just a few days thanks to an agreement that was reached between the IMF and Egypt. The agreement grew the two parties' existing deal from $3 billion to over $10 million. However, one media outlet reports that Egypt's total external financing needs are expected to surge over the next four years due to "larger repayment obligations on medium and long-term loans".

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US Exports to Russia Decreased to $58.9 Mln in December - Commerce Department

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WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) – US exports to Russia decreased to $58.9 million in December 2023, down from $69 million in November, the Commerce Department's Census Bureau said in new trade data published on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, imports from Russia to the United States decreased to $292.2 million in December from a previous level of $362.4 million, according to the data.

The total value of US exports to Russia in 2023 reached $597.3 million, and imports were at $4,565.8 billion, the data showed.

The total US trade deficit with Russia exceeded $3.968 billion in 2023, according to the data.

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US House Lawmakers Demand Documents From Austin Over Failure to Track Ukraine Military Aid

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) – US House lawmakers demand that Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin provide them with documents related to US military assistance to Ukraine after a watchdog report found that the United States has failed to track more than $1 billion in military gear provided to Kiev, according to a letter released on Wednesday.

The letter was authored by members of the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability.

"Following an Inspector General report revealing the Department of Defense (DoD) has failed to track military weapons and articles going to Ukraine, the lawmakers are calling on DoD Secretary Lloyd Austin to provide documents and information to understand how the Department intends to mitigate the vulnerabilities of military assistance to Ukraine," the letter said.

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Biden Expresses Condolences on Death of Ex-Chilean President Pinera – Statement

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden expressed condolences on Wednesday after former Chilean President Sebastian Pinera died in a helicopter crash caused by bad weather.

“Jill and I join the people of Chile in grieving the tragic loss of former President Sebastián Piñera of Chile,” Biden said in a statement.

Biden said Pinera was committed to forging a more secure and prosperous future for Chile. “He worked tirelessly to grow Chile’s economy and advocate for his nation on the world stage,” he said.

Local media reported that the helicopter piloted by the former president went down at around 3:00 p.m. (1:00 p.m. EST) and crashed on Ranco Lake due to bad weather conditions, killing Pinira and injuring three other passengers.

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The ex-president's sister Magdalena Pinera and a friend were among the passengers, according to the reports.

Sebastian Pinera was president of Chile between 2010-2014 and held a second term in office between 2018-2022.

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US Senator Majority Leader Plans to Force Vote on Foreign Aid Bill Wednesday - Reports

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) – US Senator Majority Leader Chuck Schumer plans to force a vote on Wednesday afternoon on a foreign aid package for Ukraine, Israel, and the Indo-Pacific after Senate Republicans are expected to block floor debate on a bipartisan border supplemental package, Punchbowl News reported.

While the bill would also include funds to combat the fentanyl crisis, it would not include any funds for the sticking point of border security.

Schumer informed his fellow Democrats and the White House last week of his back-up plan should Republicans reject the border supplemental compromise.

The foreign aid bill would likely be supported by Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, who told reporters on Tuesday that it was important that the Senate address foreign aid now even if it could not agree on border funding.

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Lockheed Martin Announces Partnership With Sweden's MilDef Group Tech Firm - Release

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - Lockheed Martin has launched a new partnership with the Swedish military technology company MilDef, the giant US defense contractor announced in a press release.

"Lockheed Martin and MilDef announced a memorandum of understanding (MoU) today to strengthen aerospace collaboration through Lockheed Martin's C-130J-30 Super Hercules tactical airlifter offering for the Swedish Air Force (SwAF)," the release said on Tuesday.

Through the partnership, the two companies will identify opportunities where MilDef solutions can be integrated into Lockheed Martin's global aerospace and defense programs, the release explained.

"Founded in 1997, MilDef provides military grade hardware, software and services that shield and protect critical information streams and systems, when and where the stakes are the highest. The product portfolio offers bespoke computers, laptops, servers, switches, routers, intelligent displays, software and integration service made to perform in the toughest conditions," Lockheed Martin said.

The Swedish Air Force currently flies a Lockheed Martin C-130H fleet in support of its tactical

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airlift mission requirements as well as the corporation's Sikorsky UH-60M Black Hawk helicopter and the Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) Missile Segment Enhancement (MSE) interceptor system, the release said.

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US Democratic Party Losing Ground with Black, Hispanic, Young Voters – Poll

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) – The US Democratic Party has steadily lost ground with Black, Hispanic, and young adult voters, according to a Gallup poll released on Wednesday.

While it still retained a 47-point lead over the Republican Party among non-Hispanic Black adults in 2023, this advantage decreased by 19 percentage points since 2020. The 47-point lead was also the smallest recorded by Gallup since it began tracking the question in 1999.

Democratic support in the 18-29-year-old age group decreased to a +8 lead, from a high of +26 in 2008. The party also failed to hold sway in the 50-64-year-old age group, falling to -10 from a high of a +15 lead in 2007.

The poll also found that higher education has been an increasing factor in party affiliation since 2013 and especially since 2017 when former President Donald Trump was elected. In 2023, the differences were most stark among adults with a graduate degree (+29 Democratic) and those without a college education (+14 Republican).

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Haley Loses Nevada Primary to 'None of These Candidates' - Preliminary Results

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) – US Republican presidential candidate Nikki Haley lost the primary in Nevada, finishing behind ballots that were marked "none of these candidates," according to preliminary results published on the Nevada Secretary of State website.

The results indicated that 62.94% of voters selected "none of these candidates." Haley finished with 30.78% of the vote, ahead of six other candidates who had filed for the presidential preference primary.

Republican frontrunner Donald Trump was not on the Nevada ballot, which is not factored into the Republican presidential nomination contest.

US President Joe Biden handily won 89.30% of the Democratic vote in the primary.

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Russia-Canada Trade Down 96% Amid Sanctions Campaign Over Ukraine - Ambassador

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - Russia-Canada trade dropped to $83 million in the first 11 months of 2023 as the Canadian government severed virtually all economic ties with Moscow after the onset of the special military operation in Ukraine, Russian Ambassador in Ottawa Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.

"After the start of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, Ottawa actually initiated a total blockade of Russian-Canadian economic ties. Due to such unfriendly actions, bilateral trade is breathing its last," Stepanov said.

Trade dropped from $2.2 billion in 2021 to $83 million over the first 11 months of 2023, the ambassador said.

Canada has adopted over 60 packages of anti-Russian restrictions targeting entities across financial, defense industry, energy, metallurgical, transport, information and communication sectors. Ottawa has also suspended all existing and pending licenses for export to Russia and prohibited virtually all imports from Russia.

In March 2022, Canada withdrew most favored nation status from Russia, thus increasing the duty rate on its goods to 35%. In addition, the country closed its airspace to all Russian aircraft, the ambassador recalled.

Russian officials have said that sanctions cannot influence its sovereign foreign policy, but deal a serious blow to the global economy.

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Canadians More Concerned by Growing Socio-Economic Problems Than By Ukraine -Stepanov

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - Ordinary Canadians are more concerned about the increasing socio-economic issues in the country than by the situation in Ukraine, Russian Ambassador to Canada Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.

"Outside the so-called 'Ottawa bubble' people have little interest in events in Ukraine," Stepanov said. "Ordinary Canadians are more concerned about the growing socio-economic problems in the country. Among them are the rising cost of living and the unemployment rate, the inability of the authorities to solve the acute housing crisis, ensure the normal functioning of the healthcare system, overcome the drug epidemic, etc."

However, the official Ottawa, Stepanov said, which is represented by the Trudeau cabinet is entirely on the side of the neo-Nazi regime in Kiev.

"The political line is purely ideological, without any elements of realism," the ambassador said. "The ruling liberals are demanding, for example, the restoration of Ukraine as a state within the borders of 1991, including Crimea. They call on NATO allies and Western satellites to energetically pump Ukraine with weapons, supply them themselves (as much as Canada's limited capabilities in this area allow), and provide financial assistance."

Stepanov noted that the total assistance of Canada to Ukraine since February 2022 has amounted to almost $7.6 billion.

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Cyber Security Remains Relevant Topic in Global, Bilateral Dimensions- Stepanov

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - The topic of 'cyberattacks' continues to be relevant in both global and bilateral dimensions, Russian Ambassador to Canada Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik when asked about perspectives of having such a dialogue with Ottawa.

"The topic – both in the global and bilateral dimensions – remains relevant," Stepanov said, adding that Canada has often insinuated about the possible involvement of alleged Russian hackers in information attacks on various infrastructure facilities or interference in internal affairs.

"Naturally, no evidence is provided. Russia has always confirmed that it is ready for a constructive analysis of alleged problems with any countries," he said. "They just should come with facts in hand, and not with vague discussions about "highly likely". But Canadian counterparts do not seem to be interested in this format yet."

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Russia Hopes Nothing Prevents Russians in Canada From Voting in 2024 Election - Stepanov

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - Russia expects that security will be ensured for Russian citizens in Canada to cast their ballots in the 2024 Russian presidential election, Ambassador in Ottawa Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and law enforcement agencies of Canada were informed in advance about the election of the President of the Russian Federation," Stepanov said. "We hope that nothing will prevent our fellow citizens living here from casting their vote at polling stations - at the Embassy in Ottawa and our consulates general in Toronto and Montreal."

The embassy is discussing security measures with the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Royal Canadian Mounted Police, whose responsibilities include the protection of diplomatic facilities, the ambassador said.

"Observers will be able to perform their functions in accordance with the law and applicable regulations," he added.

Russia will hold the presidential election from March 15-17.

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Canadian Businesses Lost Russia as Profitable Market Due to Ottawa's Sanctions - Stepanov

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WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - Canada's sanctions on Russia have hurt Canadian companies the most, as these businesses have lost access to the lucrative Russian market, Russian Ambassador to Canada Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.

"I would like to emphasize: the Canadian government punishes with anti-Russian sanctions, first of all, its own national business and manufacturers," Stepanov said. "They have lost Russia as a profitable market."

Stepanov pointed out that for Russian business and citizens sanctioned by Canada, these unfriendly gestures from Ottawa are merely symbolic.

"They do not and cannot cause any practical harm. Although such politicking, of course, poisons the general atmosphere," Stepanov said.

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Canada's Legislation to Seize Sanctioned Russian Assets Nothing But Theft - Ambassador

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - Ottawa's legislative amendments allowing for the confiscation of sanctioned Russian assets in Canada for the benefit of Kiev constitute an obvious form of robbery and theft, Russian Ambassador to Canada Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.

"According to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (as of the end of September), some $100 million [worth of assets of sanctioned Russians] have been blocked in Canada. Financial transactions amounting to $228 million have been frozen," he said. "In June 2023, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced the launch of a procedure to seize an An-124 Ruslan cargo plane, owned by the Volga-Dnepr company and illegally held at Toronto airport. It is clear that all of this is banal theft and robbery."

Stepanov underscored that any attempt to give such steps legitimacy through internal legal manipulation "looks ridiculous and deprives Canada of any right to call itself a rule-of-law state."

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Arctic Remains Shared Topic for Russia, Canada Despite West Sabotage Attempts - Stepanov

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - The Arctic continues to be one of the points of contact between Russia and Canada despite attempts by the West to sabotage the work of the Arctic Council, Russian Ambassador to Canada Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.

"The Arctic remains one of the points of contact between Canada and Russia, despite Westerners' sabotage of the functioning of the Arctic Council," Stepanov said. "You can't escape geography. And if and when the normalization of our dialogue begins, I do not rule out that the starting point will be the Arctic one."

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Trudeau Gov't Pressed Canadian Companies to Exit Russia - Ambassador Stepanov

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - Major Canadian companies had to leave Russian market as a result of pressure from the Trudeau government, Russian Ambassador to Canada Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.

"Ottawa's 'crusade' against Moscow could not but affect the work of Canadian investors in our market," Stepanov said. "The largest companies, which till the last remained committed to developing business in Russia, were forced to announce the suspension of operations or sell Russian assets."

The main reasons for their exit are powerful political and administrative pressure from the Trudeau cabinet, as well as logistical and financial barriers created by the West, the ambassador observed.

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Russia-Canada Trade Down 96% Amid Sanctions Campaign Over Ukraine - Ambassador

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - Russia-Canada trade dropped to $83 million in the first 11 months of 2023 as the Canadian government severed virtually all economic ties with Moscow after the onset of the special military operation in Ukraine, Russian Ambassador in Ottawa Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.

"After the start of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, Ottawa actually initiated a total blockade of Russian-Canadian economic ties. Due to such unfriendly actions, bilateral trade is breathing its last," Stepanov said.

Trade dropped from $2.2 billion in 2021 to $83 million over the first 11 months of 2023, the ambassador said.

Canada has adopted over 60 packages of anti-Russian restrictions targeting entities across financial, defense industry, energy, metallurgical, transport, information and communication sectors. Ottawa has also suspended all existing and pending licenses for export to Russia and prohibited virtually all imports from Russia.

In March 2022, Canada withdrew most favored nation status from Russia, thus increasing the duty rate on its goods to 35%. In addition, the country closed its airspace to all Russian aircraft, the ambassador recalled.

Russian officials have said that sanctions cannot influence its sovereign foreign policy, but deal a serious blow to the global economy.

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Nothing Can Be Ruled Out in Status, Quality of Canada-Russia Ties in Future- Stepanov

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - Russian Ambassador to Canada Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik that nothing can be ruled out in both status and quality of the relations between Ottawa and Moscow.

"It is probably not worthwhile to predict what will happen to the quality and status of bilateral relations. The factor of unpredictability is great; nothing can be ruled out," he said. "We will be guided by Russian interests in any development."

Stepanov pointed out that at the moment Russian-Canadian relations are in a deep freeze. "Since 2014, Ottawa has unilaterally taken the path of curtailing many formats of cooperation," Stepanov said. "And what survived then was put under the knife after February 2022, including regional, political science and scientific-academic cooperation."

There are no joint projects between Russia and Canada to speak of at the current period, the ambassador added.

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'High Risk' of Serious Incidents Near Russian Diplomatic Missions in Canada - Ambassador

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - There is a high risk of serious incidents outside Russian diplomatic missions in Canada as local police do not always act proactively in ensuring their security, Russian Ambassador to Canada Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.

"Local law enforcement officers do not always act proactively, although in particularly alarming cases they are still present," Stepanov said. "Therefore, the risk of serious incidents remains high. After all, [Canadian] authorities do not want to provide a 24-hour police presence near Russian diplomatic missions."

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Stepanov said that "ideological" demonstrators have been picketing outside Russian diplomatic missions every day since the beginning of the special military operation in Ukraine.

They often behave aggressively, interfering with the entry/exit of diplomatic vehicles, taking unauthorized photographs of license plates and passengers in the vehicles, including of family members and children, and making unambiguous threats against employees, the ambassador continued.

The situation regarding the work of Russian diplomats in Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal remains consistently tense, with the Trudeau cabinet being "at the forefront of Russophobia" promoted by the West, he added.

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Russia Still Awaiting Canada's Response on Request to Extradite Ukrainian Nazi - Stepanov

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - Russia is still awaiting a response from Canada on its request to extradite Yaroslav Hunka, the Ukrainian Nazi veteran who received a standing ovation in the Canadian parliament in September, and got assurances that the matter will be reviewed, Russian Ambassador to Canada Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.

"The request for the extradition of the Nazi henchman — this is a whole package of documents — has been submitted to the relevant Canadian authorities," Stepanov said. "We were assured that the materials would be reviewed. But there is no response from the Ministry of Justice and other agencies yet."

The Russian embassy continues to work with the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the matter, the ambassador added.

The issue is a matter of principle, and Russia will not let the Canadian government hush up this story, Stepanov stressed.

In September, the 98-year-old Nazi veteran was invited to attend Volodymyr Zelenskyy's address at the Canadian parliament. Hunka was introduced as a hero who fought against the Russians during World War II and received a standing ovation from the entire Canadian legislature.

The honoring of a Nazi veteran prompted outcries from Russia, Poland and worldwide.

In October, Hunka was charged in absentia with genocide of civilians during World War II by the Russian Investigative Committee. He is accused of participating in large-scale executions of at least 500 civilians in the Lviv region of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1943-1944.

The Russian Prosecutor General's Office told Sputnik in December that it had requested that Hunka be extradited to Russia to face criminal charges of genocide against Soviet citizens.

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Canada Visa Policy Stymies Employee Rotation at Russian Embassy - Ambassador

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - Russia's diplomatic missions in Canada do not have proper employee rotation due to Ottawa's visa policy toward Russian diplomats, Ambassador in Ottawa Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.

"The unresolved visa issue remains a significant negative factor," Stepanov said. "Because of Ottawa, it is impossible to carry out a normal rotation of diplomatic and administrative and technical personnel."

Delays in processing entry documents sometimes amount to several years, the diplomat said.

"This creates difficulties not only for the work process, but also for everyday life," he explained. "Employees of the Embassy and the Consulates General are not able to return home to Russia without replacement, and their colleagues in Moscow are forced to wait to leave for many months."

Russia is conducting dialogue with Canada on the visa issue based on the principle of parity and reciprocity, Stepanov said. The Canadian embassy in Moscow itself is suffering from the "unconstructive" policy of Ottawa, he stated.

Russia, however, believes that no matter how tense bilateral relations may be, the work of diplomatic missions should not be held hostage as diplomatic channels of communication are sometimes the only link between countries during crises, the ambassador said.

Stepanov spoke to Sputnik on Diplomats' Day, which is traditionally celebrated in Russia on February 10 and honors Russian diplomatic staff, past and present. The holiday was created in 2002 by presidential decree, in reference to February 10, 1549, the date when the Posolsky Prikaz, Russia's first foreign affairs agency, was first mentioned in official chronicles.

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BAE Wins $114Mln US Air Force Contract for AN/AAR57 Aircraft Defense System - Release

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - BAE Systems has won a $114 million contract from the US Air Force for its aircraft and helicopter AN/AA-57 missile defense countermeasures system, the company announced in a press release.

"BAE Systems received $114 million in Foreign Military Sales (FMS) contracts from the US Army for AN/AAR-57 Common Missile Warning Systems (CMWS)," the release said on Tuesday.

CMWS is an aircraft survivability system for rotary-wing and fixed-wing aircraft that integrates missile warning, hostile fire indication, and countermeasure controls for US and allied military forces with advanced threat detection and countermeasure control capabilities to protect aircraft and air crews in hostile battlefield conditions, the company explained.

“Battlefields are increasingly contested, and airborne armed forces around the world must be able to detect and defeat modern infrared threats,” BAE Systems Deputy Product Line Director of Integrated Survivability Solutions Jennifer Bartley.

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US House Rejects Resolution to Impeach Mayorkas for Failing to Secure Country's Border

(Updates with details in para 4)
WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives rejected a resolution to impeach Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas for allegedly failing to secure the United States' borders by refusing to enforce federal immigration laws.
House lawmakers rejected a resolution on Tuesday to bring articles of impeachment against Mayorkas for willful and systemic refusal to comply with the law, in a vote of 214 in favor and 216 opposed.
"As the Homeland Security Secretary, Alejandro Mayorkas has one core obligation: To protect our homeland. Unfortunately, throughout his tenure, Secretary Mayorkas has failed miserably at his job of keeping our country safe and our border secure," House Majority Leader Steve Scalise said in a statement on the resolution.
Republican Congresswoman Ana Paulina Luna in a statement after the failed vote said there will be another impeachment vote on Mayorkas next week, which should likely pass.
The impeachment effort comes amid an increase in illegal immigration at the US southern border under the Biden administration. US Senate negotiators released a supplemental funding bill that attached Ukraine and Israel aid to immigration reforms on Sunday; however, House Speaker Mike Johnson said the bill would be dead on arrival in the House of Representatives.

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US House Rejects $17.6Bln Standalone Israel Aid Bill After Biden Veto Threat

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives rejected a $17.6 billion standalone Israel aid bill following a veto threat from President Joe Biden.
House lawmakers rejected the bill on Tuesday in a vote of 250-180 under suspension of the rules, which requires two-thirds support for passage.
"House Republicans are bringing forward a measure that provides necessary funds for Israel, as well as funds for the US military in the region who have been targeted since the October 7th attacks," House Majority Leader Steve Scalise said in a statement on the bill.
On Monday, the White House Office of Management and Budget said that Biden would veto the bill if it were to pass the US Senate and make its way to his desk. The US Senate is set to hold votes on a supplemental aid package with both Israel and Ukraine aid later this week, although Senate leadership has expressed a lack of confidence in the bill.

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US House Rejects Resolution to Impeach Mayorkas for Failing to Secure Country's Borders

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House Foreign Affairs Committee Advances Bill to End US Support for UNRWA

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - The US House Foreign Affairs Committee advanced legislation to end contributions by the United States to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

The panel advanced the bill, dubbed the Stop Support for UNRWA Act, on Tuesday in a vote of 30-19.

The bill prohibits voluntary or involuntary contributions to UNRWA, any successor or related entity. The bill also prohibits contributions to the regular UN budget for the support of UNRWA or any successor entity.

On Monday, Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said that it will provide the UN with evidence linking UNRWA to terrorism, following accusations that its staff were involved in the October 7 attack on Israel.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appointed an independent review panel to examine UNRWA activities.

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Biden Placing Blame on Trump for Border Crisis He Created 'Brazen, Pathetic Lie' -Campaign

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden placing blame on former President Donald Trump for the border crisis is a "pathetic lie," Trump campaign spokesperson Karoline Leavitt said in a press release.

"Crooked Joe Biden blamed President Trump for the border crisis that Biden himself created," Leavitt said in the release on Tuesday. "This is a brazen, pathetic lie and the American people know the truth – President Trump's policies created the most secure border in American history, and it was Joe Biden who reversed them, causing death, destruction, and chaos in every American community."

Leavitt added that the Senate's bipartisan deal on US border security in the supplemental package does nothing to address illegal immigration. Instead, the Trump campaign suggests that executive authorities should be used to shut down the US southern border to illegal immigration.

"Joe Biden clearly refuses to do that, but President Trump will get it done on day one," Leavitt said.

Nearly 10 million illegal immigrants have illegally crossed into the United States under Biden's watch, Leavitt noted.

Earlier in the day, Biden said during a press conference that all indications are the supplemental bill will not move forward on the Senate floor for a vote because of Trump. Biden accused Republican lawmakers rejecting the bill to be serving Trump's interests to help him win the US election instead of working for the American public's interest.

However, Republican lawmakers have rejected the bill because they believe it does not include any meaningful border policy changes that will end the crisis.

On Sunday, the Senate, after weeks of negotiations with the White House, released the $118 billion national security supplemental bill that includes some $60 billion in additional aid for Ukraine, $14 billion for Israel, and some $20 billion for border security, among other priorities.

According to Republican Senator James Lankford, one of the key negotiators of the supplemental bill, the changes to US border policy proposed in the bill includes limits on the use of parole catch-and-release at the southern border, which is expected to stop over half-a-million border crossings each year.

The proposed legislation would also include enhanced measures to deport migrants who enter the United States illegally, tighter restrictions on US asylum eligibility for migrants, $650 million to build more border wall, and a mandated shutdown of the border to illegal migrants when the daily average number of illegal crossings exceeds 5,000 for a week.

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Elon Musk Offers Legal Backing to Disney Lawsuit Amidst Gina Carano's Allegations

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WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - Billionaire businessman Elon Musk is inquiring whether potential litigants want to join a lawsuit against Disney and Lucasfilm initiated by actress Gina Carano for mistreatment and character defamation.

"Please let us know if you would like to join the lawsuit against Disney," Musk said in a post via X on Tuesday.

Earlier on Tuesday, Carano filed the suit in a US federal court in California in which she alleges that she was fired from her role as rebel warrior Cara Dune for voicing right-wing opinions on social media.

Carano claims she suffered emotional damage and lost millions of dollars in income, and seeks the court to order Lucasfilm to reinstate her or compensate her with at least $75,000.

Carano also said she undertook legal action because Americans do not sign away their rights upon entering employment.

Musk's social media platform X is covering the cost of the lawsuit and Carano expressed earlier on Tuesday her gratitude for the support she received.

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US House Foreign Affairs Panel Advances Bill to Label Houthis Terrorist Organization

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - The US House Foreign Affairs Committee advanced a bill to designate Ansar Allah, also known as the Houthi movement, as a foreign terrorist organization (FTO).

The panel advanced the bill, dubbed the Standing Against Houthi Aggression Act, on Tuesday evening in a vote of 34-13.

The legislation directs the US Secretary of State to designate the Houthis as a foreign terrorist organization within 90 days of the bill's enactment.

The Biden administration removed the Houthis' FTO designation in February 2021, but re-listed them as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist entity last month.

The bill comes following a series of attacks by the group on military and commercial vessels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. The attacks prompted the United States to form a multinational coalition to protect commercial shipping in the area, as well as to strike alongside the United Kingdom various Houthi targets in Yemen.

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US Justice Dept. Will Not Charge Biden for Mishandling of Classified Documents - Reports

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - The US Justice Department will not criminally charge President Joe Biden or his aides for mishandling classified documents, the Washington Post reported, citing sources familiar with the matter.

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Special Counsel Robert Hur's report will be critical of Biden's mishandling of classified documents but will not recommend prosecution, the report said on Tuesday.

Justice Department policy prevents the prosecution of a sitting president; however, aides linked to the mishandling of classified documents could have faced charges, the report said.

Officials could release the special counsel report as early as this week, although prosecutors may delay its release, the report said.

US intelligence officials have been reviewing the report in recent weeks to determine how much information to make public about the classified materials mishandled by Biden, the report added.

Biden may have kept classified materials at his home and office due to sloppy staff work, the report said, citing aides to the president.

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UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Urges UK to Halt Extradition of Julian Assange to US

*WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Alice Jill Edwards is urging the United Kingdom to halt the extradition of Julian Assange to the United States over substantial concerns that he would be tortured there, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) said.

"The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Alice Jill Edwards, today urged the Government of the United Kingdom (UK) to halt the possible extradition of Julian Assange to the United States of America," OHCHR said in a release on Tuesday. "She called on British authorities to consider Julian Assange's appeal based on substantial fears that, if extradited, he would be at risk of treatment amounting to torture or other forms of ill-treatment or punishment."

Edwards believes the US diplomatic assurances of humane treatment are not sufficient to guarantee that Assange will be safe in prolonged solitary confinement given that he has been suffering from a long-standing and recurrent depressive disorder, the release said.

Since April 2019, Assange has been held in London's high-security Belmarsh prison while facing prosecution on 18 counts in the United States under the Espionage Act.

If convicted, the WikiLeaks founder could face 175 years in prison. In December 2022, he appealed to the European Court of Human Rights to fight his extradition to the United States.

WikiLeaks was founded by Assange in 2006 but rose to prominence in 2010 when it began publishing large-scale leaks of classified US and other government information, including footage of war crimes during the US mililtary intervention in Iraq.

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US Approaches Hamas Negotiations with Caution Amid Ceasefire Demand - White House

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WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - The United States is exercising caution in negotiations with Hamas, emphasizing the sensitivity of the talks, Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said during a press briefing.

"We're going to be really careful. These are sensitive negotiations," Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday when asked if President Biden believes there's a workable path forward with Hamas, still demanding a permanent ceasefire for the remaining hostages.

US negotiators, led by Central Intelligence Agency Director William Burns, are saying that Israel would face difficulties in resuming its military operations in the Palestinian enclave after a long pause. Meanwhile, the Arab officials familiar with the matter said the persisting obstacles could make the agreement's adoption unlikely, but suggested that a positive scenario could result in the deal's completion within a week to 10 days.

On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched a large-scale rocket attack against Israel from Gaza and breached the border, killing 1,200 people and abducting around 240 others. Israel launched retaliatory strikes, ordered a complete blockade of Gaza, and started a ground incursion into the Palestinian enclave with the declared goal of eliminating Hamas fighters and rescuing the hostages. Over 26,900 people have been killed so far in the Gaza Strip, local authorities said.

On November 24, Qatar mediated a deal between Israel and Hamas on a temporary truce and the exchange of some of the prisoners and hostages, as well as the delivery of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. The ceasefire was extended several times and expired on December 1. More than 100 hostages are still believed to be held by Hamas in Gaza.

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US Military Post in Jordan Likely Failed to Detect Drone That Killed 3 Troops - Reports

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - Early findings how that the US military outpost in northeast Jordan, known as Tower 22, likely failed to detect a drone that killed three American troops, the Washington Post reported, citing US Defense Department officials familiar with the matter.

Last week, three US soldiers were killed and more than 40 were injured in a drone attack on the US military outpost in northeast Jordan near the border with Syria.

The report said on Tuesday that the drone may have been able to evade detection through its low fly path.

Moreover, the report said the US military outpost was not equipped with an air defense system capable of shooting down the drone.

The US officials said the investigation is ongoing and the findings are subject to change, the report added.

Earlier on Tuesday, Pentagon deputy spokesperson Sabrina Singh told reporters she had no update on the attack, adding that the assessment was ongoing.

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Pentagon Says Ukrainian Forces Face 'Huge Challenge' in Fighting Russian Military

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - Ukrainian forces face a huge challenge in fighting the Russian military, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia, Ukraine and Eurasia Laura Cooper said during an interview with the Blue Star Families organization.

"This is a premier, global military that is very strong, not just on land, but also in air and in the sea," Cooper said on Tuesday. "Ukraine standing up to this massive military is a huge challenge."

Ukraine will not survive if the US Congress does not pass a supplemental funding bill with aid for Kiev, Cooper said.

The United States and Ukraine remain in constant communication, Cooper said, adding that she had a "long conversation" with her Ukrainian counterparts Tuesday morning.

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US Will Not Hesitate to Take Further Action if Attacks Occur in Red Sea - White House

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - The United States will not hesitate to take additional actions to defend against attacks on US ships and international commercial vessels in the Red Sea, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said.

"The United States will not hesitate to take further actions to defend against these unlawful, reckless attacks against US ships and international commercial vessels," Jean-Pierre said during a press briefing on Tuesday.

Yemen's Ansar Allah movement, whose members are also known as the Houthis, vowed in November 2023 to attack any ships associated with Israel until that country halts military actions in the Gaza Strip.

This led the United States to announce a multinational operation to ensure freedom of navigation in the Red Sea. US and UK forces later launched strikes against Houthi positions in a bid to degrade their ability to target commercial vessels.

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PREVIEW - Ukraine Aid, Immigration Bill to Face First Test in US Senate Amid Republican Pushback

WASHINGTON, February 7 (Sputnik) - A $118 billion supplemental funding bill that includes additional aid for Ukraine and immigration policy reforms will face its first test in the US Senate this week, amid pushback by some Republican lawmakers.

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Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said on Tuesday that the upper chamber of Congress will hold an initial vote on the bill on Wednesday, although he also offered to delay the vote until Thursday to give senators more time to read the legislation.

On Sunday, Senate negotiators released the text of the bill for the legislation following months of talks. The Biden administration initially requested supplemental funding for Ukraine and Israel in October.

The legislation includes billions of dollars in aid for Ukraine and Israel, as well as immigration policy reforms and national security measures.

On Monday, Schumer filed cloture on the motion to proceed to the legislative vehicle for the supplemental bill and set the first vote for Wednesday.

However, the Senate could block the bill from proceeding with the support of 41 senators.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell has supported the legislation, but other Republican senators have opposed the bill. US Senator Rand Paul criticized the bill for providing approximately $60 billion to the “corrupt regime in Ukraine,” while failing to include adequate border security measures.

US House Speaker Mike Johnson said that the bill would be dead on arrival in the House of Representatives. On Tuesday, Johnson said that he welcomes the opposition to the bill in the Senate.

President Joe Biden said on Sunday that he strongly supports the legislation and urged lawmakers to swiftly pass the bill.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, FEBRUARY 7 (Sputnik) –

TUCKER CARLSON TO INTERVIEW PUTIN

* US journalist Tucker Carlson said on Tuesday that his team independently paid for a trip to Russia to interview Russian President Vladimir Putin.

* Carlson said that it was part of his journalistic duty to interview Putin, as well as to inform Americans about the realities of the conflict in Ukraine.

ISRAELI INVASION IN GAZA

* Palestinian movement Hamas said on Tuesday that it had sent response to the framework of a hostage deal with Israel to Egypt and Qatar.

* Qatar has received a response from Hamas in regard to the framework agreement on hostages and the overall comments are positive, Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said.

* Canada has imposed sanctions on 11 individuals linked to Hamas and Islamic Jihad, including their leadership, in response to the October 7th attacks on Israel, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) said.

* The Israeli intelligence agency Mossad has received a response from the Palestinian movement Hamas regarding a potential hostage deal via Qatar, the office of Israeli Prime

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Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said.

BLINKEN'S VISIT TO MIDDLE EAST

* The normalization of relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel will depend on ending the war in the Gaza Strip and a clear path to establishing a Palestinian state, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday.

* Blinken said that during his visit to Israel this week he will discuss the need for Israeli leaders to show "results" on efforts to improve humanitarian conditions on the ground in Gaza.

* The best path forward to achieve an extended period of calm and put an end to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict would be by reaching an agreement on the hostages held in the Gaza Strip, Blinken said.

* Blinken said that it's possible parties can reach a deal on a temporary ceasefire for the release of hostages in the Gaza conflict, and the United States continues to work relentlessly to achieve it

GLOBAL ENERGY

* World oil demand is expected to grow by an estimated 30,000 barrels per day (b/d) this year to reach a total of 1.29 million and by about 80,000 b/d in 2025 for a total of 1.42 million, the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) said on Tuesday.

* Russia's pipeline gas exports have decrease by 29.9% to 99.6 billion cubic meters (bcm) in 2023, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said.

* Oil exports from Russia have decreased by 3.3% to 234.3 million tonnes in 2023, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said.

* US crude oil production is expected to reach a record high just shy of 13.5 million barrels per day by next year, the Energy Information Administration, or EIA, said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* The United States has to do more to replenish Ukraine's waning weapons cache, White House Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Tuesday.

* Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Grossi will visit the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant (ZNPP) on Wednesday, the IAEA said.

* A gas station and a bakery were damaged in the Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) after the Ukrainian armed forces attacked, presumably with HIMARS, the administration of the Starobilsk city said.

* President Joe Biden said that Ukraine is in "dire straits" on the battlefield without US support amid the ongoing conflict with Russia.

* The Pentagon is not planning for the possibility of not getting money from Congress to provide more aid to Ukraine, Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said.

SUPPLEMENTAL BILL IN US CONGRESS

* Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said on Tuesday that he is moving forward with a vote on the supplemental bill, but can delay it until Thursday to give Republicans more time to garner support for the measure.

* US President Joe Biden said on Tuesday all indications are the supplemental bill will not move forward on the Senate floor for a vote because of his predecessor Donald Trump.

* Biden called on Congress to pass the supplemental bill on border security and foreign aid for Ukraine and Israel, and specifically asked lawmakers to "stop playing games" and move past "toxic politics."

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TRUMP'S CASE IN US COURT

* A US federal appeals court ruled on Tuesday that former President Donald Trump is not immune from prosecution in his 2020 election interference case.

* Trump plans to appeal a US federal appeals court's upholding on Tuesday of a ruling that he does not retain presidential immunity in his 2020 election interference case.

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UPDATE - Trudeau Invited Nazi Veteran Hunka to Attend Parliament Session - Russian Embassy

(Modifies para 2, adds details in paras 4-6, background in paras 7-10)

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) – The Office of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was the one that extended an invitation to Ukrainian Nazi veteran Yaroslav Hunka to appear before the country's House of Commons (HoC) in September, the Russian Embassy in Ottawa said on Tuesday.

On Monday, the Globe and Mail reported that it was Trudeau's office that invited Hunka to a private reception hosted for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as he was visiting Canada.

"Now it's official – it was PM @JustinTrudeau who invited SS criminal to the Parliament last year," the embassy said in a statement shared via X.

The Embassy reacted to media reports and a letter now circulating in which it is written that Trudeau invited Hunka for a private reception on September 22.

"Dear Yaroslav Hunka, The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, is pleased to invite you to a special event. The event will take place on Friday, September 22, 2023, at 8.30 p.m. in Toronto, Ontario," the letter dated September 19, said.

Former Speaker of the HoC Anthony Rota had to resign and assume responsibility for supposedly not having made the necessary background screening which had led Canada into a rather embarrassing scandal following the incident.

In September, the 98-year-old Nazi veteran was invited, allegedly by Rota, to attend Zelenskyy's address at the Canadian parliament. Hunka was introduced as a hero who fought against the Russians during World War II and received two standing ovations from the entire Canadian legislature.

The honoring of a Nazi veteran prompted outcries from Russia, Poland and other countries, with senior Russian and Polish officials suggesting that Hunka should be extradited to face justice in a court of law.

In October, Hunka was charged in absentia with genocide of civilians during World War II by the Russian Investigative Committee. He is accused of participating in large-scale executions of at least 500 civilians in the Lviv region of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1943-1944.

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

White House Denies Tucker Carlson Claims They Try To Stop Him From Interviewing Putin

UNITED NATIONS, February 6 (Sputnik) – The Biden administration denies that it tried to stop US journalist Tucker Carlson from interviewing Russian President Vladimir Putin, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday.

"Absolutely not a comment, to be more clear. Period," Jean-Pierre told reporters. "It's a ridiculous premise and a ridiculous statement that was made about this administration."

Carlson said earlier in the day that the Biden administration twice sought to stop him from interviewing Putin.

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Ukrainian Attack on Lysychansk Was Pre-Planned, Timing Was No Coincidence - Nebenzia

UNITED NATIONS, February 6 (Sputnik) - Russia does not doubt that the timing of the deadly Ukrainian attack on a bakery in Lysychansk was deliberately chosen in advance, Russian Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia said on Wednesday.

"We have no doubt that the target and the timing of the attack [on Lysychansk] were not chosen by chance," Nebenzia told the Security Council members.

The Ukrainian armed forces deliberately waited until people and families were out for a walk on their day off, Nebenzia added.

Ukraine struck the crowded bakery on Saturday, collapsing the building and trapping some 40 civilians under the rubble, the LPR military commander's office told Sputnik. At least 28 people, including a pregnant woman and one child, were killed and 10 others were injured.

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Russia Ready to Share Results of Investigation Into Downing of Il-76 - Nebenzia

UNITED NATIONS, February 6 (Sputnik) - Russia is prepared to share the results of its investigation into the downing of an Il-76 plane that was transporting Ukrainian prisoners of war, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said on Wednesday.

"We are prepared to share the outcome of our national investigation with any interested international organizations," Nebenzia told Security Council members.

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

Pentagon Says Direct Conflict With Russia Possible if Ukraine Aid Not Renewed

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - The United States has not ruled out the possibility of direct conflict with Russia if the supplemental funding package that includes Ukraine aid is not approved, Pentagon Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said on Tuesday.

"If the US stopped support to Ukraine, we should be clear-eyed about the repercussions. Putin is not going to stop and his quest for power and control beyond Ukraine's borders. Toward NATO. If Putin attacks a NATO ally, we will find ourselves in direct conflict as we are committed to defending every NATO member," Singh said during a press briefing.

The remarks come after NSC Coordinator John Kirby said earlier on Tuesday that without the supplemental bill the United States will no longer be able to provide security assistance to Ukraine.

Singh added that the absence of more US aid will not only be felt by Ukrainian soldiers, but that it could be utilized by Russian President Vladimir Putin to push past Ukraine's borders and into NATO ally territory.

"So let's be clear. We can do the responsible thing and pay now to help Ukraine or we can pay much more later to counteract the gains we give Vladimir Putin and embolden Russia," said Singh.

On Sunday, the Senate released a $118 billion national security supplemental bill that includes some $60 billion in additional aid for Ukraine, $14 billion in aid for Israel and about $20 billion for border security, among other priorities.

US House Republicans, including Speaker Mike Johnson, have already labeled the Senate bill as "dead on arrival" and threatened that they will not move it for a vote in the lower chamber of Congress.

Western countries have provided hundreds of billions of dollars worth of aid to Ukraine since the start of Russia's special military operation in February 2022. Aid shipments began in 2022 with artillery munitions and training and have escalated to include tanks, advanced air-defense systems, missiles and cluster munitions. The Kremlin has consistently warned against the West's continued arms deliveries to Ukraine, saying that they only prolong the conflict.

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Schumer Offers Republicans Amendments, More Time to Vote 'Yes' on Supplemental

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) – Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer on Tuesday appealed to Republicans to pass the supplemental bill on border security and foreign aid for Ukraine and Israel, saying Democrats were willing to consider possible amendments and allow more time before the vote.

"To the Republicans: we will give you amendments, we will give you some time. Stay here as long as it takes. We feel it's so important. But go on the bill. Vote 'yes' and we can debate,"

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Schumer told reporters.

Earlier in the day while delivering remarks on the supplemental bill from the Senate floor, Schumer said that Democrats in the higher chamber of Congress will move forward with a vote on the bill as early as Wednesday night, but are ready to delay it by one extra day to give Republicans more time to peruse the document.

On Sunday, the Senate released a $118 billion national security supplemental bill that includes some $60 billion in additional aid for Ukraine, $14 billion in aid for Israel, and about $20 billion for border security, among other priorities.

US House Republicans, including Speaker Mike Johnson, have already labeled the Senate bill as "dead on arrival" and threatened that they will not move it for a vote in the lower chamber of Congress.

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UPDATE - US Senate Confirms Kurt Campbell as Deputy Secretary of State

(Updates throughout with final vote count)

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - The US Senate on Tuesday confirmed Kurt Campbell as Deputy Secretary of State, whom US President Joe Biden nominated to the role in November.

Senators confirmed Campbell as Deputy Secretary of State in a vote of 92-5.

Campbell also served in the Biden administration as Deputy Assistant to the President and Coordinator for Indo-Pacific Affairs on the National Security Council.

Campbell will take over the role from Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland, who took over in an acting capacity after Wendy Sherman retired from the position in July.

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Former Chilean President Pinera Dead, Three Wounded in Helicopter Crash – Reports

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) – Former Chilean President Sebastian Pinera died and three other passengers were injured in a helicopter crash caused by bad weather, El Libero reported on Tuesday.

The aircraft piloted by the former president went down at around 3:00 p.m. (1:00 p.m. EST) and crashed on Ranco Lake due to bad weather conditions, the report said.

According to a preliminary information by the Chilean National Disaster Prevention and Response Service (SENAPRED) there were four passenger of which one died and three were found alive but wounded, the report said, however noting thag no names were specified.

The possibility that Pinera died in the crash was confirmed by his family entourage, according

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to the report. The former president reportedly departed on the flight in the morning to visit one of his friends.

The ex-president's sister Magdalena Pinera and a friend of him were two of the passengers, the report said, citing former Education Minister Gerardo Varela.

Sebastian Pinera was president of Chile between 2010-2014 and held a second term in office between 2018-2022.

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Pentagon Says Not Planning for Possibility of Not Getting Money From Congress to Aid Kiev

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - The Pentagon is not planning for the possibility of not getting money from Congress to provide more aid to Ukraine, Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said on Tuesday.

"I don't think we're planning for the eventuality that the US will never be able to provide or get money from Congress," Singh said during a press briefing.

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Republicans Blast US Senate Leadership After Controversial Border Deal - Cruz

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - Republican senators blasted their leader Mitch McConnell for agreeing to a border security bill that leaves land access to the United States open to millions more illegal immigrants and guts the power of future presidents to close the loopholes, Senator Ted Cruz and colleagues told a Capitol Hill news conference on Tuesday.

"If this bill is passed the crisis never stops," Cruz told reporters. "I am angry at our... Republican leadership for going along with a terrible bill," Cruz said. "The good news is this bill is dead. I described it as a steaming pile of crap."

Senator Rick Scott of Florida joined Cruz in attacking the way McConnell and his allies had secretly cut the deal, which would also approve massive military aid packages to Israel and Ukraine, with their Democratic counterparts and kept most senators from their own party ignorant of what they were doing.

"Negotiations were done behind closed doors, people were left in the dark. ... We received the text on Sunday night at the last minute. We ought to come together as a conference," Scott said.

Concerning the Ukraine package, Scott said the senators have not been sold on it.

"I think this bill is dead. Leadership needs to listen to its members," Scott added

Senator Mike Lee described the bill as a "Trojan rabbit" out of the film "Monty Python and the Holy Grail" that was rolled out without any substance to it that was sent into the negotiating process on the Republican side without any demand for key metrics.

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Lee said it was filled with loopholes through which one could drive a Boeing 747 jet, a Mack truck and an Airbus 380 jet at the same time.

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Unknown Illness Affects 153 Passengers, Crew on Cunard Cruise Line - Statement

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - More than 150 passengers and crew on a Cunard Cruise Line ship suffered digestive problems due to an unidentified illness, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said in a statement.

According to the statement released on Monday, 153 people, or 7.02% of passengers (128 out of 1,824) and 2.59% of crew members (25 out of 967) reported being ill during the voyage.

The predominant symptoms among affected individuals included diarrhea and vomiting, while the cause of the illness remains unknown, the statement said.

In response to the outbreak, Cunard Cruise Line and the ship's crew have taken proactive measures, including heightened cleaning and disinfection procedures, and isolating passengers and crew members displaying symptoms, the statement said.

The Vessel Sanitation Program (VSP) is remotely monitoring the situation and conducting a thorough review of the ship's outbreak, response and sanitation procedures, the statement added.

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Yellen Reiterates to Congress US Strongly Against Any World Bank Lending to China

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - The United States is strongly against the World Bank and its intermediaries from lending any money to China given Beijing’s status as the second largest economy in the world, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen reiterated in a congressional testimony on Tuesday.

"We've pushed the World Bank and other MDBs (multilateral development banks) to reduce and eliminate their lending volume to China," Yellen told the US House Financial Services Committee.

Since March last year, US senators in bipartisan legislation voted to end lending to the Chinese Communist Party by multilateral development banks that included the World Bank and Asian Development Bank.

The so-called Barrasso Bill, led by Republican Senator John Barrasso and supported by 20 others, noted that the World Bank had approved $9.6 billion for projects in China since 2016 while the Asian Development Bank had provided the country with $10.6 billion in loans and $2.4 billion in non-sovereign commitments in that same timeframe.

This was despite Beijing having met the criteria for graduation from any MDB lending, the

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senators said.

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US Senate Set to Confirm Kurt Campbell as Deputy Secretary of State

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - The US Senate is set to confirm Kurt Campbell as Deputy Secretary of State on Tuesday, whom President Joe Biden nominated to the role in November.

A majority of senators voted to confirm Campbell as Deputy Secretary of State, although voting continues.

Campbell also served in the Biden administration as Deputy Assistant to the President and Coordinator for Indo-Pacific Affairs on the National Security Council.

Campbell will take over the role from Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland, who took over in an acting capacity after Wendy Sherman retired from the position in July.

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Trudeau Invited Nazi Veteran Hunka to Attend Parliament Session - Russian Embassy

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) – The Office of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was the one that extended an invitation to Ukrainian Nazi veteran Yaroslav Hunka to appear before the country's House of Commons in September, the Russian Embassy in Ottawa said on Tuesday.

"Now it's official – it was PM @JustinTrudeau who invited SS criminal to the Parliament last year," the embassy said in a statement shared via the X platform.

On Monday, the Globe and Mail reported that it was Trudeau's office that invited Hunka to a private reception hosted for Volodymyr Zelensky. On the same day he was twice given a standing ovation by the entire Canadian legislature.

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McConnell Says Does Not See 'Real Chance' to Pass $118Bln Ukraine Aid, Immigration Bill

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - US Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said on Tuesday that he does not see a real chance of passing a $118 billion supplemental funding bill with Ukraine and Israel aid, as well as immigration and national security measures.

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"It looks to me, and to most of our members, that we have no real chance here to make it law," McConnell said during a press conference.

On Sunday, US Senate negotiators released a bill text for the $118 billion supplemental funding legislation. However, many Republican members of the Senate and House of Representatives came out in opposition to the bill.

The legislation would be dead on arrival in the House of Representatives, House Speaker Mike Johnson said. Earlier on Tuesday, US President Joe Biden alleged that former US President Donald Trump is responsible for lawmakers blocking the bill.

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US House Lawmakers Unveil Resolution Saying Trump Did Not Engage in Insurrection

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - US House lawmakers introduced a symbolic resolution on Tuesday declaring that former President Donald Trump did not engage in insurrection or rebellion against the United States.

"Trump did not commit an insurrection," Representative Matt Gaetz said in a press conference after introducing the resolution, which he authored and which more than 60 Republican lawmakers co-sponsored.

Representative Elise Stefanik said the resolution aims to counter what she called political attempts to disqualify Trump in the upcoming presidential election.

"Rogue far-left Democrat operatives are attempting to use this lie to illegally take President Trump off the ballot," Stefanik added.

The measure was introduced as a so-called "sense of Congress resolution," or simple resolution, which is non-binding.

But US media reported that the legal impact of Gaetz's measure remains uncertain, because the 14th Amendment suggests a two-thirds vote of Congress could lift any disqualification, a prospect the measure is unlikely to achieve.

On January 6, 2021, a mob of Trump supporters breached the US Capitol in an attempt to halt Congress from verifying the election results.

Following the January 6 riot, the then Democrat-majority House impeached Trump for "incitement of insurrection." The former US president also faces federal and state charges for alleged election inference in connection to January 6. Trump has denied doing any wrongdoing.

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US Pushing Iranian Partners to Urge Tehran to Help Deescalate Mideast Flares - US Official

WASHINGTON, February and 6 (Sputnik) - The United States is urging partners of Iran to seek to influence Tehran to help deescalate violence in the Middle East, US Special Envoy for Yemen

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Tim Lenderking said on Tuesday.

"We see the very, very negative role that Iran is playing in the region by fanning this conflict. We really hope that those who are messaging the Iranians and we've talked to a number of countries who have relations with Iran," Lenderking said during a discussion with the Middle East Institute.

Iran has repeatedly rejected accusations from Western countries over Tehran's alleged involvement in the Houthi attacks on merchant ships in the Red Sea. In addition, Iran emphasized that resistance groups in the Middle East, such as the Houthis, do not receive any instructions from Iran.

Lenderking is meeting with regional US partners in the Gulf this week to discuss efforts to reduce regional tensions, including Houthi strikes in the Red Sea and progress on the Yemen peace process, according to the State Department.

Yemen's Ansar Allah movement, also known as the Houthis, vowed in November 2023 to attack any ships associated with Israel until it halts military actions in the Gaza Strip. This led the United States to announce the creation of a multinational operation to secure navigation in the Red Sea. Forces of the US and the United Kingdom later launched major strikes against Houthi positions in a bid to degrade the rebels' ability to target commercial vessels.

In addition, militant groups in the region have carried out numerous attacks on US forces in Iraq and Syria, including an attack on a US base in Jordan that killed three US service members.

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Tucker Carlson Says Biden Admin Twice Sought to Stop Interview With Putin

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - US journalist Tucker Carlson said on Tuesday that the Biden administration twice sought to stop him from interviewing Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"Almost three years ago, the Biden administration illegally spied on our text messages and they leaked the contents to their servants in the news media. They did this in order to stop a Putin interview that we were planning. Last month, we're pretty certain they did exactly the same thing once again, but this time we came to Moscow anyway," Carlson said in a video posted on social media platform X.

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US, European Allies Work Towards Calming Israel-Lebanon Border Tensions - Reports

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - The United States together with its European allies is on the verge of unveiling a set of proposed agreements to diffuse tensions between Israel and Lebanon, Axios reported on Tuesday.

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According to the report, the Biden administration has prioritized forestalling a potential conflict between Israel and the Lebanese-based Hezbollah movement as a crucial component of the broader efforts to curb the escalation of the war in Gaza and avert a regional conflict.

The initiative comes as the situation in southern Lebanon continues to deteriorate after the start of Israel's military operations in Gaza due to backlash from Hezbollah. The Israeli army and Hezbollah regularly exchange fire in areas along the border.

On October 7, 2023, the Palestinian movement Hamas launched an attack against Israel from Gaza, killing 1,200 Israelis - both military and civilian - and abducting some 240 others. Israel launched massive retaliatory strikes and completely blockaded Gaza, cutting off the Palestinian enclave from water, food, medicines, fuel and electricity supplies. Israel also started a ground invasion of Gaza in which nearly 28,000 Palestinians have been killed and some 70,000 wounded, according to the local authorities.

On November 24, Qatar mediated a deal between Israel and Hamas on a temporary truce and the exchange of some of the hostages and Palestinians held Israeli prisons as well as the delivery of humanitarian aid into Gaza. The ceasefire was extended several times and expired on December 1. More than 100 hostages are still believed to be held by Hamas in Gaza.

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Biden Campaign Becoming Aware Border Top Issue Among US Voters - Ex-US Official

EL PASO, February 6 (Sputnik) - The latest votes in the US primary elections have revealed to the Biden campaign that voters consider border security the top issue of concern, former acting deputy commissioner of US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Ronald Vitiello told Sputnik.

The CBP documented more than 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.

"They [Biden campaign] now know after New Hampshire and Iowa that it [immigration] is the number one issue in the minds of voters ... He has the lowest rating ever on it. And they continue to do the same thing," Vitiello said.

A Harvard CAPS-Harris poll released in late January found that immigration was the top issue in the United States among US voters, with inflation as the second top issue.

Former President Donald Trump, who dropped illegal immigration into the United States to historic lows, currently leads President Joe Biden in seven swing states, according to a recent Bloomberg poll.

On Sunday, the Senate released a $118 billion national security supplemental bill that includes some $60 billion in additional aid for Ukraine, $14 billion for Israel and some $20 billion for border security, among other priorities. US House Speaker Mike Johnson rejected the measure, adding that it would be "dead on arrival" if it reaches the House of Representatives.

The proposed legislation has received much backlash from Republicans and even from several Democrats, in both the Senate and House of Representatives over disagreements on the border

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policy measures, which makes the future of this legislation uncertain.

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Tucker Carlson Says Interviewed Putin as Journalistic Duty, to Inform Americans

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - US journalist Tucker Carlson said on Tuesday that he interviewed Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow as a journalistic duty, as well as to inform Americans about the realities of the conflict in Ukraine.

"We're in Moscow tonight. We're here to interview the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin," Carlson said in a video posted to social media platform X. "Here's why we're doing it. First, because it's our job. We're in journalism. Our duty is to inform people."

Most people in the United States are not informed about the conflict in Ukraine and have no idea what is happening in the region, Carlson said.

The conflict in Ukraine is a "human disaster" that has killed an entire generation of Ukrainians, Carlson said. The conflict has also reshaped global military and trade alliances, Carlson said.

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Tucker Carlson Says Independently Paid for Trip to Russia for Putin Interview

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - US journalist Tucker Carlson said on Tuesday that his team independently paid for a trip to Russia to interview Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"We paid for this trip ourselves. We took no money from any government or group," Carlson said in a video posted to social media platform X.

The interview with Putin will be freely available online, Carlson said, adding that Elon Musk vowed not to suppress the interview on X.

Western journalists have not bothered to interview Putin, Carlson said. Carlson said that he also requested an interview with Volodymyr Zelenskyy, which he hopes the leader will accept.

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Prolonged Unrest in Mideast Could Destabilize Yemen Amid Houthi Involvement - US Official

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - Prolonged unrest in the Middle East may further destabilize Yemen as Houthis continue to engage in strikes in the Red Sea, US Special Envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking said on Tuesday.

"One of the problems that we're going to face here is the longer this drags out, the more this

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tempts you know, miscreants, or other forces inside Yemen, to perhaps take matters into their own hands and we think that that is not a good idea," Lenderking said during a discussion with the Middle East Institute.

Lenderking explained that the violence puts at risk the significant progress made to stabilize the situation in Yemen and improve the humanitarian crisis.

The special envoy is meeting with regional US partners in the Persian Gulf this week to discuss efforts to reduce regional tensions, including stopping attacks on commercial vessels in the Red Sea, and effectuate progress on the Yemen peace process, according to the State Department.

Yemen's Houthis vowed in November 2023 to attack any ships associated with Israel until that country halts military actions in the Gaza Strip. This led the United States to announce a multinational operation to secure freedom of navigation in the Red Sea. US and UK forces later launched multiple strikes against Houthi positions in a bid to degrade their ability to target commercial vessels.

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Tucker Carlson Says Interviewed Putin as Journalistic Duty, to Inform Americans

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - US journalist Tucker Carlson said on Tuesday that he interviewed Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow as a journalistic duty, as well as to inform Americans about the realities of the conflict in Ukraine.

“We’re in Moscow tonight. We’re here to interview the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin,” Carlson said in a video posted to social media platform X. “Here’s why we’re doing it. First, because it’s our job. We’re in journalism. Our duty is to inform people.”

Most people in the United States are not informed about the conflict in Ukraine and have no idea what is happening in the region, Carlson said.

The conflict in Ukraine is a “human disaster” that has killed an entire generation of Ukrainians, Carlson said. The conflict has also reshaped global military and trade alliances, Carlson said.

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Biden Says Supplemental Bill to Not Move Forward on Senate Floor Because of Trump

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Tuesday all indications are the supplemental bill will not move forward on the Senate floor for a vote because of his predecessor Donald Trump.

"Now, all indications are this bill won't even move forward to the Senate floor. Why? The simple reason - Donald Trump," Biden said in remarks urging Congress to pass the supplemental bill.

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Biden on Ukraine: 'They Are in Dire Straits'

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden said on Tuesday that Ukraine is in "dire straits" on the battlefield without US support amid the ongoing conflict with Russia.
"They're in dire straits right now defending themselves against the Russian onslaught," Biden said in remarks on the US Senate supplemental bill. "The clock is ticking. Every week, every month that passes without new aid for Ukraine means fewer artillery shells, fewer air defense systems, fewer tools for Ukraine to defend itself."

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Biden Calls on Congress to Pass Supplemental Funding Bill, Says 'Stop Playing Games'

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden on Tuesday called on Congress to pass the supplemental bill on border security and foreign aid for Ukraine and Israel, and specifically asked lawmakers to "stop playing games" and move past "toxic politics."
"I am calling on Congress to pass this bill," Biden said during remarks on the Senate supplemental bill. "Folks, we've got to move past this toxic politics. It's time to stop playing games."

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Majority of US Voters Approve of US House Effort to Impeach Mayorkas - Poll

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - A majority of likely voters in the United States support the US House of Representatives' effort to impeach Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas for his handling of illegal immigration at the United States' border with Mexico, a new Rasmussen Reports poll revealed on Tuesday.
Fifty-two percent (52%) of likely US voters approve of the impeachment effort, the poll report said. More than one-third of respondents, 36%, strongly approve of impeaching Mayorkas, the report on the poll said.
One-quarter of respondents, 25%, strongly disapprove of impeaching Mayorkas and 36% disapprove overall, the report said.
Later on Tuesday, the US House of Representatives will vote on a resolution to impeach Mayorkas for allegedly refusing to enforce federal immigration laws as a result of which at least eight million immigrants entered the United States illegally.

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The poll surveyed 901 likely US voters on January 31, February 1 and February 4. The poll maintains a margin of error of plus-or-minus three percentage points with a 95% confidence level.

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Sullivan to Meet With Stoltenberg, NATO Counterparts in Belgium This Week – White House

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) – US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan will travel to Brussels, Belgium this week to meet with NATO Chief Jens Stoltenberg and counterparts from NATO allies to discuss a range of issues, including support for Ukraine, the White House said on Tuesday.

"National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan is traveling to Brussels, Belgium on February 7. There, he will meet with NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg and join a North Atlantic Council meeting of his counterparts from our NATO Allies. In these meetings, Mr. Sullivan will discuss a variety of key issues ahead of the 75th Anniversary Summit in Washington, including our continued support of Ukraine…," the White House said in a statement.

Sullivan will also discuss the investments that NATO members are making in strengthening defense and deterrence postures including by investing in defense industrial bases, the statement added.

The Foreign Policy magazine reported last week that while Kiev and its Eastern European allies want to see a formal NATO invite for Ukraine as soon as the upcoming 75th summit in July, the United States and Germany do not believe the time has come for their ally to become a member of the military alliance.

The report said that Poland and the Baltic states are facing a significant pushback from Washington and Berlin which believe it is too soon for Ukraine to become a full member of NATO while it is still engaged in a conflict with Russia.

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Normalizing Saudi-Israel Ties Requires End to Gaza War, Path to Palestinian State -Blinken

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - The normalization of relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel will depend on ending the war in the Gaza Strip and a clear path to establishing a Palestinian state, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday.

"With regard specifically to normalization... [Saudi Arabia] made clear... two things are required: an end of the conflict in Gaza, and a clear, credible, time-bound path to the establishment of a Palestinian state," Blinken said during a press conference in Doha.

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US 2025 Oil Output Seen at Record High 13.49 Million Barrels Per Day - EIA

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - US crude oil production is expected to reach a record high just shy of 13.5 million barrels per day by next year, the Energy Information Administration, or EIA, said in a projection issued Tuesday.

US crude output reached an all-time high of 13.29 million barrels per day in the fourth quarter of 2023 and has been forecast to go as high as 13.49 million in 2025, the EIA said in its Short-Term Energy Outlook report.

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Blinken Says Will Discuss With Israel Need for 'Results' on Humanitarian Efforts in Gaza

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday that during his visit to Israel this week he will discuss the need for Israeli leaders to show "results" on efforts to improve humanitarian conditions on the ground in Gaza.

"We need to see as I've said before, real and clear results, not simply a change in intent, but a change in what actually results, and I will be discussing all of that when I'm in Israel tomorrow as we have throughout this trip," Blinken said during a press conference in Doha alongside the prime minister of Qatar.

Blinken said he will also discuss with Israeli leaders Hamas' recent response to a proposed hostage deal.

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Israel-Hamas Hostages Deal Most Effective Way Forward to Extended Period of Calm - Blinken

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - The best path forward to achieve an extended period of calm and put an end to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict would be by reaching an agreement on the hostages held in the Gaza Strip, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday.

"The best path forward, the most effective path forward now to get an extended period of calm and to work toward an end to the conflict, is through an agreement on the hostages," Blinken said during a press conference.

Such a deal is what the United States, jointly with Qatar, Egypt and Israel, are most focused on, Blinken said.

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Hamas' response to the proposal on hostages will allow the parties to further focus on the issue, Blinken added.

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World Oil Usage Expected to Grow by 30,000 Barrels Per Day in 2024 - Energy Agency

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - World oil demand is expected to grow by an estimated 30,000 barrels per day (b/d) this year to reach a total of 1.29 million and by about 80,000 b/d in 2025 for a total of 1.42 million, the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) said on Tuesday.
"We forecast that global consumption of liquid fuels will increase by 1.4 million b/d in 2024 and 1.3 million b/d in 2025," the EIA said in its Short-Term Energy Outlook (STEO) report.

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Qatar Says Received Reply From Hamas Regarding Framework Agreement on Hostages

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) – Qatar has received a response from Hamas in regard to the framework agreement on hostages and the overall comments are positive, Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said on Tuesday.
"First, I would like to inform the media that we have received a reply from Hamas with regards to the general framework of the agreement with regard to hostages. The reply includes some comments, but in general it is positive. However, given the sensitivity of the circumstances, we will not tackle the details," the Qatari Premier said during a joint press conference from Doha with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

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Blinken Says Deal to Release Hamas Hostages Possible, US Continues to Work 'Relentlessly'

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday that it's possible parties can reach a deal on a temporary ceasefire for the release of hostages in the Gaza conflict, and the United States continues to work relentlessly to achieve it.
"We continue to believe that an agreement is possible and indeed essential, and we will continue to work relentlessly to achieve it," Blinken said during a press conference alongside the prime minister of Qatar.

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Ukraine Making 'Tough Decisions' on Battlefield Amid Lapse in US Aid - Kirby

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) – Ukraine is having to making tough decisions on the battlefield amid the lapse in aid during the US government's ongoing struggle to achieve a bipartisan consensus on approving supplemental funding, US National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said Tuesday.

"We know that for a fact that some of their battlefield commanders on the ground are making tough decisions," Kirby said at a press briefing.

These decisions included rationing munitions and making operational decisions based on their restricted ability to support forward troops. Kirby also highlighted that Ukraine did not have a steady, reliable supply of air defense equipment.

House Republican leaders have already expressed strong opposition to the latest bill put forward by the Senate on Sunday, which packaged $20.23 billion in border funding with $60.6 billion in aid to Ukraine, in a bid to secure sufficient Republican support.

Russia has consistently warned against the West's continued arms deliveries to Ukraine, saying that they only prolong the conflict.

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US Apologizes for Incorrect Claim of Advance Notice of Strikes to Iraq – NSC

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) – US National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby apologized on Tuesday for incorrectly telling the press on Friday that the US had notified Iraq in advance of the retaliatory strikes it had launched in the country earlier that day.

"I deeply apologize for the error and I regret any confusion that it caused. It was based on information we had or that was provided to me in those early hours after the strikes. Turns out that information was incorrect and I certainly regret the error and I hope that you'll understand there was no ill intent behind it, no deliberate intent to deceive or to be wrong," Kirby said at a press briefing.

A State Department spokesperson had clarified on Monday that Iraqi officials were only informed after the strikes were launched. The US launched airstrikes against 85 targets in Iraq and Syria on Friday believed to be linked to Iran, in retaliation for a drone attack in Jordan that killed three US service personnel.

Kirby also acknowledged his error on Monday.

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US Will Not Be Able to Support Ukraine Unilaterally Without Supplemental Funding - Kirby

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - The United States will not be able to send security assistance to Ukraine unilaterally without Congress authorizing additional funding, National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"Without additional funding to support Ukraine, the United States unilaterally, won't be able to continue to provide security assistance," Kirby said during a press briefing.

The fact that the United States might not be able to assist Ukraine does not mean that aid will stop flowing from other countries around the world, Kirby said.

However, the absence of the US share will certainly be felt in the hands of the Ukrainian soldiers on the battlefield, Kirby added.

On Sunday, the Senate released a $118 billion national security supplemental bill that includes some $60 billion in additional aid for Ukraine, $14 billion in aid for Israel and about $20 billion for border security, among other priorities.

US House Republicans, including Speaker Mike Johnson, have already labeled the Senate bill as "dead on arrival" and threatened that they will not move it for a vote in the lower chamber of Congress.

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Growing Trade With Africa Fertile Ground for US Business - Senior State Dept. Official

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - The growing volume of US trade with Africa offers "fertile ground" for American business and investors, Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, Energy and the Environment Jose Fernandez said on Tuesday.

"Our trade continues to grow with Africa. This is fertile ground for the United States. We will keep coming back," Fernandez told reporters in a Zoom meeting from Cape Town, South Africa.

Fernandez is visiting Cape Town to participate in the 2024 Investing in Africa Mining Indaba Conference and foster developments in the Mineral Security Partnership (MSP), which also includes Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the European Union.

Fernandez pointed out that there will be opportunities to invest in all stages of the supply chain in Africa.

"Our job in the MSP is to make the investments viable for the private sector," Fernandez said.

The US Export-Import Bank and other government financial organizations have made financing these deals a priority, Fernandez added.

The total volume of US trade with sub-Saharan Africa came to $44.9 billion in 2021. Exports amounted to $16.6 billion while imports, mainly of raw materials, came to $28.3 billion,

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according to official figures.

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UPDATE - Canada Sanctions 11 Individuals Over October 7 Hamas Attacks on Israel – Global Affairs

(Adds details in para 3-5, background in para 6-7)
WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) – Canada has imposed sanctions on 11 individuals linked to Hamas and Islamic Jihad, including their leadership, in response to the October 7th attacks on Israel, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) said on Tuesday.
"Effective immediately, Canada is imposing sanctions against 11 individuals in response to the attack by Hamas in Israel that began on October 7, 2023, and the threat that Hamas and its affiliates pose to regional security," GAC said in a statement.
The sanctioned individuals include Hamas leaders Yahya Sinwar and Mohammed Deif, as well as Palestinian Islamic Jihad leader Akram al-Ajouri, the statement said.
Earlier on Tuesday, Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Melanie Joly announced Ottawa's decision to sanction Hamas and PIJ leadership without providing details.
"Let me be clear, Hamas is a terrorist organization, and they will be held accountable for their terrorist attacks," Joly told reporters.
On October 7, 2023, Palestinian movement Hamas launched a large-scale rocket attack against Israel from Gaza and breached the border, killing 1,200 people and abducting around 240 others. Israel launched retaliatory strikes, ordered a complete blockade of Gaza, and started a ground incursion into the Palestinian enclave with the declared goal of eliminating Hamas fighters and rescuing the hostages. Over 27,500 people have been killed so far in the Gaza Strip, local authorities said.
On November 24, Qatar mediated a deal between Israel and Hamas on a temporary truce and the exchange of some of the prisoners and hostages, as well as the delivery of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. The ceasefire was extended several times and expired on December 1. More than 100 hostages are still believed to be held by Hamas in Gaza.

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Kirby Inadvertently Confirms Russia Does Not Target Civilian Structures in Ukraine

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby on Tuesday inadvertently confirmed that Russia targets only Ukrainian military units and industrial structures that produce munitions, and not civilian ones.
Kirby said that Russian drones, cruise and ballistic missiles are targeting particularly two things in Ukraine: "One is obviously military units, but also specifically and directly … Ukraine's

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defense industrial base to try to eliminate a Ukrainian way to organically produce many of the munitions that they need to defend themselves."

Kirby noted that air defense has been critical for Ukraine's ability to fight Russia and will become even more so in the coming months.

Russia has repeatedly stated since the beginning of its special military operation in Ukraine in February 2022 that it does not target civilian structures and uses high-precision munitions and missiles to achieve that goal. This is in stark contrast to the Kiev regime, which continues to shell Russian populated areas and kill civilians.

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Biden to Reaffirm Commitment to Ukraine During Meeting With German Chancellor - NSC

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden will reaffirm his personal commitment to supporting Ukraine during his upcoming meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, US National Security Council (NSC) spokesperson John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"I think he will make clear to Chancellor Schultz how much he personally wants to continue to support Ukraine," Kirby said during a press briefing.

Kirby added that Biden would also discuss with Scholz the situation in the Middle East and also the upcoming NATO summit in Washington.

Scholz is scheduled to visit the White House on Friday.

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Canada Sanctions 11 Individuals Over October 7 Hamas Attacks on Israel – Global Affairs

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“Effective immediately, Canada is imposing sanctions against 11 individuals in response to the attack by Hamas in Israel that began on October 7, 2023, and the threat that Hamas and its affiliates pose to regional security,” GAC said in a statement.

The sanctioned individuals include the leader of the Hamas movement, Yahya Sinwar, the statement said.

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US, China Hold Meeting of Economic Working Group, Agree to Reconvene in April - Treasury

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - The United States and China held the third meeting of the Economic Working Group and plan to reconvene in April, the US Treasury Department said on Tuesday.

"The United States and the People's Republic of China held the third meeting of the Economic Working Group (EWG) on February 5-6," the Treasury Department said in a release.

The meeting was the first one of the EWG this year and the first held in China, the release said.

Senior officials from the Treasury Department and from China's Ministry of Finance, as well as other government agencies, attended the talks, the release said.

The discussions included the countries' macroeconomic outlooks; cooperation on shared challenges such as debt in low-income and emerging economies; and the United States' concerns about the impact of China's industrial policy practices and overcapacity on US companies and workers, the release said.

The United States reaffirmed its stance that it was not seeking to decouple its economy from China's, but to create a level economic playing field, the release said.

Both delegations agreed to convene again in April, the release added.

The US delegation also met with Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng and indicated that Treasury Secretary Yellen looked forward to visiting China later this year.

The EWG was established in September 2023 and reports directly to Yellen and He.

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US Foreign Policy Since 2021 Defined by 'Half Measures, Self-Deterrence' - McConnell

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - US foreign policy under the Biden administration has been defined by "hesitation half measures" and "self-deterrence," resulting in complete devaluation of the American word, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said on Tuesday.

"For three years, American foreign policy has been defined by hesitation half-measures and self-deterrence. President [Joe] Biden has dug our credibility, the value of American word into a hole," McConnell said in his remarks from the Senate floor.

On Sunday, the Senate released a $118 billion national security supplemental bill that includes some $60 billion in additional aid for Ukraine, $14 billion in aid for Israel and about $20 billion for border security, among other priorities.

US House Republicans, including Speaker Mike Johnson, have already labeled the Senate bill as "dead on arrival" and threatened that they will not move it for a vote in the lower chamber of Congress.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said earlier that Democrats will move with voting on the bill on Wednesday night, but he is ready to provide an extra day for Republicans to give them more time to read the document.

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US Must Do More to Replenish Ukraine's Weapons Stocks - White House

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - The United States has to do more to replenish Ukraine's waning weapons cache, White House Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"We know that that's a critical need. So that's one area where, you know... we've got to do more to replenish their stuff," Kirby said during a press briefing.

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Texas Corporation Linked to Fake Biden Robocalls in New Hampshire - Attorney General

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - New Hampshire authorities have traced fake robocalls imitating President Joe Biden back to the Texas-based Life Corporation, the state's Attorney General John Formella said on Tuesday

"After looking at these tracebacks, and reviewing the information received, we have identified the source of these calls to be Life Corporation, which is a Texas based company owned by an individual named Walter Monk," Formella said during a press briefing.

Last month, the New Hampshire Attorney General's Office started looking into complaints about a recorded robocall message that mimicked Biden's voice and urged voters to skip the state's presidential primary elections.

The messages were described as a unlawful attempt to disrupt the New Hampshire presidential primary election and suppress voters in the state.

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Senator Schumer Says Moving Forward With Wednesday Vote on Supplemental But Offers Delay

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said on Tuesday that he is moving forward with a vote on the supplemental bill, but can delay it until Thursday to give Republicans more time to garner support for the measure.

"We can change the schedule, but we are voting to move to proceed Wednesday night, or if you want the extra day - Thursday," Schumer said in remarks from the Senate floor.

On Sunday, the Senate released a $118 billion national security supplemental bill that includes

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Trump to Appeal US Court's Denial of January 6 Immunity

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) – Former US President Donald Trump plans to appeal a US federal appeals court's upholding on Tuesday of a ruling that he does not retain presidential immunity in his 2020 election interference case.

"President Trump respectfully disagrees with the DC Circuit's decision and will appeal it in order to safeguard the Presidency and the Constitution," Trump campaign spokesperson Steven Cheung said in a statement.

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Head of UN Mission in Iraq Hennis-Plasschaert Says Will Step Down in May

UNITED NATIONS, February 6 (Sputnik) - The head of the United Nations mission in Iraq Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert announced on Tuesday that she would step down from her position at the end of May.

"In December 2018, I arrived in Baghdad. Now, five years later, it is almost time for me to say 'goodbye.' I expect to depart from this position at the end of May," Hennis-Plasschaert said during a meeting of the UN Security Council.

Hennis-Plasschaert explained that the decision to step down was not an easy one, pointing out that Iraq has become an important part of her heart.

"Most importantly, I wish to thank the people of Iraq for their boundless hospitality, their generosity and kindness," she said.

Hennis-Plasschaert expressed the hope that people from around the world one day will be able to see the country of rich diversity and culture that has many opportunities to develop.

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US Appeals Court Rules Trump Not Immune to January 6 Prosecution - Court Document

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) – A US federal appeals court ruled on Tuesday that former President Donald Trump is not immune from prosecution in his 2020 election interference case.

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"Today, we affirm the denial. For the purpose of this criminal case, former President Trump has become citizen Trump, with all of the defenses of any other criminal defendant. But any executive immunity that may have protected him while he served as President no longer protects him against this prosecution," the ruling stated.

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Only 45% of Canadians Interested in Ukraine, 25% Say Ottawa Doing 'Too Much' – Poll

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) – Only 45% of Canadians say they are paying attention to the ongoing armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine, compared to 63% in 2022, and one in four say Ottawa is doing "too much" to support Kiev, an Angus Reid Poll showed on Tuesday.

Since the start of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine in February 2022, the Canadian government has committed more than US$1.86 billion in military assistance to Kiev, providing Leopard 2 main battle tanks, armored combat support vehicles, anti-tank weapons, M777 howitzers and associated ammunition, among other items.

"One-quarter (25%) of Canadians believe their country is doing too much to assist Ukraine in its fight against the Russian invasion, up from 13 percent who said the same in May 2022," the poll found. "During the same interval, the number who say Canada is not doing enough has halved (38% to 19%)."

The percentage of Conservative voters who think Ottawa is providing too much assistance to Ukraine amid Russia's ongoing special military operation has more than doubled from 19% to 43% since May 2022.

In addition, 45% percent of those polled said they were "closely following" news on the conflict, a significant decline from 66% in 2022.

The poll also found that just 35% of Canadians still believe Ottawa should help Ukraine for "as long as it takes," while 10% percent think Canada should only offer another year of support, 30% are uncertain, 20% believe Ukraine should seek peace, and 5% say Canada should

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completely end its assistance to Kiev.

The poll surveyed 1,617 Canadians from January 29–31 and has a margin of error of -/+ 2%.

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US Authorities Arrest Migrants Suspected of Beating New York Police Officers - Reports

WASHINGTON, February 6 (Sputnik) - The US authorities have arrested several illegal immigrants suspected of participating in the recent physical assault on two New York City police officers, Fox News reported on Tuesday.

The suspects were arrested late on Monday at a bus station in Phoenix, Arizona, the report said.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arrested the migrants in coordination with the Homeland Security Department but did not disclose additional details, including the suspects' identities, the report said.

The incident was caught on video that went viral on social media platforms and subsequently caused New York Governor Kathy Hochul to issue a stern reaction in defense of the police officers. Hochul also said she would inquire with Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg about why most of the caught suspects were released without bail.

The Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has reported more than 302,000 migrant encounters in December, marking the highest single-month figure ever recorded in the United States. The Biden administration has also experienced three consecutive years of record numbers of illegal immigration on the southern border, numbering at least eight million.

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