Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

2/29/24 Thursday

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

Germany Mulls Re-Obtaining Nuclear Arms, Names Trump Among Reasons

Germany gave up their nuclear weapons nearly three and a half decades ago. But a recent comment from former President Donald Trump has made them nervous, and prompted them to reconsider their position.

A recent report suggests that German defense officials are privately contacting British and French NATO allies for a potential nuclear weapons deal as an alternative to their nuclear dependency on the US.

Germany fears not only potential aggression from Russia, but is also concerned that a second Donald Trump presidency will lead the US to disengage themselves from NATO. The debate is a difficult one for the country, as Germany has already surrendered the use of both nuclear energy and the atomic bomb.

In 1990 they agreed under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons with the US, UK, France and the Society Union to renounce their nuclear weapons. And last year, in fact, Germany closed down its last nuclear power plant.

But earlier this month, Trump said that as president he would “encourage” Russia “to do whatever... they want” to countries that are “delinquent” in paying their “bills”.

“NATO was busted until I came along,” Trump said at a rally in Conway, South Carolina. “I said, ‘Everybody’s gonna pay.’ They said, ‘Well, if we don’t pay, are you still going to protect us?’ I said, ‘Absolutely not.’ They couldn’t believe the answer.”

Trump then recounted a conversation he had with “one of the presidents of a big country” during his time as president who, he claimed, had asked him if the US would respect Article 5 commitments and defend their country were they to be under attack.

“No, I would not protect you,” Trump recalled telling that president. “In fact, I would encourage them to do whatever the hell they want. You got to pay. You got to pay your bills.”

In an article published earlier this month, German Finance Minister Christian Lindner voiced the idea of nuclear collaboration between Germany and its European partners in response to Trump’s comment.

“Under which political and financial conditions would Paris and London be willing to maintain and expand their own strategic capacities for our collective security? And conversely, how much are we ready to contribute?”

“Let us not deceive ourselves: as long as there are nuclear weapons in the world, Europe will also have to adhere to a system of nuclear deterrence in order not to be defenseless at the mercy of the blackmail of authoritarian states” Lindnerdeclared.

It has been reported that senior members of the conservative CDU party as well as the ruling SPD are now looking into a common European nuclear deterrent in the event that they may have to end their dependency on US nuclear arms.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

According to the report, it is estimated that 20 nuclear weapons are already stationed at Büchel Air Base in Germany, despite Germany not really "owning" the nuclear weapons. German warplanes are also equipped to launch the US nuclear weapons that are stationed there. However, the use of those weapons are controlled by the US.
Germany is partial to a US military presence in Europe, and so they haven't swayed towards joining a European nuclear umbrella—an idea first introduced by France—until now. However, a French official has said that it hasn't been in any recent contact with the country about extending its nuclear umbrella.
According to a report, experts believe the country could have access to nuclear weapons in a relatively short period of time due to their industrial and scientific prowess. And a recent poll shows a sway among Germans (52%) who are now in favor of the presence of nuclear weapons.

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

$3 Billion Experiment Involving US Tunnels May Help Unravel Questions About the Universe

Not to be confused with Frank Herbert's science fiction franchise, DUNE is an international experiment for studying neutrinos, which may help unravel the secrets of the universe.
The DUNE project—Deep Underground Neutrino Experiment—is an "international flagship" project aimed at studying neutrinos. The project is being led by scientists at the US Department of Energy's Fermilab and will require the use of tunnels beneath the US state of South Dakota. As a result of the estimated $3 billion project, crews that began excavating 800,000 tons of rock out of the former gold mine now have three underground caverns that are 500 feet long, and almost tall enough to hold a seven-story building.
"The actual excavation took only a year, which is amazing," said Jaehoon Yu, professor of physics at UTA, which is helping to make the colossal detectors. "It's great that the excavation work is finished and now preparations can be made for the installation of the detectors. This is an exciting time."
That excavation work has recently been completed, and the next step is to install the first of four particle detectors about a mile below the surface at the Sanford Underground Research Laboratory in Lead, South Dakota, according to a release from the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA).
Particle accelerators at Fermilab outside Chicago, Illinois will first fire an extremely powerful beam of neutrinos through a detector at Fermilab. That beam will then travel underground for 800 miles to the detector at the South Dakota Sanford Underground Research Facility.
Neutrinos are sometimes referred to as "ghost particles", and are incredibly difficult to study. They live all around us, and pass through us, unnoticed. The existence of neutrinos was first theorized in 1930, but experimenters only discovered the subatomic particles 26 years later. They are tiny, neutral and weigh so little that it is impossible to measure their mass.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

But they are also the most abundant particles that have been made in the universe. They are created by the sun, supernovae, and are even produced by the natural radioactivity of potassium in bananas.
"If you hold your hand up, there are 10 billion neutrinos from the sun going through your hand" every second, said physicist Mary Bishai and spokesperson for DUNE.
Those in the DUNE experiment hope their research will help them discover why the universe is composed of matter instead of antimatter, how an exploding star creates a black holes, and answer the question as to whether or not protons decay.

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

Race to the Border - Cartoon

The US president and his predecessor were separated by 300 miles, but the appearances were still fraught with tension as the two aimed their political attacks against each-other.
Thursday was an awkward day for US politics as former President Donald Trump and US President Joe Biden, political adversaries fighting for a spot in the Oval Office, made competing visits to the US-Mexico border.
During the visit, Biden challenged Trump to "join" him in securing the US-Mexico border, while Trump blamed the president for the lawlessness there. Migrant counters have more than doubled since Trump was president, and both sides of the political aisle have blamed Biden for the record levels of crossings.
But the US president expressed his frustration at a border bill that was torpedoed by Republicans who said it wasn't strong enough. Biden, and other Democratic leaders, have said that both Democrats and Republicans supported the legislation until Trump told them not to, because doing so would help bolster Biden's political gains.
"Here's what I'd say to Mr. Trump... instead of telling members of Congress to block this legislation, join me — or I'll join you — in telling the Congress to pass this bipartisan border security bill," he said. "We can do it together. You know, and I know it's the toughest, most efficient, most effective border security bill this country has ever seen. So instead of playing politics with the issue, why don't we just get together and get it done?"
Biden campaigned on ending Trump-era border policies, but may consider executive action that would close the border to new arrivals if more than an average of 5,000 migrants per day tried to cross unlawfully within a week, or if more than 8,500 tried to cross per day.
Meanwhile, Trump, who launched his first presidential campaign by accusing Mexico of sending "crime," "drugs," and "rapists" across the US-Mexico border, met with Republican Governor Greg Abbott at Eagle Pass, Texas.
Trump delivered a speech in which he inflated falsehoods about "migrant crime" coming into the US, despite crime rates in most US cities having fallen over the last three years, and multiple studies finding that immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than other US residents.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Trump has reportedly planned an extreme expansion of his first-term immigration policies if he is reelected in 2025.
Those plans include abducting undocumented people who live in the US and detaining them in large---yet to be built---camps while they wait for expulsion. This would include those who may have lived in the US for decades. He would also enact an effort to end birthright citizenship and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), push to ban entry to people who come from Muslim-majority nations, and refuse asylum claims to those perceived as carrying infectious diseases like tuberculosis.

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

Pentagon Hosts Colombian Defense, Justice Ministers to Discuss Counter-Drug Policy

WASHINGTON, March 1 (Sputnik) - US Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Hemispheric Affairs Rebecca Zimmerman has hosted the Colombian ministers of defense and justice to discuss the Latin American country's new counter-drug policy, the Pentagon said on Friday.
"Performing the Duties of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Hemispheric Affairs, Ms. Rebecca Zimmerman, hosted Colombia's Minister of Defense, Mr. Iván Velásquez, and Minister of Justice and Law, Mr. Néstor Osuna, at the Pentagon on February 28," the Pentagon said in a readout.
Zimmerman and her Colombian counterparts discussed Bogota's new counter-drug policy and progress made on the country's Total Peace Plan. The US official also highlighted the DoD's assistance to Colombia during the recent forest fires.
In addition, the officials exchanged views on efforts to counter illicit drug trafficking and human security, stem irregular migration, and enhance bilateral security cooperation, the readout added.
The US reaffirmed its commitment to Colombia as the two countries work toward ensuring a stable and secure hemisphere, the readout added.
In September, the Colombian government introduced its new National Drugs Policy 2023-2033 which recognizes that the drug market is a transnational problem. Colombia seeks to reduce illicit coca leaf cultivation surfaces by 90,000 hectares by 2026, which would result in a 43% reduction in production and the elimination of 11,823 million cocaine doses in the world market.

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

Canada Expands Ban on Russian Diamonds to Indirect Imports – Foreign Ministry

WASHINGTON, March 1 (Sputnik) – The Canadian government on Friday expanded its ban on Russian diamonds to indirect imports.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

"This ban further builds on Canada's December 2023 import restrictions on diamonds and diamond-jewellery-related products from Russia by targeting indirect imports of Russian diamonds weighing 1 carat and above," Global Affairs Canada said in a statement.

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

RPT: ANALYSIS - Mitch McConnell Forced Out From Senate Leadership by Former Right-Wing Allies

WASHINGTON, March 1 (Sputnik) - US Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, who announced he would be stepping down as the Republican leader in the upper chamber after 17 years in the job, is a victim of the new radical right-wing forces he has done so much over the decades to foster and protect, US analysts told Sputnik.

McConnell, who has just turned 82 and has had several public health issues in recent months, announced his decision on the floor of the Senate on Wednesday. He said he would stay in his position until the current Congress ends in November and would remain in the chamber as the senior senator from his home state of Kentucky.

ULTRA RIGHT ENEMIES

Age and health issues were not the driving force behind McConnell's decision to step down but the increasing public criticism he was receiving from more right-wing senators including Ted Cruz of Texas in recent months, University of Houston Professor of African American History Gerald Horne believes.

"Mitch [was] hoisted on his petard," Horne said. "He was an engineer of the rise of the ultra-right especially in packing the courts."

However, McConnell's old allies eventually became more radical, especially on foreign policy issues, than he was, Horne said.

"His old-line [Republican] posture on foreign policy was anathema to his comrades and, thus, those he boosted forced his departure," he said.

STAYED TOO LONG

McConnell led his party in the Senate for a longer period than any other senator in history, but he stayed too long and should have stepped down long ago, former hedge fund manager, historian and political commentator Charles Ortel said.

"McConnell should have relinquished the leadership long ago," he said.

McConnell was also married to former secretary of labor and then of transportation Elaine Chao, who had also been a senior banker with Citicorp, raising many allegations of conflict of interest which they both shrugged off over the decades. Critics charged they were both committed to free trade and open borders policies to the detriment of the American people.

There were "legitimate questions about his wife and concerning her family," Ortel said.

In recent years, critics charged that McConnell was too amenable to liberal free trade and related policies and made common cause with the Democrats, selling out his own party far too often.

"McConnell has not required backbone or skill to press for truly sensible and conservative

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

legislation and outcomes for more than a decade," he said.

Ortel also assessed McConnell as being too eager to still hold onto the prestige and influence of his Senate seat despite his age and possibly failing health.

"While he is at it, he might consider resigning from the Senate itself so that younger, fresh blood might replace him in a special election," he said.

Ortel also noted that McConnell had decided to announce his stepping down from the Republican Senate leadership after former President Donald Trump, with whom he has repeatedly clashed in recent years, was cementing his renewed hold on the party with a number of sweeping primary victories over mainstream former South Carolina governor Nikki Haley in the presidential race.

"Trump, like each of us, has flaws. But Donald Trump has vast, authentic and enthusiastic support. [President Joe] Biden and [Vice President Kamala] Harris certainly do not," Ortel said.

LESS PORK FOR KENTUCKY

George Mason University Professor of Law Francis Buckley, however, saw little change coming in the balance of power in the Senate. The change would mainly be felt in a reduction in the amounts of federal subsidies and other aid going to McConnell's home state of Kentucky, he said.

"Less pork for Kentucky. And that's about it," he said.

McConnell strongly supported the latest foreign aid bill with over $60 billion for Ukraine and another $14 billion in assistance for Israel attached. One of his leading Republican critics, Sen. Rand Paul also from Kentucky, described McConnell's support for the bill that stripped out border security provisions as "outrageous."

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

RPT - Seizing Russia's Frozen Assets May Unsettle Flow of Foreign Investments - Ex-IMF Official

WASHINGTON, March 1 (Sputnik) - A seizure of Russia's' frozen assets abroad by the European Union and its G7 allies would unsettle the flow of foreign investments and damage the global economy, former member of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) executive board Hossein Askari told Sputnik.

The European Union (EU) is estimated to hold some $300 billion in Russian central bank assets together with its G7 allies, including the United States, Japan and Canada. The Western allies have been holding talks on how to tap the frozen funds to help pay for the reconstruction of Ukraine, but Russia argues this is illegal and will ruin the West's image as a safe haven for global money.

"Seizing Russia's assets now and awarding them to Ukraine would set a dangerous precedent," Askari said. "It would unsettle the flow of finance and foreign direct investment as countries would see a heightened risk of their assets being seized. Such reduced flows would in turn damage the global economy."

Last year, the World Bank estimated that $411 billion would be needed for the reconstruction

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

and recovery of Ukraine.

European Council President Charles Michel previously noted that drawing up a legal framework that would allow the EU to seize Russian state money would not be an easy task, and suggested focusing on unlocking the profits generated by those assets first.

Russia views potential attempts by the US and EU to seize Russian assets as theft and also an act of trade war, and Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova has warned that Moscow would have a tough response to such an escalation of economic aggression.

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

RPT - Excessive Use of US Sanctions May Lessen World Trade, Create Trade Blocs - Ex-IMF Official

WASHINGTON, March 1 (Sputnik) - The excessive use of US sanctions may lessen world trade and lead to the establishment of several powerful trading blocs, former member of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Executive Board Hossein Askari told Sputnik.

"Less world trade than what we might have had," Askari said when asked about the long-term impacts of excessive US sanctions. "Also, we could see the emergence of three or four powerful trading blocks, where the politics and economic finance of the countries are more aligned."

Askari also said that excessive use of US sanctions will restructure the global economy, which will eventually lead to even higher levels of inflation worldwide.

Last week, the United States imposed some 500 new sanctions on Russian individuals and entities, including in the energy sector, in light of the two-year anniversary of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine.

Overall, the United States has imposed some 3,500 anti-Russia sanctions on individuals and entities since the start of the special military operation in February 2022.

Russian officials have pointed out that Russia is solving all the problems the collective West has created to contain and weaken the country's economy, but the West lacks the courage to recognize that the sanctions regime has failed.

Russian officials have also said that the Western sanctions have dealt a serious blow to the global economy and have actually increased the prices of electricity, fuel and food products in Europe and in the United States.

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

RPT - Russian Energy Exports to China, India Key to Thwarting US Sanctions - Ex-IMF Official

WASHINGTON, March 1 (Sputnik) - US sanctions on Russia have not had the desired consequences of slowing Moscow's economy due to the continued flow of Russian energy exports, especially to key economic powerhouses like China and India, which the United States

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

is hesitant to sanction, former member of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) executive board Hossein Askari told Sputnik.

"Two countries that need oil and gas are China and India, these are big countries that are willing to defy secondary US sanctions," Askari said. "As long as the price of oil and gas is at an acceptable discount and they know that the US cannot afford to sanction them too, especially not China."

Russia, Askari added, has learned some lessons on how best to evade certain sanctions.

Last week, the United States rolled out approximately 500 new sanctions on Russian people and entities, including in the energy sector, in light of the two-year anniversary of Moscow's special military operation in Ukraine. Overall, the United States has imposed some 3,500 anti-Russia sanctions on individuals and entities since the start of Russia's special military operation in February 2022.

Earlier this month, International Monetary Fund (IMF) spokesperson Julie Kozack said that Russia's economy has surprised spectators in terms of strength and growth despite Western efforts to restrict its economy through sanctions.

However, Kozack added that the IMF projects these sanctions and human capital issues may impact the Russian economy in the medium term.

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

US Senate Passes Stopgap Funding Bill, Sending Measure to Biden for Approval

WASHINGTON, March 1 (Sputnik) -The US Senate passed a continuing resolution to temporarily fund the federal government and avert a shutdown, granting lawmakers more time to pass appropriations bills over the next several weeks.

Senators passed the stopgap funding measure in a vote of 77-13 on Thursday.

Earlier on Thursday, the US House of Representatives also passed the measure, which now awaits final approval from President Joe Biden.

On Wednesday, congressional leaders announced their plan to pass a continuing resolution ahead of a shutdown deadline on Friday. The plan also includes passing multiple sets of appropriations bills in the coming weeks.

In addition, the Senate rejected attempts to add aid for Israel and to add Republican House-passed bill HR2, which is a border security measure that would have reinstated some Trump-era immigration policies.

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

US Weapon Systems Costing More Than Legal Permitted Spending Levels to Run - Report

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

WASHINGTON, March 1 (Sputnik) - The US armed services are spending more money than they are permitted to do by law in their efforts to maintain and continue to operate many weapons systems, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) warned in a report.

"The GAO looked at DOD [the Department of Defense]'s Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 sustainment reviews, and found that seven out of 16 weapon systems had sustainment cost growth above the thresholds identified in law," the report said on Thursday.

The GAO recommended that the Defense Department address the issue, the report stated.

"The Department of Defense spends billions of dollars a year to operate and maintain its weapon systems. These "sustainment" costs - such as for repair parts or personnel - account for about 70% of a weapon system's total cost, the GAO said.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Sustainment serves as the principal staff assistant and advisor to the senior secretary of defense in monitoring these procedures, but its guidance does not provide the necessary clarity to ensure the consistent presentation of cost estimate information, the report noted.

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

US Navy Extends Huntington-Ingalls Planning Deal on Littoral Combat Ships - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, March 1 (Sputnik) - Huntington-Ingalls Industries-Ingalls Shipbuilding has received a more than $80 million US Navy contract extension to continue providing shipyard planning services for the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) operational fleet, the Department of Defense announced in a press release.

"Huntington-Ingalls Industries-Ingalls Shipbuilding [of] Pascagoula, Mississippi is awarded an $80,038,980 ...modification ...contract ...[for] the planning yard services for the Littoral Combat Ship in-service ships," the release said on Thursday.

Almost all the work on the contract will be performed in Hampton, Virginia (30%) and in Pascagoula, Mississippi (68%), the Defense Department said.

The contract is scheduled to last for 14 months and to be completed by April 2025, the Defense Department said.

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

Boeing Wins $680Mln Software Contract For US Navy, Australian F/A-18 Fleets - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, March 1 (Sputnik) - Boeing has won a more than $680 million US Navy contract to produce training systems software and hardware upgrades for the F/A-18E/F and EA-18G aircraft of the Navy and the Australian Air Force, the Department of Defense announced in a press release.

"The Boeing Company [of] St. Louis, Missouri is awarded a $680,070,000 ...contract to

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

produce, deliver, and install aircrew and maintenance training systems software and hardware configuration upgrades ...in support of the F/A-18E/F and EA-18G aircraft for the Navy and Royal Australian Air Force," the release said on Thursday.

Under the contract, Boeing will also provide logistics support including spares procurement, support equipment, technical manual updates, and reports on software discrepancies, the Defense Department added.

Boeing will also develop new courseware and provide on-site training for aircrews and maintenance training systems, the release continued.

Work on the project will be performed in St. Louis, Missouri over the next five years and is expected to be completed in February 2029, the Defense Department said.

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

New US Army Combat Vehicles Doomed to Be Costly Failures - Ex State Dept. Official

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - Three new advanced US Army combat vehicles introduced last year appear almost certainly doomed to be long delayed, suffer enormous cost overruns and perform very poorly in battlefield conditions, US Marine Corps combat veteran and former State Department official Mathew Hoh told Sputnik.

In 2023, as part of its ambitious modernization efforts to prepare for potential conflicts with such peer adversaries as Russia and China, the US Army introduced 24 new systems. The most notable were the M10 Booker infantry-support armored vehicle, which is equipped with a 105mm heavy caliber gun, and the XM30 mechanized infantry fighting vehicle to replace the old and long-criticized M2 Bradley fighting vehicle.

Hoh, now a senior fellow at the Center for International Policy, cautioned that the long history of Army procurement programs virtually guaranteed that none of the new systems would deliver as promised and meet their hyped up and exaggerated expectations.

"I'm not sure how anyone would oppose the idea that the long history of program cancellations, massive cost overruns, failed tests and corrupt practices that define not just Army procurement, but the entire Defense Department will somehow be different with these vehicle systems," Hoh said.

The primary motivation to award the contracts would be the degree of financial support that the biggest defense contractors would channel to the politicians making the decisions and the work would as usual be rationed out not according to any considerations of cost or efficiency but in order to ensure continued support for the programs in major states and powerful corporations, Hoh said.

"What I am sure of is that politicians will get ample campaign contributions from the defense industry, weapons makers will reap huge profits, and American soldiers will have poorly performing, costly and hard to maintain vehicles," Hoh said.

The new systems were announced with the intention of keeping the US Army ahead of its potential rivals in waging warfare on a rapidly changing battlefield, Hoh added.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

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

RPT - Overuse of US Sanctions Curbs Their Impact, Hard to Monitor All of Them - Ex-IMF Official

WASHINGTON, March 1 (Sputnik) - The overuse of US sanctions hinders their effect and it is difficult to manage them all at the same time, former member of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) executive board Hossein Askari told Sputnik.

"Yes, the US has always overused the sanction weapon in large part to pound its chest and tell Americans and the world that it is acting, it is doing something to counteract the objectionable policies of an adversary," Askari said. "Yet some of these sanctions have little effect and the US cannot monitor so many thousands of sanctions to assess violations."

The United States would be more effective to have a few focused sanctions on a country's access to international finance and its major exports and imports, Askari added.

Last week, the United States rolled out approximately 500 new sanctions on Russian people and entities, including in the energy sector, in light of the two-year anniversary of Moscow's special military operation in Ukraine. Overall, the United States has imposed some 3,500 anti-Russia sanctions on individuals and entities since the start of Russia's special military operation in February 2022.

Russian officials have pointed out that Russia is solving all the problems the collective West has created to contain and weaken the country's economy, but the West lacks the courage to recognize that the sanctions regime has failed. Moscow adds that the sanctions dealt a serious blow to the global economy and have actually increased the prices of electricity, fuel, and food products in Europe and the United States.

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

Former Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney Passes Away Surrounded by Family - Statement

WASHINGTON, March 1 (Sputnik) - Canada's 18th Prime Minister Brian Mulroney passed away peacefully surrounded by family at the age of 84, his daughter Caroline Mulroney said in a social media post.

"On behalf of my mother and our family, it is with great sadness we announce the passing of my father, The Right Honourable Brian Mulroney, Canada’s 18th Prime Minister. He died peacefully, surrounded by family," Caroline Mulroney said on Thursday.

Caroline Mulroney added that details of the arrangements would be available at a later time.

According to reports, Brian Mulroney served as Canadian Prime Minister from 1984 to 1993 and is known for negotiating the Canada–United States Free Trade Agreement, and privatizing Crown corporations like Petro Canada and Air Canada.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

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

US Prosecutor in Trump Classified Records Case Proposes New Trial Date of July 8 - Filing

WASHINGTON, March 1 (Sputnik) - US Special Counsel Jack Smith is proposing a new trial date of July 8 in former President President Donald Trump's classified documents case in the state of Florida, a court filing revealed.

"Attached to this pleading is the Government's proposed schedule for going forward, culminating in a new trial date of July 8, 2024," Smith stated in the court filing on Thursday.

Trump's legal team in a separate court filing reiterated their call to postpone the classified documents trial until after the 2024 US presidential election in November, but offered August 12 as an alternative.

Trump faces 37 charges related to his alleged mishandling of classified documents that the FBI uncovered in a raid of his Florida residence. He pleaded not guilty to the allegations.

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

UNSC Unable to Adopt Press Statement on Gaza Due to US Position - UN Source

UNITED NATIONS, March 1 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council was unable to adopt a press statement because of the United States' position, which refused to condemn Israel and recognize killings of Palestinians, a UN source told Sputnik.

"The UN Security Council was unable to adopt a statement for the press because of the position of the United States, which refused not only to condemn Israel, but even to recognize that the Palestinians were killed and didn't just die," the source told Sputnik.

US Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Robert Wood told journalists that the Security Council members are still working on it and they need to gather all the facts on how the people were killed.

Earlier on Thursday, the Gaza health authorities said the Israeli military shot more than 100 Palestinians while they were waiting for an aid delivery. Israeli officials disputed the death toll and said the victims were killed by aid trucks running over them.

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

Indicted Pentagon Leaker Jack Teixeira to Enter Guilty Plea on March 4 - Court Filing

WASHINGTON, March 1 (Sputnik) - Jack Teixeira, the accused leaker of top-secret military intelligence documents, is expected to plead guilty next week, according to a motion filed by US

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

prosecutors.

"Now comes the United States, through undersigned counsel, and with the assent of the defendant respectfully requests that the Court schedule this matter for a Rule 11 hearing on March 4, 2024, the date currently set for the Pretrial Conference," the motion said on Thursday.

A Rule 11 hearing means that Teixeira will change his not-guilty plea and that the US attorneys and the defendant have already reached an agreement on it.

The authorities arrested Teixeira in April after which he was indicted on six counts of willful retention and transmission of classified information relating to national defense. The documents purportedly contained information regarding the conflict in Ukraine, US espionage activities, and other national security matters.

Each one of the charges could garner him up to ten years in prison, up to three years of supervised release and a fine of up to $250,000.

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

Biden Says Would Urge Trump to Collaborate in Urging Congress to Pass Border Security Bill

WASHINGTON, March 1 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden said during a press briefing at the southern border in Brownsville, Texas, that he would invite Former President Donald Trump to collaborate in urging Congress to pass a bipartisan border security bill.

"Here's what I would say to Mr. Trump...Join me, or I'll join you in telling the Congress to pass this bipartisan border security bill," Biden said Thursday.

Biden added that rather than "playing politics", it would be more productive for everyone to unite and pass a bipartisan supplemental bill with border policy reforms.

Earlier today, Biden visited Brownsville, Texas, coinciding with Trump's visit to Eagle Pass.

According to US Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the Biden administration has experienced three consecutive years of record numbers of illegal migration on the southern border. CBP documented more than 302,000 migrant encounters in December, marking the highest single-month figure ever recorded.

President Biden's visit to the US southern border is too late and only a political attempt to save himself, National Border Patrol Council Vice President Art Del Cueto told Sputnik earlier this week.

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

Oil Dips on Last Day of February But Still Ends Month Up Extending 2024 Rally

NEW YORK, February 29 (Sputnik) - Crude prices managed to close February higher despite dipping on the last day of the month and swinging for weeks, as this year's rally in oil continued amid concerns about supply disruptions and waning fuel demand.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude for April delivery finished the final session of February down 28 cents, or 0.4%, at $78.26 a barrel on Thursday. For the month though, the WTI benchmark was up 3.2%, following through with January's gain of 5.9%.

London-traded Brent crude for May delivery also settled slightly down on the day, easing 24 cents, to close at $81.91 a barrel. For all of February. Brent was up 1.7% after January's advance of 4.6%.

Since 2024 began, oil prices have risen on fears that the Israel-Hamas war could disrupt crude shipments from oil-rich countries around the conflict zone. Iran-backed Houthi rebels supporting Hamas have particularly attacked vessels in the Red Sea, delaying some oil deliveries to Europe and Asia.

Talk that oil producing alliance OPEC+ might resort to supply cuts in the second quarter has also boosted prices. The alliance groups 13 members of the Saudi-led Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries with 10 independent oil producing countries steered by Russia.

On the other end, surging stockpiles of US crude have raised worries about demand for oil. US crude stockpiles rose for a fifth week in a row and by around 27 million barrels since late January, according to data on Wednesday from the Energy Information Administration.

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

US Senator Durbin Says Mayorkas Impeachment 'Waste of Time'

WASHINGTON, March 1 (Sputnik) - An impeachment effort by the US House of Representatives against Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas is a waste of time for lawmakers, Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin said.

"It is a political stunt by the House of Representatives… They wasted their time on it, and it's a waste of time in the Senate. I hope we spend very little time with that," Durbin said in a Bloomberg TV interview on Thursday.

Earlier this month, House Republicans passed a resolution to impeach Mayorkas for allegedly failing to secure the United States' borders from illegal immigration. The Senate is now tasked with holding an impeachment trial on the recommendation of the House of Representatives.

On Tuesday, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said that he supports holding an impeachment trial against Mayorkas. However, the Democratic-majority Senate could dismiss the impeachment articles with a simple majority vote.

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

Congressional Candidate Says Term Limits Needed in US Congress After McConnell Resigns

WASHINGTON, March 1 (Sputnik) - Republican congressional candidate Scott Cleveland's campaign told Sputnik in light of Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell's resignation, that

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

term limits are needed for lawmakers in Congress.
On Wednesday, McConnell announced that he will step down from the Senate leadership role in November, although he will serve out the remainder of his term.
"[Cleveland] He believes he should absolutely step down and fully supports term limits," a campaign spokesperson said on Thursday.
The campaign pointed out that Cleveland's opponent Congressman Mike Simpson, 73, has been in Congress for 25 years, which they consider to be "way too long."
Cleveland is running in the election to represent in Congress Idaho's 2nd congressional district.

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

Boeing Wins $3.4Bln Contract for Delivery of 17 P-8A Aircraft to Canada, Germany -Pentagon

WASHINGTON, March 1 (Sputnik) - The US Defense Department said that it awarded Boeing a $3.4 billion contract for the delivery of 14 P-8A aircraft to Canada and three to Germany.
"The Boeing Co., Seattle, Washington, is awarded a $3,407,940,833 firm-fixed-price, undefinitized contract for the procurement and delivery of 17 Lot 13 P-8A Multi-Mission Maritime Aircraft (14 for the government of Canada and three for the government of Germany), as well as associated non-recurring engineering," the Defense Department said in a press release on Thursday.
The contract is expected to be completed by Boeing in March 2028, the release added.

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

Russian National Marchenko Pleads Guilty to Money Laundering, Smuggling - US Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, March 1 (Sputnik) - Russian citizen Maxim Marchenko pleaded guilty to charges of money laundering and smuggling goods from the United States, the US Justice Department announced.
"Maxim Marchenko, 51, a Russian citizen who has resided in Hong Kong, pleaded guilty today to charges of money laundering and smuggling goods from the United States," the Justice Department said in a statement on Thursday.
Marchenko's plea of guilty to one count of money laundering carries a potential sentence of up to 20 years in prison, while his smuggling charge could lead to a maximum of 10 years behind bars, the statement said.
"He is scheduled to be sentenced on May 29 in Manhattan. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the US Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors," the statement added.
Last year, the United States arrested Marchenko for his alleged involvement in illegally

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

procuring US dual-use, military grade microelectronics for Russian entities.

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

Wall Street Rallies For 4th Straight Month With February's Higher Close

NEW YORK, March 1 (Sputnik) - Wall Street's rally extended for a fourth straight month on Thursday as US industrial to blue chip and tech stocks closed February higher.

The S&P 500, which tracks the top 500 US companies, finished the month up 2.2% at 5,092. The index gained 1.7% in January, 4.4% in December and 8.9% in November.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average, which serves as Wall Street's broadest equities indicator by following stocks of 30 large US corporations, finished February 2.2% higher at 39,004. The index gained 1.2% in January, 4.8% in December and 8.8% in November.

The technology-laden Nasdaq Composite Index, which comprises marquee tech names such as Google, Amazon, Apple, Facebook(banned in Russia) and Netflix, ended the month up 6.2% at 16,103. The index rose 1.0% in January, 5.5% in December and 10.7% in November.

All three indexes also hit record highs on multiple occasions in February, with the S&P peaking at 5,111, the Dow at 39,282 and the Nasdaq at 16,133.

The rally on Wall Street was largely powered by the mania over artificial-intelligence stocks that led to a surge in share prices of chip-making companies such as Nvidia, which added $277 billion in value one day alone last week in what has been described as the largest single-day gain in market history.

Optimism over strong US economic growth in the post-pandemic era also underpinned the stock run-up, aside from expectations that the Federal Reserve will cut interest rates in coming months, creating an easier credit situation and fund flows into the market.

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

Trump Says Would Not Play Games With Venezuela if Reelected US President

WASHINGTON, March 1 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said during remarks in Eagle Pass, Texas that he would not play games with Venezuela if reelected to the White House in 2024.

"We would not be playing games with Venezuela. They would not be doing what they're doing," Trump said on Thursday.

Trump said that Venezuela was in "very bad shape" when he left the Oval Office. The United States would have been able to easily work with Venezuela, Trump said.

Venezuela is sending migrants to the US from prisons and mental institutions and refusing to take them back, Trump said, adding that such a situation would not occur under his leadership.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

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

US Authorizes Certain Transactions With Venezuelan Airline Conviasa – Treasury

WASHINGTON, March 1 (Sputnik) – The United States issued a general license authorizing certain repatriation transactions of Venezuelan nationals from non-US jurisdictions in the Western Hemisphere involving Consorcio Venezolano de Industrias Aeronáuticas y Servicios Aéreos, S.A., also known as Conviasa, a Venezuelan airline.

"[A]ll transactions ordinarily incident and necessary to the repatriation of Venezuelan nationals from non-U.S. jurisdictions in the Western Hemisphere to Venezuela, and which are exclusively for the purposes of such repatriation, involving Consorcio Venezolano de Industrias Aeronáuticas y Servicios Aéreos, S.A., or any entity in which Conviasa owns, directly or indirectly, a 50 percent or greater interest … are authorized," the license released on Thursday said.

According to the document, the license also covers transactions for the maintenance and repair of the aircraft being used for such repatriation flights.

Earlier this week, Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said that all Venezuelan migrants currently staying in the United States will come back to their homeland within one year if Washington lifts the sanctions against Caracas.

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

US Senate Rejects Resolution to Block $23 Billion F-16 Sale to Turkey

WASHINGTON, March 1 (Sputnik) - The US Senate rejected an effort by Senator Rand Paul to block a $23 billion sale of F-16s to Turkey that was approved by the Biden administration last month.

Senators on Thursday rejected Paul's effort to force a vote on his resolution, which would have blocked the sale over concerns about Turkey's political stances on Hamas, its human rights record, and use of Russia S-400 air defense systems.

In April 2021, the United States excluded Turkey from the F-35 program, after Ankara purchased Russian S-400 air defense systems. The US later offered to sell F-16s, which are one technological generation behind F-35s.

In January, the Biden administration said that it would move forward with the multi-billion sale of F-16s to Turkey after Ankara completed the NATO ratification process for Sweden. However, Turkish media reported earlier this month that the fighter jets may not start arriving until 2028 or 2029, due to the workload at the aircraft manufacturing plant.

"Turkey's President [Recep Tayyip Erdogan] praised Hamas as a 'liberation group,' Turkey's military fired at our troops in Syria, and Turkey's police imprison those who dare to criticize the

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

leader. That doesn't sound like the actions of an 'ally' deserving of $23 billion worth of American firepower," Paul said on Thursday in a statement.

Paul earlier told the American Conservative in an interview that he feared Turkey might use the F-16s to "test the S-400 Russian system" and identify weaknesses in either the F-16 or S-400.

The US Congress has never blocked a proposed arms sale through a joint resolution of disapproval.

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

Trump During Border Visit Briefed By State Officials on Efforts to Curb Illegal Migration

WASHINGTON, March 1 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump during his visit to the US southern border was briefed by state officials on their efforts to curb an influx of illegal immigration in the region over the last several years.

Trump visited Eagle Pass, Texas, which was a hot spot for illegal immigration along the US-Mexico border over the last three years until the state of Texas bolstered efforts to stop it despite pushback from the Biden administration.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott joined Trump during a briefing from the Texas National Guard at Shelby Park, where the state's military department set up a makeshift base camp right on the banks of the Rio Grande River that separates the United States and Mexico.

"The people that are coming into our country and they're coming from jails and they're coming from prisons and they're coming from mental institutions, and they're coming from insane asylums, and they're terrorists," Trump said during a press conference. "They're being led into our country, and it's horrible. It's horrible."

Trump added that he knows many of the leaders of the South American countries he accused of sending criminal migrants to the US-Mexico border.

Moreover, Trump said there has been a big population of migrants coming from the Congo who were previously in prison.

Media reported that Mexicans gathered on the other side of the river in the Mexican city of Piedras Negras to get a glimpse of the border.

Trump also used the visit as an opportunity to meet the dozens of Texas National Guard and the Texas state police personnel that have been surged to the border to help deal with the border crisis.

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

FBI Raids Home of New York City Mayor Aide - Reports

WASHINGTON, March 1(Sputnik) – Federal law enforcement agents from the FBI raided the home of one of the closest aides to New York City Mayor Eric Adams, Politico reported on

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Thursday.

The home, which attracted the attention of the officers, belongs to Winnie Greco, who served as Adams' special adviser and director of Asian affairs. She was also an informal liaison to Chinese American communities and assisted the mayor in his 2021 campaign, the report said.

Following the raid, Greco, whose Chinese name is Zheng Qirong, has been placed on leave from her position, it added, citing local officials familiar with the matter.

The report stressed that Greco tried to solicit donations to a nonprofit she ran to grant access to a government event. She also allegedly asked one Adams campaign volunteer to help renovate her kitchen in return for promising him a government job, according to the information.

A City Hall spokesperson stressed that Adams has not been accused of any wrongdoing. He declined to provide additional comments but pointed out that the New York City administration will cooperate with law enforcement on any review, the report added.

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

Biden Arrives to Border Greeted By Anti-War, Pro-Republican Protesters - Press Pool

WASHINGTON, March 1(Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden arrived to the southern border in Brownsville, Texas, greeted by both conservative protesters and demonstrations calling for a ceasefire in the Gaza war, a White House press pool said on Thursday.

The report said that outside the airport where Air Force One landed there was a crowd of people waving flags and holding signs, including a free Palestine sign and a "Don't Tread on Me" flag, which is used by many conservatives.

Biden and two US Customs and Border Protection (CBP)officers walked along the Rio Grande river that separates the United States and Mexico, later joining a larger group of CBP personnel and Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, according to the press pool.

Biden will deliver remarks about the border later on Thursday.

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

Canada's Top Diplomat Says Gaza Aid Incident 'Nightmare,' Violence Must Stop

WASHINGTON, March 1 (Sputnik) – Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs Melanie Joly called the deadly incident at an aid distribution point in Gaza a "nightmare" and said that the targeting of civilians must stop.

"I must say, I think this is a nightmare. I think the violence must stop. I think civilians cannot be targeted," Joly told reporters on Thursday. "At the end of the day we need to make sure that international aid is sent into Gaza and that people are protected when they go and get that aid that they need to survive."

The Palestinian authorities said on Thursday that Israeli forces opened fire on Gazans trying to

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

get food from humanitarian aid trucks in western Gaza City, leaving at least 104 dead and 760 others injured.
The Israeli military said that most died from being trampled or run over by the trucks. The IDF said it opened fire on several Gazans who moved toward an IDF tank and troops.

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

SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, March 1 (Sputnik) -

PUTIN'S ADDRESS TO FEDERAL ASSEMBLY
* Russia will do everything to eradicate Nazism and achieve all tasks of the special military operation in Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Thursday.
* The Russian economy has proven its flexibility and resilience all throughout the Russian special military operation in Ukraine, Putin said.
* Russia will build a new global financial architecture on an advanced technological base and free from political interference, Putin said.
* Putin brushed off Washington's claims that it was ready to engage in talks on strategic stability with Russia as an act of presidential campaigning that aimed to prove that the United States still had everything under control.
* The share of BRICS in the global economy at purchasing power parity will increase to 36.6% by 2028, while the G7's share will drop to 27.8%, Putin said.
* The share of imports in the Russian economy should decrease to 17% of the country's GDP by 2030, Russian President Vladimir Putin said.

US GOVERNMENT FUNDING MEASURE
* The US House of Representatives on Thursday passed a temporary government funding measure, which would avert a federal government shutdown and give lawmakers more time to pass appropriations bills.
* Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer expressed hope that the Senate will by the end of the day adopt a stopgap funding measure to avert a partial government shutdown.

RUSSIA'S MILITARY PLANS
* Tests of Russia's nuclear-capable Burevestnik cruise missile are being completed, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Thursday.
* The Russian military will soon demonstrate the new heavy intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) Sarmat on combat duty, Putin said.
* Russia's strategic nuclear forces are in a state of full readiness, Putin said.
* Recent claims that Russia is attempting to deploy nuclear weapons in space are baseless, Putin said, adding that all these accusations are false and needed only to draw the country into negotiations profitable for the United States.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

* Russia possesses weapons that are capable of reaching targets in Western countries, Putin said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* The consequences of a possible NATO intervention in Ukraine will be very tragic for those troops that may be deployed here, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Thursday.
* There are many CIA bases on the territory of Ukraine, Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) chief Alexander Bortnikov said.
* US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said he really believes that NATO will have to fight Russia if Ukraine loses in the ongoing conflict.
* The United Kingdom provides various forms of support to Ukraine, including by sending people and sharing intelligence, in fact, it is directly involved in the conflict, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

MIDDLE EAST CRISIS

* The first day of the inter-Palestinian format meeting in Moscow has been positive, and the parties have a good chance to agree on many issues, Mustafa Barghouti, the secretary-general of the Palestinian National Initiative party, told Sputnik on Thursday.
* Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas intends to pay a visit to Moscow after the Russian presidential election in March, Azzam al-Ahmed, the head of the Fatah delegation to the inter-Palestinian meeting in Moscow told Sputnik.
* It is premature to talk about the possibility of negotiations with Hamas as Israel has still not received a list of hostages that are expected to be released, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said.
* The United States remains optimistic about reaching a ceasefire agreement after Thursday's deadly incident at an aid distribution point in Gaza City, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said.
* The United States is urgently seeking more information on what exactly happened during the deadly aid incident in Gaza, Miller said.

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

Pentagon Says Continuing to Operate Under Continuing Resolutions 'Not Helpful'

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - The US Defense Department has a difficult time operating under continuing resolutions, Pentagon press secretary Maj. Gen. Patrick Ryder said on Thursday.

"We continue to operate under CRs, it's not helpful," Ryder said during a press briefing. "We need a full year appropriation."

Congress' short-terming spending bills, which are meant to avert government shutdowns, make it a challenge for the Defense Department to conduct operations in support of the US national security mission, Ryder added.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Earlier in the day, House lawmakers passed a continuing resolution in a vote of 320-99, with two-thirds support required for passage.

The legislation now heads to the US Senate for consideration. US Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said that senators could pass the stopgap funding measure as soon as later on Thursday.

On Wednesday, congressional leaders announced a plan to temporarily fund the federal government, which would begin to shut down if lawmakers fail to pass funding measures by the end of the day Friday. The plan involves using the stopgap funding measure to grant lawmakers time to pass appropriations bills over the next several weeks.

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

US Monitoring Violence in Chad, Reports of Opposition Leader's Death - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) – The United States is closely following the deadly violence in the capital of Chad ahead of the presidential election, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Thursday.

"We are aware of the targeted violence that transpired yesterday in a neighborhood in the capital. That violence has abated but we continue to monitor the situation closely," Miller said during a press briefing.

The US is aware of widespread reports regarding the death of Chadian opposition leader Yaya Dillo Djerou, Miller added. The spokesperson however said that he could not confirm the information for the time being.

On Wednesday, several people were killed in an attack on the office of the Chadian security agency, with the authorities blaming the opposition Socialist Party Without Borders (PSF) for the incident. Later in the day, a group of soldiers tried to take control of the presidential palace in N'Djamena.

Government forces in turn stormed the PSF headquarters. Media reported that Djerou, the PSF leader and the cousin of the transitional Chadian president, had been killed in the clashes. The authorities declared a curfew to protect the population.

The situation in Chad has escalated ahead of the presidential election in the country. The first round is scheduled for May 6. Chad is currently ruled by a military council under transitional President Mahamat Idriss Deby. His cousin and most vocal critic, Djerou, was planning to run in the election.

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

UN Does Not Know Facts of Tragedy During Aid Delivery in Gaza - Spokesperson

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

UNITED NATIONS, February 29 (Sputnik) - The United Nations cannot yet verify the facts about the deadly incident during an aid delivery to Gaza, apart from knowing that people died under "horrendous" conditions, UN Spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Thursday.

"We don't know exactly what the facts are, except that people, men, women and children died in a horrendous situation, in horrendous conditions. As I told your colleague, there will be a time for accountability," Dujarric said during a press briefing.

The incident underscores the fact that the current method of delivering humanitarian aid is not safe - neither for those who deliver the aid, nor for those receiving it, he added.

Earlier in the day, Gaza health authorities said that the Israeli military shot over 100 Palestinians while they were waiting for an aid delivery. Israeli officials disputed the death toll and said the victims were killed by aid trucks running over them.

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. At least 30,000 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.

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

No Attacks on US Forces Stationed in Iraq, Syria This Week - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - There have been no attacks on US forces in Iraq and Syria this week, Defense Department spokesperson Patrick Ryder said on Thursday.

"Not that I'm aware of," Ryder said during a press briefing in response to a question whether there have been any attacks this week on US troops stationed in Iraq and Syria.

Earlier in the week, US media reported that Iran allegedly called on its Shiite proxies in Iraq and Syria to scale back their attacks on US military installations in the region given that Tehran is wary of provoking an open military conflict with the United States.

Iran has denied playing any role in attacks on US forces in the Middle East in the past months and said that resistance groups do not receive any instructions from Tehran.

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

State Dept. Warns of Ramifications on US Assistance to Ghana if LGBTQ Bill Passed

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - Ghana passing an anti-LGBTQ bill could have negative consequences on the assistance provided to the West African country by the United States, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Thursday.

"If this bill becomes law, it would certainly have a chilling effect on foreign investment and tourism in Ghana … Should the bill pass, it would potentially have ramifications on US assistance to the country," Miller said during a press briefing.

Washington has been very clear on its stance regarding the legislation in private conversations with Ghanaian authorities, Miller said.

On Wednesday, Ghanaian media reported that the country's parliament had passed a bill imposing criminal liability on people identifying as LGBTQ and those involved in the promotion of LGBTQ rights. The legislation will enter into effect only after being signed by President Nana Akufo-Addo.

Under the bill on "Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values," those engaged in sex with people of the same sex face five years imprisonment instead of the three years under previous legislation, the Citi Newsroom portal reported. Meanwhile, the propaganda of LGBTQ rights and the financing of relevant activities could be punished with three to five years in jail.

In November 2023, Russia designated the international LGBT movement as an extremist organization, with its activities totally banned.

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

US Has Not Seen Moscow Play Positive Role in Resolving Middle East Conflict – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) – The United States has not seen Russia play a positive role in resolving in the Middle East conflict, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Thursday as Palestinian factions gathered in Moscow for talks aimed at forming a new unity government.

"We haven't seen Moscow play much or any role in trying to resolve the conflict since October 7," Miller told reporters when asked to comment on the three-day inter-Palestinian meeting that started Thursday in the Russian capital.

Miller said the US always welcomes the efforts of different countries who are willing to play a constructive role in achieving a diplomatic resolution.

"But I will say, it has never been our assessment that this is the role that Moscow once or is willing to play," he added.

Participants from about a dozen Palestinian factions based in Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and other countries in the Middle East have gathered in Moscow for a three-day meeting to discuss the formation of a new Palestinian unity government and the post-conflict reconstruction of the Gaza Strip.

The meeting comes after Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh's government resigned on Monday.

The formation of a new Palestinian unity government is seen as a key step before the

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Palestinians can secure international funds to help rebuild Gaza or reach a comprehensive peace deal with Israel.

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

UN Chief Urges All Actors to Refrain From Escalating Situation in Transnistria - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, February 29 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres closely follows the situation in and around Transnistria and calls on all parties to refrain from any escalation, United Nations spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Thursday.

"The Secretary General continues to follow the regional developments and calls on all relevant actors to refrain from escalating rhetoric or action," Dujarric said during a press briefing.

On Wednesday, the unrecognized breakaway region of Transnistria asked Russia for assistance in connection with the economic blockade imposed by Moldova, according to a declaration adopted by its lawmakers.

Tiraspol hosted a congress of lawmakers at all levels who adopted the declaration that Transnistria is faced with unprecedented challenges and threats of an economic, social and political-military nature.

The lawmakers also sent appeals to the United Nations and other international organizations, asking them to help prevent an escalation in the situation as initiated by Moldova and to facilitate comprehensive dialogue between them.

On Wednesday, the Foreign Ministry told Sputnik that Russia prioritizes protecting the interests of Transnistria residents and is carefully considering all of its requests.

Transnistria held a referendum in 2006 in which 96.62% of the population there voted in favor of joining Russia. However, no decision was made by Russia at that time on the results of the referendum.

Transnistria had sought to secede from Moldova even before the collapse of the Soviet Union. It was known then as the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, formed in 1990 on the eastern periphery of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic.

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

US Sees No Sign Russia Preparing to Use Nuclear Weapons - State Dept.

(Adds context in paras 3,4)

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - The United States does not currently have any sign that Russia is planning to use nuclear weapons but will continue to monitor the situation carefully, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Thursday.

"We do not have any sign that Russia is preparing to use a nuclear weapon and we will continue to monitor this carefully," Miller said during a press briefing.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

In his state of the nation address earlier in the day, Russian President Vladimir Putin said the foreign policy of the West, including claims about possible deployment of NATO troops to Ukraine, is dangerous and threatens a nuclear conflict that would result in the destruction of civilization.

He also dismissed claims that Russia is attempting to deploy nuclear weapons in space, calling them a ploy to draw the country into negotiations on terms beneficial to the United States. At the same time, the US is blocking a Russian proposal, which has been on the table for over 15 years, to prevent the deployment of nuclear weapons in outer space, Putin recalled.

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

Texas' Smokehouse Creek Wildfire Has Burned More Than 1Mln Acres - DHS Chief

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - The Smokehouse Creek wildfire in the state of Texas has burned through more than one million acres, US Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said on Thursday.

"The latest report is that over a million acres burned, one life has been lost," Mayroaks told reporters. "We in the Department of Homeland Security, especially FEMA, are intensely focused on these fires and providing the resources, equipment and personnel that the impacted communities need."

Mayorkas added that the federal government has fire management assistance funds available to Texas and Oklahoma, and has already deployed firefighters, first responders, trucks and other equipment to help the states fight the fire.

Media reported that the Smokehouse Creek wildfire is now the largest wildfire on record in the history of Texas.

The Smokehouse Creek wildfire has engulfed the Texas panhandle and spread into Oklahoma, according to the Texas Forest Service.

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

US Has No Substitute for Supplemental Bill to Provide Ukraine With Arms - White House

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - The United States does not have a substitute for its national security supplemental in order to provide weapons to Ukraine, Principal Deputy Press Secretary Olivia Dalton told reporters on Thursday.

“There is no substitute for our ability to provide immediate resources through the national security supplemental to provide Ukraine with the weapons and ammunition they need like right now,” Dalton said, when asked whether the Biden administration could use seized Russian assets to fill the gap.

Earlier this month, Senate Republicans blocked a $118 billion national security supplemental

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

package that includes $60 billion for Ukraine, $14 billion for Israel and border policy reforms. Republicans say the reforms in the bill would not do enough to deter illegal immigration on the US southern border.

The Senate has sent a $95 billion foreign aid bill that excludes border security reforms to the House of Representatives for consideration, but House Speaker Mike Johnson has been reluctant to take it up for a vote over differences on national security priorities.

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

US Nuclear Authorities Must Spend $1Bln on Plutonium Tests Over Next Decade - Report

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - The US National Nuclear Safety Administration (NNSA) will need to expand its inventory of samples of artificially aged plutonium so that aging effects can be projected decades into the future at a cost of $1 billion over the next decade, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) said in a report on Thursday.

"NNSA will ... need to expand its inventory of samples of artificially aged plutonium so that aging effects can be projected decades into the future," the report said. "NNSA's estimated budgetary requirements to carry out the planned experiments, modeling, and simulation activities total about $1 billion over the ten-year period of fiscal years 2021 through 2030."

According to NNSA officials, the results from the research plan will allow NNSA to more confidently predict pit lifetimes for each nuclear weapon system in the US stockpile, the report said.

"NNSA is responsible for ensuring the stockpile's performance, safety, and reliability. Scientists and other weapons experts have identified concerns that radioactive decay of plutonium in a pit, called aging, over many years may degrade a weapon's performance," the report added.

Before 2021, independent evaluations indicated that NNSA was not sufficiently prioritizing plutonium and pit aging research. Therefore the new research is needed to inform decisions about stockpile management and modernization, according to the report.

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

FBI Director Says US Will Face Increased, Tech-Enabled Threats to US Elections

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - FBI Director Christopher Wray said on Thursday that the current election cycle will encounter increased challenges from a number of adversaries, with the advancements in technology speeding up their efforts.

"This election cycle, the US will face more adversaries moving at a faster pace and enabled by new technology," Wray said during the Intelligence and National Security Alliance (INSA) Leadership Breakfast.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Wray added that to ensure election security, it's crucial for intelligence professionals across various government sectors to collaborate closely, utilizing their finest intelligence capabilities in unison to counteract these threats.

Earlier this year, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency Director Jen Easterly said that the United States should expect foreign actors to seek to influence and interfere in the upcoming US elections.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) will play a tremendous role in the battlefield to come, in the public, as well as in the private sectors. Cyber threats aimed at influencing elections have been observed as a rising trend around the globe, Easterly added.

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

White House Asks Fox News to Retract Biden Claims by Indicted FBI Informant - Reports

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - The White House has asked Fox News executives to retract the network's coverage of the corruption allegations against president Joe Biden made by an indicted FBI informant, Axios reported on Thursday.

All Fox News digital articles on the topic should at a minimum be updated with editor's notes informing readers that the source of this allegation has been federally indicted for making it up, the report cited White House spokesperson Ian Sams as saying in a letter to the network's top executives.

Fox News has been asked to revise its coverage of bribery and corruption allegations against Biden after the source of the claims was charged with allegedly fabricating the story, the report said.

The letter accuses Fox News of having failed to qualify its reporting of the allegations since the informant was charged, the report said.

The letter was addressed to Fox News CEO Suzanne Scott, Fox News President Jay Wallace, among others.

US House lawmakers are investigating Biden and his family for alleged criminal activity, including various financial crimes and corruption. The probe is intended to help determine whether further impeachment proceedings against Biden are warranted.

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

US Sees No Sign Russia Preparing to Use Nuclear Weapons - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - The United States does not currently have any sign that Russia is planning to use nuclear weapons but will continue to monitor the situation carefully, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Thursday.

"We do not have any sign that Russia is preparing to use a nuclear weapon and we will

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

continue to monitor this carefully," Miller said during a press briefing.

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

US House Passes Funding Measure to Avert Shutdown, Give More Time for Appropriations Bills

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives on Thursday passed a temporary government funding measure, which would avert a federal government shutdown and give lawmakers more time to pass appropriations bills.

House lawmakers passed a continuing resolution in a vote of 320-99, with two-thirds support required for passage. Two Democrats and 97 Republicans voted in opposition to the measure.

The legislation now heads to the US Senate for consideration. US Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said that senators could pass the stopgap funding measure as soon as later on Thursday.

On Wednesday, congressional leaders announced a plan to temporarily fund the federal government, which would begin to shut down if lawmakers fail to pass funding measures by the end of the day Friday. The plan involves using the stopgap funding measure to grant lawmakers time to pass appropriations bills over the next several weeks.

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

Mayorkas Says Exclusively Focused on Work Amid Possible Impeachment Trial

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) -US Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas told reporters on Thursday that he has been exclusively focused on the work when asked what he was doing to prepare for a possible impeachment trial

“I’ve been incredibly busy with the work of the Department of Homeland Security,” Mayorkas said. “That’s my exclusive focus.”

Earlier this month, the US House of Representatives passed a resolution to impeach Mayorkas for allegedly failing to secure the United States’ borders from illegal immigration.

The Senate is tasked with holding an impeachment trial on the recommendation of House lawmakers, although Democrats hold a majority in the upper chamber of the US Congress. The US Senate could dismiss the impeachment articles with a simple majority.

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

Marine Corps Becomes First US Armed Service to Successfully Pass Audit - Pentagon Official

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - The US Marines Corps has just become the first armed service branch to successfully complete a full financial audit, Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks announced on Thursday.

"I would like to congratulate the Department of Navy and the US Marine Corps for the Marines' achievement of a clean audit - the first of the military services," Hicks said in a statement.

The successful outcome of the process was the result of dedicated leadership within the corps and teamwork across the Defense Department, the statement said.

"We owe the American people a clean financial bill of health. We intend to get there as soon as humanly possible, and these results bring us one step closer," the statement said.

The Defense Department now needed to continue the modernization of its financial system and to enhance accountability of government furnished property, especially on the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program, the statement added.

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

Pro-Palestinian Protesters Confront Austin While Leaving US Congress - Activist

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin was confronted by pro-Palestinian protesters after leaving a US House Armed Services Committee hearing, Co-Founder of the peace group CODEPINK Medea Benjamin said on Thursday.

"Now: We just confronted Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin as he exited today's House hearing," Benjamin said via X. "He is the Secretary of Genocide! The blood is on his hands!"

Benjamin also posted on X a video of the encounter.

Earlier on Thursday, Austin arrived in Congress to testify about his hospitalization for cancer treatment in January that he kept secret from the White House and Congress.

Austin testified before the US House Armed Services Committee regarding the circumstances of his failure to communicate his absence to the president in a timely manner.

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

US Believes Ceasefire Deal Still Possible After Gaza Aid Line Incident - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - The United States remains optimistic about reaching a ceasefire agreement after Thursday's deadly incident at an aid distribution point in the Gaza City, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said.

"We continue to believe a deal is possible and that a deal is in the interest of Israel, the Palestinian people, and the broader region, and we will continue to push for it to be concluded, as soon as possible," Miller said during a press briefing.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

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

Blinken, Qatari Prime Minister Discuss Hostage Release, Gaza Aid Issues - State Dept

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Thursday discussed with Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani the efforts to free hostages held by Hamas and increase humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip, the State Department said in a readout of the phone call.

"The leaders discussed ongoing efforts to secure the immediate release of all hostages held by Hamas and establish a humanitarian pause in the conflict in Gaza," spokesperson Matthew Miller said. "They agreed to continue close coordination to provide increased humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza and to press for the protection of civilians consistent with international humanitarian law."

The call comes amid the US's efforts to facilitate a humanitarian pause deal between Israel and Hamas before the Islamic holy month of Ramadan begins on March 10.

Meanwhile, the death toll in Gaza has topped 30,000 since October 7.

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

US Urgently Seeking Info on Circumstances Around Deadly Gaza Aid Incident - State Dept

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - The United States is urgently seeking more information on what exactly happened during the deadly aid incident in Gaza, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Thursday.

"We are urgently seeking additional information on exactly what took place. We have been in touch with the Israeli government since early this morning, and understand that an investigation is underway," Miller said during a press briefing.

Miller added that the US continues to make clear in all discussions with the Israeli government that all possible measures must be taken to allow the entry of more assistance into Gaza via as many points of access as possible.

Earlier in the day, the Palestinian authorities said that Israeli forces opened fire on Gazans trying to get food from humanitarian aid trucks in western Gaza City, leaving at least 104 dead and 760 others injured.

The Israeli military said that most died from being trampled or run over by the trucks. The IDF said it opened fire on several Gazans who moved toward an IDF tank and troops.

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

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

UPDATE - US Judge Blocks New Texas State Law Meant to Deter Illegal Border Crossings - Filing

(Updates with details in paras 4,5)

EL PASO, February 29 (Sputnik) - A US district judge blocked a new Texas law, known as SB4, that was meant to help deter an influx of illegal immigration on that state's border with Mexico, a court document revealed on Thursday.

"Several factors warrant an injunction. First, the Supremacy Clause and Supreme Court precedent affirm that states may not exercise immigration enforcement power except as authorized by the federal government. Second, SB 4 conflicts with key provisions of federal immigration law, to the detriment of the United States' foreign relations and treaty obligations," Judge David Ezra wrote in his ruling.

Ezra further explained that surges in immigration on the US-Mexico border do not constitute an invasion, as Texas Governor Greg Abbott has repeatedly said.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott in a statement said the state will immediately appeal the judge's decision.

"We will not back down in our fight to protect our state—and our nation—from President Biden's border crisis," Abbott said in a press release. "The President of the United States has a constitutional duty to enforce federal laws protecting States, including laws already on the books that mandate the detention of illegal immigrants. Texas has the right to defend itself because of President Biden's ongoing failure to fulfill his duty to protect our state from the invasion at our southern border."

The US Justice Department and immigrant rights groups sued the state of Texas after SB4 was signed into law in late December and expected to go into effect on March 5.

The new state law allows local authorities to arrest illegal immigrants and deport them amid record migration on the southern border that is overwhelming law enforcement and border communities.

Ezra previously said he expects the case will eventually make its way to the US Supreme Court.

The federal government is usually tasked with the responsibility of deporting illegal migrants. However, migrants potentially subject to deportation are first released into the United States after they are apprehended and processed so they can await an immigration court date, which can take months or years to take place. Some migrants skip out on the immigration proceedings and remain in the United States illegally.

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

US Government Funding Plan Designed to Create Crisis, Secure More Spending - Congressman

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - A government funding plan announced by US

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

congressional leadership earlier this week is designed to manufacture a future crisis and secure more spending, US Congressman Thomas Massie said on Thursday.

The government funding plan involves passing a continuing resolution (CR) to temporarily fund the federal government and avoid a shutdown, which would grant lawmakers more time to pass appropriations bills over the next several weeks.

"What're we doing here today? Well, we're going to pass a CR, we're going to kick the can down the road. Is that going to solve any problems? No, it creates another crisis next week," Massie said during remarks on the floor of the House of Representatives. "That's what they want, another crisis. They want to threaten you with a shutdown so they can get more spending."

US lawmakers will not stay in Washington to continue working on the legislation, but rather, will be sent home early, Massie said.

Massie urged his colleagues to oppose the continuing resolution, although the lawmaker said he is worried the opposition effort will fail to stop the measure.

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

Biden Wants G-7 to Utilize Frozen Russian Assets to Aid Ukraine by June - Reports

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden wants the Group of Seven (G-7) nations to advance plans to utilize frozen Russian assets in order to aid Ukraine before the G-7 summit in June, Bloomberg reported on Thursday.

According to the report, Biden intends to use the frozen Russian assets for Ukraine's budget and reconstruction alongside ongoing aid by the collective West.

Biden is also pushing for the allies to agree to restrict funds from Russia unless it commits to reconstruction, despite concerns about the legality of these actions, the release said.

The White House National Security Council refrained from providing any comments on this issue, the report added.

Last year, the World Bank estimated that a sum of $411 billion would be needed for the reconstruction and recovery of Ukraine.

The European Union is estimated to hold some $300 billion in Russian assets together with its G7 allies.

Russia has repeatedly said it views the attempts by the United States and its allies to seize the frozen assets as theft and also an act of trade war. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova has warned that Moscow would have a tough response to the economic aggression by the collective West.

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

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Biden Discusses Gaza Aid Line Incident With Leaders of Qatar, Egypt - White House

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden had separate telephone calls with his counterparts from Qatar and Egypt that included discussions about the Gaza aid line incident and the urgency to reach a ceasefire deal as soon as possible, the White House said on Thursday.

"President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. spoke today with Amir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani of Qatar...They also discussed the tragic and alarming incident earlier today in northern Gaza. Both leaders grieved the loss of civilian lives and agreed that this incident underscored the urgency of bringing negotiations to a close as soon as possible and expanding the flow of humanitarian assistance into Gaza," the White House said in a press release.

In a separate press release, the White House said Biden and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Sisi also discussed the incident in Gaza and the urgency to reach a ceasefire deal.

Earlier in the day, the Palestinian authorities said that Israeli forces opened fire on Gazans trying to get food from humanitarian aid trucks in western Gaza City, leaving at least 104 dead and 760 others injured.

Meanwhile, the Israeli military said that most died from being trampled or run over by the trucks. The IDF alleged that fewer than 10 of the casualties were a result of Israeli fire, which was opened after several Palestinians reportedly approached an IDF tank and troops.

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

Congressman Says Some Lawmakers Wasting US Taxpayer Money on Ukrainian Propaganda

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - Congressman Matt Rosendale said on Thursday that some lawmakers are wasting US taxpayer money on spreading Ukrainian propaganda, including accusations that Republican members of Congress are surrendering Ukraine to Russia by not providing additional aid.

"Members on the other side of the aisle are wasting taxpayer dollars on [Ukrainian President] Zelensky's propaganda," Rosendale said in a statement via the social media platform X. "Our borders are wide open, our national debt is skyrocketing. We must put America First!"

Rosendale shared a picture of an official letter sent to lawmakers by Democratic Congressman Wiley Nickel, which included a white flag with the text "House Republicans Surrendered Ukraine to Russia" printed on it.

The letter comes amid stalled efforts in Congress to pass legislation with billions of dollars in aid for Ukraine and Israel, of which there have been multiple variants. Lawmakers are currently working to fund the US government ahead of shutdown deadlines, as well as to secure the border from illegal immigration.

The Biden administration has warned that Ukraine risks further losses to Russia on the battlefield if lawmakers fail to provide more aid. US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said on Thursday that he believes NATO will fight Russia directly if Ukraine falls.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

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

Colombian President Says Suspends Israel Weapons Purchases After Attack on Gaza Residents

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - Colombian President Gustavo Petro said on Thursday that Bogota was suspending all purchases of Israeli-made weapons following the deadly incident at an humanitarian aid line in the Gaza Strip.

"Asking for food, 100 Palestinians were murdered by Netanyahu. This is called genocide and it reminds of the Holocaust, even though world powers have a hard time recognizing it," Petro said via the social media platform X. "The world must block Netanyahu. Colombia suspends all weapon purchases from Israel."

Earlier on Thursday, the Palestinian authorities accused Israel of striking a street in western Gaza City, saying that the shelling had left at least 104 people killed and 760 others injured. All the victims were awaiting the arrival of humanitarian aid, the Palestinian authorities added.

The Israeli military said that a group of Gaza residents had tried to rob trucks with humanitarian aid in the northern part of the Palestinian enclave, with the incident resulting in a stampede that left dozens of people dead and many others injured.

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

New US Army Combat Vehicles Repackaged Decades-Old Technology - Colonel

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - The new combat vehicles rolled out by the US Army to ensure battlefield dominance in the coming era are the same old technologies designed to operate in out-of-date and different combat environments but repackaged to look fashionable and cutting edge, renowned military tactitian and retired US Army Col. Douglas Macgregor told Sputnik.

"Like everything the Army does, it is old tech repackaged to look like something new and revolutionary," Macgregor said.

In 2023, the US Army introduced 24 new systems as part of its modernization efforts to prepare for potential conflicts with peer adversaries China and Russia. The most notable were the M10 Booker infantry-support armored vehicle with a 105mm gun and the XM30 mechanized infantry fighting vehicle to replace the old and long-criticized M2 Bradley fighting vehicle.

Macgregor pointed out that the new vehicles were far behind the genuinely advanced new combat designs that Russia and China were already producing,.

"A glance at some of the newer Russian platforms should worry us, but they don't seem to do so," Macgregor said.

The much-touted 105mm caliber-armed light tank was in fact a discredited idea from 30 years ago that had been scrapped and then revived, he said.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

"The 105mm light tank was designed and fielded in the early 1990s. It was originally called the Buford and rejected by the Army leadership on the grounds that it was too light," Macgregor said.

Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley revived the light tank vehicle as an infantry support weapon because he was convinced there would not be any large-scale wars again, he said.

"Hence, the infantry branch refers to it as an 'infantry support tank.' This is amusing since the term originated with the infantry branch during the interwar period," Macgregor said.

The long obsolete weapon, designed for very different kinds of conflict than wars against peer adversary nations, would simply go to keep wrongly conceived units and deployments functioning and it would provide no true improved deterrence or capabilities to US land forces, he said.

"It will go to the defunct, obsolete airborne force and may also replace the equally ineffective mobile gun systems in the BTR-60 like units called Stryker Brigades created by General Eric Shinseki for peacekeeping and peace enforcement," Macgregor said.

The other supposedly new vehicles were just variations on the old Bradley Fighting Vehicle Model that had failed to protect US forces from significant casualties during the long Iraq insurgency, he said.

"My impression is that the remaining vehicles are spin offs of the Bradley platform," Macgregor said.

Army procurement chiefs and their military industry designers therefore had made no significant advances on previous systems but were trying to mislead both political leaders and the American public that they had, he said.

"In sum, nothing is really new," Macgregor added.

Macgregor is the author of works on military tactics and modern war including "Breaking the Phalanx" and "Margin of Victory."

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

UPDATE- US Defense Secretary Austin Says NATO Will be in Fight With Russia if Ukraine Falls

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said on Thursday that he "really believes" that if Ukraine loses in the ongoing conflict, NATO will have to fight Russia next.

"Quite frankly, if Ukraine falls, I really believe that NATO will be in a fight with Russia," Austin told a House Armed Services Committee hearing.

Commenting on Austin's statement, Andrei Kartapolov, who chairs the State Duma's Defense Committee, told Sputnik that NATO would suffer the same fate as Ukraine if they continue their aggressive policy.

"As long as NATO is ruled by the United States, their fate is deplorable and the fate of Ukraine may well await them if they continue their aggressive policy," Kartapolov said.

On Thursday, Russian President Vladimir Putin in his annual address to the Federal Assembly

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

said that the consequences of a possible NATO intervention in Ukraine would be tragic for the alliance's deployed troops.

Putin also called statements made in the West that Russia is allegedly going to attack Europe "nonsense."

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

Canada GDP Up 0.2% in Fourth Quarter of 2023 After Drop of 0.1% in Previous Quarter

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - Canada's economy grew 0.2% in the final quarter of 2023 after shrinking 0.1% in the prior three months, as exports rose and exports fell amid lower investment growth, the Canadian government announced on Thursday,

"Real gross domestic product (GDP) edged up 0.2% in the fourth quarter of 2023, following a 0.1% decline in the third quarter," Statistics Canada said after releasing new data. "In the fourth quarter, higher exports and reduced imports fueled GDP growth, but this was moderated by a decline in business investment."

Statistic Canada said GDP had risen for a third straight year since 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic measures led to an economic contraction.

Yet, growth was at its slowest pace since 2016 as final domestic demand - composed of expenditures on final consumption and gross fixed-capital formation - dropped 0.2% in the fourth quarter, reversing all of the prior quarter's growth in this area.

For 2024, advance information indicates that real GDP rose 0.4% in January, Statistics Canada added.

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

US Judge Blocks New Texas State Law Meant to Deter Illegal Border Crossings - Filing

EL PASO, February 29 (Sputnik) - A US district judge blocked a new Texas law, known as SB4, that was meant to help deter an influx of illegal immigration on that state's border with Mexico, a court document revealed on Thursday.

"Several factors warrant an injunction. First, the Supremacy Clause and Supreme Court precedent affirm that states may not exercise immigration enforcement power except as authorized by the federal government. Second, SB 4 conflicts with key provisions of federal immigration law, to the detriment of the United States' foreign relations and treaty obligations," Judge David Ezra wrote in his ruling.

Ezra further explained that surges in immigration on the US-Mexico border do not constitute an invasion, as Texas Governor Greg Abbott has repeatedly said.

The US Justice Department and immigrant rights groups sued the state of Texas after SB4 was

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

signed into law in late December and expected to go into effect on March 5.

The new state law allows local authorities to arrest illegal immigrants and deport them amid record migration on the southern border that is overwhelming law enforcement and border communities.

Ezra previously said he expects the case will eventually make its way to the US Supreme Court.

The federal government is usually tasked with the responsibility of deporting illegal migrants. However, migrants potentially subject to deportation are first released into the United States after they are apprehended and processed so they can await an immigration court date, which can take months or years to take place. Some migrants skip out on the immigration proceedings and remain in the United States illegally.

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

UN Security Council to Hold Closed Consultations on Gaza Thursday Afternoon - UN Source

UNITED NATIONS, February 29 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council will hold closed consultations on the situation in the Gaza Strip on Thursday afternoon on the request of Algeria, a UN source told Sputnik.

"Closed consultations on the situation in Gaza were requested by Algeria and will be held at 4:15 P.M," the source said prior to the meeting.

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

Competition Bureau Expanding Inquiry Into Google Online Advertising Practices in Canada

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - The Competition Bureau Canada said on Thursday that it was expanding its investigation into Google's online advertising practices in the country.

In 2020, the Competition Bureau initiated an investigation into whether Google was engaged in practices harmful to competition in the online display advertising industry in Canada. The mandate initially focused on allegations that Google was leveraging its market power in the supply of video advertising into the market for advertiser buying tools.

"The Bureau has now expanded the scope of its investigation to examine ways that Google may be: leveraging its market power across display advertising technology services in a way that harms competition and using predatory pricing in certain display advertising technology services," the agency said in a news release.

The expanded investigation seeks more information on whether Google's practices are purposely intended to harm competition, affect the competitive process or success of competitors, or result in higher prices, reduced choices and hinder innovation in Canada.

The Competition Bureau said in the release the order was granted by the Federal Court of

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Canada and it demands that Google produce records and written information relevant to the inquiry.
There has so far been nothing proving any wrongdoing and the investigation continues, the release added.

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

US Defense Secretary Austin Says NATO Will be in Fight With Russia if Ukraine Falls

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said on Thursday that he "really believes" that if Ukraine loses in the ongoing conflict, NATO will have to fight Russia next.
"Quite frankly, if Ukraine falls, I really believe that NATO will be in a fight with Russia," Austin told a House Armed Services Committee hearing.

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

ANALYSIS - Mitch McConnell Forced Out From Senate Leadership by Former Right-Wing Allies

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - US Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, who announced he would be stepping down as the Republican leader in the upper chamber after 17 years in the job, is a victim of the new radical right-wing forces he has done so much over the decades to foster and protect, US analysts told Sputnik.
McConnell, who has just turned 82 and has had several public health issues in recent months, announced his decision on the floor of the Senate on Wednesday. He said he would stay in his position until the current Congress ends in November and would remain in the chamber as the senior senator from his home state of Kentucky.
ULTRA RIGHT ENEMIES
Age and health issues were not the driving force behind McConnell's decision to step down but the increasing public criticism he was receiving from more right-wing senators including Ted Cruz of Texas in recent months, University of Houston Professor of African American History Gerald Horne believes.
"Mitch [was] hoisted on his petard," Horne said. "He was an engineer of the rise of the ultra-right especially in packing the courts."
However, McConnell's old allies eventually became more radical, especially on foreign policy issues, than he was, Horne said.
"His old-line [Republican] posture on foreign policy was anathema to his comrades and, thus, those he boosted forced his departure," he said.
STAYED TOO LONG
McConnell led his party in the Senate for a longer period than any other senator in history, but

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

he stayed too long and should have stepped down long ago, former hedge fund manager, historian and political commentator Charles Ortel said.

"McConnell should have relinquished the leadership long ago," he said.

McConnell was also married to former secretary of labor and then of transportation Elaine Chao, who had also been a senior banker with Citicorp, raising many allegations of conflict of interest which they both shrugged off over the decades. Critics charged they were both committed to free trade and open borders policies to the detriment of the American people.

There were "legitimate questions about his wife and concerning her family," Ortel said.

In recent years, critics charged that McConnell was too amenable to liberal free trade and related policies and made common cause with the Democrats, selling out his own party far too often.

"McConnell has not required backbone or skill to press for truly sensible and conservative legislation and outcomes for more than a decade," he said.

Ortel also assessed McConnell as being too eager to still hold onto the prestige and influence of his Senate seat despite his age and possibly failing health.

"While he is at it, he might consider resigning from the Senate itself so that younger, fresh blood might replace him in a special election," he said.

Ortel also noted that McConnell had decided to announce his stepping down from the Republican Senate leadership after former President Donald Trump, with whom he has repeatedly clashed in recent years, was cementing his renewed hold on the party with a number of sweeping primary victories over mainstream former South Carolina governor Nikki Haley in the presidential race.

"Trump, like each of us, has flaws. But Donald Trump has vast, authentic and enthusiastic support. [President Joe] Biden and [Vice President Kamala] Harris certainly do not," Ortel said.

LESS PORK FOR KENTUCKY

George Mason University Professor of Law Francis Buckley, however, saw little change coming in the balance of power in the Senate. The change would mainly be felt in a reduction in the amounts of federal subsidies and other aid going to McConnell's home state of Kentucky, he said.

"Less pork for Kentucky. And that's about it," he said.

McConnell strongly supported the latest foreign aid bill with over $60 billion for Ukraine and another $14 billion in assistance for Israel attached. One of his leading Republican critics, Sen. Rand Paul also from Kentucky, described McConnell's support for the bill that stripped out border security provisions as "outrageous."

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

US Senator Cornyn Says Seeking to Replace McConnell as Top Senate Republican

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - US Senator John Cornyn said on Thursday that he is seeking to replace outgoing Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell as the top Republican in the upper chamber of the US Congress.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

On Wednesday, McConnell announced that he will step down from the Senate leadership role in November, although he will serve out the remainder of his term.

"I am asking my Republican colleagues to give me the opportunity to succeed Leader McConnell," Cornyn said in a statement. "Throughout my time I've built a track record of listening to colleagues and seeking consensus, while leading the fight to stop bad policies that are harmful to our nation and the conservative cause."

The US Senate is "broken" but can be fixed, Cornyn said, adding that he intends to play a major role in repairing the legislative body.

Cornyn said that there would be no "backroom deals" under his leadership. Senators would also not be forced to vote on legislation without adequate time to review, debate and amend bills, Cornyn said.

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

Schumer Says If US Does Not Deliver to Ukraine 'ASAP,' Both Ukraine and US Will Lose

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) -Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said on Thursday that both the United States and Ukraine will face losses if aid is not provided to Kiev promptly.

"If we don't provide this aid ASAP (as soon as possible), not only will Ukraine lose the war, but the United States will lose out," Schumer said during remarks on the Senate floor.

Schumer added that the American people stand to suffer economically, militarily, diplomatically and politically over the coming decades if the national security supplemental does not "move forward."

Senate Republicans recently blocked a $118 billion national security supplemental package that includes $60 billion for Ukraine, $14 billion for Israel, and border policy reforms. Republicans claim the reforms in the bill would not do enough to deter illegal immigration on the US southern border.

However, the Senate sent over a $95 billion foreign aid bill that excludes border security reforms to the House of Representatives for consideration. House Speaker Mike Johnson has been reluctant to take up the measure for a vote due to differences in national security priorities. The foreign aid bill includes $60 billion for Ukraine and $14 billion for Israel, among funding for other priorities.

The United States has provided more than $75 billion in assistance to Ukraine since the start of Russia's special military operation in February 2022.

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.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

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

Canadian Govt. Tables Legislation Setting Bases for First National Universal Pharmacare

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) – The Government of Canada has tabled the Pharmacare Act to the House of Commons, setting the base principles for the first phase of the country's national universal pharmacare, Health Canada said on Thursday.

"Today, the Honourable Mark Holland, Minister of Health, introduced Bill C-X [64], An Act respecting pharmacare (Pharmacare Act), which proposes the foundational principles for the first phase of national universal pharmacare in Canada and describes the Government of Canada's intent to work with provinces and territories (PTs) to provide universal, single-payer coverage for a number of contraception and diabetes medications," the health authority said in a statement.

Minister Holland also announced the Government's intention to establish a federal fund to ensure diabetic Canadians have better access to supplies required to monitor their condition and administer medication, respectively glucose test strips and syringes, among others.

The tabled legislation is an important step toward improving health equity and affordability as well as their outcomes, Health Canada said. The Pharmacare Act could also potentially mean long-term savings in the country's healthcare system, it added.

Health Canada estimates that some 9 million Canadians of reproductive age will have better access to both contraception and reproductive autonomy which in turn will reduce the incidence of unintended pregnancies. The bill aims to cover contraceptive drugs and devices.

Moreover, 3.7 million individuals affected by diabetes will also benefit, Health Canada said, further noting that nearly one in four Canadians are currently unable to afford the costs related to their treatment.

The Pharmacare Act was introduced a day before the March 1 deadline established by the New Democratic Party, which had threatened to exit the coalition with the governing Liberal minority Government if the legislation wasn't tabled. Tabling the Bill was one of the core planks of the two-party agreement which ensures "parliamentary stability" until June 2025.

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

Production Rate of B-21 Strategic Bomber Should Be Quicker - US Strategic Command Chief

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - The production rate of the B-21 Raider strategic bomber should be quicker, US Strategic Command chief Anthony Cotton said in a congressional testimony on Thursday.

"The limited production rate of the B-21 is the only thing that I wish we could do a little quicker," Cotton told the US Senate Armed Services Committee.

Cotton emphasized that the United States would need to continue to modernize its current

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

weapons systems despite its capabilities being currently superior to those of the nearest peer competitor - China.

However, Cotton also said that China would achieve parity with the United States in terms of land-based systems by 2035.

Cotton warned that if China's and Russia's forces were combined, their weapons count would be larger than that of the United States by 2035.

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

USSTRATCOM Says Russia, PRC, DPRK, Iran Coordination Poses Risk of Concurrent Conflicts

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - The increasing coordination between Russia, China, Iran and North Korea elevates risks of the United States being involved in near-simultaneous conflicts with multiple nuclear-armed adversaries, the USSTRATCOM commander said on Thursday.

In remarks to the Senate Armed Services Committee, USSTRATCOM commander Gen. Anthony Cotton stated that the US and its allies continue to be confronted by two potential adversaries - Russia and China - while also being faced with an allegedly increasing nuclear threat from North Korea and Iran.

"What's more, our potential adversaries are increasing their level of coordination and cooperation with one another," Cotton said. "This threat environment raises the possibility of near-simultaneous conflicts with multiple nuclear-armed, opportunistic adversaries."

Cotton stated that strategic competition is currently on the rise, including in the nuclear domain.

"The emphasis on nuclear capabilities by potential adversaries, coupled with the incorporation of technologies like hypersonic weapons (HSW) and fractional orbital bombardment (FOB) capabilities, significantly escalates global security risks," he said.

In his state of the nation address on Thursday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said the foreign policy actions undertaken by the collective West are dangerous and threaten a nuclear conflict that would result in the destruction of civilization.

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

Russia Possesses Largest, Most Diverse Nuclear Arsenal in World - USSTRATCOM Commander

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - Russia currently has the largest and the most diverse nuclear arsenal in the world, the commander of US Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) Gen. Anthony Cotton said in remarks to the Senate Armed Services Committee on Thursday.

"Russia is currently in possession of the largest and most diverse nuclear arsenal of any

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

nation," Cotton said in his prepared testimony for a hearing before the committee.

Beyond its traditional strategic triad, Russia is both increasing and modernizing its nuclear options, Cotton said.

"These include nuclear-capable hypersonic systems such as the Tsirkon land attack cruise missile and the Kinzhal air-launched ballistic missile, the last of which Russia has employed frequently against Ukraine in a conventional role," he said. "These hypersonic systems add diversity and flexibility to Russia's nuclear arsenal and complement its stockpile of approximately 2,000 theater nuclear weapons that do not fall under New START limits."

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in January said Moscow sees no possibility for a strategic dialogue with Washington at the moment. The West must stop anti-Russian rhetoric to create a possibility for such talks, he said.

Russia does not reject the possibility of negotiations, as well as "the possibility of a political and diplomatic settlement" on the issue of strategic stability, but Washington wants to resume control over the Russian nuclear arsenal under the guise of reciprocity, Lavrov said.

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

Almost 80% of Americans Say Negotiating Permanent Ceasefire in Ukraine Important - Poll

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) – Almost 80% of Americans believe that negotiating a permanent ceasefire in Ukraine is important, a new poll from the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research showed on Thursday,

Forty-nine percent of Americans believe that such negotiations are extremely or very important, and another 30% consider them "somewhat" important, according to the poll.

The Democrats are more supportive of such negotiations (59%) than the Republicans (41%).

The poll also highlighted how divided Americans are over providing aid to Ukraine.

"Overall, 4 in 10 adults think the U.S. government is spending too much on aid to Ukraine. Three in ten say they are spending too little and a third think the amount is about right. Roughly half of Republicans (55%) think the government is spending too much money on military aid to Ukraine whereas 44% of Democrats think the government is spending too little," the poll said.

More than a third of Americans (35%) are concerned that the conflict in Ukraine may spill over to the whole of Europe. Forty percent are worried that the United States will be drawn into a war with Russia, according to the poll.

The poll was conducted from February 22-26 among 1,102 adults nationwide.

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

US Retains Top Space Capabilities,While China, Russia 'Breathtakingly Fast' –Space Command

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) – The US Space Command Commander said on Thursday that China and Russia are “breathtakingly fast” in building counter-space weapons, but the US has retained the best military and space capabilities.

“Today I am completely clear in saying we do have the world's best military and space capabilities. I will use the same word that General Cotton used when we look at what China and Russia are doing, particularly building with their counter-space weapons, they're moving breathtakingly fast. And so we must ensure that....we continue to invest to make sure that we keep pace with that breathtaking pace,” Commander of the United States Space Command General Stephen Whiting testified at a Senate Committee on Armed Services hearing.

While the US was currently able to win a conflict that started or extended into space, Whiting added that the items on the command’s unfunded priorities list would enable the US to move faster than Russia and China’s pace.

Funding the items would also give the US the capabilities it needed in the next three, five, and ten years, he said.

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

Biden When Asked If Reported Israeli Fire on Gaza Food Line Affect Ceasefire Talks:It Will

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden said on Thursday that reports of Israeli forces opening fire at Gaza food lines will complicate ceasefire talks.

"I know it will," Biden was quoted by White House press pool as saying, when asked if the reports of multiple fatalities as a result of the incident would complicate the talks.

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

Trump Files Appeal Against Court Order to Oust Him From Ballot in Illinois - Official

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump's legal team has filed an appeal against a judge's order to remove him from the Republican primary ballot in the US state of Illinois, an Illinois State Board of Elections spokesperson told Sputnik on Thursday.

On Wednesday, Cook County Judge Tracie Porter ordered the state election board in Illinois to remove Trump from the March 19 primary ballot but put her order on hold until Friday.

"An appeal has been filed today," the spokesperson told Sputnik. "The campaign is seeking to have Judge Porter’s decision stayed 'until the appeal is fully and finally resolved by the Illinois Appellate Court, First District, the Illinois Supreme Court, and/or the US Supreme Court.'"

Trump remains on the ballot pending further court action, the spokesperson said.

The Trump campaign said that the judge's ruling is unconstitutional and accused the judge of being a Democrat party activist.

Trump faces similar rulings in the states of Colorado and Maine, where both orders to remove

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

him are currently on pause.
Each decision to disqualify Trump from state primary ballots cites his alleged role in the January 6, 2021, events at the US Capitol.

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

Austin Says He Never Told Anyone to Keep His Hospitalization in January Secret

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said on Thursday that he never told anyone to keep secret his hospitalization in January, including keeping it secret from President Joe Biden.
"I never told anyone not to inform the president White House or anyone else about my hospitalization," Austin told a US House Armed Services Committee hearing about the circumstances of his hospitalization.
Austin was initially hospitalized on January 1 for complications following a December surgical procedure to treat cancer. The Defense Department failed then to communicate Austin's hospitalization to the White House for several days, which eventually triggered an investigation by the Pentagon Inspector General.
The defense secretary was briefly hospitalized again earlier this month for close monitoring in connection to a related health issue.
Republicans and Democrats in Congress have criticized Austin about his lack of effort to notify lawmakers and the Biden administration about his hospitalization, prompting bipartisan calls for him to resign.

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

Johnson Says US Lawmakers Will Receive Government Funding Bill Text This Weekend

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - US House Speaker Mike Johnson said on Thursday that lawmakers will receive a bill text for government funding legislation this weekend.
"That bill text is going to be posted this weekend. All of our members will have 72 hours to review it," Johnson said during a press conference.
The legislation will include defense spending increases and cuts to non-defense discretionary spending, Johnson said.
The US House of Representatives is set to vote on a continuing resolution to temporarily fund the federal government and grant lawmakers more time to pass spending bills over the next several weeks. US Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said earlier on Thursday that the Senate could pass the stopgap measure as soon as tonight as well.
The US Congress must pass a stopgap funding measure by the end of Friday to avert a partial government shutdown.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

However, one-third of US House lawmakers could block the government funding plan, US Congressman Thomas Massie said. Massie instead backed a full-year continuing resolution, which would prompt 1% discretionary funding cuts.

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

Austin to Testify Again in Congress Next Month About His Hospitalization - Rogers

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will be back at the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee in March to continue the testimony about his hospitalization in January, committee Chairman Mike Rogers said on Thursday.

"The secretary will be back in about a month to testify again," Rogers said at the outset of an Armed Services committee hearing about the circumstances of Austin's hospitalization.

Earlier on Wednesday, Austin arrived at the committee to explain the lack of transparency of his hospitalization in January.

Rogers said that Autsin is still recovering from an exacerbation of his disease after undergoing several medical procedures and consequently the duration of the hearing has been limited to two hours as per a Defense Department request.

Austin was initially hospitalized on January 1 for complications following a December surgical procedure to treat cancer. The Defense Department failed then to communicate Austin's hospitalization to the White House for several days, which eventually triggered an investigation by the Pentagon Inspector General.

The defense secretary was briefly hospitalized again earlier this month for close monitoring in connection to a related health issue.

Republicans and Democrats in Congress criticized Austin about his lack of effort to notify lawmakers as well as the Biden administration about his hospitalization, which prompted several bipartisan calls for him to resign.

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

Biden Says Gaza Ceasefire Unlikely by Monday, but He Remains Hopeful

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden on Thursday said he does not expect a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas to be in place by Monday, but added that he remains hopeful as he continues contacts with leaders in the region.

"Hope springs eternal, I was on the telephone with the people in the region ... probably not by Monday, but I'm hopeful," Biden told reporters when asked whether a ceasefire would be in place by Monday.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

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

Gen. Whiting Says US Should Make Space Capabilities Against China, Russia 'More Resilient'

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - The United States must ensure that its space capabilities with respect to peer competitors China and Russia should be made "more resilient," US Space Command chief Gen. Stephen Whiting said in a congressional testimony on Thursday.

"Our competitors, PRC [People's Republic of China] and Russia have invested in counterspace capabilities, having studied us for decades, to hold at risk our ability to fight the way we would like," Whiting told the US Senate Armed Services Committee. "And so now we have to make our current space capabilities that provide satellite communications; positioning, navigation and timing; missile warning … more resilient against those threats and provide, protect, and defend capability to help protect them."

Whiting pointed out that China's intelligence satellite fleet had tripled its on-orbit presence since 2018 to more than 359 systems.

China's space and counterspace systems had also dramatically improved in monitoring, tracking and targeting US and allied forces on earth and on orbit, he said.

Whiting also said that Russia's military operations in Ukraine had revealed its reliance on space and space-enabled capabilities and that Moscow continues to research and develop its counterspace capabilities.

The necessary investments in the US space capabilities have already been made but what must be done now is ensure that the programs deliver results and the investments continue, Whiting added.

Earlier on Thursday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said the foreign policy actions undertaken by the collective West are dangerous and threaten a nuclear conflict that would result in the destruction of civilization. Putin also said that the United States is blocking a Russian proposal, which had been on the table for 15 years, to prevent the deployment of nuclear weapons in outer space.

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

Schumer Says Hopes for Final Senate Passage of Stopgap Funding Measure by This Evening

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) – Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer expressed hope on Thursday that the Senate will by the end of the day adopt a stopgap funding measure to avert a partial government shutdown.

"The House is set to vote today on the extension of government funding until March 8 and March 22. Once the House acts, I hope the Senate can pass the short-term CR as soon as

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

tonight," Schumer said in remarks on the Senate floor.

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

UN Aid Chief Appalled After Hundreds of Gazans Killed, Injured During Aid Delivery

UNITED NATIONS, February 29 (Sputnik) - The United Nations is horrified by reports of multiple people killed and injured during a transfer of aid supplies west of Gaza City, UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths said on Thursday.

"I'm appalled at the reported killing and injury of hundreds of people during a transfer of aid supplies west of Gaza City today," Griffiths posted on his X profile, formerly Twitter. "This comes as the death toll across Gaza since October 7 hits the 30,000-mark."

Earlier in the day, the Israel Defense Forces said that dozens of Gaza Strip residents died in a crowd crush and under the wheels of trucks that delivered humanitarian aid to the northern part of the enclave.

Over 104 people were killed and 760 were injured in the crowd crush, the enclave's health ministry said.

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

US Border Patrol Union Ahead of Biden's Trip to Texas: 'Keep Our Names Out of Your Mouth'

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) - The US Border Patrol Union said on Thursday that US President Joe Biden should refrain from mentioning the group of federal agents during his trip to the United States' southern border.

Biden is set to travel to Texas later on Thursday to meet with local authorities, community leaders and Border Patrol agents involved in addressing an increase in illegal migration at the US border with Mexico.

"Attention President Biden: Keep our names out of your mouth today," the Border Patrol Union said in a statement via social media platform X.

Biden's visit to the border is "too little, too late," National Border Patrol Council Vice President Art Del Cueto told Sputnik earlier this week.

The US has experienced three conservative years of record illegal migration at the southern border, according to US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) data. CBP recorded more than 302,000 migrant encounters in December, marking the highest single-month figure ever recorded.

Former US President Donald Trump is also scheduled to visit Texas on Thursday. Biden said that he was unaware of Trump's plans when he scheduled his own trip to the state.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM

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

Majority of US Swing State Voters See Biden as 'Too Old' – Poll

WASHINGTON, February 29 (Sputnik) – Voters in swing states see US President Joe Biden as too old to be reelected, even though he is less than four years older than his key Republican rival Donald Trump, according to a Bloomberg News/Morning Consult poll released on Thursday.

Overall, 82% of respondents across the seven swing states said Biden was "too old" — a combination of those who found him alone to be "too old" (44%) or both Biden and Trump as "too old" (38%). In comparison, just 8% saw Trump alone as "too old."

Additionally, in response to an open-ended question about what they had seen, read, or heard about a candidate, more than 1,000 voters mentioned Biden's age and acuity.

However, 45% of respondents said Trump alone was "dangerous," compared to 34% for Biden. Just 14% described both candidates as "dangerous."

The poll was conducted with 4,955 registered voters across Arizona, George, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin from February 12-20. It followed Special Counsel Robert Hur's report on Biden's mishandling of classified documents. Hur found that while criminal charges were not merited, Biden's memory was a significant problem.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 03/01/2024 9:51:54 AM