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3/25/24 Monday

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‘This is a War Against Russia’: Spelling Out Context of Moscow Terror Attack

The terrorist attack at a concert hall near Moscow this past Friday is not the only one that Russians have suffered in recent years.

Friday’s deadly attack near Moscow refocused the world’s attention on the threat of violent terrorism. But Russians have felt like a people under siege for years according to filmmaker Regis Tremblay, who joined Sputnik’s The Critical Hour program on Monday to place last week’s horrific events in broader context.

“I think most Russians were shocked,” said Tremblay, an American documentarian currently living in Crimea. “There's a feeling of anger in a lot of Russian people, and rightly so. This was a horrendous attack coming at a time when the Russians are beginning to realize that this is a war against Russia and Russia's future.”

Although Friday’s incident at the Crocus City Hall music venue in a suburb of Moscow drew global shock, Tremblay explained it is not the first such terrorist attack suffered by Russian civilians in recent months. The filmmaker noted that the Russian border region of Belgorod has come under increasing assault from Ukrainian drones and missiles while Crimea was hit some 24 times over the past weekend.

The Kiev regime has frequently attacked civilian targets in the Donbassgoing back to 2014, prompting Russia’s intervention to protect ethnic Russians living there.

“Russians are feeling, I think more and more, that this isn't a war against Ukraine,” said Tremblay of the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia. “The vast population are beginning to realize this is a war of the United States and its vassals in Europe against Russia, bent on destroying the Russian Federation.”

Viewed in the context of ongoing provocations, the documentarian claimed Russians see Friday’s atrocity as “the final red line” the country must answer to, according to popular Russian commentator Stanislav Krapivnik who discussed the incident with Tremblay on Sunday.

Tremblay urged caution against speculating about the causes of the attack as a handful of suspects are interrogated, but he noted the intense anti-Russian animosity that’s emerged from the West in recent years. Western sports and cultural institutions led a frenzied campaign against Russian participation in the aftermath of the country’s special operation in the Donbass, with even Russian ballets and works by Tchaikovsky being banned.

Ukrainian soldiers – many of them sporting Nazi tattoos – often use racist terms like “Orcs” and “Asiatic hordes” to refer to Russians, with the commentary of Western reporters sometimes mirroring their language.

“What the elite want is to rape and pillage Russia, which they've been after for centuries,” said Tremblay, claiming that Western interests are willing to stoke ethnic hatred to accomplish their goal.

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The documentarian discounted offers by the European Union to resume anti-terrorism cooperation with Russia in light of Friday's attack, claiming European leaders had no genuine interest in assisting the country while backing an ongoing war against it.

Western observers have pointed to statements from purportedly ISIS*-linked figures claiming responsibility for the act of terrorism, although little has emerged publicly beyond the allegation of attackers being recruited over Telegram with promises of cash payment. Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova pointed to the role of the United States in the creation and support of radical Islamist groups like Al Qaeda, which emerged from US-backed Mujahideen forces in the Soviet-Afghan war.

Observers often speculate about Western instrumentalization of ISIS, which has fought in the US-backed Syrian Civil War against forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad. The radical group has stood to benefit from Western hostility to the secular Assad, long an opponent of Western-aligned Israel. The presence of ISIS has served as a useful pretense for continued US involvement in the conflict, which originally emerged in the form of a covert billion-dollar CIA program known as Operation Timber Sycamore.

Tremblay noted recent comments from neoconservative US Under Secretary of State Victoria Nuland warning of an imminent "nasty surprise" for Russians, although he again insisted speculation should wait until Russia finishes its investigation of Friday's attack.

Many prominent Russiagate conspiracy theorists in Western media have proven unable to adopt Tremblay's advice, as prominent New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof took to X to speculate the tragic incident was a "false flag" attack. Kristof was forced to delete the post after being roundly mocked by others on the social media platform.

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Biden Administration Slammed for 'PR Stunt' as Backing of Israeli Killing Continues

The US president has continued to provide the Netanyahu regime with lethal aid even while occasionally signaling public opposition to Israel's bloody campaign.

Six House Democrats sent a letter to US President Joe Biden Saturday calling continued US aid to Israel into question as the embattled Netanyahu government continues to block humanitarian aid from entering the besieged Gaza Strip. The country's conduct, the lawmakers warned, risked putting Israel in violation of Section 620I of the Foreign Assistance Act which forbids US support for regimes blocking access to humanitarian assistance.

The move comes as the Biden administration allowed a United Nations resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza to pass after having blocked similar statements multiple times. The Israeli government, in turn, canceled a pair of Netanyahu advisors' planned trip to Washington.

The developments have caused some to conclude that Biden's position on Israel's Gaza campaign has evolved after months of lockstep support. But analyst Misty Winston threw cold water on such claims during an appearance Monday on Sputnik's The Critical Hour program.

"I don't think that this really has anything to do with much else other than it being an election year," said the radio host and free speech activist. "The Biden administration is struggling

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desperately. They recognize the fact that the Palestine issue has really become the red line issue for a lot of people, including younger voters, who they are very desperately trying to kind of rein in."

Winston cited the recent campaign among progressive activists to urge voters to mark "uncommitted" on their Democratic Party primary ballots as an act of protest against Biden's handling of the issue. Polling has shown the president risks losing November's election after angering large portions of his party's base, including Arab American voters in swing states like Michigan.

"Within seconds of the [UN] resolution passing we had them downplaying it," she noted, "[saying] 'oh, it's not binding' and all this other stuff. I think it's much ado about nothing."

The Biden administration has continued to supply the Netanyahu regime with lethal aid even while occasionally citing opposition in public. A recent report revealed the White House has secretly sent over 100 aid packages to Israel, packaging the aid and weapons shipments in such a way as to avoid public and congressional scrutiny.

Biden has claimed to be a "Zionist" throughout his career, expressing support for the ideology that claims Jews have a right to a nation state in the Levant to the exclusion of the region's indigenous Palestinian population. The Israeli human rights group B'Tselem has labeled Israel an "apartheid" and "Jewish supremacist" regime, while the Soviet Union led a successful UN resolution noting that Zionism is a racist ideology in 1975.

"We all know that Israel is going to break the ceasefire," Winston said, noting the Netanyahu government returned to killing civilians in Gaza after a temporary ceasefire ended in November. "We know that they are going to continue to slaughter Palestinians. And I'm just curious, what are the repercussions when that inevitably happens?"

Winston also slammed allegedly progressive Democratic Party members like Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), who only recently admitted that Israel's campaign in Gaza is genocidal after an embarrassing encounter with protesters. The International Court of Justice ordered Israel to take steps to cease acts and statements from officials encouraging genocide in a case brought by South Africa earlier this year.

Ocasio-Cortez has frequently demonstrated ignorance on matters of foreign policy, once parroting the US State Department line on Chinese "oppression" of people in Tibet. The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has used the Dalai Lama and supporters of Tibet's former slaveholding class as paid assets for decades. Living standards in the autonomous region have improved dramatically after Chinese leader Mao Zedong liberated Tibet from its feudal system.

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Pelosi, Accused of Insider Trading, Makes Major Stock Move

Last week also saw the arrest of a protester who demonstrated at the powerful US lawmaker's home. The activist is being held on felony charges.

Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) raised eyebrows recently with the revelation the former US House Speaker placed a big bet on a little-known San Francisco tech startup.

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A disclosure made last week showed the powerful Democratic Party politician purchased $5 million in stock of the privately-held company Databricks, a cloud data company.

The stake is one of dozens Pelosi holds in US tech companies, some obscure and some well-known such as Tesla and Microsoft. The lawmaker has reportedly invested more than $120 million in stock purchases since entering federal government in 1987. Her net worth is thought to be over $100 million, although her current salary as a US congresswoman is just over $220,000.

Pelosi has never been convicted of criminal wrongdoing in her investment activity, although her portfolio's impressive return of 65% last year might suggest the legislator is more informed than average traders. US stock indices grew an average of 26% in 2023.

"From an ethical perspective, I believe it is extremely harmful for politicians to trade individual stocks," said Chris Josephs, the founder of a stock trading service, to US media. "There are numerous jobs out there that don't allow employees [to conduct] trading, yet our most powerful Americans can."

Pelosi opposed attempts to ban lawmakers from buying and selling stocks in 2021 under the claim such activity could be viewed as insider trading. "We are a free-market economy," she said at the time. "They [Congress members] should be able to participate in that."

Former director of the US Office of Government Ethics Walter Shaub slammed the argument as "ridiculous."

"She might as well have said 'let them eat cake,'" said Shaub, referring to famous comments by the French queen Marie Antoinette. "Sure, it's a free-market economy. But your average schmuck doesn't get confidential briefings from government experts chock full of nonpublic information directly related to the price of stocks."

Late last week it was announced that an activist involved in pro-Palestine protests at the California lawmaker's home had been arrested on felony vandalism charges. Cynthia Papermaster, 77, is reportedly being held on a $50,000 bond.

"We want to see a permanent and immediate ceasefire," said Papermaster in an interview recently. "We can't control what the Israelis do, but we can control what our own government does, or at least that's the aspiration."

Pelosi called for the anti-war activists to be investigated by the FBI in an appearance on US television after the incident earlier this year. Pelosi first claimed the demonstrators were being paid by China, then later clarified she believed Russia was behind the act of civil disobedience. The former House speaker joins the ranks of opponents of US civil rights with her comments; detractors frequently claimed racial justice protests in the 1960s and 70s were fomented by Russia to sow discord in the United States.

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UN Vote Unlikely to Signal Change in US Policy Towards Israel

The public spat between Biden and Netanyahu shouldn't be seen as an indication of a broader shift in the alliance, according to one analyst.

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The Biden administration signaled passivity, but not support towards a proposed ceasefire in Gaza during a vote on the matter at the United Nations on Monday. The move made headlines as the United States' abstention marked a shift from the country's previous three vetoes of similar Security Council resolutions.

But analyst Mark Sleboda warns of reading too far into the incident, claiming the current rift in US-Israel relations is more of a matter of animosity between the countries' leaders than a genuine change in their military relationship.

"As to [Israeli President] Benjamin Netanyahu, Bibi and Biden, this is a broken bromance," said the researcher and international relations expert on Sputnik's Political Misfits program on Monday. "I don't know if it was ever a bromance, actually, between the two, but all the indications are that this is not indicative of some larger change in US foreign policy considering the influence of AIPAC in the US and the longstanding US security relationship with Israel. That would actually be very momentous if it was true."

"Everything we've heard in the Western press is that Biden personally has problems with Netanyahu," added Sleboda. "It seems [to be] not so much what he's doing, but the way he's going about it and his complete lack of political damage control which is making Joe Biden's life and his reelection more difficult."

The analyst said a halt in US lethal aid flowing to Israel would be evidence of a genuine shift in relations between the two longtime allies. The death toll in Gaza currently stands at over 32,000, with the majority of casualties thought to be of Palestinian civilians. Israel has been engaged in an assault on the enclave since early October.

Biden's antipathy toward Netanyahu likely extends back to the administration of former US President Barack Obama, when Biden served as vice president. Netanyahu opposed Obama's attempts to pursue diplomacy with Iran, preferring military confrontation with the country of 88 million. Netanyahu's attempts to undermine Obama extended as far as giving a televised address to a session of the US Congress blasting the US president's policy.

Despite the open hostility, Obama still provided Netanyahu with Israel's largest military aid package in history before leaving office.

Whatever rift existed between the current US president and Netanyahu seemed to have briefly healed as a sobbing Biden embraced the Israeli Prime Minister in Tel Aviv in the aftermath of Hamas' October 7 uprising. But Netanyahu has repeatedly embarrassed Biden in recent months with his blatant defiance of US calls for restraint.

"We've already seen other potential Israeli politicians inside the unity government doing a tour of London and Washington," noted Sleboda, "positioning themselves, it seems to me, to be the next prime minister of Israel with the US' support." Observers have speculated Biden may prefer a more outwardly moderate figure like opposition leader Benny Gantz.

Sleboda stated the primary concern for Biden currently is that Israel will undertake a violent incursion into Rafah, where over 1.5 million Palestinians are sheltering. Besides generating public opposition, such a move would likely also damage the United States' relationship with Egypt if Palestinians are forced to seek refuge in the Sinai Desert.

Egypt has been one of the largest recipients of US foreign aid dating back to the late 1970s, when US President Jimmy Carry oversaw the signing of the Camp David Accords which guaranteed Egyptian backing of Israel. The United States has stifled Egyption democracy in the

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decades since, supporting a coup against elected President Mohamed Morsi to ensure a pro-Israel leader holds power in the country.
US support for Israel has apparently done little to generate gratitude among average Israelis. A 2009 video filmed by journalist Max Blumenthal demonstrated widespread racist attitudes among the Israeli public, with Israelis calling then US President Obama the N-word among other racial slurs.
The video was taken down by YouTube, Vimeo, and other online platforms amidst opposition from Zionist groups, who opposed drawing attention to the pervasive bigotry within Israeli society.
“This is a war against Russia”: Friday’s terrorist attack in context

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Friday’s deadly attack near Moscow refocused the world’s attention on the threat of terrorism. But Russians have felt like a people under siege for years according to filmmaker Regis Tremblay, who joined Sputnik’s The Critical Hour program to place last week’s horrific events in broader context.

“There's a feeling of anger in a lot of Russian people, and rightly so. This was a horrendous attack coming at a time when the Russians are beginning to realize that this is a war against Russia and Russia's future,” said the documentarian.

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Biden administration slammed for ‘PR stunt’ as backing of Israeli killing continues

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Recent developments have caused some to conclude that US President Joe Biden's position on Israel's Gaza campaign has evolved after the White House allowed a pro-ceasefire resolution at the United Nations to pass over the weekend. But analyst Misty Winston threw cold water on such claims during an appearance on Sputnik's The Critical Hour program.

"I don't think that this really has anything to do with much else other than it being an election year," said the radio host and free speech activist. "The Biden administration is struggling desperately. They recognize the fact that the Palestine issue has really become the red line issue for a lot of people."

"Within seconds of the [UN] resolution passing we had them downplaying it," she noted, "[saying] 'oh, it's not binding' and all this other stuff. I think it's much ado about nothing."

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Pelosi, accused of insider trading, makes major stock move

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UN vote unlikely to signal change in US policy towards Israel

The Biden administration signaled passivity towards a proposed ceasefire in Gaza during a vote on the matter at the United Nations Monday. But analyst Mark Sleboda warns of reading too far into the incident, claiming the current rift in US-Israel relations is more of a matter of personal animosity between the countries’ leaders than a genuine change in their military relationship.

“As to [Israeli President] Benjamin Netanyahu, Bibi and Biden, this is a broken bromance,” said the international relations expert on Sputnik’s Political Misfits program Monday. “All the indications are that this is not indicative of some larger change in US foreign policy considering the influence of AIPAC in the US and the longstanding US security relationship with Israel.”

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Boeing Secures Nearly $100Mln to Modernize Special Operations Chinooks - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, March 26 (Sputnik) - Boeing has received an almost $100 million contract extension to rebuild a MH-47G Chinook military heavy lift helicopter for US Special Operations

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Command (USSOCOM), the Department of Defense said.

"Boeing Company [of] Ridley Park, Pennsylvania is being awarded a $96,222,530 ... modification to an existing delivery order ...f or ... an MH-47G renew build for rotary wing aircraft," the press release said on Monday.

Most of the work on the project will be carried out in Ridley Park, Pennsylvania over the next three and a quarter years and is expected to be completed by July 2027, the Defense Department said.

The MH-47G carries a fully integrated digital Common Avionics Architecture System (CAAS) for global communications and navigation that includes integrated forward-looking infrared (FLIR) and multimode radar for nap-of-the-earth and low-level flight operations in conditions of extremely poor visibility and bad weather, according to published sources.

The MH-47G also is equipped with a fully integrated digital cockpit management system and long-range fuel tanks that give it twice the range of a CH-47F along with an in-flight refueling system.

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Container Ship Dali Lost Propulsion, Warned of Possible Bridge Collision – Reports

WASHINGTON, March 26 (Sputnik) - The container ship Dali that caused the collapse of a major bridge in Baltimore had lost propulsion as it was leaving the port and notified authorities of risks of a possible collision, ABC News reported on Tuesday, citing an unclassified Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency report.

"The vessel notified MD Department of Transportation (MDOT) that they had lost control of the vessel and an allision with the bridge was possible," the report said.

Early Tuesday, the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapsed after being hit by a cargo ship. The Dali cargo ship was sailing under a Singaporean flag from Baltimore to the capital city of Sri Lanka, Colombo, at the time of collapse, according to media reports.

Officials said they are searching for at least seven individuals in the water. Along with vehicles, there were construction workers on the bridge when it fell, according to officials.

A major spill of diesel fuel was registered around the vessel after the incident, media reported.

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Biden Briefed on Collapse of Bridge in Baltimore, Ongoing Rescue Efforts - White House

WASHINGTON, March 26 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden has been briefed on the collapse of a major bridge in Baltimore and is receiving updates on the situation, the White House said on Tuesday.

"The President has been briefed on the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore

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and the ongoing search and rescue efforts. He will continue to receive updates from his team throughout the day," the White House said in a statement.
Earlier on Tuesday, the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapsed after being hit by a cargo ship. Officials believe that at least seven people are missing in the water.

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Police Say Nothing Indicates That Baltimore Bridge Collapse Is Terrorist Attack

(Adds details in paras 3-8)
MOSCOW, March 26 (Sputnik) - There are no signs that the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge in the US city of Baltimore was a terrorist attack, the local police said on Tuesday.
"There is absolutely no indication that this was an act of terrorism or that it was done intentionally," the Baltimore Police told reporters.
Early Tuesday, the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapsed after being hit by a cargo ship. The vessel traffic has been suspended in the area. An active search and rescue mission is underway.
There were individuals on the bridge at the time of the collapse, working on the bridge, Maryland Secretary of Transportation Paul Wiedefeld said during a morning briefing on Tuesday. The construction workers were doing "concrete-type repair," he added.
The US Coast Guard is looking for any survivors in the water, a US Coast Guard official said during the briefing. The Coast Guard has three small boats on the scene and a helicopter.
The White House is "closely monitoring" the situation in Baltimore after the bridge collapse, ABC News reported, citing an official.
"Our hearts go out to the families of those who remain missing as a result of this horrific incident," the White House official said.
There was no indication of "any nefarious intent," the official added.

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Russian Embassy in US Holds ‘Cranes Are Flying’ Memorial to Honor Moscow Attack Victims

WASHINGTON, March 26 (Sputnik) - The Russian embassy in the United States has joined the all-Russia "Cranes Are Flying" memorial event to pay tributes to the victims of the terrorist attack near Moscow, a Sputnik correspondent reported.
Diplomats and the representatives of Russian media lit the candles outside the diplomatic mission, and at 9:00 p.m. local time [01:00 GMT], a projection of the endless wedge of cranes flying into the sky appeared on one of the main walls of the embassy. The art projection was accompanied by a song "Cranes" performed by USSR opera singer Muslim Magomayev, after whom the destroyed concert hall was named.

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In many countries, cranes symbolize immortality, and in Russia, cranes became a symbol of the people who lost their lives during World War II.

A shooting occurred last Friday in the Crocus City Hall concert venue in the city of Krasnogorsk, just outside Moscow, followed by a massive fire. A Sputnik correspondent who witnessed the attack reported that a number of gunmen in camouflage broke into the music hall, shooting people point-blank and throwing incendiary bombs. The Russian Investigative Committee said that at least 139 people were killed as a result of the terrorist attack.

Eleven people were detained in connection with the events, including four believed to be directly involved in the terrorist attack, the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) said. The four main suspects in the case were detained in the Russian region of Bryansk, which borders Belarus and Ukraine, the FSB added. They were charged with terrorism and ordered to be held in pretrial custody until May 22, Moscow's Basmanny District Court said. All of them are from Tajikistan and could face a life sentence in prison.

The Moscow-area concert hall terrorist attack is the deadliest in Russia in nearly 20 years.

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Canada, Greece Strengthen Ties with Focus on Jobs, Climate, Trade - Statement

WASHINGTON, March 26 (Sputnik) - Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau met with Greece's Prime Minister Mitsotakis on March 24-25, they discussed enhancing trade, climate, and job initiatives, the Canadian leader's office said in a statement.

"Prime Minister Justin Trudeau welcomed the Prime Minister of Greece, Kyriakos Mitsotakis to Canada from March 24 to 25. The two leaders advanced cooperation in shared interests, including trade and investment, climate action, tourism, and creating good, middle-class jobs," the statement said on Monday.

Furthermore, the Prime Ministers decided to boost their collaboration on emergency management and public safety, including Greece buying seven firefighting planes, the statement said.

"Prime Minister Trudeau announced a $10 million investment for the Hellenic Community of Greater Montreal to build a new community centre in the heart of Chomedey, Lavalm," the statement said.

The new community complex, funded by the Green and Inclusive Community Buildings Program, will offer various facilities like a theater and sports complex for celebrating culture and hosting events, aiming to be a modern, net-zero space, the statement added.

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Florida Governor Signs Bill Restricting Children's Access to Social Media - Statement

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WASHINGTON, March 26 (Sputnik) - Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed legislation limiting children's access to social media, his office said in a statement.

"Today, Governor Ron DeSantis signed HB 3, which prohibits children under the age of 14 from becoming social media account holders and allows 14- and 15-year-olds to become account holders with parental consent," DeSantis' office said in a press release on Monday.

In early March, DeSantis vetoed a bill that would have banned social media for children under the age of 16, adding that he was waiting for HB3, which he views as a superior bill.

DeSantis said in the release that HB3 provides parents with a greater ability to protect their children.

The release explains that the legislation prevents a minor who is younger than 14 years of age from becoming a social media account holder, empowers parents to decide whether 14- and 15-year-olds can have a social media account, and protects the ability of Floridians to remain anonymous online.

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US Homeland Security Agency Confirms Raids on Homes of Rap Mogul Sean 'Diddy' Combs

WASHINGTON, March 26 (Sputnik) - US Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in a statement to Sputnik said that it took law enforcement action in Los Angeles and Miami in connection to an ongoing investigation involving longtime rap mogul Sean "Diddy" Combs.

"Earlier today, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) New York executed law enforcement actions as part of an ongoing investigation, with assistance from HSI Los Angeles, HSI Miami, and our local law enforcement partners," HSI said on Monday when asked about reports federal agents were raiding Combs' homes in Los Angeles and Miami.

HSI said that it will provide further information as it becomes available.

Combs was recently sued by music producer Rodney Jones, also known as Lil Rob, who claims he was sexually harassed, drugged and forced to engage in unwelcomed sex acts by the rapper.

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Trump’s Wealth Surges to Record $6.5Bln Despite Mounting Lawsuits Against Him – Reports

WASHINGTON, March 26 (Sputnik) – Despite an ever-growing number of legal cases against him, US President and businessman Donald Trump is richer than ever with $6.5 billion in net wealth, Bloomberg reported.

Trump’s net worth surged by $4 billion alone on Monday after his social media company Trump Media & Technology Group announced its plans to go public on Tuesday after a 29-month-long merger, the report said on Monday.

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For the first time in his life during which Trump's net worth has never peaked higher than $3.1 billion, Trump has joined the club of the 500 wealthiest people in the world, the report said.

On Monday, an appeals court agreed to grant Trump ten more days to post a bond in his civil fraud case as well as slashed the bond amount from $454 million to $175 million, according to a court order.

Later in the day, Trump said in a Truth Social post that he would abide by the latest appeals court decision and post either a bond, securities, or cash. He also noted that this was the fifth time that a superior court had overruled an order of Judge Artur Engoron in the case.

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Western States Fear Exposing Truth About NATO's Bombing of Yugoslavia - Nebenzia

UNITED NATIONS, March 25 (Sputnik) - Western countries are afraid to expose NATO's real history to the world and therefore objected to a UN Security Council meeting on their bombings of Yugoslavia during the Kosovo war, Russian Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia said on Monday.

Nebenzia made the remarks after several delegations including France objected to Russia's request to hold a Security Council meeting on NATO's bombing campaign during the Kosovo war.

"Despite the so-called reasons which we'll hear from Alliance members today, the main reason [for objecting to the meeting] is the unwillingness to admit one of the hugest mistakes in NATO history, in fear of being exposed in front of the world community aggressive and invasive states, trying to build a colonial system across the entire world. We have already seen many examples of it not only in Yugoslavia, but in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Libya, and finally Ukraine," Nebenzia said.

The Russian Mission to the UN requested the Security Council meeting to mark the 25th anniversary of the aerial bombing campaign carried out by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia during the Kosovo War in 1999.

However, several UN states raised objections to the meeting, saying it was not relevant under the UN Security Council agenda category of "threats to international peace and security." Later on, Japan, which holds the rotating presidency of the UN Security Council this month, canceled the meeting, saying it would discuss the matter with the Council members and inform them accordingly.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

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WASHINGTON, March 26 (Sputnik) –

TERRORIST ATTACK IN RUSSIA

* The suspects accused of carrying out the deadly attack on a concert hall near Moscow admitted their guilt and shared details of their accomplices and clients, the chairman of Russia's Investigative Committee Alexander Bastrykin said on Monday.

* Three terrorist accomplices, arrested earlier in the day in Russia, provided the militants with an apartment and a car, and transported money, Investigative Committee head Bastrykin said.

* Russian Prosecutor General Igor Krasnov has been instructed to work out all the questions concerning the terrorist attack in the Crocus City Hall on March 22, Russian President Vladimir Putin said.

* Investigators have established a full chronology of developments of the terrorist attack on the Crocus City Hall concert venue near Moscow, Bastrykin said.

* EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell confirmed the existence of cooperation between the EU and Russian intelligence services, with the announcement made a few days after the deadly terrorist attack on the Crocus City Hall concert venue in a suburb of Moscow.

* The United States is making a comprehensive effort to convince everyone that Ukraine had nothing to do with the terrorist attack on the Crocus City Hall near Moscow and that the responsibility lies solely with Islamic State (IS, terrorist group, banned in Russia), Putin said.

* Aminchon Islomov, who was arrested earlier on Monday by the Moscow Basmanny Court in the case of the terrorist attack in Crocus City Hall, pleaded not guilty during the hearing, a Sputnik correspondent reported from the courtroom.

UNSC RESOLUTION ON GAZA

* The UN Security Council on Monday adopted a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza for the month of Ramadan, a Sputnik correspondent reported on Monday.

* United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that the newly adopted Security Council resolution demanding a ceasefire in Gaza must be implemented and that there is no space for failure.

* The US State Department said on Monday that the UN Security Council's resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza is non-binding.

* Russia regrets that US envoy to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield has not read the UN Charter, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said after his American counterpart called a resolution on a Gaza ceasefire "non-binding."

* Russia will be seeking clarification from the United States after Thomas-Greenfield called a UN Security Council resolution on a Gaza ceasefire "non-binding," Russian Deputy Ambassador to the UN Dmitry Polyanskiy said.

* The Palestinian movement Hamas welcomed on Monday the adoption of a UN Security Council resolution on a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip during Ramadan.

ISRAEL'S DECISION TO CANCEL VISIT TO US

* The United States is 'very disappointed' that Israel has decided to cancel its delegation's visit to Washington to discuss alternatives to a ground operation in Rafah, National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said.

* Kirby said that he has not been notified of any schedule changes to an Israeli delegation's visit to Washington this week following a US abstention in a UN Security Council vote earlier in the day on a resolution demanding a ceasefire in Gaza.

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ISRAELI INVASION IN GAZA

* Israel has no "moral right" to stop its operation in Gaza while the hostages are still held there, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said on Monday.

* White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Monday that he held constructive talks with Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant about Israel's military operation against Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* Hungary will never send troops or weapons to Ukraine, and this is Budapest's official position, Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told reporters on the sidelines of the Atomexpo forum.

* Russia's armed forces have taken better positions in the Donetsk direction, with Kiev having lost up to 175 soldiers over the past 24 hours, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

* Kiev's supporters do not want to be complicit in terrorism, but many questions to them remain, Russian President Vladimir Putin said, in the wake of the terrorist attack on the Crocus City Hall concert venue near Moscow.

RUSSIA-US SECURITY COOPERATION

* White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby said that there is not going to be security assistance between Russia and the United States following the terrorist attack at the Crocus City Hall just outside Moscow.

* The US will not enhance or initiate security agreements with Russia, Spokesperson Matthew Miller said.

TRUMP COURT CASES

* A US appeals court has agreed to give former US President Donald Trump 10 more days to post a bond in the civil fraud case against him and also slashed the bond amount to $175 million, according to a court order published on Monday.

* A US appeals court has agreed to give Trump 10 more days to post a bond in the civil fraud case against him and also slashed the bond amount to $175 million, according to a court order.

* Trump said that it would be unfair to hold a trial against him in the months ahead of Election Day for the United States' 2024 presidential race, after a judge set a tentative trial start date of April 15 for a case involving alleged falsification of business records.

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Austin Announces Departure of Acting Under Secretary for Policy Sasha Baker

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) - Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Sasha Baker will depart the department at the end of April following more than eight months in the position, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said in a statement.

"Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Sasha Baker will step down at the end of April. I am deeply grateful for her outstanding contributions to the Department and to U.S. national security," the statement said.

Amanda Dory, who is currently serving as the Director of the Africa Center for Strategic Studies at the National Defense University in Washington, DC will perform Baker's duties following her

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departure in April, the statement said.
Baker became Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Policy after Colin Kahl left the post in July 2023.

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Sullivan Says Held 'Constructive' Talks With Israel's Gallant on Operation Against Hamas

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) - White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Monday that he held constructive talks with Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant about Israel's military operation against Hamas in the Gaza Strip.
"We had a constructive discussion on how best to ensure Hamas' lasting defeat in Gaza," Sullivan said in a statement via social media platform X, following a meeting between the two officials at the White House.
Sullivan said he conveyed US President Joe Biden's support for Israel's security, including threats from Iran.
Sullivan also said he welcomed Gallant's commitment to take steps to address the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip.
Earlier on Monday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu canceled a visit by a high-level Israeli delegation to Washington after the United States abstained from voting on a UN Security Council resolution that demands an immediate Ramadan ceasefire that leads to a lasting cessation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip.
US State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller said that the decision to cancel the Israeli delegation's visit is surprising and unfortunate.

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US House Panel Threatens Garland With Contempt Over Biden's Hur Interviews - Letter

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) - House Judiciary Chairman Jim Jordan and Oversight Chairman James Comer on Monday set an April 8 deadline for Attorney General Merrick Garland to submit subpoenaed audio and transcripts from Special Counsel Robert Hur's interviews with President Biden, warning of possible contempt of Congress proceedings for non-compliance.
"The Department continues to withhold additional material responsive to the Committees' subpoenas ... Accordingly, the Committees expect you to produce all responsive materials no later than 12:00 pm on April 8, 2024. If you fail to do so, the Committees will consider taking further action, such as the invocation of contempt of Congress proceedings," Jordan and Comer said in a letter to Garland.
Last month, two committees issued a subpoena demanding that Garland provide all documents

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related to Hur's investigation of Biden's alleged mishandling of classified information, including the transcripts and audio recordings of his interviews with the president and his ghostwriter Mark Zwonitzer.

The committees initially requested the materials on February 12, just days after Hur on February 9 issued his final report in his investigation, which found Biden "willfully" mishandled classified materials but that a jury likely would have considered the president a "well-meaning" old man with a poor memory.

The Judiciary and Oversight Committees are leading an investigation into business dealings and other activities of the Biden family to determine whether there are sufficient grounds to draft articles of impeachment against Biden.

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Canada Begins Small-Scale Assisted Departures for Canadians in Haiti - Joly

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) – The Canadian government will be carrying out the initial phase of assisted departures of its "most vulnerable" citizens from Haiti's Port-au-Prince toward the neighboring Dominican Republic, Foreign Minister Melanie Joly said on Monday.

"Today we are launching an assisted departure for the most vulnerable Canadians in Haiti. We have also deployed diplomats and consular agents across the region … We will be facilitating the travel of the most vulnerable Canadians in Haiti to the Dominican Republic," Joly said during a press conference.

The first phase of departures, which began earlier on Monday, will only be available to the "most vulnerable" individuals with a valid passport, Joly said.

Ottawa is working on finding alternative solutions for all other Canadian nationals and permanent residents who wish to leave Haiti, Joly said. Global Affairs Canada (GAC) aims to conduct the assisted departures without separating families, she added.

The departures from Port-au-Prince to the Dominican Republic will be carried out by helicopter from designated locations throughout the capital city, Joly said. Eighteen Canadians left Haiti on Monday.

GAC's Assistant Deputy Minister Julie Sunday said during the same conference that there are currently slightly more than 3,000 nationals registered with the Registration of Canadians Abroad service but noted that the number of those seeking assistance to depart stands under 300 as not everyone wants to leave.

On February 29, gang violence erupted in the downtown area of Port-au-Prince while Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry was visiting Kenya to seek an agreement for the deployment of foreign forces in Haiti to fight organized crime. The gangs said their goal was to prevent the prime minister from returning to Haiti. They took control over many parts of the city and stormed Haiti's largest prison, freeing an unconfirmed number of inmates. The Haitian government declared a state of emergency in the capital region. On March 11, Henry announced that he would resign once a transitional presidential council was created.

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Netanyahu Manufacturing Fake Rift With US for Domestic Political Reasons – Reports

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) – Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has manufactured an artificial crisis in bilateral relations with the United States for domestic political reasons, Axios reported on Monday, citing three US officials.

Earlier on Monday, Netanyahu canceled a visit of his high-level delegation to Washington after the US abstained from voting on a UN Security Council resolution that demands an immediate Ramadan ceasefire that leads to a lasting sustainable ceasefire in Gaza.

During bilateral discussions on Sunday evening, White House officials warned their Israeli counterparts of US plans to abstain from the UN Security Council vote on a ceasefire in Gaza on Monday, the report said.

"If Prime Minister Netanyahu felt so strongly, why didn't he call President Biden? The US position is clear: we read the resolution as calling for both a ceasefire and the release of hostages — in the same paragraph. For that reason, we abstained," the report cited one of the US officials as saying.

One of the officials also described the White House reaction to Netanyahu's decision as "perplexity" while another US officials said that Netanyahu used the UNSC vote as a pretext to not send his delegation to Washington DC this week, according to the report.

"He [Netanyahu] was afraid we might offer something reasonable," the report cited the official as saying. "He would rather than a fight with us even if it's not in Israel's interest."

The development represents the first instance of discord between the two close allies since the start of Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza more than six months ago.

In October, Hamas launched a large-scale rocket attack against Israel from the Gaza Strip and breached the border, killing 1,200 people and abducting around 240 others. Israel launched retaliatory strikes, ordered a complete blockade of Gaza, and started a ground incursion into the Palestinian enclave with the declared goal of eliminating Hamas fighters and rescuing the hostages. Over 32,300 people have been killed so far in the Gaza Strip, local authorities said.

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Nebenzia Says All UNSC Resolutions Fully Binding, Regrets US Envoy Has Not Read UN Charter

UNITED NATIONS, March 25 (Sputnik) - Russia regrets that US envoy to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield has not read the UN Charter, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said on Monday after his American counterpart called a resolution on a Gaza ceasefire "non-binding."

"All resolutions of the UN Security Council are fully binding and I regret that Ambassador Linda

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Thomas-Greenfield has not read the UN Charter," Nebenzia told journalists.

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US Says Wants To See Elections in Ukraine, Recognizes Difficulty to Conduct Amid Conflict

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) - While the United States would like to see elections in Ukraine, Washington recognizes that it is difficult to hold them amid the ongoing conflict, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Monday.

'We want to see presidential elections and all elections in Ukraine. But we recognize that it's a difficult thing to conduct in the middle of the war," Miller said. "Ultimately, it's a decision for the Ukrainian people to make."

A presidential election was supposed to be held in Ukraine in the spring of 2024 according to the country's laws. However, the Ukrainian constitution prohibits holding elections under conditions of martial law, which has been in effect since the beginning of Russia's special military operation in February 2022.

Last month, the Ukrainian parliament approved an extension of the martial law status in the country for another 90 days.

Zelenskyy had previously said that a delay in holding elections was required by Ukrainian law because the country is currently in conflict with Russia. Existing laws would have to be modified in order to hold elections in Ukraine.

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Russia Seeking Clarification From US on 'Non-Binding' Gaza Resolution Remark - UN Mission

UNITED NATIONS, March 25 (Sputnik) - Russia will be seeking clarification from the United States after Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield called a UN Security Council resolution on a Gaza ceasefire "non-binding," Russian Deputy Ambassador to the UN Dmitry Polyanskiy said on Monday.

"The words of our American colleague that this resolution is non-binding sound odd. We categorically disagree with this point of view regarding Security Council resolutions. In accordance with the UN Charter, members of the Organization agree to obey and implement the decisions of the Security Council. We will clarify what Ms. Thomas-Greenfield meant and what consequences this statement may have," Polyanskiy wrote on Telegram.

Earlier in the day, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution calling for an immediate Ramadan ceasefire in Gaza that leads to a lasting and sustainable ceasefire. The motion was sponsored by the 10 non-permanent members of the council. Fourteen countries voted in favor, while the United States abstained.

US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield said that the US "fully supports some of the critical

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objectives in this non-binding resolution."

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Putin Says Clear That Concert Hall Attack 'Act of Intimidation,' Question Is Who Benefits

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) - The terrorist attack on a concert hall outside Moscow is an act of intimidation, and the question is who benefits from this crime, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Monday.

"The horrific crime committed on March 22 in the capital of Russia is an act of intimidation ... and the question immediately arises: who benefits?" Putin said during a meeting on the measures being taken in the wake of the terrorist attack. "This atrocity can only be an element in a whole series of attempts by those who have been fighting our country since 2014 with the hands of the neo-Nazi Kiev regime."

Those who attacked the Crocus City Hall concert venue had tried to escape to Ukraine, where, according to preliminary data, a "window" was prepared for them to cross the border, Putin previously said. All four who were directly involved in the shooting were arrested.

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Putin Calls for Objective Probe of Crocus Attack, Wishes Speedy Recovery to Wounded

MOSCOW, March 25 (Sputnik) - Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Monday that investigators must conduct an objective probe into the Crocus City Hall terrorist attack despite the desire to bring the perpetrators to justice.

“Despite the universal pain, sorrow, compassion and legitimate desire to punish all the perpetrators of this brutal atrocity, the investigation must be conducted in a highly professional and objective manner, without any political bias,” Putin said in a video statement.

Putin asked investigators to report on the progress of their probe and work to identify all those involved in the terrorist attack, as well as to report regularly on the investigation as it proceeds.

Putin expressed condolences to the family and friends of the victims of the attack and also wished a speedy recovery to the wounded victims. The terrorist attack on Friday killed at least 137 people, marking the deadliest such incident in nearly 20 years.

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US Navy Funds Munitions Plant to Boost Solid Rocket Motor Output - Northrop Grumman

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) - The US Navy is financing the expansion of an ammunition plant in the state of West Virginia to double the US annual national output of solid fuel rocket motors, Northrop Grumman announced in a press release on Monday.

"The investment will increase rocket motor energetics and will add to Northrop Grumman's investment in rocket motors and increase resiliency by doubling the capacity of the defense supply chain and ensure production capacity to meet the growing demand of solid rocket motors and warheads on time and at affordable scale," the release explained.

The company was recently awarded a $178 million contract from Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) to support the expansion, Northrop Grumman said.

The new facility will use advanced manufacturing processes to configure production for multiple products and consolidate operations to minimize travel, movement of materials, and overall downtime, Northrop Grumman said.

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US Will Not Boost Or Start New Security Cooperation With Russia - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) - The US will not enhance or initiate security agreements with Russia, Spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Monday during a press briefing.

"Obviously, we are not going to boost our security or boost any security agreements or start any security agreements with the Government of Russia," Miller said.

Miller added that should there be intelligence in the future similar to that regarding the recent attack, it would certainly be shared with the Russian government.

A shooting occurred last Friday in the Crocus City Hall concert venue in the city of Krasnogorsk,

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just outside Moscow, followed by a massive fire. A Sputnik correspondent who witnessed the attack reported that a number of gunmen in camouflage broke into the music hall, shooting people point-blank and throwing incendiary bombs. The Russian Investigative Committee said that at least 137 people were killed as a result of the terrorist attack.

Eleven people were detained in connection with the events, including four believed to be directly involved in the terrorist attack, the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) said. The four main suspects in the case were detained in the Russian region of Bryansk, which borders Belarus and Ukraine, the FSB added. They were charged with terrorism and ordered to be held in pretrial custody until May 22, Moscow's Basmanny District Court said. All of them are from Tajikistan and could face a life sentence in prison.

The Moscow-area concert hall terrorist attack is the deadliest in Russia in nearly 20 years.

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Seizing Frozen Russian Assets Will Erode Trust in Global Financial System - Ex-Regulator

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) - A seizure of frozen Russian assets by the West would contribute to the erosion of confidence in the current international financial system and amount to misuse of financial power, former deputy governor of the Reserve Bank of India Rakesh Mohan told Sputnik.

US President Joe Biden reportedly wants the G7 countries to make progress on plans to use seized Russian sovereign assets to support Ukraine by the time the leaders meet in June. The United States has proposed to its G7 allies that they create a special purpose vehicle to issue at least $50 billion of bonds backed by the profits generated by frozen Russian sovereign assets in order to support Ukraine, US media reported.

"I do think that it does contribute to the erosion of confidence in a rules based international financial system," Mohan said. "Furthermore, it also amounts to misuse of political and financial power. It also violates any concept of property rights and due process of law."

Mohan pointed out that foreign countries protest "loudly" if any of their businesses or assets are nationalized and characterize it as expropriation.

Countries have already started reducing the dollar's share in their foreign exchange reserves, but there is a limit to this action because of the lack of alternatives, according to Mohan.

However, Mohan said that the lack of alternatives implies that countries will now look for alternatives to US currency more actively. Gold is a small proportion of foreign exchange reserves, so it is not important and can always be held within countries, Mohan noted.

A recent Invesco survey reportedly found a “substantial percentage” of central banks expressed concern about how the United States and its allies froze nearly half of Russia’s $650 billion gold and foreign exchange reserves, and some 68% of the banks surveyed said they are now keeping their gold reserve within their country’s borders, up from 50% in 2020.

After the start of Russia's military operation in Ukraine in February 2022, Western countries imposed comprehensive sanctions against Russia, including the freezing of nearly half of the country's foreign currency reserves. The West is estimated to hold some $300 billion in Russian

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central bank assets and has been discussing ways to legally tap the frozen funds. Russia has said that such acts would be illegal, in addition to ruining the West's already shaken image as a safe haven for global investors.

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US Indicts 7 Chinese Hackers, Sanctions Their Group for Targeting Beijing Foes - Treasury

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) - The US government has indicted seven Chinese hackers for allegedly targeting US and other critics of the People's Republic over the past 14 years and has issued sanctions against the group they allegedly belong to, the Departments of Justice and the Treasury announced on Monday.

"An indictment was unsealed today charging seven nationals of the People's Republic of China (PRC) with conspiracy to commit computer intrusions and conspiracy to commit wire fraud for their involvement in a PRC-based hacking group that spent approximately 14 years targeting US and foreign critics, businesses and political officials in furtherance of the PRC's economic espionage and foreign intelligence objectives," the Justice Department said in a press release.

The defendants were identified as Ni Gaobin, Weng Ming, Cheng Feng, Peng Yaowen, Sun Xiaohui, Xiong Wang and Zhao Guangzong, Attorney General Merrick Garland said in the release.

"The Justice Department will not tolerate efforts by the Chinese government to intimidate Americans who serve the public, silence the dissidents who are protected by American laws, or steal from American businesses," Garland said.

Also on Monday, the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned the Wuhan Xiaoruizhi Science and Technology Company which it accused of being a "China-based Ministry of State Security (MSS) front company that has served as cover for multiple malicious cyber operations," the Treasury Department said in a press release.

OFAC also designated Zhao Guangzong and Ni Gaobin, two Chinese nationals affiliated with Wuhan XRZ, for their alleged roles in malicious cyber operations that targeted US entities operating in US critical infrastructure sectors, thus allegedly directly endangering US national security, the release added.

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UN Says All UNSC Resolutions Part of International Law, Including Today's on Peace in Gaza

UNITED NATIONS, March 25 (Sputnik) - All United Nations resolutions of the Security Council are binding, the UN Spokesman Farhan Haq said on Monday, following a question from a journalist clarifying the organization's rules after the US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield called in her speech a resolution 'non-binding'.

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"... All Security Council resolutions are international law ... This one [resolution calling for a lasting peace in Gaza], as every other one," Haq said during the briefing to journalists.

Today, US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield said during the meeting on Gaza that the US "fully supports some of the critical objectives in this non-binding resolution."

Earlier in the day, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution calling for an immediate Ramadan ceasefire in Gaza that leads to a lasting and sustainable ceasefire. The motion was sponsored by the 10 non-permanent members of the council. Fourteen countries voted in favor, while the United States abstained.

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Trump Says Plans to Start Trial Amid US Presidential Election 'Not Fair'

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said on Monday that it would be unfair to hold a trial against him in the months ahead of Election Day for the United States' 2024 presidential race, after a judge set a tentative trial start date of April 15 for a case involving alleged falsification of business records.

"I don't know how you can have a trial that's going on right in the middle of the election," Trump said during a press conference. "It's not fair at all."

Earlier on Monday, a judge scheduled a trial to start on April 15 to resolve a case involving alleged hush-money payments to pornography actress Stormy Daniels during Trump's 2016 presidential campaign. Trump said that his legal team will appeal the decision.

Trump also said that he would be willing to testify at a potential trial, claiming that he would do so because he has done nothing wrong.

Trump characterized the numerous legal cases against him as a form of election interference through the weaponization of government.

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Israel Canceling Visit to US After UNSC Vote 'Surprising, Unfortunate' - State Dept

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) - Israel's decision not to send its delegation to Washington in response to the UN Security Council adopting a Gaza ceasefire resolution is "surprising and unfortunate," State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Monday.

"I would say it's a bit surprising and unfortunate," Miller said in a press briefing.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu canceled a visit of his high-level delegation to Washington after the US abstained from voting on a UN Security Council resolution that demands an immediate Ramadan ceasefire that leads to a lasting sustainable ceasefire in Gaza.

The United States did not use its veto power because there are things in that resolution that

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were consistent with Washington's long- term position, most importantly, that there should be a ceasefire and that there should be a release of hostages, "which is what we understood also to be the government of Israel's position, so it is a bit surprising and unfortunate that they are not going to attend these meetings," Miller said.

The motion was sponsored by the 10 non-permanent members of the council. Fourteen countries voted in favor.

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said on Monday that Israel has no "moral right" to stop its operation in Gaza while the hostages are still being held there.

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US State Dept. Says UNSC Resolution on Gaza Ceasefire 'Non-Binding'

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) - The US State Department said on Monday that the UN Security Council's resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza is non-binding.

"The resolution [UNSC] today is a non-binding resolution," spokesperson Matthew Miller said during a press briefing.

Earlier in the day, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution calling for an immediate Ramadan ceasefire in Gaza that would lead to a lasting and sustainable ceasefire. The motion was sponsored by the 10 non-permanent members of the council. Fourteen countries voted in favor, while the United States abstained.

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UN Top Humanitarian Diplomat Steps Down Due to Health Reasons - Statement

UNITED NATIONS, March 25 (Sputnik) - The United Nations' top humanitarian relief diplomat, Martin Griffiths, has resigned due to health reasons, the UN Spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Monday.

“The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Martin Griffiths, has informed the Secretary-General of his intention to step down for health reasons,” the statement said.

The Secretary-General appreciates Griffiths’ efforts and ‘tremendous leadership’.

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US Targets 2 Individuals, 18 Entities With Russia-Related Sanctions - Treasury Dept.

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(Updates with paras 4-7)

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) – The United States has imposed new Russia-related sanctions on two individuals and 18 entities, the Treasury said on Monday.

The two sanctioned individuals are Timur Bukanov and Igor Kaigorodov.

The sanctions also target 18 entities located in Russia, Estonia, the UAE, and Cyprus.

"Many of the individuals and entities designated today facilitated transactions or offered other services that helped OFAC-designated [Office of Foreign Assets Control] entities evade sanctions. These designations build upon OFAC's February 23, 2024 action to target companies servicing Russia's core financial infrastructure and curtail Russia's use of the international financial system to further its war against Ukraine," the statement said.

Kaigorodov is the majority shareholder at both Veb3 Tekhnologii and Veb3 Integrator, the two companies designated for providing blockchain solutions and platforms within the Russian financial sector, including Sberbank and Alfa-Bank sanctioned by the US, according to the statement.

Bukanov is described as the owner and director of TOEP, a fintech company that operates a virtual currency exchange that has enabled digital payments in rubles and virtual currencies to OFAC-designated entities such as Sberbank, Alfa-Bank and Hydra Market, it added.

Imposing sanctions means freezing all US-controlled assets of designated individuals and entities. US citizens also cannot make business deals and maintain transactions with them.

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UPDATE - Appeals Court Allows Trump to Post $175Mln Bond Within 10 Days in Civil Fraud Case – Order

(Updates with Trump's reaction in para 4)

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) – A US appeals court has agreed to give former US President Donald Trump 10 more days to post a bond in the civil fraud case against him and also slashed the bond amount to $175 million, according to a court order published on Monday.

"It is ordered that the motion is granted to the extent of staying enforcement of those portions of the Judgment (1) ordering disgorgement to the Attorney General of $464,576,230.62, conditioned on defendants-appellants posting, within ten (10) days of the date of this order, an undertaking in the amount of $175 million dollars," the order said.

The civil fraud case against Trump was brought by New York Attorney General Letitia James for allegedly lying about the value of his properties. Last month, a New York court found Trump liable for fraud and ordered him to pay more than $464 million in penalties, which includes interest.

Later in the day, Trump said in a Truth Social post that he would abide by the latest appeals court decision and post either a bond, securities, or cash. He also noted that this was the fifth time when a superior court overruled an order of Judge Artur Engoron in the case.

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US Judge Sets Start Date For Trump 'Hush Money' Trial On April 15, Trump Says to Appeal

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) - Judge Juan Merchan has set April 15 as the start date for Donald Trump's trial in his hush money case, a decision that former president and presumptive Republican nominee called "election interference."

Trump is accused of not disclosing hush-money payments to pornography actress Stormy Daniels and others during the 2016 presidential campaign.

Speaking to reporters after the hearing, Trump called the trial date "election interference" and vowed to appeal the decision.

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China's Ambassador to UN to Step Down in March - Correspondent

UNITED NATIONS, March 25 (Sputnik) - The Chinese Ambassador to the United Nations Zhang Jun has thanked UN journalists for the support they gave him as he is to step down from his post this month, a Sputnik Correspondent reported on Monday.

“I wish to say my tenure as the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations ends in March and I thank you so much for your support here in the past almost five years,” Zhang told journalists at the United Nations.

Zhang has been one of the most sought-after ambassadors at the UN due to his engagement with the press.

Zhang Jun has served as the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations since July 2019. The Chinese diplomat also served as President of the UN Security Council in March 2020, May 2021, August 2022, and November 2023.

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US Claims Warning to Russia Was Sent Due to Its Vigilant Monitoring of IS - Kirby

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) - White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby on Monday asserted that the United States was able warn Russia in advance of a planned attack by the Islamic State (banned in Russia) because Washington is very vigilant in monitoring the group's activities.

"We are very vigilant in monitoring this group's activities and their planning as best as we can," Kirby said in a press briefing. "In fact, it was because of the aggressive way in which we've been

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monitoring ISIS that we were able to give the Russians a warning."

The United States has blamed a branch of ISIS known as ISIS-Khorasan (banned in Russia as terrorist) for the Crocus City Hall attack near Moscow.

Meanwhile, the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) has said that the four main suspects in the terrorist attack had contacts in Ukraine and were planning to cross the Russian-Ukrainian border when they were detained in Russia's Bryansk Region. Russian President Vladimir Putin has also said that all the four were heading for Ukraine, where, according to preliminary data, a "window" was prepared for them to cross the border.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov stated that the Russian authorities have not commented on information about the possible involvement of the ISIS group in the terrorist attack, as the investigation was still underway and no official scenario had been put forward.

A shooting occurred last Friday in the Crocus City Hall concert venue in the city of Krasnogorsk, just outside Moscow, followed by a massive fire. A Sputnik correspondent who witnessed the attack reported that a number of gunmen in camouflage broke into the music hall, shooting people point-blank and throwing incendiary bombs. The Russian Investigative Committee said that at least 137 people were killed as a result of the terrorist attack.

Eleven people were detained in connection with the events, including four believed to be directly involved in the terrorist attack, the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) said. The four main suspects in the case were detained in the Russian region of Bryansk, which borders Belarus and Ukraine, the FSB added. They were charged with terrorism and ordered to be held in pretrial custody until May 22, Moscow's Basmanny District Court said. All of them are from Tajikistan and could face a life sentence in prison.

The Moscow-area concert hall terrorist attack is the deadliest in Russia in nearly 20 years.

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US Vote at UNSC on Gaza Does Not Represent Policy Shift - White House

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) - The United States abstaining during a UN Security Council vote on a Gaza ceasefire resolution does not indicate any changes in Washington's policy, White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby said on Monday.

"Our vote does not, I repeat that, does not, represent a shift in our policy," Kirby said during a briefing.

Earlier in the day, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution calling for an immediate Ramadan ceasefire in Gaza that leads to a lasting and sustainable ceasefire.

The motion was sponsored by the 10 non-permanent members of the council. Fourteen countries voted in favor, while the United States abstained.

In response, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu canceled the visit of an Israeli delegation to Washington that was to discuss Rafah operation planning.

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

Kirby Says No Plans for Security Cooperation With Russia After Concert Hall Attack

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) - White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby said on Monday that there is not going to be security assistance between Russia and the United States following the terrorist attack at the Crocus City Hall just outside Moscow.
"There's not going to be security assistance with Russia and the United States," Kirby said in a press briefing, when asked if the US and Russia having common enemy in the Islamic State terrorist group (IS, banned in Russia) would open up security cooperation between the two countries.
Russian authorities do not comment on allegations of the IS terror group's possible involvement in Friday's deadly attack on a concert hall outside Moscow because the investigation is still underway, the Kremlin said on Monday.

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US 'Very Disappointed' Israel Canceled Delegation's DC Visit After UN Gaza Vote- Kirby

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) - The United States is 'very disappointed' that Israel has decided to cancel its delegation's visit to Washington to discuss alternatives to a ground operation in Rafah, National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Monday.
"We're very disappointed that they will not be coming to Washington DC to allow us to have a fulsome conversation with them about viable alternatives to going in on the, on the ground in Rafah," Kirby said during a briefing.
Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu canceled a visit to Washington after the US abstained from voting on a UN Security Council resolution that demands an immediate Ramadan ceasefire that leads to a lasting sustainable ceasefire in Gaza.

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Changing Wording of UNSC Resolution on Gaza 'Disappointing' – Russian UN Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, March 25 (Sputnik) – The change of the wording of the UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution on Gaza at the request of the United States is "disappointing," Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said on Monday.
"The wording 'permanent' would be more precise, and we are disappointed that it did not make it through," Nebenzia told the UNSC.
Earlier today, the Security Council members adopted a resolution calling for an immediate Ramadan ceasefire in Gaza that leads to a lasting and sustainable ceasefire.

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The draft resolution was to call for a "permanent sustainable ceasefire," but the word "permanent" was removed at the last-minute request of the United States.

Before the vote, Russia proposed an amendment to return the call for a "permanent ceasefire," protesting the "weak wording." The amendment was backed by China and Algeria, but was blocked by the United States, with 11 others abstaining.

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Appeals Court Allows Trump to Post $175Mln Bond Within 10 Days in Civil Fraud Case – Order

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) – A US appeals court has agreed to give former US President Donald Trump 10 more days to post a bond in the civil fraud case against him and also slashed the bond amount to $175 million, according to a court order published on Monday.

"It is ordered that the motion is granted to the extent of staying enforcement of those portions of the Judgment (1) ordering disgorgement to the Attorney General of $464,576,230.62, conditioned on defendants-appellants posting, within ten (10) days of the date of this order, an undertaking in the amount of $175 million dollars," the order said.

The civil fraud case against Trump was brought by New York Attorney General Letitia James for allegedly lying about the value of Trump properties. Last month, a New York court found Trump liable for fraud and ordered he pay more than $464 million in penalties, which includes interest.

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White House Says Not Notified of Any Schedule Changes for Israeli Visit to Washington

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) - White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby said on Monday that he has not been notified of any schedule changes to an Israeli delegation's visit to Washington this week following a US abstention in a UN Security Council vote earlier in the day on a resolution demanding a ceasefire in Gaza.

"I don't have any information that we've been notified that there's any changes to a Israeli delegation coming over," Kirby told reporters.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reportedly canceled a visit to Washington after the US abstained from voting on a UN Security Council resolution that demands an immediate Ramadan ceasefire that leads to a lasting sustainable ceasefire in Gaza.

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US Targets 2 Individuals, 18 Entities With Russia-Related Sanctions - Treasury Dept.

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) – The United States has imposed new Russia-related sanctions on two individuals and 18 entities, the Treasury said on Monday.

The two sanctioned individuals are Timur Bukanov and Igor Kaigorodov.

The sanctions also target 18 entities located in Russia, Estonia, the UAE, and Cyprus.

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US Condemns Terror Attack Near Moscow, Voices Solidarity with Russian People - Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, March 25 (Sputnik) – The United States condemns the terrorist attack that occurred at the Crocus City Hall concert venue outside Moscow and stands in solidarity with the Russian people, US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield said on Monday.

"At the top, I want to express my condolences to the families and loved ones of last week's terrorist attack in Moscow. We condemn terrorism in all its forms and stand in solidarity with the Russian people in grieving the loss of life from this horrific event," Thomas-Greenfield told the UN Security Council.

A shooting occurred last Friday in the Crocus City Hall concert venue in the city of Krasnogorsk, just outside Moscow, followed by a massive fire. A Sputnik correspondent who witnessed the attack reported that a number of gunmen in camouflage broke into the music hall, shooting people point-blank and throwing incendiary bombs. The Russian Investigative Committee said that at least 137 people were killed as a result of the terrorist attack.

Eleven people have been detained in connection with the events, including four believed to be directly involved in the terrorist attack, the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) said. The four main suspects in the case were detained in the Russian region of Bryansk, which borders Belarus and Ukraine, the FSB added. They were charged with terrorism and ordered to be held in pretrial custody until May 22, Moscow's Basmanny District Court said. All of them are from Tajikistan and could face a life sentence in prison.

The Crocus City Hall terrorist attack is the deadliest in Russia in nearly 20 years.

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UN Chief Says Newly Adopted UNSC Resolution Must be Implemented, Failure is 'Unforgivable'

UNITED NATIONS, March 25 (Sputnik) - United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Monday that the newly adopted Security Council resolution demanding a ceasefire in Gaza must be implemented and that there is no space for failure.

"The Security Council just approved a long-awaited resolution on Gaza, demanding an immediate ceasefire, and the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. This

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resolution must be implemented. Failure would be unforgivable," Guterres said on his X profile.
Earlier today, the Security Council members adopted a resolution calling for an immediate Ramadan ceasefire in Gaza that leads to a lasting and sustainable ceasefire.

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UNSC Starts Meetings With Moment of Silence Over Russia Concert Hall Terrorist Attack

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council on Monday started its meetings with a moment of silence to mourn the victims of the deadly terrorist attack on the Crocus City Hall concert venue outside Moscow, a Sputnik correspondent reported.
The council is holding two meetings on Monday morning - a Russia-requested informal meeting on the impact of unilateral sanctions on the ability of countries to combat terrorism and a separate session to vote on a Gaza ceasefire resolution.
The participants of the meetings rose from their seats and observed a moment of silence to commemorate over 130 victims of the attack.
A shooting occurred last Friday in the Crocus City Hall concert venue in the city of Krasnogorsk of the Moscow Region, followed by a massive fire. A Sputnik correspondent who witnessed the attack reported that a number of gunmen in camouflage broke into the music hall, shooting people point-blank and throwing incendiary bombs. The Russian Investigative Committee said that at least 137 people were killed as a result of the terrorist attack.
Eleven people have been arrested n connection with the attack, including four who were directly involved, the Russian Federal Security Service said. All four suspected shooters were apprehended in Russia's Bryansk Region, which borders Belarus and Ukraine, the FSB added.

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UNSC Adopts Resolution on Ramadan Ceasefire in Gaza, US Abstains - Correspondent

UNITED NATIONS, March 25 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council on Monday adopted a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza for the month of Ramadan, a Sputnik correspondent reported on Monday.
The motion was sponsored by 10 non-permanent members of the council.
Fourteen countries voted in favor, while the United States abstained.
The resolution "demands an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan respected by all parties leading to a lasting sustainable ceasefire, and also demands the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages."
The draft resolution was to call for a "permanent sustainable ceasefire," but the word "permanent" was removed at the last-minute request from the United States.
Prior to the vote, Russia proposed an amendment to return the call for a "permanent ceasefire,"

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protesting the "weak wording." The amendment was backed by China and Algeria, but was blocked by the United States, with 11 others abstaining.

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Trump Says US Courts Trying to Interfere in Presidential Race Through 'Ridiculous' Fines

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said on Monday that courts in the United States are attempting to interfere in the United States' 2024 presidential election by imposing large fines on him, which drain him of resources that could otherwise go towards his campaign.

"Why should I be forced to sell my 'babies' because a corrupt New York judge and attorney general set a fake and ridiculous number. 'Take his cash so that he can't use it to defeat his political opponent, Crooked [US President] Joe Biden.' Election interference, all headed up by the White House," Trump said in a statement via Truth Social.

Trump faces a deadline on Monday to turn over $454 million in penalties imposed as part of a civil fraud trial in New York. Trump also must pay the full amount as a bond as part of efforts to appeal the ruling against him. Trump denies the accusations against him.

Trump said that the legal cases against him are "rigged" and part of a coordinated effort by the White House and the US Justice Department to interfere in the 2024 presidential election, in which Trump is the presumptive Republican Party candidate.

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Boeing CEO to Step Down as Part of Broad Management Shakeup Amid 737 Max Crisis

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) - The Boeing CEO, its board chair and commercial airplanes president all are going to step down, the company announced on Monday after a number of safety incidents involving its 737 Max aircraft.

"Boeing [NYSE: BA] President and CEO Dave Calhoun today announced his decision to step down as CEO at the end of 2024, and he will continue to lead Boeing through the year to complete the critical work underway to stabilize and position the company for the future," Boeing said in a statement.

Board Chair Larry Kellner has also informed the board that he does not intend to stand for reelection at the upcoming annual shareholder meeting, the statement added. Steve Mollenkopf will replace him in this position.

In addition, Boeing Commercial Airplanes President and CEO Stan Deal retires immediately and will be succeeded by chief operating officer Stephanie Pope, according to the statement.

"As you all know, the Alaska Airlines Flight 1282 accident was a watershed moment for Boeing. We must continue to respond to this accident with humility and complete transparency. We also

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must inculcate a total commitment to safety and quality at every level of our company," Calhoun wrote in a message to employees.

He explained that his decision to step down as CEO has been prepared for and will result in a number of changes at a management and governance level moving forward.

US media reported that last week, Calhoun began scheduling meetings with Boeing directors to discuss their concerns over the lack of manufacturing quality controls and lower-than-expected production of 737 Max planes.

In January, the US Federal Aviation Administration temporarily grounded all Boeing 737 Max 9 planes in the United States after a door panel blew out on a Alaska Airlines flight.

Boeing has also experienced issues with other aircraft. In particular, an oxygen leak was discovered on board of a Boeing 737 that was to transport US Secretary of State Antony Blinken from the Davos World Economic Forum in January. The leak proved impossible to mend, making the plane unsafe to fly.

In one of the latest incidents that took place on March 11, around 50 people were injured as a Boeing 787 Dreamliner plane of Chile-based LATAM Airlines experienced a "technical problem" en route from Australia's Sydney to New Zealand's Auckland.

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Russian Jets Intercept 2 US B-1 Bombers Over Barents Sea in 'Safe' Manner - Air Force

WASHINGTON, March 25 (Sputnik) - Two US B-1 bombers were recently intercepted by Russian aircraft over the Barents Sea in a safe and professional manner, a US Air Force spokesperson told Sputnik.

"Two US Air Force B-1B Lancers flew over the Barents Sea en route to their deployed location as part of a routine strategic bomber deployment, Bomber Task Force 24-2," the spokesperson said on Sunday. "The B-1s were approached by Russian aircraft but the interaction was considered safe and professional."

The US aircraft were operating in international airspace and in full accordance with international law, the spokesperson noted.

The B-1 bombers were flying from Dyess Air Force Base in the state of Texas to Moron Air Base in Spain, according to the Air Force.

The spokesperson said the US Air Force routinely hosts and supports a variety of US Air Force aircraft and units for training to support geographic combatant command objectives.

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No Calls Between US, Russian Defense Officials Following Moscow Terror Attack - EUCOM

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WASHINGTON, March 24 (Sputnik) - There are no calls between US and Russian defense officials following the terrorist attack on the Crocus City Hall concert venue near Moscow, a US European Command (EUCOM) spokesperson told Sputnik on Sunday.

"Per the Office of the Secretary of Defense Public Affairs, we have no calls to read out between Department of Defense officials and their Russian counterparts at this time," the spokesperson said.

Gunmen opened fire in the Crocus City Hall concert venue near Moscow on Friday evening, killing at least 137 people, according to authorities. Eleven people were detained in connection with the attack, including four who were directly involved, the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) said. All four suspected shooters were detained in the Russian region of Bryansk, which borders Belarus and Ukraine, the FSB added. The Russian Interior Ministry said that the four alleged gunmen are foreign citizens.

On Saturday, Russian Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov, commenting on recent US statements that the Islamic State terrorist group (banned in Russia) is involved in the terrorist attack, told Sputnik that there is no need to rush to conclusions, as Russian special services are conducting investigative work to find those responsible for the attack.

Antonov added that the US government did not contact the Russian embassy after the terrorist attack, and that contacts between the United States and Russia in the fight against terrorism have been "destroyed," but not through Moscow's fault.

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