

5/6/24 Monday

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Israel Closes In on Rafah After Banning Al Jazeera

The Israeli Ministry of Communications announced on Sunday that it had raided an office belonging to Al Jazeera just hours after the Israeli cabinet ordered its closure. The Qatar-based network lambasted the decision as a "criminal act".

On Monday, journalist Mohamed Gomaa sat down with Sputnik's [The Final Countdown](#) to discuss Israel's decision to ban Al Jazeera's broadcasting in Israel and raid its office. The Israeli Ministry of Communications said on Sunday that it had confiscated the broadcaster's equipment just hours after the Israeli cabinet ordered its closure.

Gomaa suggested that the Israeli government is attempting to "suppress any coverage of what they are doing in Gaza now" as Israel likely plans to carry out their attack on the city of Rafah. A live [report](#) published on Monday by a US news site claims that Israeli forces plan to invade the Palestinian city which is in the southern Gaza Strip within "hours".

"I think [Israel] is very close to [carrying out] their attack on [Rafah]. I think during maybe the next couple of hours, maybe we will hear the news that they will start their operation in Rafah. I don't know when, but I think it will be very, very soon," said Gomaa. "That's why they need to close any media that can cover or can reflect what will happen on the ground, [because it] would, frankly, not be any complement to the Israeli government."

Sputnik's Angie Wong noted that Israeli officials [raided](#) Al Jazeera's offices in addition to shutting down their production, and that such an act may signal that the office contained what Israeli officials view as a matter of national security endangerment.

The office they raided was a Jerusalem hotel room being used by Al Jazeera for their production. A video shared online showed officers dressed in plain clothes dismantling camera equipment in a hotel room in East Jerusalem.

"The last thing coming from the international Committee [to Protect Journalists] is that they are condemning this decision from the Israeli government," Gomaa said. "But this is the first time we [have] heard of Israel, or any Western country suppressing the coverage, especially around the time of the war or any military action or something like this."

[Cindy McCain](#), the director of World Food Programme, said that there is a "full-blown famine" in northern Gaza, and it is making its way into the South. The United Nations has been warning since mid-March that a famine is "imminent" in Gaza. McCain said a ceasefire in Gaza is necessary so that people can be fed in a "much faster fashion."

Sputnik's Ted Rall suggested that Israeli officials put in place several unnecessary delays, including inspections, to prevent food and other equipment from reaching the Palestinians.

"The famine starts from the blockade of the Israeli government, from many across the border with Egypt, with Jordan. And they stopped a lot of military assistance because they said that they have to search for any military equipment or any guns or something like that. That's why we see this famine," Gomaa explained.

"The Israeli government uses the famine as an arm against the Palestinians, and it's a punishment for the Palestinians," he added. "[But if] Hamas is in the tunnels and their fighters are hiding in the tunnels, [then] why [do the] Israeli blockade the assistance? Why does the US military drop assistance from air?"

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Alzheimer's Likelihood Linked to Genetics, Says New Study

Further research will be needed to develop gene therapy or drugs that target the gene which accounts for half of all patients who carry at least one copy of it.

As a first in medical history, researchers have identified a genetic form of Alzheimer's disease. This means that the disease could be inherited more often than previously thought; just 1 in 50 cases of the disease were thought to be based on familial forms.

But according to a [study](#), published on Monday in the journal Nature Medicine, 1 in 6 cases of Alzheimer's could be considered inherited.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [Alzheimer's disease](#) is the most common type of dementia. It is a progressive disease beginning with mild memory loss and can possibly lead to the loss of being able to carry on a conversation or respond to one's environment. It affects parts of the brain that control thought, memory and language.

Prior to Monday's publication, scientists have been aware of a gene called [APOE4](#) that can increase people's risk of developing Alzheimer's. APOE makes a protein that is responsible for carrying cholesterol throughout the body and brain and is believed to play a role in monitoring beta amyloid plaques which disrupt cell function.

APOE4 is one of three subtypes of the APOE gene. And those who have at least one copy of this gene type have an elevated risk of developing Alzheimer's disease, while people with two copies of the gene have an even higher risk.

But authors of the new study say the gene is not just a risk factor - it is an inherited form of the disease and essentially guarantees that any person with two copies of the gene will experience the biological changes of Alzheimer's disease in their brains. APOE4 could also result in patients experiencing symptoms at an earlier rate - about 10 years earlier - than those without. The researchers found that those with two copies of the APOE4 gene were accumulating more amyloid at age 55 than those with just one copy of a "neutral" gene variant, APOE3. Then, at the age of 65, brain scans showed significant plaque buildup in almost three-quarters of double carriers.

"The critical thing is that these individuals are often symptomatic 10 years earlier than other forms of Alzheimer's disease," said [Dr. Reisa Sperling](#), a neurologist at Mass General Brigham in Boston and a co-author of the study. "By the time they are picked up and clinically diagnosed, because they're often younger, they have more pathology."

Sperling said it isn't clear if those who carry two APOE4 genes would benefit from the drug Leqembi, which works to clear away amyloid, especially because they are at a high risk to the side effects of the [drug](#) which includes dangerous brain swelling and bleeding.

A gene test for those that carry two APOE4 genes is also uncommon. But if one's parents both developed Alzheimer's relatively early - in their 60s rather than their 80s - they most likely carry two APOE4 genes.

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Play Into His Base: Trump May Use Student Protests to Win 2024 Presidential Election

The Ivy League school made its decision to downsize its commencement ceremony on May 15 after discussions with student leaders. Pro-Palestinian protests first began on April 17 after students set up about 50 tents demanding a cease-fire in Gaza, as well as a divestment from companies that they say profit from the war.

Columbia University announced its decision on [Monday](#) to cancel a university-wide commencement ceremony, and will instead organize school-level events due to lingering security concerns following student protests against Israel's war in Gaza. Arrests that took place at the school's Hamilton Hall have resulted in a lack of confidence in University President Minouche Shafik among students and faculty.

On Monday, author and journalist Robert Fantina joined Sputnik's [The Final Countdown](#) to discuss the recent campus crackdowns on protestors. Fantina, an activist working for peace and social justice, noted how the protests may be used to the advantage of the Republican Party in the US presidential election come November.

During the interview, Sputnik's Ted Rall asked Fantina how the campus protests might change moving forward as a majority of students will most likely leave campus for summer break. Fantina pointed out that with social media, students may still find ways to protest, even if college campuses will be closed.

"The advantage of social media must not be overlooked. These people will be in contact with each other, with other organizations throughout the summer. They'll be made aware of protest activities that are happening, activities in support of the Palestinians throughout the summer and they will participate in them," Fantina explained.

"We won't see university encampments over the summer, of course, probably because, as you mentioned, most university students are home, their home is local or at a distance, so they're not on campus," the journalist continued. "So, the campuses themselves will not be hotbeds of support for Palestinians."

"However, the students will still have access to the same social media accounts, the same pro-Palestine organizations will keep them informed about what's going on and what they can do over the summer in support of the human rights of the Palestinian people," he added.

Ted Rall then asked if it is possible that former US President Donald Trump and other right-wing Republicans may point to the on campus protests as proof that US President Joe Biden has lost control of the American public and is to blame for its general unrest. Rall then pointed out the similarities between the US presidential election in 1968, compared to this year's election.

However, the US was experiencing a very different environment in 1968; the assassination of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. and Senator Robert F. Kennedy, students marching in protest

against the Vietnam War, and a leading presidential candidate who was not on criminal trial. But former Vice President Richard Nixon did campaign to restore "[law and order](#)," and won 32 states in the presidential election by doing so. [Trump](#) chose to recycle the sentiment during his presidency when confronted by the Black Lives Matter movement.

"Yes. It's very possible, likely because Trump is already making noises about the unrest at campus and the need to put down these demonstrations and these spoiled kids, etc., and history will repeat itself," said Fantina. "As you mentioned, in another generation, people look back at the protesters and say how brave they were, and how courageous, how they were on the right side of history."

And while Biden has tried to tread lightly when commenting on the pro-Palestinian student protestors, former President Donald Trump has openly [attacked the demonstrators](#) and celebrated police crackdowns as a "beautiful thing to watch."

"But, in the current environment, as Richard Nixon was a 'law and order' candidate, bring back law and order to the country, stop these protesters in the streets and campuses. Trump is certainly going to play into that because it works with his base," he added. "It works with the people who will vote for him, who see the United States as speaking of democracy, which it's not and never has been, and see these protesters as trying to change their way of life."

Even as the [Biden administration](#) has not wavered in their support of Israel, Biden does not want to lose the support of his young, college-aged voters - a key Democratic constituency - who have turned against him in response to his administration's Israel policy.

"We are not an authoritarian nation where we silence people or squash dissent," Biden said.

"But neither are we a lawless country. We are a civil society, and order must prevail."

"So, it could certainly cost - from my view right now, it will cost Biden the reelection. But, as you very correctly said, future years will not be - history will not be kind to these university presidents and these racist and politically-oriented politicians who only are interested in getting reelected, keeping their job, and really aren't concerned with international human rights, which is what these university students are concerned with," Fantina suggested.

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Chinese President to Visit Three Key Countries During Trip to Europe

An article in The New York Times suggests China shares skepticism towards US hegemony with some European countries, but the Asian power maintains positive cultural, economic, and historical ties as well.

"Xi Visits Europe, Seeking Strategic Opportunity," declared the headline of a New York Times [piece](#) Sunday on the Chinese leader's trip to the continent.

"The Chinese president... appears intent on seizing opportunities to loosen the continent's bonds with the United States and forge a world freed of American dominance," its authors continued, following in the [controversial](#) newspaper's tradition of staunch [advocacy](#) for US hegemony.

Xi's diplomatic visit to Europe – his first in five years – certainly comes during a period when the United States' global leadership is in doubt. The US' leveraging of coercive unilateral economic sanctions against nearly one-third of the world's population has endangered the dollar's position as the de facto global reserve currency, leading various world powers to seek alternatives. Countries throughout the Global South have chafed under the United States' insistence they must follow its lead in isolating Russia after the launching of its special military operation in the Donbass. This phenomenon is observed vividly in North Africa, with a slew of nations ending military cooperation with the US and [ejecting American troops](#).

Even within Western Europe the United States' image has taken a beating. NATO officials are scrambling to prepare for a possible future without the guiding role of Washington, fearing a second Donald Trump presidency could see the US cut funding or even pull out of the military alliance.

Historical allies' perception of the country seems permanently altered after the controversial real estate magnate's chaotic time at the helm; one-third of Europeans now [say](#) the United States cannot be trusted while more than two-thirds [say](#) it is not a model democracy.

The New York Times documents various reasons for shared skepticism towards the United States among China and the three countries Xi plans to visit during his trip. France has long sought to resist US influence over its affairs, with revered statesman Charles de Gaulle famously refusing to place French troops under NATO command. Current President Emmanuel Macron has advocated for "strategic autonomy" in European affairs, positioning the EU as a third major power independent of China and America.

Hungary, too, has challenged US influence over its internal affairs, rejecting criticism of its self-declared "illiberal Christian democratic" [Prime Minister Viktor Orban](#).

Opposition towards the United States is perhaps strongest in Serbia, where the lasting impact of NATO's 1999 bombing of Belgrade is still felt. [Increased rates of cancer and birth defects](#) persist decades after the alliance's use of depleted uranium in its assault on the capital city. The US' bombing of Beijing's embassy in Belgrade during the attack is still commemorated regularly by both China and Serbia.

But beyond these countries' shared objection to US dominance, there are also strong cultural, economic and historical links. Beijing's relations with Serbia extend back to the days of the former Yugoslavia, when both countries shared an egalitarian socialist vision. Hungary [became](#) the largest recipient of Chinese direct investment in 2015, with Orban enthusiastically participating in Belt and Road infrastructure projects.

French-Sino relations, meanwhile, go back to the Middle Ages; the Chinese monk Rabban Bar Sauma was [hosted](#) by France's King Philip IV during a diplomatic trip by the Uyghur emissary throughout Europe. Today, both countries are joined together by their shared status as G20 economies, members of the UN Security Council, and major regional powers.

"Looking to the future, peace and development remain the trend of history and the aspiration of the people," [proclaimed](#) Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi in 2023. "China's experience shows that the path of peaceful development has worked and worked well. There is no reason for us to discontinue but every reason to stay the course, and come together with more countries in the pursuit of peaceful development."

"When all countries pursue peaceful development, the future of humanity will be full of promise," he concluded.

As China continues to grow in economic power and influence the country insists it is committed to peaceful development and concern for humanity's common advancement. Xi's visit to Europe suggests the country is willing to search for allies in its cause wherever they may be found, even as broader trends threaten to drive world powers apart.

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Queen of Jordan Calls on World to Use 'Leverage' to End Israel's Assault on Gaza

Queen Rania al Abdullah made the comments during a pre-recorded interview aired on US television on Sunday.

The Queen of Jordan made a rare foray into global geopolitics Sunday during an interview aired on US broadcast television.

Queen Rania al Abdullah urged the United States and the international community to use "political leverage" to force the entry of more humanitarian aid into the besieged Gaza Strip and bring an end to Israel's war on the enclave in a pre-recorded segment on CBS's Face the Nation.

"There's definitely been a change in tone and language," said the wife of Jordan's King Abdullah II in response to a question suggesting US President Joe Biden has increased pressure on Israel. "But we've seen time and again Israeli officials not heeding the warnings or counsel or advice of allies."

"I think it's time that the international community, including the US, really use this political leverage to compel Israel to end the war and to let aid in," she insisted.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has reportedly allowed more aid to enter Gaza in recent weeks after intense criticism. But human rights groups say hunger and malnutrition are still a major concern, particularly in the northern region of the territory where destruction of roads and infrastructure makes movement difficult. Children and newborns are particularly vulnerable, with several documented cases of [death by starvation](#).

The withholding of food to create conditions of famine is classified as a war crime by multiple international authorities.

The Jordanian monarchy is considered a strong ally of the United States going back decades. It was reported that Jordan assisted the US and Great Britain in shooting down Iranian drones and missiles during the country's retaliation against Israel for the destruction of its Syrian consulate early last month.

The queen's comments may be seen as a nod towards public opinion in Jordan, where support for the Palestinian cause is high. An opinion poll [revealed](#) two-thirds of Jordanians approve of [Hamas' October 7 attack against Israel](#) last year.

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Is Biden Pushing for 'Another Nakba' with Gaza Aid Pier Ploy?

Members of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet want to force Palestinians out of their historic lands once and for all. Observers worry the US president, a self-proclaimed "Zionist," is accommodating their plans.

As negotiations are ongoing to achieve a ceasefire in the besieged Gaza Strip, work continues on the United States purported "humanitarian pier" off the coast of the enclave.

First unveiled during Joe Biden's [State of the Union address](#) in March, the concept is reportedly designed to help increase the flow of food into the territory as Israel limits the entry of aid convoys through land crossings. The embattled US president has portrayed the idea as a signal of his concern for the plight of Palestinians in Gaza, where [more than 34,000 have been killed](#) amid Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's onslaught in retaliation for Hamas' October 7 surprise attack.

But various observers have suggested [the project is not all that it seems](#), fearing the pier could serve as a foothold for espionage or even military operations by Western powers. Journalist Elijah Magnier joined [Sputnik's Fault Lines program Monday](#) to offer analysis as Israel signals an imminent assault on the southern Gazan city of Rafah.

"Benjamin Netanyahu [is] not only saying that they would go to Rafah regardless, but starting to bomb Rafah and dropping leaflets on the population asking them to evacuate," noted the veteran war correspondent, insisting the Israeli leader will move forward in invading the city regardless of the outcome of current peace talks. It was recently reported that [Hamas had accepted a ceasefire proposal](#) negotiated with the help of Egypt as concerns mount over the fate of 1.5 million Palestinians currently sheltering in Rafah.

"Netanyahu doesn't want the deal," Magnier claimed. "It is not in his advantage to reach any deal. He only wants all the prisoners and the hostages to be released to [resume] the war." The Palestinian group Hamas has consistently rejected demands to release Israeli captives without an assurance of a permanent ceasefire in Gaza.

IDF spokespeople have [confirmed](#) that a "significant" proportion of the Hamas-held hostages are Israeli military personnel captured during Hamas' attack on security installations tasked with overseeing Israel's illegal occupation of the Palestinian territory. Hamas is also calling for the release of hostages held by Israel, which detains thousands of Palestinian civilians without charge.

Meanwhile, the Biden administration has proposed establishing refugee camps in northern Gaza for Palestinians in Rafah to flee to before Israel begins its promised invasion of Rafah.

"What they are saying is we will send 40,000 tents and allow a place in the north, allow them to return to the north, where they can sit in camps or in other tents but don't start the operation in Rafah before you remove the 1.5 million," said Magnier, explaining the Biden administration's position. "This is the only difference between the Americans and the Israelis."

White House officials have promoted the administration's "humanitarian pier" concept as a way to ensure the provision of aid to relocated Palestinians. But Magnier claimed the port is being built not to allow food to be brought into Gaza, but to facilitate Palestinians being removed from the enclave.

“They want to close the crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip and, most probably, push the Palestinians for another Nakba through the pier they are going to construct,” the reporter proposed.

The Nakba, which means “catastrophe” in Arabic, refers to the forced relocation of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians coinciding with Israel’s founding in 1948. The act was accomplished with the aid of [self-avowed Zionist terrorist groups](#) such as Irgun, Lehi, and Haganah which attacked and burned Palestinian cities, killing tens of thousands.

“Tantura was a rich village and had beautiful houses,” said former Israeli soldier Yosef Diamont in a documentary on Israeli television, recalling Zionists’ assault on the Palestinian town. “Its residents lived like Europeans and the women of the village used to wear nice clothes.”

“One of the soldiers raped a sixteen-year-old girl,” he said, laughing. “The events there were horrendous... There was a [Zionist] with us, he took them [Palestinians] and put them in a cage and killed them... They imposed a cover-up. There were soldiers who took flamethrowers and ran after the villagers and burned them. It was horrible.”

Israel’s ruling Likud party has long [claimed](#) the territories of Gaza and the West Bank, considered Palestinian land under international law, as part of “Greater Israel” – insisting Arabs must be expelled from the territories to complete Zionists’ colonization of historic Palestinian land. Last year, a plan by Israeli intelligence [leaked](#) proposing the forced transfer of millions of Palestinians in Gaza into Egypt’s Sinai Desert.

Egypt objected to the proposal as did the Biden administration, fearing the plan would threaten Egypt’s historical defense of Israel dating back to 1978’s signing of the Camp David Accords. But hardline members of Netanyahu’s coalition including Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir have continued to openly insist on complete Israeli occupation of the territories.

So far, the Biden administration has shown little willingness to challenge its Israeli ally. A reporter recently asked the US president whether unprecedented demonstrations on college campuses throughout the country might cause Biden to reconsider his “ironclad” support for the country. Biden [responded](#) to the inquiry with a succinct, “no.”

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Climbing the 'Escalation Ladder': French, British Threats Provoke Russian Warning

Moscow responded aggressively to claims that Kiev may use British weapons to strike within Russia, claiming such an attack would force the country to target UK military installations in Ukraine and beyond.

“While defending our own vital interests, nuclear powers must avert those confrontations which bring an adversary to a choice of either a humiliating retreat or a nuclear war,” said former US President John F. Kennedy during an [address](#) at American University in 1963.

The remark, coming a few months after the previous year’s [Cuban Missile Crisis](#), demonstrated Kennedy’s newfound sense of restraint in navigating Cold War tensions. The confrontation with the Soviet Union brought the world to the brink of nuclear war with both Washington and Moscow poised to save face by unleashing the deadliest weapons ever conceived by mankind.

A repeat of the scenario must be avoided, Kennedy reasoned, with each world power tacitly accepting the other's existence.

Half a century later the slain leader's realization has been forgotten, claimed former CIA analyst Ray McGovern on [Sputnik's The Critical hour program Monday](#). The founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity joined hosts Garland Nixon and Wilmer Leon to discuss the latest developments in NATO countries' proxy war against Russia in the Donbass.

"Things are getting pretty intense and the Russians are pretty much saying, 'okay, that's enough,'" said McGovern, responding to the latest statement from Russian government officials. British Foreign Secretary David Cameron was quoted by media saying Ukraine could use UK-supplied weapons to strike within Russian territory during a visit to Kiev last week.

The comment provoked a strong response from Moscow suggesting Russia could target British military assets in Ukraine or elsewhere in response to such an attack on its territory.

"We have those reports that [French President Emmanuel] Macron is crazy enough to want to send French troops into battle there in Ukraine, and... the Russians actually have claimed to have killed seven of them this morning," McGovern added.

"Friends vacationing in Cyprus or other military facilities run by the British, I would tell them to go and sun themselves on some other beach," he said. "The Russians are speaking pretty tough – tougher than ever before. If one of these British long-range missiles does significant damage in Russia proper there will be retaliation. It will be tit-for-tat, and the Russians will be perspicacious, but they'll be offensive. These will not be defensive measures."

McGovern claimed Russia's response could even be nuclear in nature, noting, "the Russians are waving the nuclear possibility as never before. I can say 'never' because I've been around a while – would you believe six decades of watching Soviet and then Russian leaders? They don't brandish nuclear weapons. Now they are."

The Russian Ministry of Defense announced Monday they were commencing [exercises involving tactical nuclear weapons](#), suggesting the country could use such armaments if Western nations enable strikes within the country.

"The exercise is aimed at maintaining the readiness of personnel and equipment of units for the combat use of non-strategic nuclear weapons in order to unconditionally ensure Russia's territorial integrity and sovereignty in response to provocative statements and threats from Western officials," read the [statement](#).

Russia also possesses [hypersonic weapons](#) able to evade traditional defensive systems – a technology not yet developed by any of its Western rivals. McGovern noted the armaments could be equipped with nuclear warheads, but only if Russia is significantly provoked.

The stance has predictably caused the US and allies to accuse Moscow of "nuclear saber rattling." But McGovern claimed the threat is a response to an unprecedented deterioration of relations between Russia and the West, noting recent analysis by Russian historian Dmitri Trenin.

"Russia has experienced an existential threat," said McGovern. "At all times during the Cold War the notion of inflicting a strategic military defeat on either one was verboten. In other words, when John F. Kennedy said in his wonderful American University speech in '63 we must never, never face a nuclear armed country with a humiliating choice between abject retreat or using nuclear weapons – well, that was honored."

"But now the US is doing this by proxy," he observed. "That's new... We need to rethink this whole thing because this is an existential threat."

The former intelligence analyst warned of the potential consequences if Russia continues to feel it is provoked.

"That's the next rung up on the escalation ladder," he claimed. "I'm afraid that if the French and the British and US don't come to their senses and if Zelensky appeals for NATO troops on the ground that there'll be enough pressure on the part of NATO countries – some of them at least – to comply."

"In every other statement Putin says 'we're ready to talk,'" McGovern claimed. "Now, what does he mean by that? I think he's ready to say, 'look, you have to recognize that we've won hands down. We could do that before your election in November, Mr. President... or we could postpone it so you don't have to be subject to a great defeat before the election.'"

"These threats about nuclear, tactical weapons being mounted for exercises – well, that may be part of this tough approach. But it still worries me greatly because the Russians don't usually do that."

Is Biden pushing for "another Nakba" with Gaza aid pier ploy? (Part 1)

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Various observers have suggested US President Joe Biden's "humanitarian pier" project in Gaza is not all that it seems, fearing the port could be used to expel Palestinians in the enclave to other countries. Journalist Elijah Magnier joined Sputnik's Fault Lines program to offer analysis as Israel signals an imminent assault on the southern Gazan city of Rafah.

"Netanyahu doesn't want the deal," Magnier claimed as Hamas signals its approval of a ceasefire negotiated with the help of Egypt. "It is not in his advantage to reach any deal. He only wants all the prisoners and the hostages to be released to [resume] the war."

IDF spokespeople have confirmed that a "significant" proportion of the Hamas-held hostages are Israeli military personnel captured during Hamas' attack on security installations tasked with overseeing the illegal occupation of Palestinian territory. Hamas is also calling for the release of prisoners held by Israel, which reportedly detains thousands of Palestinian civilians without charge.

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Climbing the 'escalation ladder': French, British threats provoke Russian warning

"While defending our own vital interests, nuclear powers must avert those confrontations which bring an adversary to a choice of either a humiliating retreat or a nuclear war," said former US President John F. Kennedy during an address at American University in 1963.

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"A shot across the bow": Moscow will not allow NATO attacks on Russian civilians

More than a month out from a horrific terrorist attack at Moscow Crocus City Hall, officials have made clear they will not allow civilian life to be threatened on Russian soil. The Kremlin expressed its position during meetings with diplomats from France and the UK amid rumors the countries may send troops to Ukraine or participate in an attack on the Crimean Bridge.

"I can tell you both of them were taken out behind the woodshed and given a huge whoop-ass beating by the Russians," said American filmmaker Regis Tremblay on Sputnik's The Critical Hour program.

"They were told in no uncertain terms that if their missiles – and I'm talking about those Storm Shadow missiles from the UK and France and the ATACMS from the United States – if they are used to attack deep into Russia, and that means Crimea, they will meet with a devastating retaliation," the filmmaker highlighted.

Russia's history has taught the country to take all threats seriously, Tremblay emphasized.

"It's been stated very clearly that the policy of the United States and, therefore, of these idiotic, crazy European leaders, is the strategic defeat of Russia," he said. "The Russians understand exactly what that means."

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Rafah Assault Would Be Strategic Mistake, Political and Humanitarian Nightmare - Guterres

UNITED NATIONS, May 7 (Sputnik) - An Israeli offensive in Rafah would become a strategic blunder and trigger a wider political and humanitarian disaster, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned on Tuesday.

"I urge the Government of Israel to stop any escalation, and engage constructively in the ongoing diplomatic talks," Guterres told journalists. "An assault on Rafah would be a strategic mistake, a political calamity, and a humanitarian nightmare."

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UN Chief Distressed by Israeli Operation in Rafah, Calls for Reopening Aid Crossings

UNITED NATIONS, May 7 (Sputnik) - United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres said on Tuesday that he is distressed by the renewed Israeli military activity in Rafah and called for the immediate reopening of humanitarian crossings into Gaza.

"I am disturbed and distressed by the renewed military activity in Rafah by the Israeli Defence Forces," Guterres told journalists at the press stakeout area at the UN. "The closure of both the Rafah and Karem Shalom crossings is especially damaging to an already dire humanitarian situation. They must be re-opened immediately."

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un chief says he is disturbed and distressed by israeli military's renewed military activity in rafah

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HRW Calls on US to Suspend Military Aid to Israel After Bombing of Lebanese NGO

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - Human Rights Watch (HRW) said Tuesday that an Israeli bombing of a humanitarian relief NGO in southern Lebanon in March was an "unlawful attack" that used US military equipment, calling for the US to "immediately suspend" arms sales and military assistance to Israel.

"An Israeli strike on an emergency and relief center in south Lebanon on March 27, 2024, was an unlawful attack on civilians that failed to take all necessary precautions, Human Rights Watch said today. If the attack on civilians was carried out intentionally or recklessly, it should be investigated as an apparent war crime," the release stated.

It added that the strike, which killed seven volunteers at a residential building in Habbarieh that housed the Emergency and Relief Corps of the Lebanese Succour Association, used a "US-made Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) guidance kit and an Israeli-made 500-pound (about 230 kilograms) general purpose bomb."

The Israel Defense Forces had said in a March 27 post that its "fighter jets struck a military compound" in Habbarieh and that "a significant terrorist operative belonging to the 'al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya' organization who advanced attacks against Israeli territory was eliminated along with additional terrorists who were with him."

However, HRW found "no evidence of a military target" at the site in Habbarieh, citing photographs and videos of the site taken by residents and journalists before and after the attack. It also reviewed footage of remnants of weapons made by Israel's Elbit Systems and America's Boeing.

HRW also conducted numerous interviews, including with the parents of three people killed; the building's owner; a member of the emergency corps who had left the center shortly before the strike; a resident who went to the site shortly after the attack; a local official; the head of the Emergency and Relief Corps; and two members of the Lebanese Civil Defense, including the head of the team who retrieved the corpses from the rubble. A parliamentary member representing Jama'a al-Islamiyya also told HRW that none of the group's fighters had been killed in the strike, and denied that any fighters from its armed wing were affiliated with the Lebanese Succour Association.

HRW called for the US to "immediately suspend arms sales and military assistance to Israel given evidence that the Israeli military is using US weapons unlawfully." It also called for the Lebanese Foreign Ministry to "swiftly move forward" to file a declaration with the International Criminal Court, so that it could investigate potential Israeli war crimes committed on Lebanese territory since October 7, 2023.

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Russia Sentences US Citizen to 10 Days for Breaking Into Children's Library While Drunk

MOSCOW, May 7 (Sputnik) - A Moscow court has sentenced an American man to 10 days in detention on charges of petty hooliganism for breaking into a children's library while drunk, the court told Sputnik on Tuesday.

"The court imposed an administrative arrest for a period of 10 days," the court said.

William Nycum "drank alcoholic beverages; then was found naked in the courtyard; demonstrated clear disrespect for society, citizens and public order, for which he was detained by police officers," according to a statement posted on the telegram channel of the Moscow courts of general jurisdiction.

In the early hours of May 3, Nycum broke a window to gain entry into the children's library and fell asleep there, Russia's REN TV channel reported. Nycum came to Russia on a tourist visa and was staying with acquaintances, the report said.

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US F-22 Raptor Stealth Fighter Involved in Mishap During Exercise - Reports

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - A US Air Force F-22 Raptor fighter was involved in a mishap during an exercise in the US state of Georgia, Air Force Times reported.

The incident occurred on Monday at the Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport during Savannah Sentry, a counterair exercise for fourth- and fifth-generation fighter jets from across the Air National Guard, the report said.

The pilot was not injured, according to the report.

"Sentry Savannah is all about showcasing readiness and today's mishap affirmed our airmen's ability to respond at a moment's notice," Col. Stephen Thomas, commander of the Air Dominance Center at Savannah Air National Guard Base, Georgia, was quoted as saying in the report.

US Air Force is investigating the incident.

In fiscal year 2023, F-22 Raptors were involved in nine incidents, the report said, citing an analysis of Air Force Safety Center data.

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US Repatriates 11 American Citizens From IS Camps in Northeastern Syria - Blinken

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - The United States has repatriated 11 American citizens from camps for relatives of the Islamic State terror group (banned in Russia) in northeastern Syria,

marking the largest number of Americans retrieved from the conflict zone, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday.

"Today the United States repatriated 11 U.S. citizens from northeast Syria, including five minors. Additionally, we resettled in the United States the nine-year-old non-U.S. citizen sibling of one of the U.S. citizen minors. This is the largest single repatriation of U.S. citizens from northeast Syria to date," Blinken said in a statement.

As a part of the operation, the US also facilitated the repatriation of six Canadian citizens, four Dutch citizens, and one Finnish citizen, among them eight children.

Blinken thanked these governments for their partnership and expressed gratitude to Kuwait for its support and also to the Syrian Democratic Forces for its assistance.

Al-Hawl and Roj displaced persons camps in Syria remain home to about 30,000 individuals from more than 60 countries outside Syria, Blinken said. The majority of them are children.

The only durable solution to the humanitarian and security crisis in such camps in Syria is for countries to "repatriate, rehabilitate, reintegrate, and where appropriate, ensure accountability for wrongdoing," Blinken said.

The United States is committed to helping countries that seek to repatriate their nationals from northeastern Syria, the secretary added.

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12 US Senators Warn ICC Not to Issue Arrest Warrants for Israeli Officials - Letter

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - Twelve US senators sent a letter to International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor Karim Khan warning severe sanctions if the court pursues arrest warrants against Israeli officials for their actions in the Gaza Strip.

"We write regarding the reports that the International Criminal Court (ICC) may be considering issuing international arrest warrants against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other Israeli officials. Such actions are illegitimate and lack legal basis, and if carried out will result in severe sanctions against you and your institution," Senator Katie Boyd Britt reposted the letter, which was then published by Politico on Monday.

Senators Tom Cotton, Mitch McConnell, Marsha Blackburn, Katie Boyd Britt, Ted Budd, Kevin Cramer, Ted Cruz, Bill Hagerty, Pete Ricketts, Marco Rubio, Rick Scott and Tim Scott signed the letter.

The senators condemned the ICC for potentially issuing arrest warrants against Israeli officials, asserting that Israel's actions in Gaza were legitimate self-defense.

"Issuing arrest warrants for the leaders of Israel would not only be unjustified, it would expose your organization's hypocrisy and double standards," the letter read.

Last week, US media reported that the ICC may issue arrest warrants for Netanyahu, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and other senior officials as early as this week.

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US Army Orders \$2.3Bln of New Construction Projects at Fort Worth, Texas - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - Hensel Phelps Construction; W. G. Yates & Sons Construction and Zodiac-Poettker HBZ will compete for each order of a more than \$2.3 billion US Army construction contract at Fort Worth, Texas, the Defense Department announced.

"Hensel Phelps Construction Co., Austin, Texas; W. G. Yates & Sons Construction Company, Mississippi and Zodiac-Poettker HBZ, Saint Louis, Missouri will compete for each order of the \$2,358,526,000 ... contract for vertical design build or design bid build construction," the Defense Department said in a press release on Monday.

Work on the various projects is expected to take five years with an estimated completion date of March 7, 2029, the release said.

The US Army Corps of Engineers in Fort Worth will oversee the various aspects of the project as the contracting activity, the release added.

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Indra Wins Nearly \$200Mln US Air Force TACAN Tactical Navigation Contract - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - Indra Air Traffic has won a nearly \$200 million US Air Force contract for its man-portable Tactical Air Navigation (MP TACAN) system, the Department of Defense announced in a press release.

"Indra Air Traffic [of] Overland Park, Kansas, was awarded a not-to-exceed \$198,360,000 ...contract for the man-portable Tactical Air Navigation (MP TACAN) system replacement program," the release said on Monday.

The contract covers MP TACAN systems, spares, support equipment, interim contractor support, training, travel, organic depot stand-up support, technical data packages, and engineering change support for future technology upgrades, the Defense Department explained.

Work on the contract will be carried out at Hurricane, Utah (60%) and Overland Park, Kansas (40%) over the next eight years and is expected to be completed by fiscal 2032, the Defense Department said.

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US Navy Orders \$170Mln Maintenance on Triton Drones From Northrop Grumman - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - Northrop Grumman Systems has received an almost \$170 million contract from the US Navy to provide maintenance on its MQ-4C Triton unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) mission control systems and also for the Australian Air Force, the Defense

Department announced.

"Northrop Grumman Systems Corporation [of] San Diego, California is awarded a \$169,720,752 ...contract [for] sustainment engineering and logistics support ... in support of MQ-4C Triton air vehicles mission control and operator training systems for the Navy and the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF)," the Defense Department said in a press release on Monday.

The work will include life cycle program planning, manning, training support, repair and modification of government furnished property, integrated logistics support, spare and repair parts and providing support equipment, the release said.

It will also include "special tooling, diminishing manufacturing sources and material shortages management, non-recurring engineering support for engineering change proposals, engineering analyses, investigations, root cause corrective action activities [and] test support," the release added.

Work on the contract will be performed in San Diego, California (38.1%); Patuxent River, Maryland (13.5%); Jacksonville, Florida (6.8%); Guam (6.7%); Sigonella, Sicily, Italy (5.3%); Katherine, Australia (2%) and Adelaide, Australia (1%); over the next four years and is expected to be completed in May 2028, according to the release.

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GOP to Hold Garland in Contempt Over Audio of Biden-Hur Interview - Reports

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - The House Judiciary Committee is planning to hold US Attorney General Merrick Garland in contempt of Congress for refusing to submit audio recordings of President Biden's interview with the special counsel who investigated his mishandling of classified documents, the Washington Examiner reported on Monday.

The Committee, which is led by Ohio Republican Jim Jordan, is to hold a meeting to vote on the issue on May 16, the report said, citing two sources familiar with the matter.

If the House votes to hold Garland in contempt, it would mark the 4th time in US history that a Cabinet member has received such condemnation, the report added. The last time an attorney general was held in contempt was in 2019.

If the House approves contempt, the report said, a criminal referral will be made to the US attorney's office in Washington, which will decide whether or not to move ahead with prosecution.

A DOJ spokesman quoted in the report said that releasing the audio could have a negative effect on witnesses coming forward to law enforcement and hamper the DOJ's ability to conduct effective investigations.

Earlier this year, two committees issued a subpoena demanding that Garland provide all documents 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.

In March, House Judiciary Chairman Jim Jordan and Oversight Chairman James Comer set an April 8 deadline for Garland to submit the subpoenaed audio and transcripts from Special Counsel Robert Hur's interviews with President Biden.

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Pentagon Says Not Concerned About Russia's Access to Abrams Tanks Captured in Ukraine

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - The US Defense Department is not concerned about Russia's access to the technology of US-made Abrams tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles, which were among those captured in Ukraine amid the ongoing conflict there, Pentagon spokesperson Pat Ryder said.

"I'm not tracking any concerns at this point, nor do I have anything to pass along," Ryder said during a press briefing on Monday.

On May 1, the Russian authorities opened an exhibition of captured foreign equipment from the war zone in Ukraine, including a US-made M1 Abrams tank and a Bradley fighting vehicle, a German-made Leopard tank and others. Exhibition visitors can see on the territory of the Victory Park in Moscow a total of 32 types of equipment in service in NATO countries that were supplied to Ukraine and later captured by the Russian armed forces.

According to media reports, more than 100,000 people have already visited Victory Park to see the captured fighting equipment.

Western countries have been providing massive military and financial aid to Kiev since the start of Russia's military operation in Ukraine in February 2022. The Kremlin has consistently warned against continued arms deliveries to Kiev, saying it would lead to further escalation of the conflict. In April 2022, Russia sent a diplomatic note to all NATO countries on the issue of arms supplies to Ukraine. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov warned that any cargo containing weapons for Ukraine would become a legitimate target for Russia.

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Pentagon Says No Indication Russian Forces in Niger Pose Force Protection Concern

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - Pentagon Press Secretary Patrick Ryder said on Monday that there is no indication that Russian soldiers who are on the same base housing American forces in Niger pose a force protection concern.

"They're not right next to each other by any stretch. They're on the same compound, but as I understand it, it's pretty big compound, so you know, not co-located in near proximity," Ryder

said during a press briefing. "No indication that it poses a force protection concern."

On Thursday, a US official told Sputnik that Russian forces are being housed on the same base in Niger but in a separate compound with no access to US forces until the withdrawal of the contingent of the United States from the country.

Ryder added that there is no interaction between the US and Russian troops.

"And so, you know, they're doing their thing. We're focused on ours," he added.

There is an estimated 1,100 US personnel in Niger. Washington and Niamey have recently begun discussions for the "orderly withdrawal" of US servicepeople based in Niger. The military pullout was initiated in March after a Nigerien military spokesperson said the country's transitional government, which took power in a coup in July 2023, had terminated the military agreement with the US with immediate effect, citing the interests of the Nigerien people.

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US Not Planning to Withdraw Troops From Syria – Pentagon

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) – The United States is not planning to withdraw its troops or change its force posture in Syria at this time, Pentagon spokesperson Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder said during a press briefing.

"No," Ryder said on Monday when asked if the United States is pulling its forces out of Syria amid escalation in the region. "I'm not tracking any force posture changes [in Syria] at this point in time."

Since the escalation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in October 2023, the US and coalition forces in Iraq and Syria have been repeatedly attacked by missiles and drones that Washington believes belong to pro-Iranian groups. Iranian authorities said the armed groups that carry out attacks have nothing to do with Iran and do not receive any orders from it.

The United States and Iraq are currently engaged in talks to determine the future of the US military footprint in the country. In January, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said that Washington and Baghdad would begin working group meetings related to the future of the US military presence in the country.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) –

MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

* Turkey is satisfied with the fact that Palestinian movement Hamas accepted a ceasefire proposal, and now expects Israel to follow suit, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Monday.

* The chairman of the political office of the Palestinian movement Hamas, Ismail Haniyeh, has informed Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani and Abbas Kamel, the chief of Egypt's intelligence, of acceptance of a proposal to achieve a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, Hamas said.

* Saudi Arabia demands the global community's intervention to stop the "genocide of Palestinians" in the Gaza Strip amid Israel's plan to start a military operation in Rafah, the Foreign Ministry said.

* The Palestinian authorities call on the US administration to act immediately to prevent Israel's operation in the Gazan city of Rafah, Palestinian presidential spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh said.

BIDEN-NETANYAHU TALKS

* US President Joe Biden spoke by telephone with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu amid Israel's call for evacuation of Palestinians from Rafah in the Gaza Strip, the White House said on Monday.

* Netanyahu pledged during a telephone call with Biden to keep the Kerem Shalom crossing open for humanitarian aid, the White House said in a statement.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* China will support holding an international peace conference that will be recognized by both Russia and Ukraine, President Xi Jinping said on Monday.

* Russia will treat F-16 multi-role fighter jets operated by Ukraine as nuclear-capable assets, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

* The United States will not be able to turn the tide in the Ukraine conflict even if it sends troops there, Russian Ambassador in Washington Anatoly Antonov said.

* Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy sent bills to parliament that provide for the extension of martial law and military mobilization in the country for another 90 days, according to the legislature's database.

RUSSIA-FRANCE DIPLOMATIC ISSUES

* The Russian Foreign Ministry on Monday summoned French Ambassador Pierre Levy over recent "warlike statements" made by French officials leading to further escalation of conflict in Ukraine.

* French President Emmanuel Macron assured his Chinese counterpart that his country was not at war with Russia or its people after Xi Jinping urged Paris to avert a new cold war.

* Xi Jinping urged France to work closely together to avert another cold war or a confrontation among blocs, Chinese media reported.

PUTIN'S INAUGURATION

* The heads of diplomatic missions accredited in Moscow will take part in Russian President Vladimir Putin's inauguration ceremony, his aide said on Monday.

* French Ambassador Pierre Levy will represent his country at the upcoming inauguration of Putin, media reported.

* No final decision on the EU's participation in the inauguration of Putin on May 7 has been made yet, the issue is currently being discussed, EU foreign policy spokesman Peter Stano said.

* Polish Ambassador Krzysztof Krajewski will not attend the inauguration of Russian President Vladimir Putin on May 7, Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski said.

US SOLDIER DETENTION IN RUSSIA

* Russian authorities have detained a US soldier over the weekend for allegedly stealing from a woman, NBC News reported on Monday.

* US Army spokeswoman Cynthia Smith confirmed to Sputnik on Monday that Russian authorities detained an American soldier on charges of criminal conduct in Vladivostok.

* The Biden administration is aware that a US soldier has been detained in Russia, but cannot provide much about the case at this moment, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said.

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Ceasefire Not Required to Use Gaza Temporary Pier - White House

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) - A ceasefire is not necessary for the operation of the maritime temporary pier that the United States is constructing in Gaza, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Monday.

"A ceasefire doesn't have to be in place to use the temporary pier," Kirby said during a press briefing when asked if he could give an update on the temporary pier and if a ceasefire would need to be in place for the full implementation of the temporary pier.

Earlier in the day, Hamas informed Qatari and Egyptian mediators that it agrees to their ceasefire proposal.

The Israeli government said that the proposal presented to Hamas is far from Israel's mandatory requirements and it has unanimously decided to continue its operation in Rafah in southern Gaza Strip to pressure the Palestinian group on the issue of releasing hostages.

Israel will, however, send a delegation to talks in Egypt "to seize the opportunity to reach an agreement on terms acceptable to Israel," the cabinet said.

In March, the United States announced its intention to deploy joint logistics over-the-shore (JLOTS) capability off the coast of Gaza to help facilitate the flow of humanitarian aid into the Palestinian enclave.

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UN Security Council Calls on Guterres to Appoint Successor for Libya - Statement

UNITED NATIONS, May 6 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council said on Monday that it has called on UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to appoint a replacement for special representative (SRSG) for Libya and head of the organization's Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) Abdoulaye Bathily as soon as possible.

"The members called on the Secretary-General to appoint a successor as soon as possible. The members reiterated their continued support to UNSMIL and its leadership and the

importance for UNSMIL's interim leadership to continue to implement UNSMIL's mandate and ensure a smooth transition for a new SRSG," the UN Security Council said in a statement.

The members also again called for withdrawal of all foreign forces and mercenaries now placed in Libya, the statement added.

In March, key Libyan political factions agreed during a meeting in Cairo on the need to form a unified government in order to hold presidential and parliamentary elections in the country.

Libya has faced multiple crises since the 2011 Western military intervention that toppled the country's longtime leader Muammar Gaddafi and created a power vacuum that split the nation into rival factions. Although the warring parties agreed to a historic ceasefire in 2020, they did not resolve their differences and the country continues to be ruled by two rival governments.

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US Army Confirms American Soldier Detained on Criminal Charges in Vladivostok

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) - US Army spokeswoman Cynthia Smith confirmed to Sputnik on Monday that Russian authorities detained an American soldier on charges of criminal conduct in Vladivostok.

"On May 2, 2024, Russian authorities in Vladivostok, Russia, detained an American Soldier on charges of criminal misconduct," Smith said in a statement. "The Army notified his family and the U.S. Department of State is providing appropriate consular support to the Soldier in Russia."

Russia notified the US State Department about the detention under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, the statement added.

Earlier on Monday, NBC reported that Russia detained a US soldier who was stationed in South Korea.

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UN Chief 'Deeply Concerned' Large Scale Operation in Rafah May Be Imminent - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, May 6 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is deeply concerned that Israel may undertake a large-scale military operation in Rafah in the Gaza Strip very soon, United Nations spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Monday.

"The Secretary-General is deeply concerned by the indications that a large-scale military operation in Rafah may be imminent. We are already seeing movements of people - many of these are in desperate humanitarian condition and have been repeatedly displaced. They search for safety that has been so many times denied," Dujarric said.

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US Announces \$100Mln Boost to Small Firms Making Electric Auto Parts - Vice President

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is providing a \$100 million boost in funding for small and medium-sized auto parts manufacturers involved with electric vehicles to support the US domestic supply chain in that sector, Vice President Kamala Harris said on Monday.

"We are investing \$100 million [in grants] in auto companies to make parts for electric vehicles," Harris announced in a speech in Detroit.

The grants will total more than \$100 million in funding for small- and medium-sized auto parts manufacturers to expand or retool manufacturing facilities, the White House said in a fact sheet.

The Department of Energy will set aside \$50 million from its Automotive Conversion Grants Program to help small- and medium-sized suppliers convert from manufacturing internal combustion engine parts to manufacturing parts for the electric vehicle supply chain, the fact sheet said.

The Energy Department is also setting aside up to another \$50 million of its Industrial Assessments Center Implementation Grants Program to help auto suppliers kickstart manufacturing diversification and conversion projects, the White House said.

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US Space Force Activates New Advanced Missile Attack Warning Ground System - Raytheon

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) - The US Space Force has now activated a new advanced warning ground system for missile attack, Raytheon announced on Monday.

"An advanced ground system for space-based missile warning developed by Raytheon is now operational at the US Space Force's Overhead Persistent Infrared Battlespace Awareness Center (OBAC)," Raytheon said in a release.

The Future Operationally Resilient Ground Evolution Mission Data Processing Application Framework (FORGE MDPAF) is a modular and adaptable framework that enables fast integration of mission focused applications to process, exploit and disseminate information from satellites, the release said.

"As a next step, FORGE MDPAF will move from supporting OBAC operations to full missile warning detection," the release added.

FORGE MDPAF is used to process overhead persistent infrared (OPIR) satellite data from both the US Space Force's Space Based Infrared System constellation and the future Next Gen OPIR constellation, as well as processing data from other civil and environmental sensors, according to the release.

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Lockheed Martin Completes 5 Patriot Missile Defense Projects With Poland - Statement

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) - Lockheed Martin has completed five joint projects with Poland's Ministry of Defense on deploying Patriot PAC anti-missile defense systems in the country, the US defense contractor announced in a on Monday.

"Poland's Ministry of Defense officially approved five completed Offset projects in the first phase of the WISLA program," Lockheed Martin said in a release.

Lockheed Martin partnered with local industrial partners to increase technical capabilities and provide manufacturing know-how of components related to Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) Missile Segment Enhancement (MSE) and in support of Poland's air and missile defense, the release said.

"Wojskowe Zaklady Elektroniczne (WZE) and Wojskowe Zaklady Lotnicze Nr. 2 (WZL-2) each completed vital offset projects in support of the WISLA program," the release added.

The offsets projects allowed Polish companies to participate in the PAC-3 supply chain, boosting the Polish defense industry, according to the release.

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White House Aware of US Soldier Detained in Russia, Cannot Say Much Now

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is aware that a US soldier has been detained in Russia, but cannot provide much about the case at this moment, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Monday.

"Yes," Kirby told reporters when asked if the White House is aware of the situation.

Kirby said he cannot provide details and referred the issue to the Pentagon.

NBC News reported earlier in the day that the Russian authorities have detained a US soldier over the weekend for allegedly stealing from a woman.

The US soldier, who was stationed in South Korea, traveled to Russia on his own accord, where he was accused of stealing, the report said

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US Soldier Detained in Russia for Allegedly Stealing From Woman - Reports

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) - The Russian authorities have detained a US soldier over the weekend for allegedly stealing from a woman, NBC News reported on Monday.

The US soldier, who was stationed in South Korea, traveled to Russia on his own accord, where he was accused of stealing, the report said.

It is unclear at this time whether the charges are legitimate or not, the report added.

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State Dept. on Congressman Jeffries' Comment: US Will Not Send Troops to Fight in Ukraine

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) - The United States will not send any troops to fight in Ukraine, US State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said on Monday.

US House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries said on Sunday that there is a significant likelihood the United States will have to send troops to the conflict zone if Ukraine falls, adding that Washington must continue supporting Kiev in order to prevent a broader war.

"The president [Joe Biden] has made clear that he will not send US troops to fight in Ukraine," Miller said in a press briefing.

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No Reason to Adjust US Nuclear Posture in Response to Russia Drills - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) - The United States sees no reason to change its nuclear stance in response to Russia's planned drills on tactical nuclear weapons nor does it see signs that Moscow is preparing to use nuclear arms in Ukraine, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Monday.

"Russia's rhetoric has been reckless and irresponsible throughout this conflict. That said, we have not seen any reason to adjust our own nuclear posture and, in response, to these announcements nor any indications that Russia is preparing to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine," Miller said during a press briefing.

Earlier in the day, the Russian Defense Ministry said that the General Staff of the Russian armed forces had started preparations for exercises involving missile units of the Southern Military District, aviation, as well as naval forces, in order to increase the readiness of non-strategic nuclear forces to carry out combat missions.

During the exercises, the Russian armed forces will practice a set of activities for the preparation and use of non-strategic nuclear weapons, the ministry said.

The drills should be perceived in the context of NATO's recent destabilizing actions as well as the latest bellicose statements made by Western officials, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

Last week, French President Emmanuel Macron said in an interview with The Economist that he did not exclude the possibility of sending troops to Ukraine should Kiev send a request. UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron rejected the idea but said that Kiev had the right to use the weapons provided by London to attack Russian territory.

On Sunday, US House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries told CBS that "there's a significant likelihood" that America will have to send its troops to the conflict zone if Ukraine falls. He

claimed that the US must continue supporting Kiev to "prevent a broader war."

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US Will Not Have Representative at Putin's Inauguration - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) - The United States will not have any representative attending the inauguration of Russian President Vladimir Putin, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said on Monday.

"We will not have a representative at his inauguration," Miller said during a press briefing.

Miller said that the US "certainly did not consider" Russia's March presidential election free and fair but Putin is "the President of Russia and is going to continue in that capacity."

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Rafah Operation Would Jeopardize Delivery of Humanitarian Assistance - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) - An Israeli operation in Rafah could disrupt ongoing humanitarian assistance increases in Gaza, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Monday.

"Certainly, a Rafah operation would make it incredibly difficult to sustain the increases in humanitarian assistance that we have been able to deliver over the past few weeks since the president's call with Prime Minister Netanyahu on April 4, you have seen an increase in the number of trucks going in through Kerem Shalom, you have seen an increase in the distribution inside of Gaza, including inside southern Gaza. All of that would be put in jeopardy by Rafah's offensive," Miller told a press briefing.

The US has proposed to the Israeli government targeted and effective strategies to address legitimate military objectives against Hamas battalions in Rafah, Miller added.

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Russia's UNSC Resolution Urges States to Negotiate Early on Multilateral Space Agreements

UNITED NATIONS, May 6 (Sputnik) - A newly drafted Russian UN Security Council resolution on outer space calls on states to hold discussions from the outset to find a reliable and truthful legally binding multilateral agreement, the text says, as seen by Sputnik.

In addition, the document, urges all nations, particularly those with advanced space capabilities, to prevent any placement of weapons in outer space and threats coming from

space both to Earth and vice versa.

The draft also stresses the importance of preventing an arms race in outer space, urging adherence to UN Charter provisions and highlighting the need for international negotiations to strengthen the legal regime governing outer space activities.

At the end of April, Russia vetoed the US- and Japan-sponsored UN Security Council draft resolution prohibiting the use of weapons of mass destruction in outer space.

US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield attempted to accuse Russia of allegedly undermining the nuclear non-proliferation regime while failing to mention that during her visit to Nagasaki, Japan, she refrained from mentioning that the United States used atomic bombs against Japan.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Moscow had always been categorically against deploying nuclear weapons in space and its position on this issue is clear and transparent. Russia's activities in space are no different from those of other countries, including the United States, and they know it, Putin added.

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State Department Says US 'Concerned' by Al Jazeera Closure in Israel

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) - The United States is concerned by the decision of Israel to shut down Al Jazeera, US Department of State spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Monday. "We have made quite clear that we support media freedom all around the world, including in Israel, and that we are quite concerned about this action," Miller said in a press briefing.

On Sunday, the Israeli government voted unanimously to shut down the local offices of Al Jazeera and discontinue its operations in the country over perceived national security risks.

Israeli Communications Minister Shlomo Karhi signed orders with immediate effect to close Al Jazeera's offices in Israel, confiscate its broadcast equipment, block its website, and cut the channel off from cable and satellite companies.

Karhi later posted a video on social media showing Israeli authorities raiding Al Jazeera's office in Jerusalem. He added that officials had confiscated some of the channel's equipment there.

The Qatari-based news network strongly condemned Israel's move, saying that it "violates human rights and the basic right to access of information" and affirmed its right to continue providing news to its audience.

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Russia's UNSC Draft Resolution on Outer Space Security 'Balanced' Unlike US Version - Fu

UNITED NATIONS, May 6 (Sputnik) - The Russia-proposed UN Security Council draft resolution on security in outer space is more comprehensive and balanced than the previous US draft,

Chinese Ambassador to the United Nations Fu Cong said on Monday.

"The draft resolution on Outer Space Security previously proposed by the US and Japan in the Council is neither comprehensive nor balanced," Fu said. "The Russian Federation has recently submitted a new draft resolution in the Council that is more comprehensive and balanced."

China will support Russia's draft and looks forward to reaching an agreement among the UN Security Council members, Fu added.

At the end of April, Russia vetoed the US- and Japan-sponsored UN Security Council draft resolution prohibiting the use of weapons of mass destruction in outer space. Russian representatives said the US draft was politicized and should have included Russia's amendments to prohibit the use of all weapons in outer space and not just nuclear ones.

US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield attempted to accuse Russia of allegedly undermining the nuclear non-proliferation regime while failing to mention that during her visit to Nagasaki, Japan, she refrained from mentioning that the United States used atomic bombs against Japan.

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US Says Reviewing Hamas Response to Ceasefire Proposal, Discussing With Partners in Region

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) - The United States is now looking into the response given by Hamas to a ceasefire proposal and is discussing it with partners in the region, US Department of State spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Monday.

"We are reviewing that response now and discussing it with our partners in the region," Miller said in a press briefing. "We will be discussing this response with our partners over the coming hours."

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UN on Russia's Tactical Nuclear Arms Drills: Any Escalation Must Be Avoided

UNITED NATIONS, May 6 (Sputnik) - The United Nations believes that any steps that could result in miscalculation or escalation must be avoided, spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Monday, commenting on Russia's planned drills involving tactical nuclear weapons.

"Regarding nuclear weapons, we've seen it talked about more and more recently by various parties. Currently, nuclear risks are at an alarmingly high level. Currently, all actions that could lead to miscalculation, escalation with catastrophic consequences must be avoided," Dujarric said at a UN briefing when asked about the UN stance on Russia's drills.

Earlier in the day, the Russian Defense Ministry said that the General Staff of the Russian armed forces had started preparations for exercises involving missile units of the Southern

Military District, aviation, as well as naval forces, in order to increase the readiness of non-strategic nuclear forces to carry out combat missions. During the exercises, the Russian armed forces will practice a set of activities for the preparation and use of non-strategic nuclear weapons, the ministry said.

The drills should be perceived in the context of NATO's recent destabilizing actions as well as the latest bellicose statements made by Western officials, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

Last week, French President Emmanuel Macron said in an interview with The Economist that he did not exclude the possibility of sending troops to Ukraine should Kiev send a request. UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron rejected the idea but said that Kiev had the right to use the weapons provided by London to attack Russian territory.

On Sunday, US House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries told CBS that "there's a significant likelihood" that America will have to send its troops to the conflict zone if Ukraine falls. He claimed that the US must continue supporting Kiev to "prevent a broader war."

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US Senator Warren Urges Pentagon to Address Russia's Use of Starlink - Reports

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) - US Senator Elizabeth Warren urged the Pentagon to address the alleged use of Starlink internet systems by Russian troops in a letter sent to US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, The Wall Street Journal reported on Monday.

Warren characterized the issue as a serious national security threat to the United States, the report said, citing the letter.

The letter reportedly referenced a media investigation into the alleged use of black market Starlink systems by Russian forces. The letter requested information from the Pentagon on its knowledge of the matter, the report said.

SpaceX, founded by billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk, cannot allow its products or services to be used to undermine US national security as a Pentagon contractor, the letter reportedly said.

The US Defense Department is aware of reports of Russian troops using Starlink systems and is working with SpaceX and the Ukrainian government to investigate and address the matter, the report said, citing a Pentagon spokesperson.

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Biden to Welcome Romania's President to White House on May 7 - Press Secretary

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden will welcome Romanian President Klaus Iohannis to the White House on May 7, Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on

Monday.

"President Biden will welcome President Klaus Iohannis of Romania to the White House on May 7," Jean-Pierre said in a statement.

The two presidents will recognize during the meeting Romania's 20th year membership in NATO and emphasize their continued support for Ukraine, Jean-Pierre added.

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Trudeau Says 'Jewish or Not' People Should Be Able to Declare Themselves as Zionists

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) – Individuals should feel safe to declare themselves as Zionists whether they are Jewish or not, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Monday.

The Prime Minister made the remarks during a ceremony marking Holocaust Remembrance Day at Ottawa's National Holocaust Monument.

"Let me be clear. In a country like Canada, it should be, and it must be safe to declare oneself a Zionist, Jewish or not," Trudeau said. "Zionism is not a dirty word or something anyone should be targeted for agreeing with."

Trudeau said that declaring oneself Zionist simply equates to believing that Jews, like anyone else, have a right to determine their own future. The Premier further noted that following the Holocaust, Israel became a safe haven for its survivors.

The Prime Minister characterized it as "absolutely unacceptable" for Canadians to be threatened or harassed for supporting the right of Jews to self-determination in their "ancestral homeland."

"Threatening, excluding, and harassing Canadians because of their fate, their identity, or because they support the Jewish people's right to self-determination in their ancestral homeland is absolutely unacceptable," Trudeau said.

The Premier further said that he believes being a Zionist does not impede strong support for the creation of a Palestinian state coexisting in peace and security with an Israeli neighbor.

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Georgieva Says 'Aging' Country US Must be 'Careful' in Spending

(Updates with paras 3-5)

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) – International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said on Monday that an aging country like the United States must be very careful in its spending.

"When you are an aging country, then you need to be very careful how much and for what you spend," Georgieva said during a conversation hosted by the Milken Institute.

The US population age 65 and over has grown nearly five times faster than the total population

over the last 100 years, reaching 55.8 million or 16%% of the population in 2020, according to the Census Bureau.

Georgieva noted that the aging US population puts increasing strain on certain entitlement policies, such as Social Security and Medicare.

She noted, however, that these strains are offset by migration, as many young people seek to come to the US and obtain jobs.

"The world is helping the US with its demography," she said.

The IMF chief also stressed that the US remains a very attractive economy to investors.

"In fact, we see financial flows into US reaching one-third of the money that moves in the world," she said.

Georgieva stressed that this flow has almost doubled since the pre-pandemic period, adding that the US economy does not face shortages.

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US Court Sets Up Sentencing for Russian National Alexander Vinnik on July 12 - Document

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) - The sentencing date for Russian national Alexander Vinnik has been set for July 12, the US District Court for the Northern District of California said on Monday.

"Sentencing set for 7/12/2024 11:00 am in San Francisco," the document said.

Judge Susan Illston will preside over the sentencing, the document said.

On Friday, Vinnik's lawyer Arkady Bukh told Sputnik that his client has accepted a plea agreement with the US government that will resolve his case and likely result in a sentence of under ten years in prison.

The US Justice Department said Vinnik pleaded guilty today to conspiracy to commit money laundering related to his role in operating the cryptocurrency exchange BTC-e from 2011 to 2017.

The US government accuses Vinnik of enabling criminal activity through the cryptocurrency exchange BIC-e by obscuring and anonymizing transactions and sources of funds.

Vinnik has denied the charges against him.

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Netanyahu Vows in Call With Biden to Keep Kerem Shalom Open for Aid - White House

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pledged during a telephone call with U President Joe Biden to keep the Kerem Shalom crossing open for humanitarian aid, the White House said in a statement on Monday.

"The prime minister agreed to ensure the Kerem Shalom crossing is open for humanitarian

assistance for those in need," the statement said.

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US House Speaker Weighs Kicking Members Off Panels Over Disagreements - US Congresswoman

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) - US House Speaker Mike Johnson is considering removing Republican colleagues from their committee assignments if they oppose his rules and legislation, US Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene said on Monday.

"Speaker Mike Johnson is talking about kicking Republican members off of committees if we vote against his rules/bills," Greene said in a statement via social media platform X. "It's not us who is out of line, it's our Republican elected Speaker!!"

Greene has threatened to introduce a measure to vacate Johnson as speaker for advancing foreign aid bills and other legislation despite objections from some House Republicans. Greene could trigger the motion to vacate as soon as Monday, Fox News reported.

Greene is set to meet with Johnson at 3:30 p.m. ET (19:30 GMT) on Monday, the report added. Johnson is under the control of Democratic Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Democratic Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, Greene said in a separate statement via X.

The ultimate goal of the United States is to put US troops on the ground in Ukraine, Greene also said. People should keep supporting Johnson if they want their sons and daughters fighting Russia in Ukraine, Greene said.

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Biden Attempting to Solidify US Policy Changes to Prevent Trump Reversals - Reports

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden and his administration are attempting to finalize regulatory changes in an effort to prevent presumptive 2024 Republican Party presidential nominee Donald Trump from overturning their policies if he retakes the White House, The Wall Street Journal reported on Monday.

After winning the presidency in 2016, Trump and allied lawmakers used the Congressional Review Act to eliminate regulatory changes put forward by former US President Barack Obama. Trump plans to do the same to Biden-era policies if reelected in November, the report said, citing people close to Trump.

As such, the Biden administration is working to quickly finalize regulatory changes, which would make it more difficult for Trump to overturn the policies, the report said. Trump would likely have to propose new regulations to change ones finalized by the Biden administration, the report said.

Trump and Republican lawmakers could target regulations introduced within 60 working days of

the end of the current congressional session if Trump wins the presidential election and Republicans secure majorities in both chambers of the US Congress, the report said.

The so-called lookback window could begin in late May, although the timetable could change if the US Congress alters the schedule, the report said.

Biden administration officials noted that their efforts to finalize regulatory changes should not be perceived as a sign that they believe Trump will beat Biden in the election, the report said.

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Georgieva Says 'Aging' Country US Must be 'Careful' in Spending

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“When you are an aging country, then you need to be very careful how much and for what you spend,” Georgieva said during a conversation at the Milken Institute.

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Biden Speaks With Netanyahu Amid Israel's Call for Evacuation From Rafah - White House

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden spoke by telephone with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu amid Israel's call for evacuation of Palestinians from Rafah in the Gaza Strip, the White House said on Monday.

"President Biden spoke today with Prime Minister Netanyahu ... a readout will be released soon," the White House in a statement.

The Times of Israel reported earlier on Monday that the Israel Defense Forces had started calling on Palestinians to leave the eastern part of Rafah ahead of IDF's planned military operation there.

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US Unveils Visa Curbs on Colombian Companies Moving Migrants by Sea

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) - The United States has introduced visa restrictions against executives of several Colombian transportation firms for helping move migrants by sea, a senior

US administration official said on Monday.

"Today the United States took critical steps to impose visa restrictions on executives of several Colombian transportation companies moving migrants by sea," the official told reporters. "These companies facilitate irregular migration and expose migrants to exploitation and violence."

The official spoke ahead of the third ministerial meeting of the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection scheduled to take place tomorrow.

"As we enter tomorrow's ministerial, there is a momentum in the regional efforts to coordinate enforcement, expand lawful pathways and address root causes and we want to strongly rally behind that," the official said. "To that end, the United States will be making a multi-hundred million dollar commitment tomorrow, providing humanitarian and development assistance to foster stabilization of migrant communities and further partner country efforts to fully integrate migrants."

Illegal crossings on the US southern border have gone through three consecutive record-breaking years since Joe Biden took over the White House in January 2021.

Since 2021, there have been 9 million encounters nationwide and over 7.4 million encounters at the southwest border.

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US Draft Resolution on Nuclear Weapons in Outer Space 'Dangerous' - Nebenzia

UNITED NATIONS, May 6 (Sputnik) - The US- and Japan-sponsored UN Security Council draft resolution on nuclear weapons in outer space contained dangerous elements as it did not incorporate preliminary expert technical and legal discussions, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said on Monday.

"It is important to mention another very dangerous element of the American draft. It clearly attempts to use the Security Council to introduce new restrictions, which have not previously been included anywhere including the Outer Space Treaty, which is questionable from a legal point of view, as imposing such obligations without preliminary expert legal and technical discussions is inadmissible," Nebenzia said.

Russia included amendments to the draft resolution, which allowed for a far more reaching application, Nebenzia said, adding that the topic was being used as a political tool by the United States.

However, the amendments that Russia proposed did not receive enough support at the UN Security Council.

At the end of April, Russia vetoed the US- and Japan-sponsored UN Security Council draft resolution prohibiting the use of weapons of mass destruction in outer space.

US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield attempted to accuse Russia of allegedly undermining the nuclear non-proliferation regime while failing to mention that during her visit to Nagasaki, Japan, she refrained from mentioning that the United States used atomic bombs against Japan.

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Joly to Host Philippine Counterpart for Talks on Indo-Pacific Strategy - Foreign Ministry

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) - Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly will host her Philippine counterpart Enrique Manalo on May 8 to work on advancing a range of common regional and international priorities under Ottawa's Indo-Pacific strategy, Global Affairs Canada said on Monday.

Manalo's visit to Ottawa will also serve to mark the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Canada and the Philippines.

"The Honorable Melanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs, today announced that she will welcome Enrique A. Manalo, Secretary for Foreign Affairs for the Philippines, to Ottawa on May 8, 2024," Global Affairs Canada said in a statement.

Joly and Manalo are set to build on the progress made since Canada launched its Indo-Pacific strategy in 2022, the statement said.

The two diplomats will discuss ways to advance shared priorities on regional peace and stability as well as the promotion of democracy and the so-called "rule of law," the statement said.

Manalo is also to meet with Canadian Minister of International Trade Mary Ng, Minister of International Development Ahmed Hussen, Minister of Immigration Marc Miller and Minister of Small Business Rechie Valdez, the statement added.

In November 2022, Canada unveiled its Indo-Pacific strategy in an effort to cement the country's alleged leading role in the region, including through a \$1.7 billion investment over five years to boost military and cyber security in the region and through enhancing trade ties with regional partners.

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US Will Send Aid to Ukraine Until Start of Conflict With China - Former US Congressman

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) - The United States will continue to send aid to Ukraine until it can start a conflict with China instead, former US Congressman Ron Paul said on Monday.

"The US weapons industry and its cheerleaders in Washington DC are determined to keep Ukraine money flowing ... until they can figure out a way to gin up a war with China after losing the current war with Russia," Paul said in a column for the Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity.

US elites have no intention of ending aid to Ukraine, which transfers wealth from the working and middle classes to the rich and well connected, Paul said.

Most of the US assistance is actually going toward restoring US weapons stockpiles to the benefit of the military-industrial complex, Paul said.

The Biden administration's reported intention to sign a 10-year security assistance agreement with Ukraine would unconstitutionally tie future presidents to the Biden administration's foreign policy and force US taxpayers to fund the weapons industry and a corrupt foreign government, Paul said.

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Antonov on Jeffries Remarks: Deployment of US Troops Won't Turn Tide in Ukraine Conflict

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) - The United States will not be able to turn the tide in the Ukraine conflict even if it sends troops there, Russian Ambassador in Washington Anatoly Antonov said on Monday.

On Sunday, US House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries said in an interview with CBS that "there's a significant likelihood" that America will have to send its troops to the conflict zone if Ukraine falls. He claimed that the US must continue supporting Kiev to "prevent a broader war." "Calls to increase the supply of weapons and ammunition [to Ukraine] only bolster the hateful policy of the [American] elite toward our country. It will not help turn the tide on the battlefield in their favor. Even if some crazy person decides to send their troops to our land," Antonov told reporters.

The ambassador warned that a direct clash between two nuclear powers will lead to unpredictable consequences.

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US Lifts Sanctions From Former Sberbank Subsidiary Bank in Switzerland – Treasury

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) – The United States lifted Ukraine-related sanctions on a former subsidiary of Russia's Sberbank in Switzerland, the US Department of the Treasury announced on Monday.

In September 2022, the Geneva-based m3 Groupe acquired the Zurich-based Sberbank Switzerland amid sanctions imposed by the European Union and the United States against the Russian financial sector including Sberbank, the biggest Russian bank controlled by the Russian government, according to Swiss media reports.

Following the acquisition, the former Sberbank banking unit is operating under the name TradeXBank and specializes in the financing of commodities trade, according to media reports.

The US and other countries have imposed numerous sanctions on Russia in response to its special military operation in Ukraine, including restrictions on its financial and energy sectors.

Russian officials have said despite Western attempts to contain and weaken the country's economy the sanctions regime has failed.

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West's 'Interest' in Peaceful Use of Outer Space Hypocrisy, Double Standards - Nebenzia

UNITED NATIONS, May 6 (Sputnik) - The West's claims about its alleged interest in cooperation on peaceful use of outer space sound like hypocrisy and double standards, Russian Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia said on Monday.

"All the statements that you will hear from Western states about their interest in dialogue on maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes — and we will hear many of them today in this room — are nothing more than hypocrisy and double standards," Nebenzia told his UN colleagues in the General Assembly hall.

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western states' talk of interest of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes is nothing more than hypocrisy, double standards - nebenzia

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Two in Three Canadians Would Oppose Total Ban on Gas-Powered Vehicles by 2035 - Poll

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) - The majority of Canadians (66%) would oppose a total phaseout of gasoline-powered vehicles on the country's roads by 2035 as planned by the government, a Nanos poll showed on Monday.

Fifty percent of Canadians said they oppose the move while 16% said they "somewhat oppose" it.

Only 30% of respondents said they support or somewhat support it or 13% and 17% respectively, according to the findings.

Two thirds of those polled are not confident (44%) or somewhat not confident (22%) that Canada will have the appropriate nationwide charging infrastructure needed to support the estimated increase in the number of electric vehicles hitting Canadian roads.

In addition, Canadians' level of interest in purchasing an electric vehicle has decreased from 65% in 2021 to 54% in 2024. The number of people who show no interest in owning such a car grew from 20% to 31% over the same period of time.

In December, the Canadian Ministry of Environment and Climate Change announced its intention to achieve its target of 100% zero-emission vehicle sales by 2035. The interim period will be marked by two provisional targets of 20% by 2026, and at least 60% by 2030.

In order to ensure proper availability of charging stations, Ottawa is investing C\$1.2 billion

(\$879 million) to build 84,500 additional chargers across the country by 2029.

According to government estimates, Canadians would be saving up to C\$36.8 billion in energy costs between 2024 and 2050, and the total phasing in of new electric vehicle sales would reduce over 360 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions over the same period and prevent C\$100 billion worth of global damages.

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Judge Fines Trump \$1,000 for Violating Gag Order, Threatens Jail Time - Court Filing

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) – New York Judge Juan Merchan found Donald Trump in contempt of the gag order for the tenth time and fined him another \$1,000, warning that the former US president can be incarcerated if he doesn't stop breaking the order, according to a court filing published on Monday.

"THEREFORE, Defendant is hereby put on notice that if appropriate and warranted, future violations of its lawful orders will be punishable by incarceration; and it is hereby ORDERED, that Defendant pay a \$1,000 fine for his violation of this Court's lawful order by the close of business on Friday, May 10, 2024," the filing reads.

Merchan also ordered that Trump remove his Truth Social post by 2:15 p.m. Monday.

The court has fined Trump \$10,000 for his posts on Truth Social, which Merchan found violating his gag order amid the ongoing "hush money" trial.

While announcing his decision, Merchan emphasized that he would not want to put Trump in jail for contempt of the court because he is the former US president and possibly the next one.

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Columbia University Cancels University-Wide Commencement Ceremony Due to Student Protests

WASHINGTON, May 6 (Sputnik) – Columbia University announced on Monday its decision to cancel a university-wide commencement ceremony and instead organize school-level events due to lingering security concerns following a wave of student protests against the war in Gaza, according to a notice on its website.

"Based on feedback from our students, we have decided to focus attention on our Class Days and school-level graduation ceremonies, where students are honored individually alongside their peers, and to forego the university-wide ceremony that is scheduled for May 15," the announcement said.

The university will focus its resources on those smaller-scale ceremonies and keeping them safe and respectful, it added.

"These past few weeks have been incredibly difficult for our community. Just as we are focused

on making our graduation experience truly special, we continue to solicit student feedback and are looking at the possibility of a festive event on May 15 to take the place of the large, formal ceremony. We are eager to all come together for our graduates and celebrate our fellow Columbians as they, and we, look ahead to the future," the announcement said.

New York Mayor Eric Adams said last week that the police has arrested approximately 300 protesters at the campuses of Columbia University and the City College of New York amid pro-Palestine demonstrations across the United States.

Numerous pro-Palestinian demonstrations have rocked college campuses across the US in recent weeks as protesters are urging an end to US military, financial and diplomatic support for Israel's military operations in the Gaza Strip, which have resulted in the deaths of more than 34,600 Palestinians. Students are also calling on their universities to condemn Israel's military campaign in Gaza, to divest from companies linked to Israel and discontinue programs of study abroad at Israeli universities.