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5/7/24 Tuesday

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'Israel Doesn't Want a Ceasefire': Truce Talks Take Back Seat as Rafah Attack Surges

Hamas claimed on Monday to accept an Egyptian-Qatari cease-fire proposal, but Israel said the deal did not meet their demands and decided to move forward with their assault on Rafah.
As ceasefire talks hung in the air on Monday, Israel began their aerial and ground attacks on Rafah, the largest city in Gaza where war refugees were once told to shelter in safety. About 1.4 million displaced Palestinians are in the city, and Israel's offensive is underway without any plan to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis.
On Tuesday, Esteban Carrillo, a Beirut-based Ecuadorian journalist and current editor for The Cradle, joined Sputnik's Fault Lines to discuss the ongoing attacks on Rafah, as well as the political implications that those attacks will pose on US President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.
"For weeks now, there's been this effort to make it seem like it's Hamas that doesn't want a deal, that they don't want to sit down at the table to accept Israeli demands. Where, in reality, it's the opposite," Carrillo explained. "Hamas has been very steadfast in what they're asking for. And it's Israel who doesn't want a lasting ceasefire. This is really the crux of the issue here."
Carrillo added that CIA Director William Burns was reportedly involved in drafting the bill that was presented to Hamas and which Hamas said yes to. Doing so reportedly upset Israeli authorities who said they felt blindsided by the US.
"Israel has maintained that they would enter Rafah. With a ceasefire deal, no ceasefire deal, they said, 'we are going into Rafah.' Why? Because Rafah is where this final victory against Hamas lies, right? This is what they've been telling everyone," Carrillo said.
"Rafah has been besieged already for weeks. For the past 24 hours, more than 24 hours at this point, this tiny strip of land has been coming under constant bombardment overnight, right after Hamas approved the ceasefire deal," he added. "Israel deployed what they like to call a fire build bomb in an area, where 1.5 million people are huddling after being told to go there."
Sputnik's Melik Abdul noted that the Biden administration has reportedlydelayed shipments of ammunition that were meant to be sent to Israel, according to three US officials.
Meanwhile, White House spokesman John Kirby said the administration's "commitment to Israel's security remains ironclad". Abdul added that Netanyahu does not seem to be "concerned at all" about appearances despite US politicians glumly watching their poll numbers plummet due to US voters' stances on the war.
"Well, no, he doesn't, right? He hasn't portrayed an ounce of seeming to care since the 7th of October," Carrillo responded, noting that after Antony Blinken had returned from a trip to Israel, he said the actions of its government reflects a majority of what the Israeli public wants.
"It's not like [Netanyahu] stopped showing concern, it's just that there was never any concern. And what the US is doing by halting this weapons shipment, it's just one ammo shipment that they're holding," he added. "It's not like they're holding the $16 billion something package that

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they signed a couple of weeks ago. It's such a weak move. If you actually want to do something, you could have done something months ago, you could have done something weeks ago."
"And I think we'll have to see what happens with Rafah. I don't think the US is really going to stand in the way that they are trying to say they are. I don't think they are going to cut the bomb deliveries. Biden said himself, 'there are no red lines for Israel,'" Carrillo added.
"And [the US government] can point and they can clutch their pearls and they can say all they want about how Benjamin Netanyahu is the worst person in the world. When it comes down to it, the bombs are going to continue to flow."

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Western Media Acknowledges Ukraine's Losing

Western media has rarely acknowledged Russia's successful suppression of Ukrainian troops, even as the US continues to pour billions of dollars into the failed proxy war.
A recent Reuters report describes a "cat-and-mouse" game between Russian drones and Ukrainian artillery units as Moscow's troops take on ground attacks along the 1,000-km (6210mile) front in the south and east of Ukraine.
Ukrainian military brigades, including part of the 43rd Artillery Brigade, say they face an "increasing harassment" from Russian drones, the report says. A senior battery officer expressed difficulty in shielding from Russian reconnaissance drones, including the Orlan and the Supercam.
"Sometimes it happens that there's lots of work for the day, but we can't move because something is always flying above," the officer said, while repeating other Ukrainian troops and senior officials' calls for more electronic warfare systems in order to combat Russian drones.
"There were (attacks) before, but not the same amount," a 27-year-old Ukrainian battery commander added. "Now it's really scary."
The report also noted that like other Ukrainian artillery units, "the 43rd Brigade battery faces a critical shell shortage that limits the Panzerhaubitze's potential."
Unable to deflect Russian attacks, the Ukrainian forces are now "anxiously awaiting" shipments from a $61-billion US military aid package.
The legislation - which will also provide aid for Israel and Taiwan - includes air defense and artillery munitions for Kiev. US President Joe Biden said of the legislation: "It's going to make America safer, it's going to make the world safer and it continues American leadership in the world and everyone knows it."
The report also noted a drop in Kiev's inventory of supplies, adding that one of the Ukrainian units is firing between just "eight and 15" shells per day. The Ukrainian forces are also reportedly failing to repair their vehicles as they have lost access to spare parts and struggle with malfunctioning navigation systems.
In a similar report published last month, the tabloid news outlet Politicoadmitted to a bleak outlook for Ukraine's forces, describing a situation in which there is "a lack of advanced weapons" and "losses on the battlefield".

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Heat Waves Are Further Endangering Bumblebee Populations, Study Finds

Bumblebees differ from other insects in that they are rotund and furry, making them perfectly suited to colder climates like the Alps and Britain where they thrive.

Bumblebee populations are already in decline. But new research illustrates yet another devastating attack on Earth's beloved pollinators. What has been described as the "runaway climate crisis" in a recent report, is now threatening the health of nesting bumblebees.

According to an international team of researchers who reviewed 180 years worth of scientific literature, heat from the ongoing climate change crisis is a driving force in destroying bumblebee population numbers. Heat has made it difficult for bumblebees to safely construct their homes - where they lay future generations of their brood.

"The complex interactions of the mechanisms at the root of the declines are poorly understood," the researchers write. "Among the numerous factors, we posit that heat stress in the nests could play a key role in the decline of bumblebee species."

Usually, bumblebee colonies have no difficulty in thermoregulating their hive. In hot climates, worker bees will gather and beat their wings to cool their homes down. But the climate crisis has driven temperatures beyond average heat, and bumblebees are now struggling to keep up. Most broods are not able to survive at temperatures 95° Fahrenheit (35° Celsius).

The researchers add that no matter which continent a bumblebee brood may reside, their "optimal" temperature for incubating nests is between 82F and 89F (28C and 32C).

"If [bumblebees] can't keep temperatures below what is probably a lethal limit of about 35C, when the brood may die, that could explain why we are losing so many bumblebees around the world, especially in North America and Europe," said Peter Kevan, the lead author of the study.

There have also been reports of bumblebees moving to higher, cooler ground as a way to combat climate change, says Dave Goulson, a professor of biology at the University of Sussex, who was not involved in the research. Other animal populations are experiencing the same climate change-induced migration, including great white sharks which have been found moving up the eastern coastline of the US in an effort to reach cooler waters and higher seal populations.

Across the globe there are more than 250 species of bees that are classified as the genus Bombus (bumblebees) with 49 species of bumblebees in the US (2 species are extinct).

Goulson, who has studied bumblebees for 30 years, says the recent research is "depressing" and "heartbreaking". He points out that bumblebee populations have already taken a nosedive due to habitat loss, which in combination with rising temperatures has created a "double whammy."

In their paper, the researchers admitted that "the thermal environments in which bumblebee nest (mostly underground, some in cavities, and few on the surface of the ground) are a neglected area in bumblebee ecology." The researchers have proposed conducting studies using ground-penetrating radar to study ground-nesting species of bumblebees.

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“We hope that future scientists may take the ideas we present and apply them to their own research on bumblebee health and conversation,” said Kevan.
The study was published in Frontiers in Bee Science.
'Israel Doesn't want ceasefire': truce talks take back seat as Rafah attack surges

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As ceasefire talks hung in the air on Monday, Israel began their aerial and ground attacks on Rafah, the largest city in Gaza where war refugees were once told to shelter in safety. Esteban Carrillo, a Beirut-based Ecuadorian journalist and current editor for The Cradle, joined Sputnik’s Fault Lines to discuss the ongoing attacks on Rafah.

“Rafah has been besieged already for weeks. For the past 24 hours, more than 24 hours at this point, this tiny strip of land has been coming under constant bombardment overnight, right after Hamas approved the ceasefire deal,” said Carrillo. “Israel deployed what they like to call a fire build bomb in an area, where 1.5 million people are huddling after being told to go there.”

“For weeks now, there's been this effort to make it seem like it's Hamas that doesn't want a deal, that they don't want to sit down at the table to accept Israeli demands. Where, in reality, it's the opposite,” Carrillo explained. “Hamas has been very steadfast in what they're asking for. And it's Israel who doesn't want a lasting ceasefire. This is really the crux of the issue here.”

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European Leaders Ignore Public Opinion, Domestic Concerns to Stoke Cold War

Europe’s economy has faltered amid the West’s obsession with undermining Russia, but leaders seem intent on ignoring public opinion in order to continue ramping up tensions.
President Xi Jinping’s visit to Europe this week marks his first trip to the continent in five years after the global disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic saw the leader largely remain in China.
Xi is traveling to three key countries during his visit with historical cultural and geopolitical ties to Beijing. Trade and economic concerns are near the top of the agenda as China takes steps toward investing in infrastructure throughout the continent as part of the country’s Belt and Road Initiative.
But many European leaders are far more focused on the West’s proxy war in Ukraine against Russia noted Dr. George Szamuely, a senior research fellow at the Global Policy Institute.
Szamuely joined Sputnik’s Fault Lines program Tuesday to discuss the obsession over the conflict among officials in France, Germany, and elsewhere.

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“There's no question Europe is very heavily dependent on trade with China,” said Szamuely, author of the book Bombs for Peace: NATO's Humanitarian War on Yugoslavia.

“But at the same time Europe is wedded to this policy in Ukraine of seeking the military and strategic defeat of Russia,” he noted. “These policies are somewhat in tension. That's why they've been seeking for more than two years to apply pressure on China… to do what? It's not at all clear because China hasn't really been an ally or a partner of Russia's. China has taken a neutral stance.”

Tensions have arisen over US claims that Beijing is supplying Russia with “dual use” products able to be used for civilian as well as military purposes. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken sharply criticized China over the issue in recent comments, in line with a pattern of public American condemnation of Beijing immediately following diplomatic encounters.

Chinese leaders have rejected the complaint, claiming the country maintains a sovereign right to conduct trade with whomever it desires.

“Just about anything in the world can be ‘dual use’ for other purposes,” said Szamuely. “So it's an absurd argument… they clearly are not doing anything at all to help any citizens of Europe.”

Still, officials across the continent have aligned themselves with the Biden administration’s stance on China and Ukraine even when such posturing places them at odds with the will of the public.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has attempted to maintain good relations with Beijing, noted Szamuely, given the country’s crucial importance as a foreign market for Berlin’s automakers. But the researcher said Scholz’s foreign minister Annalena Baerbock “is rabid on the subject of China, almost as bad as she is on the subject of Russia.”

“If she were to take control of policy then Europe would indeed go down the path of sanctioning China and hurting itself,” he said. “Already we've seen… how much Europe has hurt itself through its sanctions policy against Russia. But as Annalena Baerbock has famously said… Ukraine is far more important to me than the wishes of the German people.”

Baerbock caused a stir in 2022 when the German minister of foreign affairs explicitly stated she is willing to oppose domestic opinion in order to continue the country’s anti-Russia stance.

“No matter what my German voters think, I want to deliver to the people of Ukraine,” said Baerbock in comments that were widely panned. “We are now facing wintertime, where we will be challenged as democratic politicians… We will stand with Ukraine, and this means that the sanctions will continue on through wintertime, even if it gets really tough for politicians.”

Szamuely said China is unlikely to change its stance in regards to Russia as a result of European pressure.

“China is very unlikely to show up for this meeting, this 'peace conference' that excludes Russia that's supposed to be held in Switzerland,” said the author, referring to a meeting planned for June at the luxurious Bürgenstock resort near Lucerne.

“One of the key parties – the key party – isn't invited. So China is not going to go along with something so farcical,” he added, claiming the European ploy would amount to “Russian capitulation.”

China unveiled its own 12-point plan for peace in Ukraine in 2023, which Szamuely noted was “ignored” by the US and European Union.

China’s plan criticized the eastward expansion of NATO as the origin of the conflict, insisting, “The security of a country should not be pursued at the expense of others. The security of a

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region should not be achieved by strengthening or expanding military blocs. The legitimate security interests and concerns of all countries must be taken seriously and addressed properly."
Beijing's plan called for "a balanced, effective and sustainable European security architecture," also criticizing "unilateral sanctions" and "'long-arm jurisdiction' against other countries."
"Dialogue and negotiation are the only viable solution to the Ukraine crisis," the proposal concluded.

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Russians United in Support for Putin's Military, Economic, Diplomatic Achievements

The Russian president's leadership has paved the way for a multipolar world as the country is able to withstand Western aggression on multiple fronts.
Vladimir Putin was inaugurated for another term as Russia's president Tuesday in a ceremony following an unprecedented victory in March's election.
Putin prevailed with 87% of the vote, an unmatched performance in Russia's modern post-Soviet history, with voter turnout reaching over 77%. Western countries have expressed dissatisfaction with the development with only seven of the European Union's 27 member states reportedly sending representatives to Tuesday's ceremony.
But domestic support for the longtime Russian leader is strong claimed international relations expert Mark Sleboda, who appeared on Sputnik's The Critical Hour program Tuesday to discuss sentiment on the ground from Moscow.
"Whatever the propaganda rags in the West may try to present, there was a higher voter turnout and Putin achieved a higher result in this election than he had in any previous elections," said the security analyst. "I don't care whether you're talking Russian polling or opposition polling paid for by the US government – like Levada – or outside polling, they all show the same results. So any accusations that the elections were anything less than they appear to be are just sour grapes."
Sleboda noted that among the European countries sending ambassadors to the inauguration were Hungary, Slovakia, and France. Hungary and France are among the stops on Chinese President Xi Jinping's itinerary as he visits Europe this week, suggesting the two countries are making some effort to signal a foreign policy independent from that of the US-led western consensus.
The United States has attempted to convince China not to conduct trade with Russia amid the latter's military operation in the Donbass, with Xi resisting US attempts to turn the conflict into a dispute between China and the United States.
"I think they show Putin at the height of his power and popularity," said Sleboda of the results of Russia's recent election. "And also I think it shows a broad support of the course and vision that he has charted for the country, but also, more poignantly right now, it has been viewed – and correctly so – as a referendum on the special military operation on the Russian intervention in the Ukrainian civil conflict."

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“If the results of the election weren't enough to do that, the fact that the Russian Ministry of Defense is signing up over a thousand Russian men and women a day volunteering to serve in Ukraine, in the special military operation, as contract soldiers clearly makes the support [clear] that Russians in general have for that,” he added.

Host Wilmer Leon noted one line in particular from Putin’s inaugural speech where the Russian president insisted, “we will determine the fate of Russia by ourselves and only ourselves for the sake of today's and future generations.”

“Garland [Nixon] and I say all the time when you listen to President Xi, when you listen to Putin, when you listen to [Ebrahim] Raisi, you really have to pay attention to what they say because they say what they mean and they mean what they say,” said Leon.

“When you read that statement and you look at the actions that he's taking – whether it's the Russian economy, whether it's the military intervention, whether it's the relationship he's developed with China – he's doing what he says he's going to do. And the turnout and the percentage of win obviously speaks volumes that the Russian people are pleased not only with their president, but with their government.”

Russia’s close diplomatic ties with China have proven crucial as the country weathers sanctions imposed by the West. The use of Chinese systems such as UnionPay has provided a fallback for the country as the United States bans Russia from participating in SWIFT and other Western-controlled frameworks. The two countries also dealt a blow to the United States’ ability to leverage dollar hegemony against its adversaries by agreeing to settle energy deals in each other’s national currencies in 2022.

Such moves have paved the way for a global financial system free from Western domination, but they’ve also paid concrete economic dividends for Russia. Recent data suggests Russia could reach over 3% GDP growth in 2024, placing it well ahead of its European competitors. The advancement has been driven by strong performance in the manufacturing sector, which currently faces decline in countries like Germany that have sanctioned Russian energy.

Putin’s victory signals strong domestic support for Moscow’s special military operation to defend the Donbass republics, which is viewed as an existential battle against foreign aggression. Russia’s dominance is driven by its technological supremacy on the battlefield, with the country’s troops able to easily defeat even advanced NATO weaponry.

The dynamic is demonstrated by a recent controversy over the provision of Reaper drones to Ukraine. Reports in Western media suggest Kiev is requesting more of the unmanned vehicles from its US and European allies. But the Russian Armed Forces have been able to easily destroy the top-of-the-line drones, Sleboda notes.

“As to this story about Ukraine asking for Reaper drones – this is a joke because Russia has demonstrated that it has such superior air defense and electronic warfare,” said the expert. “The British Royal United Services Institute, the unofficial think tank, admitted that Russian electronic warfare takes down 90% of the Western-supplied drones that have been given to the Kiev regime. They called it a drone massacre.”

“You may have noticed that even the Houthis, or Ansar Allah, have taken down three Reaper drones that the US sent in their attempt to stop the Houthis from attacking shipping connected with Israel through the Red Sea,” he recalled. “These drones cost $30 million apiece, and the US has lost at least four of them in the last year… They're not going to feed more of them to Ukraine. They don't have that many of them to waste like that.”

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“They would be mowed out of the sky. The US knows it. Ukraine can request it all they want, but whether for reconnaissance or combat purposes, the US is not going to supply the Reapers to Ukraine because they know how ineffective they will be, and how quickly they'll be taken down, and they cost too much. And the US doesn't have that many of them that they can throw away like that.”

European leaders ignore public opinion, domestic concerns to stoke cold war

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Trade and economic concerns are near the top of China’s agenda this week as President Xi Jinping visits Europe for the first time in five years. But many leaders are far more focused on the West’s proxy war in Ukraine against Russia noted researcher Dr. George Szamuely on Sputnik’s Fault Lines program.

“There's no question Europe is very heavily dependent on trade with China,” said Szamuely. “But at the same time Europe is wedded to this policy in Ukraine of seeking the military and strategic defeat of Russia. These policies are somewhat in tension.”

Officials throughout the continent have aligned themselves with the Biden administration’s stance on China and Ukraine even when such posturing places them at odds with the will of the public. Chancellor Olaf Scholz has attempted to maintain good relations with Beijing given the country’s importance as a foreign market for German automakers. But Szamuely said Scholz’s foreign minister Annalena Baerbock “is rabid on the subject of China, almost as bad as she is on the subject of Russia.”

“If she were to take control of policy then Europe would indeed go down the path of sanctioning China and hurting itself,” he said. “Already we've seen… how much Europe has hurt itself through its sanctions policy against Russia. But as Annalena Baerbock has famously said… Ukraine is far more important to me than the wishes of the German people.”

Baerbock caused a stir in 2022 when the German minister of foreign affairs explicitly stated she is willing to oppose domestic opinion in order to continue the country’s anti-Russia stance.

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Russians united in support for Putin's military, economic, diplomatic achievements

Vladimir Putin was inaugurated for another term as Russia’s president Tuesday in a ceremony following an unprecedented win in March’s election. The leader’s large margin of victory demonstrates that his domestic support is strong claimed international relations expert Mark

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Sleboda, who appeared on Sputnik's The Critical Hour program to discuss sentiment on the ground from Moscow.

"There was a higher voter turnout and Putin achieved a higher result in this election than he had in any previous elections," said the security analyst. "I think it shows a broad support of the course and vision that he has charted for the country."

Host Wilmer Leon agreed, claiming, "the turnout and the percentage of win obviously speaks volumes that the Russian people are pleased not only with their president, but with their government."

Russia's diplomatic ties with China have proven crucial as the country weathers sanctions imposed by the West. The two countries' cooperation has paved the way for a global financial system free from Western domination (https://t.me/geopolitics_live/17166), also paying concrete economic dividends for Russia. Recent data suggests Russia could reach over 3% GDP growth in 2024, placing it well ahead of its European competitors (https://t.me/geopolitics_live/13360).

Putin's victory also signals strong domestic support for Moscow's special military operation to defend the Donbass republics, which is viewed as an existential battle against foreign aggression. Russia's dominance is driven by its technological performance on the battlefield, with a recent controversy over the provision of Reaper drones (https://t.me/geopolitics_live/23008) to Ukraine demonstrating that Russia is able to defeat even advanced NATO weaponry.

"These drones cost $30 million apiece, and the US has lost at least four of them in the last year… They're not going to feed more of them to Ukraine. They don't have that many of them to waste like that," Sleboda emphasized.

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US senators issue 'mafia-style' threat as Israeli military enters Rafah

A group of Republican lawmakers released an open letter threatening officials of the International Criminal Court and their families with reprisal if the body issues arrest warrants against Israeli officials, referencing a US statute commonly referred to as "The Hague Invasion Act."

"When you read that letter, which I have – anybody can go online and find it – it looks like something from the mafia," said host Garland Nixon on Sputnik's The Critical Hour program. "It's a mafia-style letter. It is the US saying, 'look, we're not going to pretend like we're liberal interventionists and we're going around the world to do good. You will do what we say or, basically, we'll come after you and your families."

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“It's the honest face of US imperialism,” he concluded. “I got to give them credit. That is US imperialism without a mask on.”

“That's the only difference, and when you look at what the US threatened to do – sanctioning employees, preventing members of the ICC and their families from coming to the United States, and then closing with 'you have been warned' – what a threat this is,” responded author Robert Fantina. “As you said, mafia, tin-pot dictator kind of behavior.”

“To issue this kind of a threat against an internationally-recognized body whose goal is world justice and the adherence to international law, it does pull the mask off the United States,” he said. “It's a rogue nation. It believes in might makes right, has no interest in diplomacy, and has no interest in human rights or international law. It holds all those things in contempt,” Fantina emphasized.

Netanyahu has likewise warned the ICC against issuing arrest warrants, claiming that doing so would be an “unprecedented antisemitic hate crime.”

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Canada Welcomes NAFTA Dispute Panel Ruling on US Softwood Lumber Duties - Minister

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) – Canada has welcomed a ruling by the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) Dispute Panel that duties imposed by the United States on Canadian softwood lumber products are inconsistent with its own legislation, Minister of International Trade Mary Ng said.

"Canada welcomes the panel’s decision that U.S. duties on Canadian softwood lumber are inconsistent with U.S. law," Ng said in a statement released on Tuesday.

The minister however expressed disappointment over certain aspects of the panel’s ruling. Ng nonetheless noted that it was a step toward the complete removal of US countervailing duties on Canadian softwood lumber.

The dispute over Canadian softwood lumber dates to the early 1980s and has been a drag on the two countries’ bilateral trading relationship for decades, including mutual complaints through the World Trade Organization.

In 2006, the two sides reached a settlement under which the United States agreed to suspend lumber duties. The deal expired in 2015 and the administration of former US President Donald Trump subsequently imposed new tariffs on Canadian lumber.

Last October, the NAFTA panel ruled that elements of the US import duties on softwood lumber from Canada were inconsistent with US law and directed the Commerce Department to review key aspects of its determination. However, the US International Trade Commission ruled in late

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November that Washington could continue to impose duties on Canadian softwood lumber products.

The situation escalated in early February when the US Commerce Department said it was going to increase duties on Canadian softwood lumber products from 8.05% to nearly 13.86%, a decision Ng characterized as "entirely unwarranted,"

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Biden Announces $3.3Bln Microsoft Investment for AI Center in Wisconsin – White House

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) – US President Biden announced on Wednesday a $3.3 billion investment by Microsoft to build an artificial intelligence (AI) datacenter in Racine, Wisconsin, according to a release.

"President Biden will announce a $3.3 billion investment by Microsoft to build a new artificial intelligence (AI) datacenter in Racine, creating 2,300 union construction jobs and 2,000 permanent jobs over time," the release stated.

Microsoft will also partner with Gateway Technical College to train 1,000 Wisconsinites for datacenter and STEM roles by 2030. It projects that it will employ up to 2,000 people in permanent roles at its Racine facility. It also plans to build an innovation center in southeast Wisconsin and collaborate with startup accelerator Gener8tor to train 1,000 business leaders to adopt AI in their operations

The datacenter will be built on the same site where Taiwanese electronics manufacturer Foxconn had committed $10 billion in 2017 to build a display panel manufacturing plant that would create 13,000 jobs. The project fell behind schedule and Microsoft purchased the site last year.

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Canada Finds Wire Rod From China, Vietnam, Egypt Hurts Domestic Industry

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) – The Canadian International Trade Tribunal (CITT) has determined there are reasonable grounds to believe that the dumping of some types of wire rod from China, Vietnam and Egypt has harmed or could harm the country's domestic industry.

"The Canadian International Trade Tribunal today determined that there is a reasonable indication that the dumping of certain wire rod from the People's Republic of China, the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam has caused injury or is threatening to cause injury to the domestic industry," CITT said in a statement on Tuesday.

The Canada Border Service Agency (CBSA) will continue its dumping probe and deliver a preliminary determination of its own by June 6.

In early March, the CBSA announced that Ottawa would launch an investigation into alleged

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wire rod dumping practices by the aforementioned countries.
The probe was launched over a complaint made by Ivaco Rolling Mills 2004 LP, alleging that their business had "suffered material injury" in the forms of lost market shares, lost sales, price undercutting, price depression, price suppression, as well as a negative impact on employment, capacity utilization, and financial performance.

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US Presidential Candidate Robert F. Kennedy Had Suspected Brain Parasite – Reports

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) – US Presidential Candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. had a suspected parasitic worm in his brain, among various health issues, according to his deposition from his 2012 divorce proceedings, The New York Times reported on Wednesday.
Kennedy had been experiencing memory loss and mental fogginess in 2010, and doctors reviewing scans of his brain concluded that he might have a brain tumor. However shortly before surgery, Kennedy was given a different opinion from a doctor that he might have a dead parasite inside his brain. He underwent further tests, and doctors ultimately ruled that the apparent cyst seen in his brain scans contained the remains of a parasite.
Kennedy was also diagnosed with mercury poisoning around the same time, which can cause neurological issues. In his 2012 deposition, Kennedy admitted to having “cognitive problems” and both “short-term” and “longer-term memory loss.” He also revealed that he had contracted Hepatitis C during his youth from drug use.
He has previously spoke publicly about his spasmodic dysphonia, which causes his vocal cords to press together and strain his voice. Kennedy also suffered from atrial fibrillation for decades, although he told The New York Times in an interview that he had not had an incident in more than a decade.
He also said in the interview that he had recovered from his memory loss and mental fogginess, as well as the suspected parasite without treatment. His campaign declined to provide his medical records.
Kennedy, 70, has positioned himself as a young and healthy candidate in comparison to front-runners Joe Biden and Donald Trump.

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China, Partners Have Decreased Use of US Dollar in Trade Finance Since Early 2022 - IMF

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - China and its partners have decreased the use of the US dollar in trade finance since the beginning of 2022, International Monetary Fund (IMF) First Deputy Managing Director Gita Gopinath said.
"China’s share in US imports declined by 8 percentage points between 2017 and 2023

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following a flare-up in trade tensions," Gopinath said during an event hosted by the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research.

Gopinath pointed out that the US share in China's exports has dropped by approximately 4 percentage points.

The average weighted quarter-on-quarter trade growth between US-leaning countries and China-leaning ones during the second quarter of 2022 and third quarter of 2023 was almost 5 percentage points lower than the average quarterly weighted trade growth during the first quarter of 2017 until the first quarter of 2022.

Gopinath compared the change with a 2-percentage point drop in quarterly growth in trade within different blocs.

Trade fragmentation in this regard could reduce efficiency gains from specialization, competition and knowledge diffusion, Gopinath said.

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IMF on Frozen Russian Assets: Any Action Should Have 'Sufficient Legal Underpinnings'

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - Any action involving the Russian assets frozen by the collective West should have "sufficient legal underpinnings" and not undermine the international monetary system, International Monetary Fund (IMF) First Deputy Managing Director Gita Gopinath said.

"While this is for relevant courts and jurisdictions to determine, for the IMF, it is important that any action has sufficient legal underpinnings and does not undermine the functioning of the international monetary system," Gopinath said during an event hosted by the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research.

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Concerns About Sanctions Risk May Be Behind Rise in Gold Purchases by Some Nations - IMF

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - Concerns about the risk of sanctions may be behind the rise in gold purchases by some nations, International Monetary Fund (IMF) First Deputy Managing Director Gita Gopinath said.

"The share of gold in the FX [foreign exchange] reserves of the China bloc has been rising since 2015 - a trend not exclusively driven by China and Russia. Importantly, during the same period, the share of gold in FX reserves of countries in the US bloc has been broadly stable. This suggests that gold purchases by some central banks may have been driven by concerns about sanctions risk," Gopinath said.

The IMF official made the comment during an event hosted by the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research.

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Gopinath emphasized that foreign exchange reserves could be re-aligned to reflect new economic links and geopolitical risks.

"A global system with multiple reserve currencies could have several benefits, including a larger pool of safe assets and more opportunities for FX reserve diversification," Gopinath said.

However, Gopinath emphasized that the stability of such a system would be at risk without strong policy coordination among all reserve currency-issuing countries.

"This would not be possible if the world is divided along geopolitical lines," Gopinath added.

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US Dollar Accounts for Over 80% of Trade Finance Despite Rising Geopolitical Risks - IMF

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - The US dollar accounts for more than 80% of trade finance despite increased geopolitical risks, International Monetary Fund (IMF) First Deputy Managing Director Gita Gopinath said.

"Despite increased geopolitical risks, the latest data show that the US dollar remains dominant. According to SWIFT, it accounts for over 80% of trade finance, likely because much of commodity trade continues to be invoiced and settled in dollars," Gopinath said.

Gopinath made the comment during an event hosted by the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research.

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IMF Says 'No Clear Signs' of Deglobalization Yet, But Fragmentation Increasing

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) – The International Monetary Fund does not see clear signs of deglobalization yet but warns about an increasing fragmentation along geopolitical lines, IMF First Deputy Managing Director Gita Gopinath said on Tuesday.

“There are not yet clear signs of deglobalization at the aggregate level,” Gopinath said in a presentation to the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research.

However, she stressed that there are increasing signs of fragmentation. “Trade and investment flows are being redirected along geopolitical lines,” she added.

Gopinath pointed out that the current fragmentation is not significantly different from the initial years of the Cold War. “But there is still cause for concern. Trade fragmentation is much more costly this time around because unlike the start of the Cold War when goods trade to GDP was 16 percent, now that ratio is 45 percent,” she said.

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

US Weather Authorities Issue Tornado Emergency Alert in Michigan - Statement

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - The US National Weather Service (NWS) issued a tornado emergency alert for Union City and Sherwood Michigan, characterizing the event as a life-threatening situation.

The NWS Tornado account on social media platform X publicized the emergency alert on Tuesday, which was valid through 6:30 p.m. EDT.

The alert warned residents of a damaging tornado and hail up to two inches in size.

NWS also issued tornado warnings and watches on Tuesday for other parts of Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio.

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Biden Administration Revokes Intel, Qualcomm Licenses to Supply Huawei - Reports

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration has revoked the licenses extended to Intel and Qualcomm to supply semiconductors to the communications technology giant Huawei, the Financial Times reported.

The US Commerce Department has affected Huawei's access to laptop and mobile phone chips by revoking certain export licenses, notifying affected companies without detailing which ones, the report said on Tuesday.

"We continuously assess how our controls can best protect our national security and foreign policy interests, taking into consideration a constantly changing threat environment and technological landscape," a Commerce Department spokesperson was quoted by the report as saying.

The report added that Qualcomm has not responded to the comments, and Intel has declined to comment.

In October 2022, the Biden administration introduced regulations to limit the export of equipment and components used in producing advanced chips to firms in China. A year later, the Commerce Department implemented additional restrictions on semiconductor exports, revising the definitions of artificial intelligence chips and expanding licensing requirements to prevent their resale to China across more than 40 countries.

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US ‘Very Interested’ to Develop Ukraine’s Nuclear Power Sector - Official

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WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) – The United States is “very interested” in providing Ukraine support to develop its nuclear power sector, US International Development Finance Corporation CEO Scott Nathan said on Tuesday.

“The other area that we would be very interested in energy in Ukraine is helping with the nuclear sector,” Nathan said during a House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing.

He stressed that such support would provide Kiev with strong competitive advantages.

Nathan emphasized that his corporation usually partners with the private sector, but in Ukraine, it has worked with the state-owned electric entity. “But there are often opportunities to develop power generation projects,” he added.

The US official also admitted that the corporation has not had opportunities to support Ukraine’s national gas production and pipeline infrastructure.

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US Judge Indefinitely Postpones Trump's Classified Documents Trial Date - Court Document

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - The Judge in Trump's classified Documents case has indefinitely postponed the Florida trial, court documents released on Tuesday show.

"The Court also determines that finalization of a trial date at this juncture-before resolution of the myriad and interconnected pre-trial and CIPA issues remaining and forthcoming-would be imprudent and inconsistent with the court's duty...The Court therefore vacates the current May 20, 2024, trial date," wrote Judge Cannon in the documents.

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White House Does Not Think Israel Crossed ‘Red Line’ With Rafah Operation – Reports

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) – The “limited” Israeli military operation in Rafah has not crossed President Joe Biden's “red line” and therefore has not yet led to any changes in the US administration's policy towards its closest ally in the Middle East, Axios reported, citing two American officials.

On Monday, Israel started a military operation in eastern Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said that the operation would disrupt the ongoing humanitarian assistance delivery to Gaza and that the Biden administration continues to oppose it.

Biden does not view the Israeli operation to capture the Rafah Gate crossing, which the IDF considers to be a key target and one of Hamas' main strategic sites in Gaza, as a “breaking point” in relations with Tel Aviv, the report said on Tuesday.

But this could change if the limited operation broadens or gets out of control and Israeli forces enter the city of Rafah itself, where more than one million Palestinian refugees are taking

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shelter, the officials reportedly said.

The US officials have also confirmed that the Biden administration is ready to suspend weapons shipments to Israel or at least condition the use of specific US weapons systems if the Netanyahu war cabinet decides to go on a major military operation in Rafah.

Politico reported on Tuesday that the Biden administration has not yet signed off on a pending sale of Boeing-made Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAM) that can be converted to precision weapons, including Small Diameter Bombs.

The Wall Street Journal reported that Washington was expected to sell about 6,500 JDAM systems to Israel on Monday.

The delay is the first known instance of the United States delaying the supply of military aid to its closest ally in the Middle East amid disagreements over Israel's stance on Rafah.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) -

ISRAEL MILITARY OPERATIONS IN RAFAH

* Israel's military operation in Rafah does look like a prelude to a major military operation in the city, but the United States does not believe that a large-scale military operation has begun at this time, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Tuesday.
* Israel has told the US government that its operation in Rafah was limited, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said.
* Israel's military operation in Rafah may lead to a humanitarian catastrophe, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov said.
* UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that he is very concerned by the renewed Israeli military activity in Rafah and called for an immediate reopening of the humanitarian crossings into Gaza.

PUTIN INAUGURATION

* Russian President Vladimir Putin has been sworn in as head of state at the inauguration ceremony in the Kremlin and takes office for the fifth time.
* Russia will go through this difficult period with dignity and become even stronger, Russian President Vladimir Putin said.
* Putin said that national security would remain the top priority of his new six-year term.
* It is necessary to ensure reliable continuity in the development of Russia for decades to come, to raise and educate younger generations who will strengthen the power of the country, Putin said.
* The United Nations secretary-general is planning to send a letter to Russian President Putin upon his inauguration, UN Spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

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US CITIZENS DETAINED IN SYRIA

* The United States has repatriated 11 American citizens from camps for relatives of the Islamic State terror group (banned in Russia) in northeastern Syria, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday.

* The Biden administration is aware that about 25 US citizens may remain in detention facilities in northeastern Syria, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* Several explosions have occurred in Luhansk on Tuesday and a fire can be seen in various parts of the city, a Sputnik correspondent reported.

* Romanian President Klaus Iohannis said that he is ready to discuss a possibility of providing Ukraine with Patriot air defense systems but needs to know what Bucharest will get in return.

* Russia and Ukraine accuse each other of using chemical weapons, but information provided by both sides is not sufficiently substantiated, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) said.

US CITIZENS DETAINED IN RUSSIA

* The US Army has started an administrative probe into the circumstances surrounding soldier Gordon Black's travel to Vladivostok, Russia, where he has been detained on theft charges, Pentagon deputy spokesperson Sabrina Singh said on Tuesday.

* A Moscow court has sentenced an US citizen to ten days in prison on charges of petty hooliganism for breaking into a children's library while drunk, the court told Sputnik.

* Both US citizens who were recently detained in Russia were not there on behalf of the US government and the State Department is seeking access to them, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said.

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US State Dept. Approves $144Mln Missile Control Upgrade Sale to UAE - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - The US State Department has approved a potential $144 million sale of anti-radiation missile control system upgrades to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) announced in a press release on Tuesday.

"The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Government of the United Arab Emirates of High Speed Anti-Radiation Missile Control Section Modification Upgrade and related equipment for an estimated cost of $144 million," the release said.

The DSCA delivered the required certification notifying Congress of this possible sale earlier on Tuesday, the release said.

"The Government of the UAE has requested to buy up to 149 WCU-33/B High-Speed Anti-Radiation Missile (HARM) Control Section Modification (HCSM) upgrade kits. Also included are high bandwidth HSCM telemetry kits loaned for integration support," the agency said.

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The sale package also includes HARM Control Section containers, encryption devices, software and mission data support, test flight and live-fire range support, HARM support and test equipment, spare parts and repair and return support, the DSCA said.

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US Report on Israel's Conduct in Gaza Strip Delayed Indefinitely - Reports

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration's report on whether Israel violated US law and international humanitarian law during its military operations in the Gaza Strip has been delayed indefinitely, Politico reported on Tuesday.

If the report determines that US and international law have been violated, the Biden administration would be expected to stop sending military assistance to Israel.

The administration emailed Congress notifying lawmakers that it will miss the deadline to submit the report but did not provide additional details.

When the National Security Council was asked to explain the delay, they referred any inquiries to the State Department.

Earlier on Tuesday, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said that the US government is trying very hard to meet the "self-imposed deadline."

Miller said it is possible to "slip" a little bit, but the administration is trying to get the report done by Wednesday.

On Monday night, some 200 attorneys, 27 of whom are currently in the Biden administration, sent a letter to top US officials arguing that sending weapons to Israel would be illegal.

The report's delay comes as Israel started a military operation in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, where some 1.4 million Palestinians - are sheltering.

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Two Americans Detained in Russia Not Affiliated with US Government - White House

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - Both American citizens who were recently detained in Russia were not there on behalf of the US government, and the State Department is seeking access to them, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday.

"The State Department is actively seeking counsel or access to both individuals, and neither of whom were in Russia on behalf of or in affiliation with the US government," Jean-Pierre said during a press briefing.

The remarks were in response to a reporter's question on the case of Army Staff Sgt. Gordon Black, who unofficially traveled to Russia despite warnings against such travel and was arrested there on May 2 on charges of stealing from a woman.

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"We take seriously our commitment to assist US citizens abroad and provide all appropriate assistance," Jean-Pierre added.

On Monday, US Army spokeswoman Cynthia Smith told Sputnik that Russian authorities detained American soldier Gordon Black in Vladivostok on charges of criminal conduct. The soldier was stationed in South Korea before entering Russia. The US Army has started an administrative probe into his travel.

On Tuesday, a Moscow court sentenced an American national to 10 days in detention on charges of petty hooliganism. While drunk, William Nycum broke a window to gain entry into a children's library and fell asleep there. Nycum reportedly came to Russia on a tourist visa and was staying with acquaintances.

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US-Led Exercise Astral Knight Kicked Off Over Poland, Baltic States – Pentagon

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WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) – The US-led military exercise Astral Knight 2024 kicked off in Poland and the Baltic States with the participation of nearly 5,000 military personnel and 50 aircraft from six NATO countries, Pentagon deputy spokesperson Sabrina Singh said on Tuesday.

"I'd like to highlight the start of exercise Astral Knight … This two-week exercise, now in its sixth year, will feature live flying and simulated combat scenarios focused on Poland and the Baltic states. Nearly 5,000 military members and more than 50 aircraft from six NATO nations, which include Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the United Kingdom and the United States, will participate side by side strengthening our ability to operate as one cohesive force," Singh said during a press briefing.

According to the NATO Allied Air Command, Denmark and Greece will observe some elements of the exercise without taking part in it.

The exercise will run through May 18 and will demonstrate the US' unwavering commitment to the security and readiness of its allies in Europe, Singh added.

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Netanyahu's Opposition to Palestinian State Harms Israeli Security - US Congressman Smith

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's opposition to an independent Palestinian state has ultimately harmed Israel's security, US Congressman Adam Smith said on Tuesday.

"Netanyahu was fundamentally wrong on the single biggest question that we face. He felt Israel cannot be safe if there's a Palestinian state, when in fact the opposite was true," Smith said during an interview with the American Enterprise Institute.

Netanyahu has undermined Israeli security by hindering the emergence of a legitimate Palestinian state, Smith said.

The United States wants to push back on Netanyahu's policies and achieve a two-state solution, Smith said.

On October 7, 2023, Palestinian organization Hamas launched a large-scale attack on Israel, in which approximately 1,200 civilians and military personnel were killed and some 240 others abducted. Israel subsequently launched a military operation in the Gaza Strip, leading to the deaths of more than 34,700 people in the Palestinian enclave, according to local authorities.

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Biden Administration Directed Embassy Not to Attend Putin's Inauguration - White House

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration directed staff at the US Embassy in Moscow not to attend the inauguration ceremony for Russian President Vladimir Putin to

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protest against the conflict in Ukraine, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday.

"The US directed its embassy not to attend inauguration as you know in protest obviously to Russia's aggression into Ukraine," Jean-Pierre said. "As you also know, under Putin's leadership, Russia launched this brutal and unprovoked war and Russian authorities have engaged in draconian repression at home as well as aggressive actions abroad."

Putin's inauguration ceremony took place at the Kremlin earlier in the day. The Russian president will hold the office for the next six years until 2030.

In total, about 2,600 people were invited to the ceremony, according to Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov.

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White House Says News About Alleged Murder Plot Against Zelenskyy 'Very Concerning'

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday that the news about the alleged murder plot against Volodymyr Zelenskyy is "very concerning."

"We saw the announcement, it certainly is very concerning news and obviously we are glad that the potential assassination attempt was averted," Jean-Pierre said.

Earlier on Tuesday, the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) said it had arrested two officers of the State Guard on suspicion of plotting to murder Zelenskyy.

"The SBU has busted a network of the Russian Federal Security Bureau's fifth agency, which plotted to murder Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Two colonels of the State Guard were detained," the statement said.

The SBU claimed the two officers were allegedly plotting to have Zelenskyy targeted by a missile or a drone strike,

The security agency accused the two of planning to spy on Zelenskyy and senior Ukrainian government officials, including SBU chief Vasyl Maliuk and defense intelligence chief Kyrylo Budanov.

The suspects have been charged with high treason and with plotting to commit an act of terrorism. They face a sentence of life in prison.

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Pentagon Says Can Not Confirm Reports About Russia Using Starlink for Military Operations

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) – Pentagon deputy spokesperson Sabrina Singh on Tuesday said that she could not corroborate reports about Russia's alleged use of Starlink terminals for its military operations in Ukraine.

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"As you know, our contract with Starlink is for the Ukrainians to use. But I don't have anything more specific on Russia using Starlink," Singh said during a press briefing.

The Wall Street Journal reported on Monday that US Senator Elizabeth Warren in a letter to US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin urged the Pentagon to address the alleged use of Starlink internet systems by Russian troops, calling it a national security threat to the United States.

In early March, The Washington Post, citing a letter it obtained, reported that two US House Democrats claimed Russia had been using Starlink terminals, posing "a serious threat" to Ukraine's security.

SpaceX supplied Starlink terminals to Ukraine soon after Russia began its special military operation in February 2022. The Pentagon also purchased several hundred terminals for Ukraine in June 2023.

SpaceX founder Elon Musk has said that no Starlinks have been sold directly or indirectly to Russia. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that the Starlink satellite internet system was neither certified for use in, nor officially supplied to Russia, and therefore could not be used.

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RFK Jr. Says Ukraine Conflict Headed Towards 'Calamitous Escalation'

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - The conflict in Ukraine is headed towards a serious escalation, independent US presidential candidate Robert Kennedy Jr. said on Tuesday.

"The situation in Ukraine is on the brink of a calamitous escalation," Kennedy said in a statement via social media platform X. "Do the military imperialists in Washington and their lackeys in Europe have any idea the danger they are courting?"

Kennedy referenced several recent developments in the conflict, including the delivery of long-range Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS) to Ukraine and NATO military advisers directly aiding Ukraine in its fight against Russia.

He also pointed towards UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron's support of Ukraine using UK-provided weapons to strike Russian territory. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that such a statement is a dangerous form of verbal escalation.

Moreover, Kennedy noted Russia's recent exercises with non-strategic nuclear forces, which the candidate said Russia may use if threatened by NATO direct involvement in the conflict.

The US and its allies are playing a game of "chicken" with their foreign policy, Kennedy said.

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Israel Told US That Kerem Shalom Border Crossing Will Be Opened Tomorrow - White House

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - Israel told the United States that the Kerem Shalom crossing into Gaza will be reopened on Wednesday, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre

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said
"Israel has committed to reopening the Kerem Shalom … We've been told that that's going to happen tomorrow," Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday.

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US Army Opens Administrative Probe Into American Soldier Travel to Vladivostok - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - The US Army has started an administrative probe into the circumstances surrounding American soldier Gordon Black's travel to Vladivostok, Russia, where he was detained on charges of stealing last week, Pentagon deputy spokesperson Sabrina Singh said on Tuesday.
"The Army has opened an administrative investigation to determine the facts and the circumstances surrounding his travel," Singh said during a press briefing.
Singh noted that according to the US Department of Defense guidelines for foreign clearance, US military personnel are prohibited from traveling to Russia.
On Monday, US Army spokeswoman Cynthia Smith told Sputnik that Russian authorities detained an American soldier on charges of criminal conduct in Vladivostok. US media reported that the soldier was stationed in South Korea before entering Russia.

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Cuban President Congratulates 'Dear Friend' Putin on Assuming New Presidential Term

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) – Cuba congratulates "dear friend" Vladimir Putin over his March re-election and assumption of his new presidential mandate, Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel said on Tuesday.
Earlier on Monday, the Cuban President arrived in Moscow for a state visit. Diaz-Cannel will attend the Victory Day parade on May 9 to mark the 79th anniversary of the Great Patriotic War.
Following the parade, Putin is set to host two rounds of discussion with his Cuban counterpart in the so-called narrow and extended formats. Diaz-Cannel will also take part in the meetings of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council.
"In the name of the Party [Communist Party of Cuba], the Government, and the People of Cuba, we salute the inauguration for a new mandate as president of the Russian Federation, of dear friend Vladimir Putin," Diaz-Canel said via X.
The Cuban President highlighted the record-high participation in Russia's March 15-17 elections in which Putin won another six-year term with 87.28% of the votes.
Putin's inauguration ceremony took place in the Kremlin earlier in the day. The Russian President will hold the office for the next six years until 2030. In total, about 2,600 people have been invited to the ceremony, according to Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov.

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Biden Administration Aware 25 US Citizens Detained in Camps in Syria - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is aware that about 25 US citizens may remain in detention facilities in northeastern Syria, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller told reporters on Monday.

"With respect to the number of Americans that remain, we are aware of approximately 25 US citizens who may be located in displaced persons camps and detention facilities in North East Syria," Miller said during a press briefing.

Miller emphasized that the United States was able to repatriate 11 citizens and one family member of a US citizen.

"In terms of the operation that just happened overnight, there were 11 Americans and 1 family member who is not a US citizen but a family member of a US citizen," Miller said.

Earlier on Tuesday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the United States has repatriated 11 US citizens from camps detaining relatives of fighters belonging to the Islamic State terror group (banned in Russia) in northeastern Syria. The move marks the largest number of US citizens retrieved from the conflict zone.

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History Will Condemn Israel, US for Rafah Operation as Massacre Looms - Cuban President

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - History will condemn Israel for carrying out a military operation in Rafah in the Gaza Strip, and the United States for supporting the operation, Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel said on Tuesday.

"The genocide in Gaza continues despite worldwide outcry demanding its end," Diaz-Canel said via X. "The criminal government of Israel goes against Rafah, where 1.5 million civilians are massed. A new massacre of Palestinians is looming right before the world's eyes. History will condemn Israel and the US."

Earlier on Tuesday, Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez said Israel's insistence on carrying out the operation in Rafah despite attempts by allies to dissuade it would cause unprecedented suffering and additional displacement of thousands of Palestinians.

The Israel Defense Forces on Monday started a military operation in the eastern outskirts of Rafah after urging residents and displaced Palestinians present there to evacuate.

The decision came despite the Palestinian movement Hamas agreeing to the terms of the ceasefire deal proposed by Egypt and Qatar. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the deal unacceptable.

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Boy Scouts of America Says Rebranding as Scouting America After Welcoming Girls

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - The Boy Scouts of America said on Tuesday that they are rebranding the organization as Scouting America, after having opened the group up to girls five years ago.

"The Boy Scouts of America today announced that it will rebrand to Scouting America, reflecting the organization's ongoing commitment to welcome every youth and family in America to experience the benefits of Scouting," the organization said in a statement.

The rebranding celebrates the fifth anniversary of opening up the organization to girls, the statement said. The name change will take effect on February 8, 2025, which is the organization's 115th anniversary, the statement said.

The group currently serves more than 176,000 girls, including more than 6,000 who have received the rank of Eagle Scout, the statement said.

Overall, more than 130 million Americans have participated in Scouting programs since its founding, including more than 2.75 million who have earned the rank of Eagle Scout, the statement said.

The name change is a simple but important evolution to ensure that everyone feels welcome in Scouting, the group's president, Roger Krone, said in the statement. Although the name will change, the organization's mission remains unaltered, Krone added.

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Israeli Actions in Rafah Do Look Like Prelude to Major Military Operation – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) – Israel's limited military operation in Rafah that began on Monday does look like a prelude to a major military operation in the city, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Tuesday.

"This does look like the prelude of a major military operation [in Rafah]," Miller said during a press briefing.

Miller added that the Biden administration wants to see "what happens next" in Rafah before taking any steps with respect to Israel.

On Monday, Israel started a military operation in eastern Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. Miller said that a major military operation would disrupt the ongoing humanitarian assistance delivery to Gaza and that the Biden administration continues to oppose it.

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Biden Called on Americans to 'Stand United Against Antisemitism' In All Forms

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden has urged all Americans to stand against antisemitism, adding that his administration launched the first national strategy to counter antisemitism.

"We know that's not the work of government alone or Jews alone, that's why I am calling on all Americans to stand united against antisemitism and hate in all its forms," Biden said at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's Annual Days of Remembrance ceremony.

The US House of Representatives passed the legislation last week to update the definition of antisemitism for the enforcement of federal anti-discrimination laws concerning educational programs.

The legislation, dubbed the Antisemitism Awareness Act, applies a definition of antisemitism created by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and includes examples of antisemitism identified by the group.

The House advanced the legislation amid numerous pro-Palestine protests on college campuses around the United States, which have in some cases prompted police responses. The Biden administration and some lawmakers have accused demonstrators of antisemitism for their participation in the protests.

The Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE) said that the legislation would chill political speech about the Israel-Palestine conflict on US college campuses. The definition of antisemitism adopted by the bill is unconstitutionally vague and overbroad, FIRE said.

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No Assessment Israel Has Begun Major Military Operation in Rafah at This Time - State Dept

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - The United States does not believe that a large-scale military operation has begun in Rafah at this time, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said on Tuesday.

"It is not our assessment that a ... major military operation has begun at this point," Miller said during a press briefing.

On Monday, the Israel Defense Forces started a military operation in the eastern outskirts of Rafah after issuing an evacuation advisory to residents.

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Global Oil Benchmark Brent Seen Near $90 in 2024, $85 in 2025 - EIA

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WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - Brent crude, the global benchmark for oil, is expected to trade near $90 per barrel for the rest of this year due to supply disruptions caused by geopolitical events and producer alliance OPEC+'s output cuts, the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) said in a forecast published on Tuesday.

By next year, Brent could slip toward $85 as worldwide oil production grows, the EIA said in its monthly Short-Term Energy Outlook report.

"We expect voluntary OPEC+ crude oil production cuts and ongoing geopolitical risks will keep the Brent crude oil spot price near $90 per barrel (b) for the remainder of 2024 before falling to an average of $85/b in 2025 as global oil production growth picks up," the report said.

Brent hovered at under $84 per barrel in Tuesday's New York futures trade, after reaching a near six-month high of $92.18 on April 12.

Crude prices rose with few stops in the first three months of the year as the conflict in the Gaza Strip impacted to an extent shipments from oil-rich countries in the Middle East.

OPEC+'s determination to support the market with production cuts also bolstered prices.

OPEC+ intends to maintain supply cuts of 2.2 million barrels per day until the end of June. The alliance groups the 13-member Saudi-led Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) with ten other oil producing nations steered by Russia.

As of Tuesday, Brent showed a gain of nearly 8% on the year.

West Texas Intermediate, the benchmark for US crude, was up more than 9% on the year, hovering at under $79 per barrel in New York futures trade.

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UN Spokesman Says No One Should Threaten International Criminal Court

UNITED NATIONS, May 7 (Sputnik) - No one should make threats against the International Criminal Court, UN Spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Tuesday as the ICC faces increased pressure over possible arrest warrants for Israel officials due to their actions in the Gaza Strip.

"No one should threaten anyone, and that includes the International Criminal Court," Dujarric said in a briefing, when asked whether the UN had any comment on recent threats received by the ICC.

On Monday, 12 US lawmakers warned in a letter to the ICC that if it takes any actions against Israel, it will result in "severe sanctions against you and your institution." 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.

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White House Hopes Possible to Close Gaps in Hostage Talks

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - The United States believes it is possible to close remaining gaps in negotiations on a hostage deal between Israel and Hamas, the White House said on Tuesday.

"It's based on our understanding of where the text is right now. Again, Hamas responded yesterday. There were amendments offered. It's our understanding from looking at the text that we feel it suggests that we should be able to close these gaps," White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said during a press briefing.

The remarks were in response to a reporter's question asking for clarity on the optimism about ending the hostage talks soon.

On Monday, the Israel Defense Forces started a military operation in the eastern parts of Rafah, after urging residents to evacuate. Palestinian movement Hamas said that it had agreed to the provisions of the Gaza ceasefire deal proposed by Egypt and Qatar, but Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the deal unacceptable. Over a million people are believed to be sheltering in the city.

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House Majority Leader Scalise Calls on Biden to Resume Supplying Bombs to Israel

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - House Majority Leader Steve Scalise on Tuesday urged the Biden administration to remove the hold on the supply of precision bombs to Israel that was reportedly put on hold last week amid tensions over the decision of Netanyahu's cabinet to conduct a massive military operation in refugee-flooded Rafah in the south of Gaza.

“[W]e passed an aid package [for Israel] that is currently being held up by the Biden Administration. It is time for the Biden Administration to stop holding up that aid to Israel,” the lawmaker’s office quoted Scalise as saying.

Politico reported on Tuesday that the Biden administration has not yet signed off on a pending sale of Boeing-made Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAM) that can be converted to precision weapons, including Small Diameter Bombs.

The Wall Street Journal reported that Washington was expected to sell about 6,500 JDAM systems to Israel on Monday.

The delay is the first known instance of the United States delaying the supply of military aid to its closest ally in the Middle East amid disagreements over Israel’s stance on Rafah.

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.

On Monday, Israel started a military operation in eastern Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said that the operation would disrupt the ongoing humanitarian assistance delivery to Gaza and that the Biden administration continues to oppose it.

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On October 7, 2023, Palestinian movement Hamas launched a large-scale rocket attack against Israel and breached the border, attacking both civilian neighborhoods and military bases. Nearly 1,200 people in Israel were killed and some 240 others abducted during the attack. Israel launched retaliatory strikes, ordered a complete blockade of Gaza, and started a ground incursion into the Palestinian enclave with the declared goal of eliminating Hamas fighters and rescuing the hostages. Over 34,700 people have been killed so far by Israeli strikes in the Gaza Strip, according to local authorities. More than 100 hostages are still believed to be held by Hamas in Gaza.

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US Coast Guard Polar Icebreaker 5 Years Behind Schedule, $2Bln Over Budget - Official

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - The US Coast Guard's proposed next generation polar icebreaker to reestablish and maintain a strong US presence in the Arctic Ocean is at least five years behind schedule and $2 billion over budget with many design and shipbuilding problems still unresolved, a senior Biden administration official and a new report told Congress on Tuesday.

"The PSC [Polar Security Cutter] program is now years behind the original schedule, without having attained the level of maturity we require prior to authorizing the start of construction," Department of Homeland Security Deputy Under Secretary for Management Randolph Alles told the US House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Transportation and Maritime Security.

The project had suffered from the general lack of US experience designing and building polar icebreakers and its prime contractor VT Halter Marine suffered from organizational instability and has undergone managerial restructuring following its acquisition by Bollinger, a competitor shipyard in 2022, Alles said.

In addition, the design of the Polar Security Cutter is more complex and is taking more than three years longer than expected - delaying delivery of the lead ship by about five years, Alles said.

Earlier on Tuesday, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a new report in which it concluded that the program's costs increased by more than $2 billion due to these challenges.

Even with a projected 39% increase, procurement costs still appear to still be significantly underestimated because the actual ship design is about 35% larger in terms of light-ship displacement than the government's original notional design, the GAO said.

On April 24, US Coast Guard Vice Commandant Steven Poulin said that the United States is losing ground in the Arctic to its near-peer competitors Russia and China because of a lack of icebreaking capability, but he was optimistic the situation will improve in the future.

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UN Chief Will Send Letter to Putin on His Inauguration as Head of State - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, May 7 (Sputnik) - The United Nations secretary-general is planning to send a letter to Russian President Putin upon his inauguration, UN Spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Tuesday.

"A letter will be sent by the Secretary General as he does whenever a new head of state is inaugurated or re-inaugurated as the case may be," Dujarric said.

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White House Says Israel Told US Operation in Rafah Last Night Was 'Limited'

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik)- Israel told the United States that its operation last night in Rafah was limited, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"What we've been told by our Israeli counterparts is that this operation last night was limited and designed to cut off Hamas' ability to smuggle weapons and funds into Gaza," Kirby said.

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Talks on Hamas-Held Hostages Starting Again in Cairo - White House

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - Talks on releasing the remaining hostages held by Hamas are starting again in Cairo, Egypt, where the US delegation will be headed by CIA Director William Burns, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Tuesday.

"Talks are starting again today in Cairo," Kirby said. "Bill Burns will be representing us there."

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Two in 3 Canadians Say Protests Amid Gaza Conflict Useful to Raise Awareness - Poll

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - Two in three Canadians say protesting amid Israel's military operations in the Gaza Strip is useful to increase awareness about the issue but only slightly more than a third say protests can influence government policies, a new Angus Reid poll revealed on Tuesday.

The poll comes against the backdrop of heightened social tensions in Canada over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and an uptick in protests against Israel's military campaign in Gaza,

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including at McGill University in Montreal, University of Toronto and University of Ottawa.

"Angus Reid Institute finds most Canadians believe pro-Palestinian protesters can generate attention for the plight of Gazans - two-thirds (66%) say protest movements are effective at raising awareness of an issue," a report on the poll said.

However, close to half of the respondents say protests are either ineffective (34%) or very ineffective (15%) in making the government or companies change their stances on the ongoing conflict, the poll report said.

The proportion of Canadians who believe that demonstrations cannot change the views of those who initially disagree is even larger, with close to seven in ten (69%) expressing such a view, as opposed to 20% who think it is either effective or very effective, the poll report said.

On Thursday, another Angus Reid poll related to the topic of protests found that two in three Canadians said law enforcement gave preferential treatment to certain protests and causes.

Nearly two thirds of respondents (74%) said that the right to protest was lost as soon as laws were broken and 52% of respondents said organizers should be held responsible and charged with crimes committed during demonstrations.

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US Seeks To Buy 3.3Mln Barrels To Resume Oil Reserve Refill As Prices Drop - Energy Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration seeks to buy 3.3 million barrels of crude at just below $80 per barrel to resume its refill of the US oil reserve, the Department of Energy announced on Tuesday, a month after the task was paused when prices trended at or toward $90.

The Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) “has a requirement to conduct a purchase of approximately three million and three hundred thousand barrels of United States produced sour crude oil for October 2024 delivery at a price no higher than $79.99 per barrel,” the department said in a statement.

The announcement came as a barrel of West Texas Intermediate, the benchmark for US crude, hovered at under $78.30, about 0.3% lower on the day and down almost 4.5% since the start of May.

On April 12, the crude benchmark hit a near six-month high of $87.67. Brent, the global benchmark for crude, reached as high as $92.18 the same day.

The Energy Department began buying crude oil to refill the SPR in May 2023, after drawing about 200 million barrels or more from the reserve since the end of 2021 to tamp down spiraling oil prices caused by supply outages.

It last announced a purchase for the SPR in February when it said it had bought 3.25 million barrels to be delivered through August.

On April 3, the department halted a separate 3-million barrel deal, citing “taxpayer’s interest," after a three-month rally added some $8 to the price of a barrel. That oil was meant to have been delivered to the SPR site in Bayou Choctaw, Louisiana, by September.

Biden’s use of the SPR has been a highly charged matter for proponents of high oil prices and

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political opponents of the president. Both accuse him of turning the SPR into a political tool to subdue crude prices and shore up his standing with American voters, when the reserve is meant for emergency use — i.e. to boost the availability of oil in times of critically short supply.
Biden, in his defense, had said he was only acting to reduce record high pump prices of fuel, which stood at above $5 per gallon in June 2022 and has stabilized since at below $3.50. The administration had also blamed high crude oil prices for US inflation getting to four-decade highs of above 9% in June 2022.

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TikTok Says Filed Petition in US Federal Court to Overturn Ban

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - TikTok said in a statement on Tuesday that it has filed a petition in US federal court to overturn the congressional ban of its application, arguing it is unconstitutional.
"Today, we filed a petition in federal court seeking to overturn the unconstitutional TikTok ban," the statement said.
On April 26, President Joe Biden signed into law a bill that would ban TikTok if its China-based parent company, ByteDance, does not sell the US business within nine months. The law allows the US president to extend the deadline to one year.
TikTok said on Thursday that it did not intend to sell its US branch.

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Greene Says Asked US House Speaker Johnson to End Funding for Ukraine, Special Counsels

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - US Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene said on Tuesday that she asked House Speaker Mike Johnson to end funding for Ukraine and defund special counsel probes into former President Donald Trump, lest she attempt to advance a motion to vacate Johnson from his leadership role.
On Monday, Johnson met with Greene and Congressman Thomas Massie, who have backed a potential effort to oust Johnson. The lawmakers are set to meet again on Tuesday at 12:30 p.m. ET.
"I didn't plan on discussing my list before today's 12:30 meeting. But since it was leaked, I'm making it clear these are simple and easy for Mike Johnson to follow," Greene said in a statement via the social media platform X.
Greene said she asked Johnson to end funding for Ukraine and defund special counsels.
Greene also requested that Johnson follow the Hastert Rule, which states that a majority of the majority party must support any legislation, the congresswoman said.
Moreover, Greene requested that lawmakers automatically impose a 1% cut to government

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spending as part of a continuing resolution if the US Congress fails to pass 12 separate appropriations bills, the congresswoman said.
Trump has reportedly urged Greene in private to end her effort to oust Johnson, advocating instead for a unified Republican Party.

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Tampa Bay Lightning Right Wing Nikita Kucherov Among Top 3 Contenders for NHL Hart Trophy

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - Tampa Bay Lightning right wing Nikita Kucherov is a finalist for the 2023-24 Hart Memorial Trophy, the National Hockey League (NHL) said on Tuesday.
"Tampa Bay Lightning right wing Nikita Kucherov, Colorado Avalanche center Nathan MacKinnon, and Edmonton Oilers center Connor McDavid are the three finalists for the 2023-24 Hart Memorial Trophy, awarded "to the player adjudged to be the most valuable to his team," the NHL said in a statement.

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UPDATE - Israel Invasion of Rafah 'Completely Unacceptable' - Canadian Foreign Minister

(Updates with more details in paras 5-7)
WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly said on Tuesday that an invasion of Rafah in the Gaza Strip by Israel is "completely unacceptable" as it would endanger a large number of innocent civilians, many of which are women and children.
"An invasion of Rafah which would endanger the life of women and children, and innocent civilians is completely unacceptable," Joly said. "We absolutely need that the military invasion of Rafah by Israel doesn't happen."
Joly pointed out that the situation in Gaza is "absolutely catastrophic" and the majority of Palestinians currently located in Rafah were previously displaced and have nowhere else to go.
Canada will continue to maintain contact with and exert pressure on Israel, Joly said.
Canadian International Development Minister Ahmed Hussen expressed Canada's disappointment over the Israel's operation in Rafah that he had advised against.
"We have always said that that operation shouldn't happen," Hussen said. "This will cause a lot of civilian casualties. We have constantly advised against this operation and we're very disappointed that it's happening."
Hussen also said Israel's operation would not contribute to more humanitarian aid getting in Gaza but emphasized that Canada would continue to do everything it can to provide aid.
On Monday, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) started a military operation in the eastern outskirts

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of Rafah after issuing an evacuation advisory to residents.
The IDF took control over Rafah's said of the border crossing with Egypt resulting in the suspension of all humanitarian aid shipments there, according to the Israeli newspaper Haaretz.
Some 1.5 million Palestinians are believed to be sheltering in Rafah.

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Apple Unveils Updated iPad Air, Pro Models - Statements

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - US tech company Apple said on Tuesday that it is releasing updated versions of its iPad Air and Pro models, which feature improved technological capabilities.
"With its combination of a brilliant Liquid Retina display, the phenomenal performance of the M2 chip, incredible AI [artificial intelligence] capabilities, and its colorful, portable design with support for new accessories, iPad Air is more powerful and versatile than ever," Apple Vice President of Product Marketing Bob Borchers said in a statement.
The updated iPad Airs will come in both 11-inch and 13-inch models, the statement said. The new models will be available starting May 15, although customers can place orders starting Tuesday, the statement said.
The new iPad Pro models will also come in 11-inch and 13-inch versions, Apple said in a separate statement. The updated iPad Pro models will feature Apple's new M4 chip, which will offer a "huge leap" in performance and capabilities, the statement said.
Moreover, the new iPad Pros are Apple's thinnest products ever, at slightly over 5 millimeters thick, the statement said.
Customers can also place orders for the new iPad Pros starting Tuesday, with in-store availability beginning May 15, the statement said.

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Israel Invasion of Rafah 'Completely Unacceptable' - Canadian Foreign Minister

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly said on Tuesday that an invasion of Rafah in the Gaza Strip by Israel is "completely unacceptable" as it would endanger a large number of innocent civilians, many of which women and children.
"An invasion of Rafah which would endanger the life of women and children, and innocent civilians is completely unacceptable," Joly said. "We absolutely need that the military invasion of Rafah by Israel doesn't happen."
Joly pointed out that the situation in Gaza is "absolutely catastrophic" and the majority of Palestinians currently located in Rafah were previously displaced and have nowhere else to go.

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Canada will continue to maintain contact with and exert pressure on Israel, Joly said.
On Monday, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) started a military operation in the eastern parts of Rafah after issuing an evacuation advisory to residents.
The IDF took control over the Gaza side of the Rafah border crossing with Egypt and all humanitarian aid shipments there have been suspended, according to the Israeli newspaper Haaretz.
Some 1.5 million Palestinians are believed to be sheltering in Rafah.

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US Sanctions Russian National, Alleged Leader of LockBit Ransomware Group - Treasury

(Adds details in paras 3-8)
WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) – The United States imposed sanctions on Russian national Dmitry Khoroshev who is presumed to be a leader of the LockBit ransomware group, the US Department of the Treasury said on Tuesday.
"Today, the United States designated Dmitry Yuryevich Khoroshev, a Russian national and a leader of the Russia-based LockBit group, for his role in developing and distributing LockBit ransomware," the department said in a press release.
The United States alleges that Khoroshev is the primary operator of the LockBit-related cybercrime moniker, "LockBitSupp," and as a key leader and developer of the ransomware group has performed a variety of operational and administrative roles for it, according to the release.
The Department of the Treasury said that throughout its history LockBit has targeted more than 2,500 victims worldwide and received more than $500 million in ransom payments.
According to the Justice Department, Khoroshev, 31, is from Voronezh in Russia and is charged with a 26-count indictment by a grand jury in the District of New Jersey.
If found guilty, Khoroshev faces up to 185 years in prison and a fine of up to $250,000, the Justice Department said.
Khoroshev has become the 6th person involved in criminal prosecution against LockBit following indictments of Russian nationals Artur Sungatov and Ivan Kondratyev in February 2024, Ruslan Astamirov in June 2023, Mikhail Matveev in May 2023, and Mikhail Vasiliev in November 2022.
Additionally, the US State Department announced that it will pay up to $10 million in reward for information leading to Khoroshev's arrest.

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US Not Hyping But Underplaying Disinformation Threat by Russia, China - Special Envoy

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WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - The United States is not hyping but it is rather underplaying the disinformation threat posed by Russia and China, US State Department Global Engagement Center Coordinator and Special Envoy James Rubin said on Tuesday.

"I don't believe we are hyping the disinformation there and around the world. I think we are underplaying it," Rubin said.

Rubin also said that there has not been a realization of the impact of such disinformation on other countries.

The US government still does not have a formal threat assessment of the information damage caused by China and Russia to its interests around the world, Rubin added.

Russian officials have said that the collective West is doing what they are best at - spreading disinformation and increasing anti-Russian hysteria, including to justify the unprecedented militarization of Europe, and then blaming Russia.

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Johnson Says Intends to Continue Role as US House Speaker in Future

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - US House Speaker Mike Johnson said on Tuesday that he intends to continue his role as House Speaker in the future, when asked whether he will run for the position again.

"I intend to lead this conference in the future," Johnson said during a press conference.

On Monday, Johnson met with US Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene and Congressman Thomas Massie, who have backed a potential effort to oust Johnson as speaker. Johnson called the meeting a good and productive discussion, adding that they will hold another meeting on Tuesday.

Former US President Donald Trump privately urged Greene to end her effort to oust Johnson, ABC News reported on Tuesday. The Republican Party must be united, Trump reportedly told Greene.

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US Sanctions Russian National, Alleged Leader of LockBit Ransomware Group - Treasury

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) - The United States imposed sanctions on Russian national Dmitry Khoroshev who is presumed to be a leader of the LockBit ransomware group, the US Department of the Treasury said on Tuesday.

"Today, the United States designated Dmitry Yuryevich Khoroshev, a Russian national and a leader of the Russia-based LockBit group, for his role in developing and distributing LockBit ransomware," the department said in a press release.

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Canada Govt. Introduces Bill to Curb Foreign Interference, Create Foreign Agents Registry

WASHINGTON, May 7 (Sputnik) – The Canadian government has proposed new legislation aimed at countering foreign interference in Canada, notably by updating existing laws and creating a foreign agents registry, the country's Ministry of Public Safety said.

Bill C-70 - An Act respecting countering foreign interference – was introduced Monday evening by Minister of Public Safety Dominic LeBlanc and Minister of Justice Arif Virani.

Ottawa announced the bill three days after the release of a preliminary report by the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions tasked with probing alleged meddling attempts by countries like China, Russia and India, among others.

"Bill C-70 proposes to update existing laws to better equip the government to detect, disrupt, and protect against foreign interference threats against all people in Canada, including members of diaspora, marginalized or otherwise vulnerable communities," the ministry said in a statement.

Accordingly, the bill includes proposed changes to the Security of Information Act, an update to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act and to the "sabotage" offence under the Criminal Code. C-70 also seeks several amendments to the Canada Evidence Act to create a standardized and streamlined service for handling sensitive information in administrative proceedings in the Federal Court of Canada.

The bill also introduces the Foreign Influence Transparency and Accountability Act, which creates a Foreign Influence Transparency Registry that is to be overseen by an independent Foreign Influence Transparency Commissioner, the statement said.

The registry would "promote transparency" from individuals advocating on behalf of a foreign principal, including a foreign state or state-owned business, the statement said.

The proposed framework would require individuals or entities who undertake lobbying or other similar activities on behalf of a foreign government to publicly register these activities, it said.

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