

5/8/24 Wednesday

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'It's Indescribable': Humanitarian Crisis in Rafah Rapidly Unfolds as US Pauses Arms Shipment

Just days following Israel's military assault on Rafah, a recent report says that hospitals in Rafah are at risk of being overwhelmed by a "wave" of injured Palestinians while access to the city has been blocked - cutting off desperately needed supplies including fuel.

During the interview, Sputnik's Ted Rall cited an article from [The Guardian](#) which reported that Israeli forces have taken control of the Palestinian side of the Rafah crossing that lies between Gaza and Egypt. A spokesperson for the Israeli government has called the attack its "mission to take out the last found Hamas brigades in Rafah". He adds that there is now "widespread looting of existing stocks in Rafah" and that aid agencies were forced to flee warehouses leaving them unguarded.

The [report](#) added that Israel "now controls all of Gaza's crossings for the first time since it withdrew troops and settlers from the territory nearly two decades ago."

Dan Kovalik, an American human rights lawyer and peace activist, sat down with [Sputnik's The Final Countdown](#) on Wednesday and discussed in detail the dire situation in Rafah.

"We're witnessing something very terrible. First of all, we have to remember about 1.5 million of the 2.3 million people in Gaza fled to Rafah because they were told it was a safe zone, and it really has never been safe," Kovalik explained. "It's been bombed periodically throughout the course of this war, if you want to call it a war. But now, it is being targeted in a very big way. As you say, no one can come in and no one can leave - that must be emphasized."

Kovalik added that he knows of two persons who acquired appropriate clearance to leave Rafah to go to Egypt, but who are unable to leave.

"People pay thousands of dollars to an Egyptian company, which has made at least \$90 million off the poor Gazans they've been charging thousands of dollars for people to leave. People pay that money, and are on waiting lists to leave. They can't leave. So, these people are trapped in a situation where they are being bombed relentlessly," he added.

"And, already, the children, which is about half the population of all of Gaza and of Rafah itself, all the children, the UN has said, are already weakened from hunger. So, the long and short of it is, you're going to see a mass casualty rate come out of this invasion of Rafah," said Kovalik.

"Israel said it's going to carry this out for three months. I think you're going to see tens of thousands of people, mostly women and children, killed as a result of this, and it's indescribable."

Kovalik added that the US has played a "treacherous role" by feigning care for the Palestinians while continuing to approve billions of dollars in arms to Israel. The lawyer and activist then added that Egypt has also been playing an "embarrassingly cowardly" role in the conflict. The Egyptians have "given up control" of their side to the Israelis as they receive concessions and capital from the US, he says, which in part accounts for the lack of aid flowing into Rafah.

Sputnik's Angie Wong then asked their guest about Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's legacy; as she wondered whether the assault on Rafah will be Netanyahu's "last dance".

"This is his last stand," said Kovalik. "Sadly, I don't think he'll be replaced over this. I think he sees this as his only gambit. What is likely to happen is once he does step down from office or is voted out or whatever, he will be arrested and probably jailed for corruption, but not over this. Largely, this attack on Rafah is pretty popular within Israel. There are some protests over it, but I think the polls show most people support it."

"And I think he feels that the war needs to continue for his own survival. What his legacy is going to be, it will be terrible. Even people who support what he's doing don't like him. He's very unlikeable, even hardcore Zionist don't like him," the activist explained. "They know that he has really destroyed Israel's credibility throughout the world in a way that it'll never come back from."

On Wednesday, the World Health Organization said there would only be enough fuel to run health services in the south of Gaza for three more days. In addition, just a third of Gaza's 36 hospitals and primary health care centers are operating while all face shortages of medicine, fuel and providers.

[Last week](#), the Biden administration paused an arms shipment to Israel to prevent arms from being used against the city of Rafah, said administration officials. Reportedly, the president withheld 1,800 bombs weighing 2,000 pounds and 1,700 bombs weighing 500 pounds out of fear that they will be used against the more than one million Gazans seeking shelter in Rafah. More than [34,000](#) people have died in Gaza since October, according to local health officials. That total is most likely an incomplete count as well.

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Lawmakers or War-Mongering Bullies?

Israeli officials reportedly said that their prime minister is 'extremely nervous about the possible arrest warrants', adding that he had spoken to several US lawmakers in recent days, asking them to press the ICC against taking action.

A group of US Republican lawmakers released an open (and signed) [letter](#) threatening International Criminal Court (ICC) officials against issuing arrest warrants against Israeli officials, including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The court shot back against the lawmakers' threats, though they did not name the US specifically.

"Target Israel and we will target you," the senators said in a letter to ICC chief prosecutor Karim Khan. The US lawmakers added that if the ICC does so, they will "sanction your employees and associates, and bar you and your families from the US."

"You have been warned," they ominously added.

The US lawmakers indirectly threatened to invoke the American Service-Members' Protection Act (ASPA) in response to any arrest warrants. The act was signed into law in 2002 as a way for the US to protect itself against any accountability the ICC may seek and allows the US president to prevent Americans and other allies from being detained by the court. The legislation has been [condemned](#) by human rights organizations.

In their letter, the Republicans also wrote that the ICC's arrest warrants would align them with the "largest state sponsor of terrorism and its proxy". The officials then brazenly suggested that the US and Israel are "outside of [the ICC's] supposed jurisdiction."

The ICC has [reportedly](#) considered a warrant for Netanyahu for some time as they have been investigating since 2021 possible war crimes committed by Israeli forces and Palestinian militants that date back to the 2014 Israel-Hamas war. That investigation then extended to the October 7, 2023 attack and the ongoing war.

Israel has made claims to the US that the Palestinian Authority officials are coercing the ICC prosecutor to issue arrest warrants against Israeli leaders. They then warned the Biden administration that if the ICC does issue arrest warrants against Israeli leaders they will ensure the Palestinian Authority's collapse, a recent [report](#) detailed.

In response, the court said they seek to "engage constructively with all stakeholders".

"The Office seeks to engage constructively with all stakeholders whenever such dialogue is consistent with its mandate under the Rome Statute to act independently and impartially," the ICC's Office of the Prosecutor said in a statement posted on X.

"That independence and impartiality are undermined, however, when individuals threaten to retaliate against the Court or against Court personnel should the Office, in fulfillment of its mandate, make decisions about investigations or cases falling within its jurisdiction," the statement continues.

"Such threats, even when not acted upon, may also constitute an offense against the administration of justice under Art. 70 of the Rome Statute," the ICC added. "That provision explicitly prohibits both 'retaliating against an official of the Court on account of duties performed by that or another official' and 'impeding, intimidating or corruptly influencing an official of the Court for the purpose of forcing or persuading the official not to perform, or to perform improperly, his or her duties.'"

The Biden administration has not commented on whether they will pursue actions against the ICC if they issue arrest warrants for Israeli officials, though they have said that they do not support it.

"We've been really clear about the ICC investigation. We do not support it. We don't believe that they have the jurisdiction. And I'm just going to leave it there for now," White House press secretary [Karine Jean-Pierre](#) said last week.

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Skyrocketing National Debt Could Spell Disaster for Younger Generations of Americans

As a younger generation enters their "home buying age" they are facing mortgage rates that have been pushed up to a 20-year high by the US Federal Reserve. For 2024, 30-year mortgage rates in the US are expected to fall between 6.4% and 6.5%, compared to 2.96% in 2021.

The US is facing a mounting debt of more than \$34 trillion, The Hill wrote in an [article](#) published on Wednesday. And polling has found that Americans are growing more concerned over the

national debt, and what that may mean for their future. Republican lawmakers, for instance, want to make cuts to key social programs like Social Security and Medicare, as opposed to increasing taxes.

A February [report](#) by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) found that the debt held by the public will rise significantly over the next decade; climbing from 99% of GDP in 2024 to 116% in 2034. The report also found that the estimated net interest costs in 2025 would be “greater in relation to GDP than at any point since at least 1940, the first year for which the Office of Management and Budget reports such data.”

Desmond Lachman, a South African-born economist and finance author, explained that selling bonds is one move that increases interest rates, though the Federal Reserve has also increased interest rates to fight inflation, too.

“If the government is borrowing money, you’re needing to raise a lot of money, so it means I’ve got to sell a lot of bonds, that forces interest rates higher,” said Lachman. “If interest rates in general are higher, your mortgage rates are higher.”

“That’s important for young people, because they’re not in the housing market,” he added.

“They’re not sitting on a house that has got a paid off mortgage fate, they are the ones who are going to have to go out and borrow money now at a very high, very high interest rate.”

Wednesday’s article also found that the higher national debt will have an impact on both the US job market as well as the housing market. As is the case with most economic disasters, the two industries will uniformly affect one-another. One economist explained that higher interest rates discourage businesses from making investments in “new capital” including building new homes. Economists also told The Hill that future generations of Americans could see their taxes increase as a way to compensate the surging national debt.

“If the federal government doesn’t get its act together and start charging enough in taxes to cover what it wants to spend on programs, then the debt will go up,” said Joshua Gotbaum, a guest scholar in the Economic Studies program.

“If the debt goes up and the interest rate goes up, then the taxpayers at that time are going to be paying the bill,” he said. “Your parents avoided those bills, because the Congress instead of raising taxes to cover them, borrowed the money.”

A [report](#) from March 1 found that the US national debt - which is the amount the federal government borrows to cover its expenses - has been growing at an expedited rate of about \$1 trillion every 100 days. In June of last year the debt was at \$32 trillion before hitting \$33 trillion in September.

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China & Serbia Form Partnership After Depraved CIA Attack in Belgrade

The two countries have grown closer after the twin tragedies of neoliberal deindustrialization and NATO’s attack on the Chinese embassy in Belgrade.

May 7, 1999 is a date known across Serbia as the day the United States conducted a deadly bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade.

The strike in the capital city, the only one planned in its totality by the US Central Intelligence Agency, killed three Chinese citizens sheltering there and injured at least 20. The United States apologized for the attack, claiming planners had consulted outdated and inaccurate maps of the location, but the excuse has been met with wide skepticism.

The bombing occurred amidst NATO's 78-day assault on the former Yugoslavia, which killed hundreds. Decades later [increased rates of cancer and birth defects](#) are still observed in the country after the alliance's use of radioactive depleted uranium during its operation.

Serbian-American journalist Nebojsa Malic joined [Sputnik's Fault Lines program Wednesday](#) as the 25th anniversary of the tragic incident is observed, an occasion acknowledged during [Chinese President Xi Jinping's diplomatic visit to Serbia](#).

"The NATO bombing was super controversial," noted Malic. "The people who were killed were Chinese journalists that had taken refuge in the embassy because a lot of journalists had previously been at Serbian television, but that was hit in April of '99 during the night, and NATO declared it a legitimate military target after the fact. And nobody prosecuted anybody for war crimes."

"They paid some indemnity to the Chinese and sent an apology, but none of it ever made any sense because that embassy is in a very prominent location," he added. "You really can't miss it... They knew precisely what they were doing and the excuse that they were attacking an arms exporter – I'm sorry, why would you attack an arms exporter in the middle of a country that's been blockaded for 10 years and hasn't exported anything? It's just such a transparent, fake excuse in my mind, and I think the Chinese didn't buy it either."

NATO's attack on the former Yugoslavia, conducted after the UN Security Council's rejection of the proposal, was illegal under international law. The military alliance justified the assault under the pretense of "humanitarian intervention" amid ethnic strife in the region.

The event, along with NATO's 1995 attack in Bosnia and Herzegovina, signaled the unmasking of NATO as an openly offensive alliance after the end of the Cold War.

Previously, the organization had acted more covertly, supporting efforts such as the CIA's [Operation Gladio](#) which backed neo-Nazi paramilitary groups throughout Europe. Such organizations were ostensibly supported as a contingency in the event of a Soviet invasion, but the groups engaged in [a decades-long campaign of terror](#) designed to justify increased security spending and discredit the left.

"For 40 years... a clandestine intelligence and armed operations organization [has existed] in several member states," acknowledged a European Parliament resolution in 1990. "This organization has escaped all democratic controls, and been run by the secret services of the states concerned in collaboration with NATO."

"Such a clandestine network may have interfered illegally in the internal political affairs of member states [and] may still do so. Military secret services (or uncontrolled branches thereof) were involved in serious cases of terrorism and crime. These organizations operated completely outside the law."

Modern observers [draw parallels](#) between Operation Gladio and NATO countries' backing of jihadist organizations in the Middle East, demonstrating that Western powers are willing to covertly support violence and terrorism for political ends. But as the fall of the Soviet Union in the 1990s briefly left the United States as the world's only superpower, the military alliance

openly engaged in such acts of terror, leaving a deep impression upon those who remember 1999's criminal attack.

"When president Xi actually wrote about it in the oldest newspaper in the Balkans he named the three people who died [and] he said 'we will never forget and we will never allow this to happen again,'" Malic explained. "The entire op-ed was basically saying, 'we have an ironclad friendship with Serbia, we agree on a lot of international issues, and we're going to work together for a more just, equitable and fair globalization in a multipolar world.'"

The two countries' partnership has resulted in a strong economic relationship, with China becoming Serbia's largest foreign investor.

"The Chinese have been able to leverage some of the steelworks and mines that were abandoned by the West [during the 1990s] as being unprofitable whereas the Chinese have made them very profitable, and they're building infrastructure," Malic noted.

The collapse of the Eastern Bloc enabled a flood of Western capital throughout Europe, with Western interests often buying and shutting down formerly state-owned industry. The phenomenon led to the loss of thousands of jobs and deindustrialization throughout Eastern Europe, with devastating consequences. A 2009 [survey](#) of people living in eastern Germany found 57% regretted the decline in their quality of life accompanying the fall of state socialism. Polling in [Russia](#) and many [former Soviet republics](#) reveals similar sentiments.

In Serbia, partnership with China promises to restore the country's industry and infrastructure, with a Chinese-built high-speed rail line linking Belgrade with the city of Novi Sad recently being unveiled.

"It's sort of a day and night difference in both attitude and constructive demeanor that is really underscored by [China's] visit," said Malic. "There's been standing ovations from large crowds of people gathering to chant praises to President Xi because, again, [there's a] completely qualitative difference in the way he respects Serbia versus all of these Western envoys that don't."

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Hapless President Biden Caught Between Unhappy Base, Unrepentant Israel

The US president has suffered politically while trying to satisfy both the Israel lobby and its critics, solidifying perceptions of his weakness and impotence.

Six months out from November's election, US President Joe Biden continues to flounder on a key foreign policy issue.

"We've made clear our views about operations in Rafah that could potentially put more than a million innocent people at greater risk," said White House spokesman John Kirby Monday.

"[Biden] also made clear that we continue to believe that the hostage deal was the best way to avoid that sort of an outcome while securing the release of those hostages."

Days later, the IDF's operation in the southern Gazan city of Rafah continues with no apparent progress on a deal to bring it to an end.

The incident is characteristic of the White House's relationship with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, claimed analyst Hasan Unal, which leaves the US president with the impossible task of attempting to please both pro-Palestine elements in his party and Israel's far-right leadership. The professor of political science and international relations at Bashkent University joined [Sputnik's Fault Lines program Wednesday](#) to discuss these latest developments and their strategic and humanitarian implications.

"I think Israel would've wanted to see Hamas rejecting any deal on that," said Unal after reports emerged the Palestinian group had accepted a proposal negotiated with the help of the US, Egypt and Qatar. "That would have cleared the way for Israel, particularly the Netanyahu government, to undertake that awful military operation in Rafah... It has certainly placed Israel in a very difficult corner in that sense. So Hamas has won the tactical game."

"That doesn't mean that that is going to stop Israel," he explained. "Don't forget, the United States is the only country perhaps in the world that has so much leverage over Israel. On the one hand, yes, there is the Israeli lobby, which is very powerful in the United States. But at the same time the United States has enormous influence and leverage over Israel."

Unal recounted the United States' efforts to rein in Israel in the past, such as during 1956's Suez Crisis in which the US, the Soviet Union, and international authorities ordered Israel to end its occupation of Egyptian territory in the Sinai Desert. The US again forced Israel into a compromise during the 1978 signing of the Camp David Accords and once again when former President Ronald Reagan ordered the country to [end its bombing of Beirut in 1982](#).

In 1991 US Secretary of State James Baker succeeded in [delaying](#) US loan guarantees to Israel until it agreed to pause illegal settlement building in Gaza and the West Bank. Baker and former President George H.W. Bush faced strident opposition for the move from AIPAC and other pro-Israel interests.

Bush lost reelection the following year, and US leaders have shown little willingness to challenge Israel ever since.

But host Jamarl Thomas claimed Biden's efforts to assuage Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have apparently won him little favor as the US president is caught between a dissatisfied base and an Israeli leadership that seems to regard him with contempt.

"He's not getting credit from Israel for all the support he's given," said Thomas. "I mean that deranged speech that he gave yesterday as they are killing all these – I was watching pictures of babies hanging out of buildings from that attack and Joe Biden, at the exact same time, goes out and gives a speech bringing up the Holocaust as if what happened 50, 60 years ago justifies a genocide that's happening now."

"He is trying to have his cake and eat it, too, and he is losing both," he claimed. "Many of those people – the way that Israel sees it, and the way that the Israel lobby sees it – [think] that Joe Biden is abandoning Israel. That's the way they view it... any pressure that he puts on them at all is taken as a rebuttal of Israel as an outright item, despite the fact that his own party is hitting him for basically giving this complete allegiance to Israel."

"He's trying to do two things at once and is accomplishing neither."

"He's not a good juggler," Unal agreed. "He looks terribly confused as to what to do from the very beginning... Israel doesn't take the Biden administration seriously."

"I think there is also the dimension of multipolarity," he added, claiming that other global powers are playing an unprecedented role throughout the controversy. "For instance, in the past we

never had China taking so much of an interest in what is going on in the Middle East and particularly in the Israelis and Palestinians.”

Beijing brokered a meeting of officials from Hamas and Fatah recently, attempting to achieve reconciliation between the two major groups representing Palestinian interests. Moscow hosted a similar summit in February, insisting on a solution to [the long-running Palestine-Israel conflict](#) with support from within the Arab world.

When Israel and Iran traded strikes against each other in April, the United States reportedly called for China to use its influence to prevent Tehran from retaliating for the attack on its consulate in Damascus. Observers noted that the incident demonstrates the rising influence of Moscow and Beijing as the United States’ hapless leader struggles to project power globally.

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Hard Times for US Soft Power Projection in Africa

The United States’ heavy handed attempts to force African countries to cut ties with Russia may be backfiring, according to one observer.

New [polling](#) from Gallup suggests Beijing is increasingly gaining favor across Africa while perceptions of Washington fall.

The data shows China pulling ahead of the US with 58% of respondents holding a positive view of the country. The figure was driven in large part by improvements in the perception of Beijing in Western African nations, where China has invested heavily in infrastructure projects as part of its Belt and Road Initiative. The country’s approval rating stands at a stellar 80% in Cote d’Ivoire, for example, 77% in Guinea and 67% in Benin.

Russia also saw an improvement in perceptions of its leadership with its median approval rating rising above 75% in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Chad.

Expert Linwood Tauheed suggested the decline in the United States’ favorability may be a response to heavy handed attempts by the Biden administration to convince countries to cut ties with Russia amid its campaign to liberate subjects of the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics in the Donbass.

Tauheed joined [Sputnik’s The Critical Hour program Wednesday](#) to discuss the development and Washington’s historical policy towards the African continent.

“This idea of the US wanting to convince these African countries to embrace democratic norms is one thing that certainly leaps out of the page with the US, of course, violating democratic norms or at least the theory of democracy everywhere it goes, and nowhere more so than in Africa,” said Tauheed, the director of the Center for Economic Information at the University of Missouri at Kansas City.

A recent [analysis](#) by Responsible Statecraft found that 15 African military officers who received training in the United States took part in 12 recent coups across the continent. The US has been [criticized for its role](#) in overthrowing a number of prominent historical African leaders such as [Congolese independence hero Patrice Lumumba](#).

“Niger and Burkina Faso and Mali – the Sahel countries – have forced the French out,” he added, noting several West African countries’ expulsion of French troops in recent months. “And now, the US is also being forced out.”

“One wonders why the US mainstream media is surprised by the fact that the African countries want these countries, these exploiters, to leave,” said Tauheed. “Connecting it in a sense with... soft power – soft power is defined as the ability to co-opt someone else, that is to turn their interest into your interests. The idea of soft power, which is what the US is saying it is projecting, is simply another word for hard power in a soft shell.”

Host Garland Nixon suggested the US’ purported defense of democracy is cover for other motivations, quoting from a Politico article that noted, “US officials have tried to maintain diplomatic relations with those countries – many of which have vast natural resources – in an effort to one day resume military and other financial support.”

“I think if you dig below the surface, you can learn a lot from that,” he suggested.

The United States has increasingly found itself in a global battle for resources as it competes with China in the development of artificial intelligence, electric vehicles, and other technologies. [Rare-earth magnets](#) are one particular component that has drawn attention in recent years as the United States bans the use of Chinese magnets in US military equipment. The race to develop Western replacements puts pressure on the United States to lock down supplies of various rare earth elements.

The imperative of combating terrorism has represented another aspect of the United States’ soft power pitch in recent decades, with the country attempting to maintain a foothold in the Sahel under the pretense of fighting armed groups such as Boko Haram.

“Yet in the decades that they’ve been there, terrorism has increased,” said Tauheed. “The US and France are supposedly there to eliminate those groups so that the countries can engage in democratic activities but, in fact, the activities in those groups are increasing. One wonders if it’s to the benefit of the US or France to allow those groups to continue to multiply so that they can stay there, as the article says, to take advantage of natural resources.”

Some African countries have instead opted to partner with [Russia’s Wagner Group](#), a private mercenary organization.

Hard Times for US soft power projection in Africa under Biden

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Hapless President Biden caught between unhappy base, unrepentant Israel

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"The United States is the only country perhaps in the world that has so much leverage over Israel," noted international relations expert Hasan Unal on Sputnik's Fault Lines program. "[Biden is] not a good juggler. He looks terribly confused as to what to do from the very beginning... Israel doesn't take the Biden administration seriously."

"I think there is also the dimension of multipolarity," he added, claiming that other global powers are now playing an unprecedented role in the Palestine-Israel conflict. "For instance, in the past we never had China taking so much of an interest in what is going on in the Middle East and particularly in the Israelis and Palestinians."

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China and Serbia form partnership after depraved CIA attack in Belgrade (Part 2)

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“When president Xi actually wrote about it in the oldest newspaper in the Balkans he named the three people who died [and] he said ‘we will never forget and we will never allow this to happen again,’” Malic explained. “The entire op-ed was basically saying, ‘we have an ironclad friendship with Serbia, we agree on a lot of international issues, and we’re going to work together for a more just, equitable and fair globalization in a multipolar world.’”

The two countries’ partnership has resulted in a strong economic relationship, with China becoming Serbia’s largest foreign investor. “The Chinese have been able to leverage some of the steelworks and mines that were abandoned by the West [during the 1990s] as being unprofitable whereas the Chinese have made them very profitable,” Malic noted.

Partnership with China promises to restore Serbia’s industry and infrastructure, with a Chinese-built high-speed rail line linking Belgrade with the city of Novi Sad recently being unveiled.

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China and Serbia form partnership after depraved CIA attack in Belgrade (Part 1)

May 7, 1999 is a date known across Serbia as the day the United States conducted a deadly bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. The strike in the capital city, the only one planned in its totality by the US Central Intelligence Agency, killed three Chinese citizens sheltering there and injured at least 20.

The bombing occurred amidst NATO's 78-day assault on the former Yugoslavia, which killed hundreds. Decades later increased rates of cancer and birth defects are still observed in the country after the alliance's use of radioactive depleted uranium during its operation.

Serbian-American journalist Nebojsa Malic joined Sputnik's Fault Lines program as the 25th anniversary of the terrorist attack is observed, an occasion acknowledged during Chinese President Xi Jinping's diplomatic trip to Serbia.

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Trump Offered Environmental Protection Rollbacks to Oil Execs for \$1Bln Donation – Reports

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) – US presidential candidate Donald Trump promised oil company executives that he would roll back dozens of environmental protection policies if elected in exchange for a \$1 billion contribution to his re-election campaign, The Washington Post reported on Thursday.

Trump made the offer last month at his Mar-a-Lago Club in Florida when an oil executive complained of onerous environmental regulations, the report said.

Claiming that the \$1 billion represented a good "deal," Trump promised not only to roll back dozens of US President Biden's environmental policies, but also to block new ones.

Trump promised to end Biden's moratorium on permits for new LNG exports on the first day of his presidency. He also committed to rolling back Biden's push for electric vehicles, the report said.

About two dozen executives were present at the meeting, including the CEOs of Venture Global and Chenier Energy, as well as representatives from Chevron, Continental Resources, Exxon, and Occidental Petroleum, according to the report.

While Biden has called climate change an "existential threat," enacting many new regulations to reduce air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, toxic chemical use, and to conserve land and water resources, Trump has dismissed it as a "hoax."

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Biden Says He 'Absolutely Hears the Message' of Student Protests on College Campuses

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) — US President Joe Biden affirmed he understands the frustrations expressed by students in recent college campus protests regarding Gaza.

"Absolutely, I hear the message," US President Joe Biden said in an interview with CNN on Wednesday.

The remarks were in response to an interviewer's question about the frustration expressed on US college campuses regarding Gaza, where some refer to the President as "Genocide Joe," asking if Biden understands the message of these young Americans.

"There is a legitimate right to free speech and protest. There's a legitimate right to do that, and they have a right to do that. But there's not a legitimate right to use hate speech. There's not a legitimate right to threaten Jewish students. There is not a legitimate right to block people's access to class. That's against the law," Biden added.

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

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 34,800 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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Biden Says Israel's Actions in Rafah Causing Problems With Egypt

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) -Israel has not yet crossed a red line in entering heavily populated zones but their actions have caused tensions in the region, US President Joe Biden said in an interview with CNN.

"They haven't gone into the population centers. What they did is right on the border. And it's causing problems with, right now, in terms of – with Egypt, which I've worked very hard to make

sure we have a relationship and help," Biden said.

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Biden Says Trump Wont Accept Election Results If Loses

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) -Donald Trump will not accept the results of the upcoming presidential vote if he doesn't win, US President Joe Biden said in an interview with CNN.

"I promise you he won't," Biden said.

Biden also shared that he is "feeling good" about the trajectory of the presidential campaign.

"And you know as well as I do, most people don't really focus and make up their minds until the fall. There's a lot going on, and we'll see what happens," he added.

The US presidential election is slated for November 2024. The main contenders expected on the ballot are Biden and Trump, who have both won enough delegates' votes to be their respective Democratic and Republican parties' presumptive nominees.

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Biden Admits US Bombs Have Been Used to Kill Civilians in Gaza

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden said that civilians in the Gaza Strip have been killed by US-supplied bombs to Israel as well as by other methods targeting population centers.

"Civilians have been killed in Gaza as a consequence of those bombs and other ways in which they go after population centers," Biden said in an interview with CNN on Wednesday night.

On October 7, the Palestinian organization Hamas launched an attack on Israel from Gaza, killing nearly 1,200 Israelis - both military and civilians - and abducting some 240 others. Israel ordered a complete blockade of Gaza and then started a bombing campaign as well as a ground invasion of the Palestinian enclave with a declared goal of eliminating Hamas and rescuing the hostages.

Some 35,000 Palestinians have so-far been killed by the Israeli military in Gaza and more than 78,000 others have been wounded, while some 1.8 million residents of Gaza have been displaced.

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US Army Orders \$860Mln More HIMARS Artillery Multiple Rocket Systems - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - The US Army has ordered more than \$860 million worth of additional High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) from Lockheed Martin, the Department of Defense announced in a press release.

"Lockheed Martin Corporation [of] Grand Prairie, Texas was awarded an \$861,333,188 ...contract for production of High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems and supporting services," the release said on Wednesday.

Work on the contract is scheduled to take two years with each order with an estimated completion date of May 31, 2026, the Defense Department said.

The US Army Contracting Command based at Redstone Arsenal in the state of Alabama is the contracting activity that will oversee the production of the weapons, the Defense Department said.

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Trump Says Opposes Motion to Vacate Johnson as US House Speaker at Present Time

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump said that he opposes an effort by US Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene to vacate Mike Johnson as House speaker for now, although such a measure could be warranted in the future.

"With a Majority of One, shortly growing to three or four, we're not in a position of voting on a Motion to Vacate. At some point, we may very well be, but this is not the time," Trump said on Wednesday.

Trump said he appreciates Greene and her spirit and added that she will be around for a long time.

Johnson is a "good man" who tries very hard, Trump also said.

However, disunity in the Republican Party will be portrayed as chaos and will negatively impact the party, Trump said.

Republicans must now focus on fighting the Democrats, Trump added.

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Biden Says US Will Not Supply Weapons to Israel if IDF Goes in Rafah

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said that the United States will not supply weapons to Israel if that country's military goes into Rafah in the Gaza Strip.

"I made it clear that if they go into Rafah - they haven't gone in Rafah yet - if they go into Rafah, I'm not supplying the weapons that have been used historically to deal with Rafah, to deal with

the cities - that deal with that problem," Biden said in an interview with CNN on Wednesday.

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US House Tables Measure to Oust Johnson as Speaker

(Updates with more details in paras 5, 6)

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives passed a motion to table a resolution offered by Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene to vacate Mike Johnson as House Speaker.

House lawmakers tabled the resolution in a vote on Wednesday of 359 in favor, 43 opposed and seven present.

A majority of House Republicans and House Democrats alike voted in favor of tabling the motion.

Greene pushed to oust Johnson from the leadership role after he supported the passage of foreign aid legislation and a surveillance reauthorization bill with the help of Democrats.

Johnson said in remarks following the vote that the United States needs "steady hands at the wheel" of the House of Representatives. Johnson added that he is proud to serve in the leadership role in the House of Representatives.

US Congressman Thomas Massie, who supported the effort to oust Johnson, said that Johnson was supported by former Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other members of the so-called "uniparty."

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

US Congresswoman Greene Says Intends to Advance Measure to Oust Johnson as House Speaker

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - US Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene said in a statement on the House floor that she intends to advance a measure to attempt to oust House Speaker Mike Johnson from his leadership position.

Greene notified the House of Representatives of her intent to offer a privileged resolution on the matter. Greene had previously threatened to vacate Johnson as speaker for working with Democrats to advance foreign aid bills and reauthorize surveillance authorities.

"Whereas Mike Johnson is ill-equipped to handle the rigors of the job of Speaker of the House... Resolved, that office of the Speaker of the House of Representatives is hereby declared vacant," Greene said in a reading of the resolution on Wednesday.

Earlier this week, Greene met with Johnson alongside Congressman Thomas Massie. Greene said she asked Johnson to end Ukraine funding and defund special counsels targeting former US President Donald Trump.

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Johnson, McConnell Express Alarm Over Biden Admin. Delaying Arms to Israel - Letter

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - House of Representatives Speaker Mike Johnson and Senator Mitch McConnell sent a letter to President Joe Biden expressing alarm about the administration's recent delays in shipping weapons to Israel.

"Having recently worked on a bipartisan basis to pass an emergency national security supplemental appropriations bill that included urgent assistance to Israel, we were alarmed by media reports that your administration had delayed the delivery of a variety of weapons shipments bound for Israel. This news flies in the face of assurances provided regarding the timely delivery of security assistance to Israel," the letter said on Wednesday.

Johnson and McConnell voiced concerns that recent interruptions in weapons shipments and the lack of detailed information raise doubts about the steadfastness of the US commitment to Israel's security amid the urgent threats the country faces.

"We expect your administration will push departments, agencies, and industry to expedite contracting, production, and delivery of weapons and munitions critical to the defense of the United States and the free world in accordance with Congressional intent. We ask that you provide relevant responses by the end of the week on the timing of this review," the letter added.

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

US officials have also confirmed that the Biden administration stands ready to suspend weapons shipments to Israel or at least condition their use if the Israeli government decides to

undertake a major military operation in Rafah.

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US Hypersonic Defenses 'Inadequate' - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - The United States' defenses against hypersonic weapons are inadequate, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Space and Missile Defense John Hill said during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing.

"We have some systems to defend in the terminal stage, but we need more," Hill said on Wednesday when asked if the US has defenses against hypersonic weapons. "Our hypersonic defenses are inadequate."

In March, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that the alliance needs to qualitatively and quantitatively strengthen its air and missile defenses to ensure protection against Russian hypersonic weapons.

The US is also engaged in the development of its own hypersonic weapons capabilities. The US Air Force is working on a hypersonic cruise missile, which it intends to field by 2027.

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Robert Kennedy Jr. Says Could Beat Trump, Biden in Debate Even With 'Brain Worms'

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - Independent US presidential candidate Robert Kennedy Jr. said that he could suffer from multiple brain worms and still defeat Joe Biden and Donald Trump in a debate.

Earlier on Wednesday, US media reported that doctors found a dead parasite in his brain after he experienced memory loss and mental foggy in 2010.

"I offer to eat five more brain worms and still beat President Trump and President Biden in a debate," Kennedy said in a statement via the social media platform X. "I feel confident of the result even with a six-worm handicap."

Kennedy has challenged Trump to a debate at the Libertarian Party's national convention later this month, although Trump has yet to respond to the challenge.

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US Healthcare Company Hit by Cybersecurity Event, Systems Disrupted - Statement

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) - The US healthcare company Ascension announced that it has reported a cybersecurity event disrupting access to certain systems, with ongoing investigations and remediation efforts underway.

"We detected unusual activity on select technology network systems, which we now believe is due to a cyber security event. At this time we continue to investigate the situation. We responded immediately, initiated our investigation, and activated our remediation efforts. Access to some systems have been interrupted as this process continues," Ascension said in a statement on Wednesday.

According to the statement, Ascension has experienced disruptions to clinical operations and engaged Mandiant to assist in investigating and remediating the incident, while authorities have been notified and efforts are underway to assess and address any potential data compromises.

"Our care teams are trained for these kinds of disruptions and have initiated procedures to ensure patient care delivery continues to be safe and as minimally impacted as possible," the statement said.

Out of an abundance of caution, business partners are advised to temporarily suspend their connections to the Ascension environment, with notifications to follow regarding when reconnection is deemed safe, the statement added.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, May 9 (Sputnik) -

UK IMPOSES NEW RESTRICTIONS ON RUSSIA

* The United Kingdom is introducing new restrictions on obtaining diplomatic visas for Russian citizens, UK Home Secretary James Cleverly said on Wednesday.

* The United Kingdom's new measures against Russia seriously disrupt the country's diplomatic presence and interrupt some communication channels, the Russian embassy in London said.

* Russia will provide a harsh response to the new restrictions imposed by the United Kingdom as London continues to provoke Moscow and makes efforts to increase the confrontation level, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.

ISRAEL MILITARY OPERATIONS IN GAZA

* US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said on Wednesday that protecting Palestinian civilians in Gaza amid Israel's onslaught was not only a moral imperative, but also a strategic imperative.

* The Biden administration expects to deliver in the coming days the report on Israel's use of weapons in the Gaza Strip, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said.

* The Palestinian movement Hamas has rejected Turkey's proposal to move its political office from Qatar to Ankara, a source close to the movement told Sputnik.

EAEU MEETING

- * The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) leaders signed a decree to start negotiations with Mongolia on reaching a temporary trade agreement, the Kremlin said on Wednesday.
- * The EAEU has demonstrated its effectiveness when facing new challenges, including the sanctions policy pursued by some countries, Russian President Vladimir Putin said.
- * Putin and Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev held a brief meeting following the EAEU summit in the expanded format, a Sputnik correspondent reported.
- * The EAEU has become an important platform for cooperation between member states, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

- * The Ukrainian military suffered up to 940 casualties in the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) in the past 24 hours as a result of operations by the southern, central and eastern groupings of the Russian armed forces, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Wednesday.
- * NATO believes that Ukraine will be able to emerge victorious in the conflict with Russia if it receives more weapons, but it is impossible to win against a nuclear power, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto said.
- * Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that unilateral peace initiatives on Ukraine without Russia's participation have a low chance of success.
- * The EU permanent representatives have preliminarily approved the Ukrainian reform plan, which is the condition for allocating \$53.7 billion in aid to Kiev until 2027, the Belgian presidency of the European Council said.

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Biden Says Polling Data on Pessimistic US Economic Sentiments 'Wrong'

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - Polling data that shows pessimistic attitudes about the United States' economy are wrong, US President Joe Biden said on Wednesday.

"The polling data has been wrong all along," Biden said in an interview with CNN.

Biden questioned the effectiveness of phone surveys, CNN said in a preview of the interview, which is set to air on Wednesday evening.

Biden claimed that his administration has created good-paying jobs but admitted that inflation is a legitimate concern to people, the report said.

The US has the strongest economy in the world, Biden reportedly said. No president has a comparable record in terms of creating jobs and bringing down inflation, Biden said.

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MLB Player's Interpreter Agrees to Admit to Taking \$17Mln to Pay Debt - US Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - An interpreter for a Major League Baseball (MLB) player agreed to plead guilty to illegally moving nearly \$17 million from the player's bank account to pay off gambling debts, the US Justice Department said on Wednesday.

"Ippei Mizuhara, 39, of Newport Beach, has agreed to plead guilty to one count of bank fraud, which carries a statutory maximum sentence of 30 years in federal prison, and one count of subscribing to a false tax return, which carries a sentence of up to three years in federal prison," the Justice Department said in a statement.

Mizuhara is expected to enter the guilty plea in the coming weeks, the statement said.

Mizuhara's arraignment is set for May 14, the statement said.

Mizuhara acted as the translator and de facto manager for MLB player Shohei Ohtani, the statement said.

Mizuhara started placing sports bets with an illegal bookmaker starting in September 2021, the statement said. Mizuhara orchestrated a scheme to pay off gambling debts by fraudulently taking money from Ohtani's bank account.

Mizuhara also bought approximately \$325,000 in baseball cards with the intent to resell them for his own benefit, the statement said.

Moreover, Mizuhara willfully made a false federal income tax return, in which he failed to report income from his fraud scheme, the statement said.

The investigation into the case is led by the Internal Revenue Service and Department of Homeland Security, the statement said.

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Biden Admin. Weighs Filtering Out Asylum Seekers During Initial Screening - Reports

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is considering changes to the asylum system that would expedite the expulsion of migrants seeking to stay in the United States, Politico reported on Wednesday, citing four people familiar with the matter.

While the existing system allows for finding a person ineligible to receive asylum only at the interview stage, eligibility under the proposed changes would be determined during the initial screening stage, the report said.

The policy with the new changes will be announced by the US Department of Homeland Security on Thursday and will allow for expedited deportation of ineligible asylum seekers, according to the report.

Illegal crossings on the US southern border have gone through three consecutive record-breaking years since Joe Biden took over the White House in January 2021, with nearly 8 million encounters recorded during that period, according to US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) data.

Since October 2023, the US has recorded 1.3 million encounters on the southwestern border,

CBP data shows.

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US House Panel Chairs Refer Michael Cohen to Justice Department for Perjury Prosecution

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - US House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jim Jordan and Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer on Wednesday sent a letter to the Justice Department referring former Trump attorney Michael Cohen for prosecution for alleged perjury and false statements to lawmakers.

In February 2019, the US House oversight panel referred Cohen to the Justice Department for perjury and knowingly making false statements during testimony. Last year, lawmakers learned that Cohen separately lied again to the House intelligence panel in a 2019 deposition, the letter said.

Cohen's testimony formed the basis for a politically motivated prosecution of former US President and 2024 Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump, the letter said.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg is using Cohen as a witness in an ongoing criminal prosecution of Trump, which heavily relies on Cohen's testimony and credibility, the letter said.

"In light of the reliance on the testimony from this repeated liar, we reiterate our concerns and ask what the Justice Department has done to hold Cohen accountable for his false statements to Congress," the letter, addressed to US Attorney Merrick Garland, said. "Therefore, we again request that the Justice Department investigate whether any of Mr. Cohen's testimony warrants another charge for violating [US law]."

In August 2018, Cohen pleaded guilty to campaign finance and fraud charges. In November 2018, Cohen also pleaded guilty to lying to lawmakers about alleged efforts by Trump to build a tower in Moscow. Cohen served time in prison from May 2019 to November 2021.

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UPDATE - China's Seizure of Taiwan Would Be 'Absolutely Devastating' to US - Commerce Secretary

(Updates with background in paras 7, 8)

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - A Chinese invasion and seizure of Taiwan would be "absolutely devastating" to the United States, especially regarding microchip supply and production given that Taipei and Washington have been collaborating in this area for decades, US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said in a congressional testimony on Wednesday.

"It would be absolutely devastating," Raimondo told the US House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and Science. "I'm not commenting on whether that's going to happen, how it's going to happen and if it's going to happen. But what I can tell you is

right now, the United States buys 92% of its leading-edge chips from TSMC in Taiwan."

The comment referred to the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC), an independent semiconductor manufacturing foundry based in Hsin-Chu Science-Based Industrial Park - Taiwan's answer to California's "Silicon Valley." TSMC is listed on the Taipei as well as the New York stock exchanges.

Raimondo said the volume of supply currently mattered more to the United States than the technology, as TSMC will be producing even higher grade material at its US facility in Arizona.

TSMC's mission at the Arizona facility will be to build 2 nanometer and 3 nanometer chips, which is their most sophisticated product, she said.

But until that took off, Taiwan's strategic importance makes it essential for United States to defend, Raimondo added.

Taiwan has been governed independently of mainland China since 1949. Beijing views the island as its province, while Taiwan - a territory with its own elected government - maintains that it is an autonomous country but has stopped short of declaring independence.

China has said it would not undertake a military intervention against Taiwan but opposes any state's official contacts with Taipei and considers Chinese sovereignty over the island indisputable.

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Oil Edges Up as US Crude Inventories Fall, Trade Also Eyes Gaza Escalation

NEW YORK, May 8 (Sputnik) - Oil prices edged higher Wednesday on a decline reported in US crude inventories, although higher fuel stockpiles undercut the ascent.

Concerns about an escalation in the Gaza war — with Israel assuming what it called "operational control" of the Rafah crossing into Egypt despite Hamas saying it has agreed to a ceasefire — also factored into the higher prices. Analysts said the energy trade was looking out for impact of any kind on crude shipments from the war, occurring in the world's most prolific oil-producing region.

West Texas Intermediate (WTI), the benchmark for US crude, settled at \$78.99 per barrel, up 61 cents, or 0.8%, on the day. Week-to-date, WTI was flat after a near 7% tumble last week.

WTI aside, London-traded Brent, the global benchmark for crude, was at \$83.73 per barrel at the time of writing, up 57 cents, or 0.7%. Brent was up 0.3% on the week, after a drop of just over 7% last week.

Wednesday's climb in crude prices came after the Energy Information Administration said in its Weekly Petroleum Status Report that US crude balances fell by 1.362 million barrels last week after a build of 7.265 million the prior week.

A consensus of forecasts by energy analysts on Wall Street showed crude stockpiles were expected to decline by 1.43 million for the week ended May 1.

Gasoline balances rose by 951,000 barrels during the week ended April 26, after a build of 344,000 the prior week. Wall Street's forecast was for a decline of 1.18 million.

Gasoline is the primary motor fuel in the United States and makes up the largest component of

the country's energy mix.

Distillate stockpiles grew by 56,000 barrels last week, after a prior deficit of 732,000. Wall Street's forecast was for a decline of 1 million.

Distillates are primarily processed into the diesel required by trucks, buses and ships, and also go into making airline fuel.

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US Not Yet Received Consular Access to Soldier Detained in Russia – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) – The United States has not yet received consular access to US soldier Gordon Black, who was arrested in the Russian city of Vladivostok last week, and American diplomats continue “to push for that,” State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Wednesday.

“We have not yet received consular access. We continue to push for that,” Miller said during a press briefing.

Earlier on Wednesday, the press office of the Pervomaisky District Court of Vladivostok said that Black has been charged with grand larceny.

Black was arrested on Tuesday by a court in Vladivostok until July 2 on charges of stealing.

On Monday, US Army spokeswoman Cynthia Smith told Sputnik that Russian authorities detained American 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.

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Majority of US Democrats Believe Israel Conducting Genocide in Gaza Strip - Poll

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - A majority of Democrats in the United States believe that Israel is conducting a genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, according to a Data for Progress/Zeteo poll released Wednesday.

A majority of Democratic respondents, 56%, believe that Israel is committing genocide in the Palestinian enclave, the poll report said.

More than one-third of independent and third-party respondents, 36%, believe that Israel is conducting genocide in the Gaza Strip, the poll report said. Less than one-quarter of Republican respondents, 23%, believe that Israel is committing genocide, the poll report said.

A majority of respondents under the age of 45, 55%, believe that Israel is conducting a genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, whereas just 32% of respondents over the age of 45 believe the same, the poll report said.

Overall, 39% of respondents believe that Israel's actions in the Palestinian enclave constitute

genocide, 38% do not and 23% are unsure, the poll report said.

On October 7, Palestinian organization Hamas launched a large-scale attack on Israel, killing nearly 1,200 Israeli civilians and military personnel and abducting some 240 others. Israel subsequently launched a military operation in the Gaza Strip, which has resulted in more than 34,800 deaths in the Palestinian enclave, according to local authorities.

The poll surveyed 1,265 likely US voters from April 26-29. The poll maintains a margin of error of plus-or-minus three percentage points.

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FedEx Boeing 767 Jet Experiences Problems During Landing in Istanbul - Spokesperson

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - A FedEx Boeing 767 jet experienced landing problems while landing in Istanbul, Turkey, FedEx Communications Manager Sarah Rose Watkins told Sputnik in a statement on Wednesday.

"FedEx Express Flight 6268, a Boeing 767, was en route from Paris, France to Istanbul, Turkey, when it experienced an issue during landing Wednesday morning," the statement said.

Watkins said there were no injuries in the incident and updates will be provided as the investigation into the cause of the problem unfolds.

Earlier on Wednesday, a video shared on social media revealed the FedEx jet landing on its rear gear and then dipping its nose on the runway in Istanbul.

The pilots realized the front landing gear failed to deploy as the jet was on its final leg from Paris to Istanbul, according to preliminary reports.

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US Sixth Fleet Conducts Containerized Missile Rehearsal on Denmark's Bornholm Island

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - The US Sixth Fleet conducted convoy rehearsals by using a land-based containerized missile launcher on Bornholm Island in Denmark last week, the US Navy said on Wednesday.

"U.S. Naval Forces Europe, in coordination with the Danish military, conducted convoy protection rehearsals with a modular and containerized missile launcher, May 3-5, 2024," the Navy said in a press release.

Compared to shipboard ones, the release explained that the land-based containerized missile launchers are portable and therefore increase the flexibility to move and employ shore-based weapon systems to support maritime security along sea lines of communication.

The exercise became the second iteration of the operation, which took place for the first time in September 2023, the release said.

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Biden Admin. Expects to Deliver in Coming Days Report on Israel Weapons Use in Gaza

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration expects to deliver in the coming days the report on Israel's use of weapons in the Gaza Strip, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Wednesday.

"It will not be transmitted today. We continue to work to finalize the report. We expect to deliver it in the very near future, in the coming days," Miller said during a press briefing.

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Joly to Host Nigerian Counterpart May 9 to Discuss Bilateral Ties - Global Affairs Canada

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly will host her Nigerian counterpart Yusuf Maitama Tuggar during his official visit to Ottawa this week, Global Affairs Canada said on Wednesday.

The Nigerian Foreign Minister will stay in Ottawa from May 9-10 during his first visit to the Canadian capital, Global Affairs Canada said in a statement.

"Minister Joly and Minister Tuggar will discuss their countries' relations both as bilateral and multilateral partners as well as Nigeria's role and influence in West Africa," the statement said.

The ministers will also discuss global challenges and opportunities, GAC said. Discussion on ways to ensure that African states play a more prominent role in international organization are also expected to take place, the statement added.

Tuggar is scheduled to meet with Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Robert Oliphant as well as other Canadian officials, according to the statement.

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China's Seizure of Taiwan Would Be 'Absolutely Devastating' to US - Commerce Secretary

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - A Chinese invasion and seizure of Taiwan would be "absolutely devastating" to the United States, especially regarding microchip supply and production given that Taipei and Washington have been collaborating in this area for decades, US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said in a congressional testimony on Wednesday.

"It would be absolutely devastating," Raimondo told the US House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and Science. "I'm not commenting on whether that's going to happen, how it's going to happen and if it's going to happen. But what I can tell you is

right now, the United States buys 92% of its leading-edge chips from TSMC in Taiwan."

The comment referred to the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC), an independent semiconductor manufacturing foundry based in Hsin-Chu Science-Based Industrial Park - Taiwan's answer to California's "Silicon Valley." TSMC is listed on the Taipei as well as the New York stock exchanges.

Raimondo said the volume of supply currently mattered more to the United States than the technology, as TSMC will be producing even higher grade material at its US facility in Arizona.

TSMC's mission at the Arizona facility will be to build 2 nanometer and 3 nanometer chips, which is their most sophisticated product, she said.

But until that took off, Taiwan's strategic importance makes it essential for United States to defend, Raimondo added.

Raimondo also relayed the Biden administration's frustration in being unable to use export controls more effectively to prevent US-made microchips from falling into unwanted hands and cited as an example how Russia has allegedly obtained with Chinese help semiconductors from innocuous US products such as breast pumps and refrigerators to power the drones that Moscow uses to attack Ukraine.

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Trudeau Govt. Responsible for 'Explosion' in Temporary Migrants Inflow - Quebec Premier

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - The government of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is responsible for the "explosion" in the number of temporary migrants and must cooperate with Quebec on this issue, Premier Francois Legault said on Wednesday.

"There's an urgency to get results because 560,000 temporary immigrants is the equivalent of all the city of Quebec," Legault said. "Of course it has an impact on housing, on education, on healthcare and on the future of French. Mr. Trudeau has the obligation of solving the problem he created."

The Prime Minister said that he understands migrants and doesn't blame them for seeking a better life in Quebec but noted that the "explosion" in temporary migrants was problematic as the province is limited in the number of individuals it can actually host without negatively impacting services.

Legault said that out of the 560,000 temporary migrants currently residing in Quebec, close to half arrived in the past two years. He also said that it was impossible for his government to either house or build new housing to accommodate the newcomers over such a short period of time.

"It's the Trudeau government, with its policies, that created this immense problem. It's absolutely necessary to rapidly reduce the number of temporary migrants in Quebec," Legault added.

In early April, the Quebec government warned Ottawa that it would be holding a referendum on immigration if negotiations on the matter did not bear fruit by June 30. Some of Quebec's demands include a reduction in the numbers of non-permanent residents and reimbursement of

fees related to the accommodation of asylum seekers.

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US 'Frustrated, Angered' Russia Working Around Export Controls - Raimondo

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo admitted on Wednesday that Russia manages to work around export controls with help from China, which is massively "frustrating and angering."

"I think we're doing everything we can with the resources we have but it's massively frustrating and angering when you see Russia do what they do and work with, you know, folks like China to get around our export controls," Raimondo said in testimony before Congress.

The commerce secretary was responding to a question on how the United States could more effectively prevent its technology from being used against itself and its allies by states such as Russia.

"The fact that they have to use chips from breast pumps and refrigerators and such — which is what they're doing — is because our initial controls work [in] denying [them] the sophisticated stuff," said Raimondo.

She added that the Biden administration has done as much as it could on the matter.

"For example, when we find out that a Chinese company is going around our export controls to Russia, we put that company on the entity list," said Raimondo. She said the administration has created a task force with the departments of Homeland Security and Justice to help identify and prosecute countries or companies that circumvent US controls.

US-Russian trade ties have shrunk in recent years due to sanctions and export controls imposed on Moscow. Bilateral trade plummeted from \$38.2 billion in 2013 to \$5.2 billion in 2023, the US Trade Representative's Office said in a report in March.

However, US exports to Russia grew from \$36 million in February to \$43.7 million in March, according to US Census Bureau data.

Meanwhile, the US imported \$427 million worth of goods from Russia in March, up from \$287.9 million in February.

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

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

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New US Arctic Strategy to Account for New Security Environment, Climate Change - Austin

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - The US Defense Department will soon release its revised Arctic strategy to factor in the changed security environment, climate change and the fact that NATO has two new member states, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said in a congressional testimony on Wednesday.

"You are soon going to see us release a new Arctic strategy, and that strategy will account for the changes in the environment, the warming climate, and the fact that we have new members of NATO that I think will be very helpful and working with us going forward," Austin told the US Senate Appropriations Committee.

Austin pointed out that the Arctic region will remain strategically important for the United States and the new strategy will account for this fact.

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 the lack of icebreaker ships capability, but added he was optimistic that the situation will improve in the future.

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US Guided-Missile Destroyer Completes Routine Transit Through Taiwan Strait - Statement

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - The US guided-missile destroyer Halsey has conducted a routine transit through the Taiwan Strait in accordance with international law, the US 7th Fleet said on Wednesday.

"The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Halsey (DDG 97) conducted a routine Taiwan Strait transit on May 8 through waters where high-seas freedoms of navigation and overflight apply in accordance with international law," the US 7th Fleet said in a statement.

Halsey's transit through the Taiwan Strait underscores the United States' commitment to freedom of navigation, the statement said.

Members of the international community should not feel coerced into relinquishing their rights, the statement added.

Taiwan has been governed independently of mainland China since 1949. Beijing views the island as its province, while Taiwan - a territory with its own elected government - maintains that it is an autonomous country but has stopped short of declaring independence. Beijing opposes any official contacts of foreign states with Taipei and considers Chinese sovereignty over the island indisputable.

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US Joint Chiefs of Staff Chair 'Concerned' Over Delayed Sentinel Program

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) – US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Charles Brown confirmed Wednesday that the delayed timeline of the Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile program was concerning.

"I don't necessarily have the details, but ... I get concerned we don't get capabilities in the hands of our warfighters or things that are very important to our strategic deterrence," Brown testified at a Senate appropriations committee hearing.

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Republican US Lawmakers Introduce Bill to Require Proof of Citizenship to Register to Vote

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - A group of Republican US lawmakers introduced legislation on Wednesday to require proof of citizenship to register to vote in federal elections.

House Speaker Mike Johnson, Congressman Chip Roy and Senator Mike Lee backed the bill, dubbed the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) Act.

"We're here for the simple proposition — supported by the vast majority of the American people — that only citizens of the United States should vote," Roy said during a press conference on the legislation.

The lawmakers introduced the bill in advance of the 2024 US presidential and congressional elections in November.

The US Congress should quickly pass the legislation, Lee said. The only reason for a lawmaker to oppose the bill would be if they are comfortable with or want non-citizens to vote, Lee said.

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RPT - Canadian Defense Minister to Host German Counterpart to Discuss NATO, Ukraine - Ministry

(Repeats to fix quote)

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) – Canadian Defense Minister Bill Blair will host his German counterpart Boris Pistorius in Ottawa on May 10 to discuss a range of military-related matters including NATO and Ukraine, the Canadian ministry said on Wednesday.

Pistorius' trip to Canada will be his first since he was appointed defense minister in January 2023.

"Minister Blair and Minister Pistorius will discuss Canada's recently-released defence policy update, Our North, Strong and Free, Canada-Germany defence relations, our collective efforts to support Ukraine, and our work to strengthen NATO's defence and deterrence posture, including in the Baltic states, where both Canada and Germany lead multinational NATO battle groups," the ministry said in a statement.

The ministers are also scheduled to hold several public events. Pistorius will lay a wreath at the

National War Memorial in Ottawa before attending a welcoming ceremony with Blair which will include an honor guard at the National Defense Headquarters.

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UPDATE - Pentagon, State Dept. Working to Have US Military Presence in Coastal West Africa - Austin

(Fixes quote in para 2, adds comment from Austin in para 3, background in para 4)

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) – The US Department of Defense is working with the State Department to establish a US military presence in coastal West Africa to partner with countries there in a more significant way, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said on Wednesday.

“This is an important area [coastal West Africa], and we are working with State [Department] currently to address those places that you mentioned, and potentially develop the capability to have a presence there and partner in a more significant way with a couple of those countries, and that work is ongoing now,” Austin said during a Senate Committee on Appropriations hearing.

Austin during his testimony also confirmed that the United States will have to leave Niger. The Pentagon has around 1,000 troops in Niger but began making plans for a withdrawal after after the African country revoked a so-called status-of force-agreement.

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Pentagon Chief Says Protecting Gaza Civilians Both Strategic, Moral Imperatives

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin reiterated on Wednesday that protecting Palestinian civilians in Gaza against Israel's onslaught was not only a moral imperative, but also a strategic imperative.

"You have to protect the people, the civilians, in the battlespace; otherwise, you create more terrorists going forward. So it's not only a moral imperative, but it's also a strategic imperative that you protect civilians," Austin testified at a Senate appropriations committee hearing.

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Serbia, Kosovo Fail to Complete Commitments Under Ohrid Agreement - US State Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - Serbia and Kosovo have failed to complete their commitments under the Ohrid agreement to normalize relations, US Deputy Assistant Secretary

of State Gabriel Escobar said on Wednesday.

"Unfortunately, both sides have failed to honor that commitment," Escobar told reporters.

The agreement calls for Kosovo to accept the association of the Serb majority municipalities and for Serbia not to block Kosovo's integration with Euro-Atlantic structures and membership in international organizations.

"The expectations for both sides are very clear," Escobar said.

However, Escobar expressed confidence that the two sides can maintain normal, predictable and peaceful relations after implementing the Ohrid agreement.

In 2008, the Albanians in Kosovo proclaimed independence from Serbia after conducting a years-long campaign of terror against the local Serbs, Macedonians, Roma and other residents. The proclamation of independence came after the US-led bombing campaign against then rump Yugoslavia (consisting of Serbia and Montenegro) in 1999.

Serbia has vowed to never recognize Kosovo's independence and has continually noted that UN Security Council Resolution 1244 explicitly states that Kosovo is Serbian territory. However, under pressure by the United States and the European Union, Serbia signed with Kosovo an EU-mediated agreement to normalize relations. Yet, dialogue has come to a standstill and tensions have been simmering since mid-2022 as the Kosovo Albanian authorities have continued their harassment of the remaining Serbs, with the situation escalating several times and resulting in road blockages in northern Kosovo.

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Canadian Defense Minister to Host German Counterpart to Discuss NATO, Ukraine - Ministry

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Pentagon, State Dept. Working to Have US Military Presence in Coastal West Africa - Austin

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“This is an important area [coastal West Africa], and we are working with State [Department] currently to address those places that you mentioned, and potentially develop the capability to have a presence there and partner in a more significant way with a couple of those countries, and that network is ongoing now,” Austin said during a Senate Committee on Appropriations hearing.

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US Senators Introduce Bipartisan Bill to Require AUKUS Coordination With Japan

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - A bipartisan group of US Senators introduced legislation to require the federal government to coordinate with Japan on advanced technology projects with the Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) alliance.

The bill, dubbed the Coordinating AUKUS Engagement with Japan Act, would require the US State Department and Defense Department to engage with Japan on AUKUS' Pillar Two framework.

The legislation is backed by Senators Mitt Romney, Tim Kaine, Jim Risch and Bill Hagerty. Last month, the Biden administration said that AUKUS would begin consultations with Japan and other partners to determine their possible participation in advanced capabilities projects. AUKUS Pillar 2 includes cooperation on emerging technology, including artificial intelligence, quantum, electronic warfare and hypersonics.

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Collective West Continues Backing Cutting Ties with Russia Unlike Rest of World - Report

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - Most people in the Global South and the rest of the world prefer their countries maintain economic ties with Russia while people in the collective West continue to support cutting ties with Russia, according to the Democracy Perception Index (DPI) 2024 report on Wednesday.

"Support for cutting economic ties with Russia over its invasion of Ukraine remains high in Europe and the United States even after three years of sanctions. But in the rest of the world, most people prefer keeping ties," the report said.

In fact, the desire to maintain relations with Russia increased in the rest of the world, the report said.

"When asked if they think their countries should cut economic ties with Russia over its invasion

of Ukraine, people in a slight majority of countries surveyed (29 out of 52) are more in favor of keeping ties with Russia," the report said.

The survey also revealed that Hungary and Greece remain the only two European countries where the majority of the residents prefer to maintain relations with Russia.

The DPI was based on nationally representative interviews with over 62,953 respondents from 53 countries conducted between February 20 and April 15.

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Pentagon Says Israel's War on Gaza Not Currently Regional Conflict - Austin

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said Wednesday that the Pentagon does not see Israel's war on Gaza as having escalated into a regional conflict at this point.

"I think even though there's been dust-ups throughout the region, we don't see a regional conflict at this point," Austin testified at a Senate appropriations committee hearing.

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Pro-Palestine Campus Protests Made Plurality of US Voters Less Sympathetic to Cause - Poll

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - The series of pro-Palestine protests on college campuses across the United States have made a plurality of likely US voters less sympathetic to Palestinians, according to a Rasmussen Reports poll released Wednesday.

The protests made 15% of respondents more sympathetic to Palestinians and 42% less sympathetic, the poll report said. The views of 37% of respondents were not affected by the protests, the poll report said.

The protests, which took place at campuses including Columbia, George Washington University and the University of Texas at Austin, have led to clashes with law enforcement in some cases. The Biden administration and some lawmakers have also condemned alleged instances of anti-Semitism at the protests.

The protests come in the wake of Palestinian organization Hamas' October 7 attack on Israel and the Israeli military's subsequent military operations in the Gaza Strip.

The poll surveyed 1,108 likely US voters on May 2, 5-6. The poll maintains a margin of error of plus-or-minus three percentage points with a 95% confidence level.

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Immortal Regiment March Held at Russian Embassy in Washington

WASHINGTON , March 8 (Sputnik) - More than a hundred people took part in the Immortal Regiment march on the territory of the Russian embassy compound in Washington, a Sputnik correspondent reported on Wednesday.

Employees of the Russian diplomatic mission together with students from the school at the embassy marched while holding photos of participants in World War II. They observed a moment of silence for the fallen in the war.

Russian Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov thanked the gathered for their participation in the march. In his speech, Antonov noted the frightening number of people who gave their lives for their homeland, adding that the ancestors of the victors have a duty to remember their heroic struggle and sacrifice.

"Unfortunately, another very difficult responsibility and burden has fallen on our shoulders, on the shoulders of our children - we must and we will defend the national interests of Russia on the territory of the former Soviet Union. There is no doubt that we will win," Antonov said.

The ambassador pointed out that today is not easy for the employees of the Russian diplomatic mission to live and work in the United States.

"The Americans did everything [they could] to poison and to worsen our stay in the United States," Antonov said.

Antonov also said that Russian President Vladimir Putin reiterated during his inauguration yesterday that Russia stands ready to talk, including with the United States.

"This morning we woke up, turned on the TVs and saw again missiles flying across Russian cities. They are killing our guys, children and women with American weapons," Antonov added.

The Immortal Regiment march is held annually to commemorate the millions of people who died fighting against Nazi Germany and the Axis powers in World War II. The march started at the initiative by journalists from the Russian city of Tomsk and was first held there on May 9, 2012. The following year, the event was celebrated nationwide and the tradition has since spread to other countries.

The marches across Russia have been canceled this year due to security reasons related to the ongoing special military operation in Ukraine.

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US Pauses One Shipment of Munitions to Israel, Reviewing Near-Term Shipments - Austin

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Lloyd Austin confirmed Wednesday that the United States has paused one shipment of "high payload munitions" to Israel and is "reviewing near-term" shipments amid Israel's heightened offensive in Rafah.

"As we have assessed the situation, we paused one shipment of high payload munitions," Austin testified at a Senate appropriations committee hearing.

He noted that "we're going to continue to do what's necessary to ensure that Israel has the

means to defend itself. But that said, we are currently reviewing some near-term security assistance shipments in the context of unfolding events in Rafah."

Austin added that the Pentagon had "not made a final determination on how to proceed" with the paused shipment.

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US Popularity Shrinks Globally, Most Dramatically in Muslim Countries - Report

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - The United States' popularity has plunged worldwide since the spring of last year, experiencing the biggest setbacks in Muslim-majority countries amid Israel's ongoing military campaign in Gaza, according to the Democracy Perception Index (DPI) 2024 report released on Wednesday.

"The United States's reputation has suffered globally between the Spring of 2023 and the Spring of 2024. This drop in positive attitudes towards the US is particularly stark in the muslim-majority countries surveyed (Indonesia, Malaysia, Turkey, Morocco, Egypt, and Algeria) as well as many European countries (Switzerland, Ireland, Ukraine and Germany)," the report said.

However, people in most countries, particularly in Latin American and Eastern European states such as Poland and Ukraine, continue to think that the US still has a positive influence on global democracy, the report added.

"Over the past four years, from 2020 to 2024, perceptions of the US's global influence became more positive around the world - peaking in 2022 or 2023 - and then declined sharply in 2024," the report observed.

The DPI was based on nationally representative interviews with over 62,953 respondents from 53 countries conducted between February 20 and April 15.

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US Police Say Cleared Pro-Palestine Protest at GW University in DC, Arrested Dozens

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - Police cleared a pro-Palestinian protest encampment at the George Washington University in Washington DC in the early hours of Wednesday morning, arresting dozens of participants, Chief of Police Pamela Smith said in a press conference.

Smith said preparations to clear the protest camp began on Monday night, after officials concluded that the demonstration was becoming less stable and more volatile.

"Our plan included giving warnings, multiple warnings and clear direction to people inside the encampment to disperse the area. We allowed protesters ample time to leave the area, in total there were 6 disperse announcements before our officers took action," Smith said.

Smith said many protesters complied and left the encampment area, while those who did not

were arrested.

"A total of 33 arrests were made this morning for charges including unlawful entry ... and an assault on a police officer," Smith said.

Smith went on to say that as they were clearing the protest, additional protesters arrived outside of the perimeter and engaged in clashes with the police at 20th street and Pennsylvania Avenue.

The 33 arrests were made at that location.

Smith stressed that while the police support peaceful protests, they are always guided by public safety

"They [protests] began very peacefully, but over the past few days we began to see an escalation in the volatility of protests at GW. This started last Thursday when a GW campus officer was pushed by protesters and an item was grabbed out of the police officer's hands during the performance of her duties," Smith said.

On Monday, police learned of more indications that the protests were becoming unstable, she said, including security probing of GW buildings, counter-demonstrators covertly entering the encampment, evidence of offensive or defensive weapons being gathered, and information that protesters from other schools were traveling to GW.

Smith concluded by saying that the protesters will no longer be allowed to encamp at that space in the future.

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

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Nearly Half of Canadians Oppose Pro-Palestinian Encampments on University Campuses – Poll

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - Almost 50% of Canadians oppose the erection of student encampments in support of Palestine on university campuses nationwide, a Leger poll said on Wednesday.

The poll comes amid ongoing protests against Israel's military campaign in Gaza, including at McGill University in Montreal, University of Toronto and University of Ottawa.

According to the survey, close to half of Canadians somewhat (16%) or strongly (32%) oppose campus encampments. Only a third of those polled somewhat (11%) or strongly (20%) support them. Another 21% had no definitive answer.

Twenty-one percent of Canadians think encampments should be tolerated and accepted as a form of "free speech" while 44% believe that they should be dismantled and closed down as a potential threat to campus and students' safety. Thirty-three percent said a crackdown should only occur if protesters engage in anti-Semitic rhetoric.

On Tuesday, an Angus Reid poll found that two in three Canadians think protesting amid Israel's military operation 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.

Last week, the same polling institute released another survey related to the topic where it found that two in three Canadians thought law enforcement gave preferential treatment to certain protests and causes.

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

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Georgia Court of Appeals to Hear Trump's Bid to Disqualify Prosecutor Fani Willis - Order

WASHINGTON, May 8 (Sputnik) - An appeals court in the US state of Georgia has agreed to hear former President Donald Trump's bid to disqualify prosecutor Fani Willis in his 2020 election interference case, a court order said on Wednesday.

"Upon consideration of the Application for Interlocutory Appeal, it is ordered that it be hereby GRANTED," said the order from the Court of Appeals of the State of Georgia.