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Zelensky Says US Hegemony Will End If He Loses, But That Already Happened

In an interview with UK media, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky made the claim that if former US President Trump gets reelected and cuts off aid to his country, he will become a "loser president" responsible for the US losing its spot as the World's leader, but that has already happened and it was the US support of Ukraine that hastened it.

Since Russia launched its special military operation in Ukraine, the United States and NATO bet hundreds of billions of dollars that they could propel the Kiev regime to victory by outfitting it with some of the best weapons in NATO's arsenal.

Despite Russia's larger economy, population size and military, Ukraine could win, the thinking went, by using the vastly superior NATO weaponry and training. Of course, the US and NATO didn't hand over their very best weapons right away, but it would surely be enough to defeat the Russian army that was portrayed as ill-equipped and untrained in Western media outlets.

When that didn't work, NATO and the US upped the stakes, giving newer and ostensibly even more invincible weapons to Ukraine, they too failed.

Now, armed with the best weapons NATO could afford to give away, and full permission to strike inside Russia despite the risk of escalation, Ukraine is still being defeated on the battlefield. The whole world has seen for itself that NATO weapons are not equipped with force fields; they can be destroyed and are being destroyed at an alarming rate.

Last year, Trump claimed that he would end the conflict in Ukraine "within 24 hours" though he did not specify how he intended to accomplish that. When asked who he wants to win, Trump would only say that he wants "everyone to stop dying."

In his interview with the Guardian, Zelensky admitted that he had not developed a strategy to deal with Trump should he become elected, and seemingly admitted that his country would collapse without US support.

"Ukraine, barehanded, without weapons, will not be able to fight a multimillion army," he said. "Does he [Trump] want to become a loser President? Do you understand what can happen?" he added, then saying that if Ukraine loses, it means the US will lose its power in the world as well.

"This is not about him as a person, but about the institutions of the United States. They will become very weak. The US will not be the leader of the world anymore. Yes, it will be powerful, first of all, in the domestic economy because it has a powerful economy without a doubt. But in terms of international influence it will be equal to zero," the Ukrainian President who has utilized Martial Law to stay in office past his term said.

Of course, the opposite is true. The longer NATO and the US remain involved in Ukraine, the more thoroughly the veneer of NATO invincibility will be shattered. If they continue to increase their involvement and escalate things against Russia, it will only expedite the fall of Western hegemony.

"This is a decisive defeat of NATO, the European Union and the United States" former UN weapon inspector Scott Ritter told Sputnik's Fault Lines last month. "It's as decisive as you can

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get without them being directly involved, and they can't become directly involved because that is a suicide pill."

Over the last few weeks, NATO nations started giving the Kiev regime permission to strike inside Russia, culminating in the United States agreeing to it last week, but that too has failed to result in any meaningful change of the battle lines.

"But [Kremlin spokesman Dmitry] Peskov pointed out, you start using long-range missiles against Russia, we're just going to have to take more of Ukraine [to build a bufferzone]. That's what he said and he specifically mentioned Kiev," international relations and security expert Mark Sleboda told Fault Lines.

Peskov also told reporters that the United States is already involved in targeting and aiming their weapons at Russia. "[The weapons] are directly controlled by military personnel of NATO countries," adding that constituted not just military assistance but "participation in a war against us."

While Ukraine is not the only factor eating away at Western hegemony, it has played a large role, along with the US support of Israel and general economic trends.

"The world is changing indeed, not only because of the war on Russia in Ukraine but also the war in Gaza… the development of BRICS countries [and] the increase of the Shanghai Cooperation," explained war correspondent Elijah Magnier on Sputnik's The Critical Hour. "All these indicators lead to one reality, the beginning of the end of US hegemony."

While Russia has shown that NATO's weapons are not superior, it's the Ansar Allah movement, also known as the Houthis, who proved they are ill-equipped for modern war.

"The US and UK are failing in front of non-state actors in the Red Sea… So how can we understand that the Americans are ready to start a war against Russia and then against China?" Magnier added.

Still, with no other hopes or lifelines, Zelensky wants the US to embarrass themselves further by continuing to fund his government, saying that the US losing will encourage other countries to act aggressively. However, Russia and Ukraine were close to signing a peace deal in Istanbul at the start of the conflict. According to Ukrainian officials close to the negotiations, former UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson was sent to Ukraine to sabotage the deal at the behest of the United States.

Ironically, Zelensky says he recently asked Johnson to speak to Trump on his behalf.

Zelensky said he wanted to bring Trump to Ukraine to "see the results of what he brought to Ukraine." Although Zelensky was referring to Russian President Vladimir Putin "he", it would have been more accurate if he were referring to US President Joe Biden and/or Johnson, who really brought that destruction to Ukraine and Western hegemony.

"Fifty nations gathered to defeat Russia and they failed… Ukraine has been defeated and Europe is defeated," Magnier concluded.

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Drug ‘Melts Away’ Bowel Cancer, Say UK Doctors

Bowel cancer patients with a certain genetic anomaly could have drastically more success defeating it using a drug that doctors say “melts away” tumors, often eliminating the need for surgery and chemotherapy.

The study followed 32 patients with stage two or three bowel cancer who were MMR deficient /MSI-High bowel cancer (aka mismatch repair cancer syndrome) which means they have a high level of deficient cells with a large number of genetic mutations.

The patients were given nine weeks of pembrolizumab, also known as Keytruda, instead of chemotherapy ahead of their surgery. At the end of the nine weeks, 59% of the patients had no cancer remaining in their body and the other 41% had their remaining cancer successfully removed.

Typically, in bowel cancer patients with MMR deficient/MSI-High bowel cancer, less than 5% of patients show no signs of cancer after surgery.

Pembrolizumab blocks a specific protein on the surface of cells, compelling them to seek out and destroy cancer cells. The patients also did not have to suffer through post-op chemotherapy, which can be extremely taxing on patients’ bodies.

The study was led by the University of College London, University College London Hospital, the Christie National Health Service Foundation Trust in Manchester, St. James’ University Hospital in Leeds, University Hospital Southampton and the University of Glasgow.

“Immunotherapy [like pembrolizumab] can make tumors disappear before surgery. If you melt the cancer away before surgery you normally triple survival chances,” Dr. Kai-Keen Shiu, the trial’s chief investigator and a consultant medical oncologist at University College London Hospital, explained. “If patients have a complete response to pembrolizumab it can triple your chance of survival.”

Pembrolizumab is already used to treat a variety of different cancers, including lung, head, neck, stomach and cervical cancer, along with certain types of breast cancer, Hodgkin's lymphoma and melanoma.

Roughly 15% of bowel cancer patients have the genetic makeup that suggests pembrolizumab will be effective for them. Bowel cancer is the second most deadly type of cancer, killing around 900,000 people a year.

The trial will continue over the next few years and will assess the patients’ relapse and overall survival rates.

The study was presented at the world’s largest cancer conference the American Society of Clinical Oncology

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Korea’s ‘Ballooning’ Escalation Stops, For Now

Over the past week, North Korea has been dropping hundreds of bags filled with garbage over South Korea using balloons in response to South Korean activists dropping anti-Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) leaflets over North Korea using the same method.

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On Sunday, South Korea warned it would offer an “unbearable” response as North Korea said it would temporarily halt the trash balloons.

The balloon-based warfare began last month when South Korean activists launched balloons carrying anti-DPRK leaflets across the demilitarized zone despite warnings from the North that it would consider such an action a “de facto act of war,” and claimed that the South Korean government was encouraging the activists.

“South Korean authorities are egging despicable confrontational villains on to flock to areas along the Military Demarcation Line and scatter leaflets slandering the DPRK.”

The statement described the group as “a group of hooligans more dead than alive, who belong to the ultra-right conservative organizations such as the ‘Alliance for the Movement of Free North.’”

The statement, written before the balloons were launched, also claimed that the balloons were set to include DVDs and USB sticks containing “The Interview,” a 2014 comedy starring James Franco and Seth Rogen, during which the duo attempts to assassinate the leader of North Korea. It is not immediately clear if the balloons ended up including the movie or not.

“This is the gravest politically-motivated provocation against the DPRK and a de facto declaration of war against it,” the statement warned.

In May, the group "Fighters for a Free North Korea" claimed that it sent 20 large balloons over to North Korea which included over 300,000 leaflets and 2,000 USB drives. Fighters for a Free North Korea is funded by the US Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) the National Endowment of Democracy (NED), which was described by one of its co-founders as acting as a second CIA after the intelligence organization was restricted from performing coups in other countries.

"A lot of what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA," NED founder Allen Weinstein said in a 1991 interview with US media.

Starting on May 28, North Korea responded by sending trash balloons towards the south. “From May 28 to the dawn of June 2, we scattered 15 tons of wastepaper, favorite toy of the human scum, over the border areas of the Republic of Korea and its capital region with more than 3,500 balloons of various sorts,” vice-minister of national defense of the DPRK Kim Kang Il said in a statement on Sunday.

According to South Korean authorities, roughly 960 trash balloons were found in various parts of South Korea. They also accused the North of engaging in GPS jamming during the event.

On Sunday, South Korean National Security Director Change Ho-jin described the North Korean trash balloons and alleged GPS jamming by North Korea as “absurd, irrational acts of provocation that a normal country can’t imagine” while promising an “unbearable” response without clarifying what that may entail.

In its statement, North Korea said it halted the balloons but promised they would resume if anti-DPRK leaflets campaigns continue.

“We are going to halt wastepaper scattering over the border temporarily as our action was a countermeasure from A to Z."

"But, if the ROK [Republic of Korea] clans resume anti-DPRK leaflet scattering, we will correspond to it by intensively scattering wastepaper and rubbish hundred times the amount of scattered leaflets and the number of cases, as we have already warned.”

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In 2020, North Korea responded to a leaflet campaign by blowing up an inter-Korean liaison office in the North Korean border town of Kaesong. Later that year, the ROK banned the practice, arguing that it hurt reunification efforts, but that law was shot down by South Korea's Constitutional Court in September.

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DOJ: Americans Can't Hear The Biden-Hur 'Memory Interview' Because of 'Deepfakes'

The US Department of Justice (DOJ) is attempting to prevent the release of the audio of the infamous "memory interview" between US President Joe Biden and special counsel Robert Hur, arguing that "deepfakes" may appear as a result.

Hur was investigating Biden's handling of classified documents he obtained as a senator and vice president. While Hur wrote in his report that Biden likely violated the law intentionally, he declined to press charges because he thought Biden would appear to the jury as a "sympathetic, well-meaning, elderly man with a poor memory." It also noted that Biden had trouble remembering when he was vice president and which year his son Beau died.

The DOJ issued a filing on Friday that argued "The passage of time and advancements in audio, artificial intelligence, and 'deep fake' technologies only amplify concerns about malicious manipulation of audio files. If the audio recording is released here, it is easy to foresee that it could be improperly altered, and that the altered file could be passed off as an authentic recording and widely distributed."

While the DOJ admits that there is plenty of "other raw material to create a deepfake of President Biden's voice" available to unscrupulous actors, it argues that if the public became aware that the legitimate recording was released, they would be more apt to believe a fake recording is legitimate.

The filing was first obtained by Politico.

It is not known how the court will respond to the strange reasoning. If a legitimate copy of the recording were released, it stands to reason it would become easier –not more difficult– to disprove fake versions.

As the DOJ admits in its filing as part of its argument that the release of the audio recording is unnecessary, the full transcript of the interview has already been released. It would be trivial for someone with AI experience to use the "raw material" already available of Biden to create a deepfake version of the interview and say it was leaked. A legitimate version being released would make that much easier for other internet users and the media to definitively debunk.

The filing also comes after Biden used his executive privilege to stop the release of the tape to House Republicans who had sought to obtain it as part of their investigation into the Biden family. The latest filing was in response to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request.

The DOJ also argues that the release of the audio would be a violation of Biden's privacy. However, since we already know what he said thanks to the transcript– and we have no reason to believe that the transcript is incorrect, the only thing that would be revealed is everything between those words. How long did Biden pause before answering? How many times did he stumble on his words? Did he sound confused or angry during the interview?

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These are the questions that could be revealed through the release of the audio and according to the filing, the DOJ doesn't think it is in the "public interest" to reveal the answers, so much so that they are willing to resort to absurd fear-mongering over a new technology in hopes that the judge will be cowed into blocking its release.

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Chile Joins South African ICJ Case Against Israel

Chile is the latest in a growing list of countries that have joined South Africa in their case against Israel for genocide in the International Court of Justice (ICJ).
President Gabriel Boric announced his country's intention to join the case during a speech, accusing the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) of using"indiscriminate and disproportional" force.
"These acts demand a firm and permanent response of the international community," he added.
South Africa brought the case against Israel last year, accusing Israel of committing genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza, a charge that Israel denied. Chile is the latest in a growing list of countries that have joined the case. Earlier this week, Mexico announced that it would support South Africa. Nicaragua, Colombia, Libya, Maldives, Namibia, Venezuela, Egypt, Bolivia, Turkiye, Ireland, Belgium, Indonesia and the Organization of Islamic Countries which has 57 members, have all either formally joined the case, announced their intention to, or expressed support for it.
Germany is the only country that has said it will intervene on behalf of Israel and The United States declared its opposition to it.
Chile hosts the world largest community of Palestinians outside of the Middle East.
In January, the ICJ issued a preliminary ruling saying that it was "plausible" that Israel was committing genocide and ordered it to take action to prevent genocide from happening in Gaza while allowing aid to reach needy Palestinians.
Last week, the ICJ issued another ruling, ordering Israel to stop its campaign on Rafah, the southern Gazan city where more than a million Palestinians were sheltering after Israel declared it the last safe zone in the enclave. Three days later, Israel bombed a tent camp of refugees in Gaza, sparking a fire and killing more than 50 people, many of whom were burned alive.
Israel initially said was carefully targeted to hit Hamas leaders, but after hellish images and videos of the attack spread across social media, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called it a "tragic mistake." The attack received widespread international condemnation.
At least 35,984 Palestinians have been killed since Israel began its campaign against Gaza in October, including more than 15,000 children, according to the local authorities. More than 80,634 Palestinians have been seriously injured and at least another 10,000 are missing.
Including Hamas' October 7 attack and subsequent deaths during the fighting, at least 1,139 Israelis have been killed and more than 8,730 have been injured.

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Democrats' 'Lawfare' Makes Trump Look Like a Martyr, Not a Crook

On Thursday, former President and presumptive Republican Presidential nominee Donald Trump was convicted on 36 felony counts related to falsifying business records as part of hush money payments to cover up a sex scandal with former adult actress Stormy Daniels.

Trump, the first former US president to be convicted of a crime, will face sentencing on July 11, where he could face jail time.

The charges against Trump, falsifying business records would typically be a misdemeanor and past their statute of limitations in New York, but because the court alleged they were used to cover up another crime, in this case, to interfere with an election or get a candidate elected, the charge was upgraded to a felony and therefore was not past the statute of limitations.

According to the letter of the law, Trump was likely guilty of the crime the court found him guilty of. “Once the jurors came back and asked questions about Mr. Pecker and Mr. Cohen about the initial events, it was pretty clear that they had decided that Trump was part of the conspiracy,” explained California lawyer John Burris on Sputnik’s The Critical Hour. “That he was part of it at the very beginning, and that he delegated the control of the nuts and bolts to Michael Cohen. That turned out to be the death knell for him in this case.”

After his conviction, Trump decried the case as rigged and the judge as corrupt, as he did for most of the trial. He proclaimed that the “real verdict will be on November 5, by the people. And they know what happened here and everyone knows what happens here.”

While pollsters are rushing to get information on how this all looks to voters now that the former president has been convicted, previous polling revealed a collective “meh” from voters.

According to a poll released a day before the verdict, 67% of voters said a guilty verdict would make “no difference” in their decision on election day. Of those who said it would, only slightly less, 15%, said it would make them “more likely” to vote for Trump than those who said it would make them “less likely” to vote for Trump, 17%.

The Democrats are hoping that the voters at the margins will be enough to sway a close election toward current US President Joe Biden, but as the poll above shows, it will be an extremely small swing, if it has any effect at all. It has also energized Trump’s base, leading to his campaign raising $52.8 million in the wake of the conviction.

“It's going to create a lot of rightful anger among his supporters. It'll probably help him. It's certainly already helping him in the fundraising. I mean, there's a lot of obstacles he's going to face with all these convictions, but they're turning him into a political martyr,” independent journalist Dr. Jim Kavanagh told Sputnik’s The Critical Hour.

While the conviction makes legal sense on paper, it also comes off as selective punishment considering the history of recent Presidents. Former President George W Bush ran a blatantly illegal torture campaign, using the dubious legalese reasoning of administration lawyer John Yoo, and that is to say nothing about how the administration lied to Americans to start a war in Iraq.

But when Barack Obama came into office, he declined to prosecute any Bush administration officials, despite a committee report that made clear the CIA agents who tortured people and administration officials who ordered it violated the law.

In 2014, Slate published an article defending Obama’s decision, citing the appearance of political prosecution as the most significant reason.

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"Obama's best argument for letting matters rest is the principle against criminalizing politics. This is the idea that you don't try to gain political advantage by prosecuting political opponents—as governments around the world do when authoritarian leaders seek to subvert democratic institutions," lawyer Eric Posner wrote.

Notice that Posner does not qualify that it would only reflect authoritarian leaders if the accusations are false. On the contrary, Posner admits earlier in the piece that Bush administration and CIA officials were likely guilty of torture.

Posner also pointed out at the time that doing so would be very dangerous for the country. "The prospect of criminalization of political behavior raises the stakes for elections because if you or your boss loses an election, you not only lose the trappings of office but gain the prospect of being investigated for the rest of your life. This will encourage officeholders to take ever more extreme actions to stay in office."

But the evidence of selective prosecution doesn't end with Obama's decision to "move forward" after the Bush administration's torture campaigns. It is also blatantly apparent looking at the same election that Trump was convicted of trying to illegally influence when he falsified business records.

In 2022, the campaign for Hillary Clinton's failed 2016 presidential bid and the DNC were fined by the Federal Election Commission for lying about how they spent money that was used to create the discredited Steele dossier that accused Trump of being entangled with the Russian government.

That dossier was funded by payments totaling over $1 million from the Clinton campaign. They classified those payments as "legal advice and services."

"Obviously, that seems extremely similar to what Trump has been accused of," explained former lawyer and award-winning journalist Glenn Greenwald on System Update on Thursday. "They wanted those payments to be hidden because they wanted to claim that they weren't the ones funding and instigating this fraudulent Steele dossier, it turns out they absolutely [were]. The intent was obviously to shield Hillary Clinton from damaging revelations, which is exactly the theory that they just convicted Trump based on."

Noting that he has long advocated against the rich and powerful being shielded from legal consequences, Greenwald argues that this is not the case here. "I would be applauding this if I thought this was fairly applied,"he began. "The reality is there's only one person in all the United States who would have been charged with 34 felonies, or even one felony, for having done this and that person's name is Donald Trump."

This will make Trump appear to be a political martyr, even though him deserving sympathy is a matter of question. During his first term, Trump filled his cabinet with political lifers and former business executives, the same type of politicians he railed against when he was campaigning, including Mike Pompeo, John Bolton, Thomas Bossert, Sean Spicer, Steven Mnuchin and Rex Tillerson, among others.

"Trump is not draining any swamp. He's filled with swamp creatures. He's swimming amongst the alligators," Kavanagh argued. "We know what he is. Trump was president already. We know what he does and what he doesn't do. What he doesn't do is drain the swamp."

But ultimately, the move to weaponize the legal system will have implications further down the road, something Democrats used to understand when they stood by Obama for not prosecuting Bush officials on much more serious crimes.

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"If the Biden administration can indict a former president for, effectively, not much, and make it a huge thing, then that opens the door potentially to everybody else in the business world if they rub up against the administration the wrong way in terms of their political speech or their behaviors," argued the host of AM Wake Up and Slow News Day, Steve Poikonen while appearing as a guest on The Critical Hour. "We're in an era of lawfare."

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The 'Bidenomics' Will Continue Until Morale Improves

For months, US President Joe Biden and his surrogates have been claiming that the economy is doing well. They point to numbers showing relatively low inflation, low unemployment, and a rising GDP as evidence that despite voter sentiment, the economy is "strong."
According to Gallup's Economic Confidence Index, voters feel worse about the economy than they have since November. Only 22% of those polled rated the economy "excellent" or "good" while 46% rated it "Poor" and another 33% rated it "Only fair."
It is true, as the Democrats say, that the stock market is booming, that unemployment is low, that the GDP is rising and that inflation is closer to normal than it has been recently. However, those indicators are no longer an accurate measure of the quality of life for Americans.
Last year, chronic homelessness hit an all-time high. Collective credit card debt reached over $1 trillion in the US for the first time. And with rising interest rates and prices, home affordability hit an all-time low while rent asking price hit a new high in January (though that has eased somewhat).
Most Americans don't own stocks, so they don't care about the stock market. Even when unemployment is low, workers will still feel unsatisfied if they cannot afford their basic needs without incurring debt. Inflation can be 3% but if it was 9% last year, then that's still a 12% increase over two years when 4-6% would be typical for that timeframe.
On a visceral level, if you are seeing more of your fellow Americans sleeping on the streets, you're not likely to think the economy is strong, no matter what economists on television tell you. So far, the Biden administration's only answer has been a typical one, "Who are you going to believe, these economic indicators, or your lying eyes?"

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Like WWI, Ukraine Conflict Is Reshaping War For the 21st Century

On July 1, 1916, 110,000 British infantry left their trenches at the Battle of Somme. Within hours, 60,000 of them were killed or injured and the army had achieved none of its goals.
Regardless, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, chief of staff of the British Expeditionary Force and the architect of the battle decided to soldier on, losing an additional 400,000 troops in four months until winter came and mercifully halted the fighting.

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The Battle of Somme ended inconclusively and is considered one of the greatest tragedies of the First World War for the British army. Haig appeared to be a qualified general when he took the post, but as the saying goes, generals are always fighting the last war and few personified that more than Haig.

Trained in outdated military doctrine that had already been discredited in the Civil War and again in the Russo-Japanese War. Haig ordered frontal assaults, and not even the kind that were typical (though largely unsuccessful) during the early stages of the Great War. Haig preferred the kind that came out of the Napoleonic era. The general ordered his men to assault the brunt of the German defense using slow-moving, orderly lines, which he saw as easier to command. He planned to send in the cavalry– which often played major roles in Haig's plans despite their ineffectiveness in modern war– after his infantry broke the German lines.

Time and time again, Haig ordered his cavalry to suit up in anticipation of the coming breakthrough, only to order them to stand down when it failed to come and his infantry divisions were bleeding out in no man's land between the defensive lines.

Haig was not the only general to look silly during WWI, but his refusal to learn was among the worst. What Somme and many other battles in WWI proved was that the old way of fighting had come and gone. The weapons had changed the battlefield and armies had to adjust their tactics or face ruin.

The weapons that shaped warfare in the 20th century: barbed wire, machine guns, tanks, long-range artillery, and battleships, still play significant roles on the battlefield in the 21st, but they are dwarfed in importance by one invention, from which multiple theaters have been affected: the drone.

While specific numbers of their effectiveness are difficult to come by at this stage of the conflict (that will be a job for war historians) there is no doubt that it is the most significant innovation on the battlefield today, used by both sides to inflict large amounts of casualties on the other. During Ukraine's failed 2023 counteroffensive, drones played a huge role in stopping that advance. With the possible exception of Russia's distance mining equipment, which also took out large numbers of tanks, drones were pivotal in taking out NATO's most powerful armor.

"[US media] admitted how useless the Abrams [tank] is when tens of millions of dollars per tank can be taken out by a $500 drone. It is a new model of warfare," Mark Sleboda, a security and international relations expert told Sputnik's Fault Lineson Friday.

"But it is an evolution of warfare that is occurring before our eyes. So, the Chinese and Americans are certainly paying very close attention," he noted earlier in the interview.

It is an opinion shared by former Marine and UN Weapons Inspector Scott Ritter. Speaking on the Danny Haiphong show, he explained how everything from tactics to logistics has been changed by drones.

"When this war started, people were working off of Cold War-era doctrinal thinking. That is: you have tank columns, you have artillery that operates in battery or battalion sized formations flooding a zone, you have big arrow movements and things of that nature," Ritter recalled. "[Then] drones started coming in, not just for targeting purposes, not just for deep strike purposes, but tactical drones on the battlefront. These FPV drones are a nightmare for soldiers."

"If I tried to take Marines into combat using the tactics that I was taught," Ritter continued "[With] two platoons online, basic fire etcetera, my base of fire would disappear because it'd be

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swarmed by FPV drones… then my Marines attacking would be hit by these drones and they're all dead."

Much like Haig, this was a lesson that the Armed Forces of Ukraine failedto learn during their counteroffensive. Rabotino was intended to be the first minor step during that offensive that would lead to Tokmak which would serve as the staging ground for an assault on Melitopol. But as armor assault after armor assault was destroyed, it became apparent that the Ukrainians would never reach their goal. But, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky needed something to show his Western benefactors, so Rabotino became the goal. It took 71 days to capture the tiny village with a pre-war population of about 500 people, largely using the same tactics they began with. Ukraine lost dozens of expensive tanks and thousands of men capturing and then holding the village. The Ukrainian offensive never went any further and in May, Russia recaptured the village.

Just as the invention of the tank helped break the stalemate of the First World War, new technologies are emerging to counteract the drone and there it seems Russia has a decided advantage on that front. According to Military Watch Magazine, Russian electronic defenses have renderedUkraine's best artillery weapons all but useless, including the Excalibur GPS-guided artillery shells, the vaunted HIMARS rocket artillery systems and the JDAM precision-guided bombs.

"Everything ended [in 2023]: the Russian deployed electronic warfare, disabled satellite signals, and HIMARS became completely ineffective," one senior Ukrainian military official was quoted as saying.

But the innovations on the battlefield aren't exclusive to high technology, often they come from the soldiers on the ground. As tanks were increasingly taken out by drones, soldiers started adding cope cages in an attempt to protect them. This eventually led to the deployment of what is affectionately called the "turtle tank."

Typically beginning with a T-72 tank, so-called turtle tanks are outfitted with a metal shell that covers almost the entirety of the tank, leaving only the very front and its cannon exposed to drone attack. While limiting the driver in visibility and maneuverability, those drawbacks have proven worth it. The Ukrainians who initially laughed at the turtle tank's awkward appearance and low-tech solution quickly stopped laughing as they retreated from turtle tank assaults across the Western front.

As Sleboda noted, Ukraine didn't even bother trying to outfit the Abrams with anti-drone measures. "They couldn't. They're much too arrogant," to put a cope cage on an Abrams, he said.

The innovations on the battlefield in the Ukraine war are undoubtedly going to shape the next war and the war after that. China has made clear that it is paying attention and it wants the US to know that as well. In January they released a video showing how their drone swarms would work in concept against naval fleets.

China also claims to have a new "anti-drone" tank, which includes electronic warfare equipment and anti-air measures designed to counteract drones and slow-moving guided missiles. They have also shown off very advanced maritime and underwater drones.

In WWI, the generals who failed to learn from the lessons of the Civil War and the Russo-Japanese War suffered the consequences on the battlefield. Russia learned its lessons already. Ukraine did not and we see the results of that. China seems to be paying close

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attention and appears to be adjusting its priorities accordingly. The United States pioneered drone warfare in the 2000s, but as evidenced by the number of MQ-9 Reapers taken down by the Houthis in Yemen, those are no longer effective. Will the lumbering behemoth of NATO be able to adjust as quickly as Russia and China, or will they, like Haig, be stuck fighting with the tactics and equipment of the last century?

"The tensions are increasing right now across the Taiwanese straits. We're in [with Ukraine] one of the early stages of a conflict that in the future will be regarded as part of a series of conflicts that are [a part of] World War 3," Sleboda warned.

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India-Russia Oil for Rubles Deal Another Sign of Rapid Dedollarization

On Wednesday, it was reported that India's largest private corporation Reliance Industries and the Russian energy company Rosneft signed a one-year agreement for up to three million barrels of oil per month that will be paid in Russian rubles, putting another nail in the coffin for the US dollar's hegemony.

The transactions will be handled by India's HDFC Bank and Russia's Gazprombank, outside of the Western SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications) payment system and immune to the illegal unilateral sanctions placed on Russia by the West.

After the start of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, Western countries greatly reduced their purchases of Russian oil and gas in a move that was intended, but failed, to cripple the Russian economy.

"Since the Western existential economic war of sanctions [against Russia] began in 2022, India's imports of Russian oil have soared. In fact, the country's imports of Russian oil have soared tenfold in just 2023,"explained security and international relations expert Mark Sleboda on Sputnik's The Critical Hour. "So they are buying Russian oil. They're [getting] a good price on it, making their products more competitive and Europe isn't getting that cheap, reliable oil."

While India's purchase of Russian oil angered the United States, it has been hesitant to punish India because it sees it as a potential ally in a future war with China.

"The US keeps trying to rope India into fighting China, serving as proxies for it in their future war with China, which means they don't want to alienate India too much," Sleboda said.

The decision to make purchases in rubles rather than Indian rupees or US dollars represents another step in de-dollarization that has been spreading across the globe. In the late 1970s, the US dollar represented 85% of global reserve currencies. By 2022, that number had fallen to 58.4%, a trend that has been exacerbated by Western sanctions imposed by Russia and the illegal seizure of Russian assets held in US banks, a decision by the West that had led other world leaders to question the dollar's dominance.

"Every night I ask myself why all countries have to base their trade on the dollar," Brazilian President Luiz Inácio-Lula da Silva said during a speech in China last year. "Why can't we do trade based on our own currencies? Who was it that decided that the dollar was the currency after the disappearance of the gold standard?"

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If the US continues on this path, more countries will follow suit, Sleboda predicts. The more the West uses sanctions and payment systems as a weapon in foreign policy, “more of the world’s economy [will slip] outside of their grasp.”

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Ukraine ‘Advocates’ Are Fighting for Its Destruction

The most adamant and feverish Ukraine supporters do not actually support it at all and are instead promoting its use as a pawn in the United States and the West’s geopolitical chessboard.

On Sunday, Russian President Vladimir Putin signaled that he is open to talks with Ukraine and its Western benefactors, building off an agreement that was nearly reached in Istanbul, Turkiye at the start of the conflict. However, Russia also insists that the territory its soldiers fought and died for since that time will remain in Russian hands.

Ukraine and its Western supporters have repeatedly insisted that Ukraine’s 1991 borders be restored, an impossible ask even at the start of the war that has only appeared more deluded as time has gone on.

“You have to think about how does it benefit [Ukraine] to be bombed and brutalized and have its people killed and maimed for another three months? Half a year? How long is this meant to go on?” asked author Branko Marcetic on Sputnik’s The Critical Hour, who recently wrote a piece in Responsible Statecraft on this subject.

Support for Ukraine comes in two main forms. There is the political and military support provided by Western nations, and there is public support, which has been waning but still includes a vocal contingent online who has named themselves “NAFO.” While the so-called NAFO Brigades are useless to Ukraine on the battlefield, they have been useful in manufacturing consent for the wars and providing political cover for politicians who are spending on Ukraine rather than their own countries.

They are also advocating for the continued destruction of the very country they claim to be protecting. While they sit safely in their Western countries, typing Russophobic slurs through their keyboards and virtually patting other “fellas” on the back, actual Ukrainians are attempting to flee the country at an astounding rate.

Polish media estimated that around 80,000 Ukrainian men of military age have entered the country since February 24, 2022, when the restrictions against men leaving Ukraine came into effect in the country. Ukraine claims that it has caught some 13,000 men attempting to illegally cross the border.

In April, the Kiev regime ended consulate services for Ukrainian men abroad, a brazen attempt to force war refugees to the frontlines. This is on top of the countless videos posted on social media of Ukrainian men inside the country trying to avoid the draft, fighting with recruitment officers, and wearing old man masks in an attempt to go unnoticed.

These are clearly men who do not want to fight and die for a cause that even Western military analysts say is a lost cause. Yet Western leaders and the NAFO troll farms gleefully send them to their deaths, while proclaiming that they are the ones supporting Ukraine.

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“There is no other conflict in the world where this is the position,”explained Marcetic. “That the country where troop morale is low as it is in Ukraine, has suffered the kind of casualties that it has… there’s no other conflict where you have those conditions and the response is ‘let’s keep this going indefinitely because there’ll be more enemy forces killed.’”

Ukraine has suffered more than half a million casualties in the conflict according to the Russian Ministry of Defense. The country is also swamped in foreign debt and will likely have to spend more than $500 billion reconstructing the country.

Meanwhile, the Kiev regime has halted elections past Zelensky’s legal term while banning religious sects, political parties and media outlets, all for what US President Joe Biden calls the defense of “democratic values.”

“I think people have done a real disservice [to Ukraine] the people who have cheered on this war from the beginning, rather than trying to push for some kind of end to hostilities,” Marcetic explained. “Even though they present themselves as Ukrainians’ greatest defenders, by taking the option of a ceasefire of negotiated settlement out of the realm of political commonsense and basically making it a toxic subject to discuss… it’s proven just disastrous for the country.”

Noting that most of the “ordinary people” who support Ukraine in the West were likely well-meaning, Marcetic hopes that they won’t be so easily fooled by “Bush-era-like invocations of democracy and freedom” to justify wars in the future.

“The people at the top have very different ulterior motives. For them, Ukraine is a piece on the chessboard and they have been used, basically, as an expendable pawn in this conflict.”

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Canada to Host ICAO Leadership in Ottawa to Discuss Global Aviation Priorities – Ministry

WASHINGTON, June 3 (Sputnik) – The International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) Secretary General Salvatore Sciacchitano and President Juan Carlos Salazar are visiting Ottawa this week to discuss “global aviation priorities” with senior Canadian officials, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) said on Monday.

Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly and Transport Minister Pablo Rodriguez will host Sciacchitano and Salazar in Ottawa from June 3-5. The visit coincides with ICAO’s Council Off-site Strategy meeting.

“Minister Joly and Minister Rodriguez will meet with ICAO Council President Sciacchitano and ICAO Secretary General Salazar to discuss several global aviation priorities,” GAC said in a statement.

The officials will discuss upholding the so-called “rules-based” international air transport system, as well as advancing accessibility and sustainability while ensuring the safety of passengers, crews and the global aviation sector, GAC said.

Sciacchitano and Salazar are also scheduled to meet with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau during their visit to Ottawa, GAC said.

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One Dead, 4 Injured in Overnight Shooting in Toronto - Police

WASHINGTON, June 3 (Sputnik) – The Toronto Police Service said on Monday that they are investigating an overnight shooting outside of the North Albion Collegiate in the city's northeast that left one person dead and another four injured.

"Shooting: (additional info) … 1 man in his 50's, transported to hospital w/life-threatening injuries … 4 people (unknown age/gender) transported to hospital w/serious but non-life-threatening injuries," the Toronto Police Operations wrote via X. "One of the victims has succumbed to their injuries."

Law enforcement units answered to reports of a shooting at around 11:00 p.m. ET. in the Mt Olive Dr. & Kipling Ave area, the police said. Upon arrival, they found five individuals with gunshot wounds.

The police said that a black truck was seen fleeing the scene. A significant police presence is currently on the scene.

The homicides unit has taken over the investigation.

The ongoing investigation outside of the North Albion Collegiate prompted the Toronto District School Board to close both the school and on-site daycare. Facilities will be closed to students and staff alike, the board said via X.

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Hunter Biden Arrives for Criminal Trial on Gun Charges in Delaware

(Updates with details in paras 3-7)

WASHINGTON, June 3 (Sputnik) - Hunter Biden, the son of US President Joe Biden, arrived at a federal court in Delaware to attend jury selection for his trial in his case related to a firearm purchase.

Many journalists were waiting for Hunter Biden's in front of the building, but he proceeded far enough from them without answering questions, according to a live broadcast from the scene.

First Lady Jill Biden also arrived at the court without making any comments. Ashley Biden, the half sister of Hunter Biden and the daughter of Joe and Jill Biden, also arrived to the US District Court for the District of Delaware in Wilmington.

Jury selection got underway at 8:30 a.m. local time. The trial is expected to last from three to six days.

Biden is accused of lying about his history of drug use on the firearm purchase form, resulting in three felony charges. Biden's legal team unsuccessfully attempted to toss the case ahead of the trial, based on arguments that the charges violate the Second Amendment of the US Constitution.

The Second Amendment protects the right to keep and bear arms, although some restrictions on firearm ownership have been found legally permissible, including restricting ownership by

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felons and users of controlled substances.

Biden pleaded not guilty to the charges against him, after a plea deal and pre-trial diversion agreement that would have resolved the firearm charges and separate tax charges fell through. He faces up to 25 years in prison if convicted, but the Justice Department explained that actual sentences for federal crimes are typically less than maximum penalties.

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Tens of Tesla Cybertruck Enthusiasts Meet Up in Austin at Rodeo Show - Correspondent

AUSTIN, June 2 (Sputnik) - Cybertruck fans from all over the United States gathered on Sunday to celebrate the revolutionary Tesla model at the Rodeo Show in Austin, Texas.

“I have driven from Florida. It took me three days to get here,” Chris, an owner of Cybertruck from Miami, told Sputnik.

The event started with Cybertrucks lining up at a big electric charging station on Austin’s outskirts. The convoy, of approximately 50 cars, then followed the organizers, who also own the Tesla Club in Austin, to a racing track in Gatesville, one hour outside of Austin.

Trucks of all colors and customizations lined up on the tracks. At the same time, each of the Tesla supporters brought something unique: one of them brought CyberQuad for kids, another one Boring Company’s flamethrower or a DJ desk at one of the car’s back.

The Tesla Cybertruck is the second most-sold electric pickup truck on the market, losing competition only to US classic car brand Ford and its F-150 Lighting truck. Other electric car brands, such as Rival Chevy or GMC Hummer, are behind Tesla. Some car experts find this high volume surprising because of Cybertruck’s atypical design.

Despite a staggering waitlist of over a million potential buyers, Tesla has only recently managed to ramp up its Cybertruck production to 75,000 trucks annually. This unprecedented demand has led to a black market, where Cybertrucks are being resold for as high as $350,000. In an attempt to curb this, Tesla has mandated all owners to sign an agreement prohibiting the sale of their cars within the next year. However, it seems that many are not adhering to this request, and as of now, Tesla has not taken any action to enforce its agreement.

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PREVIEW – Hunter Biden Firearms Trial Set to Begin in Delaware

WASHINGTON, June 3 (Sputnik) - The trial in a case involving Hunter Biden's alleged lies on a firearm purchase form is scheduled to begin on Monday in Delaware.

Biden is accused of lying about his history of drug use on the firearm purchase form, resulting in three felony charges. Biden's legal team unsuccessfully attempted to toss the case ahead of the trial, based on arguments that the charges violate the Second Amendment of the US Constitution.

The Second Amendment protects the right to keep and bear arms, although some restrictions on firearm ownership have been found legally permissible, including restricting ownership by felons and users of controlled substances.

Biden pleaded not guilty to the charges against him, after a plea deal and pre-trial diversion agreement that would have resolved the firearm charges and separate tax charges fell through.

The court expects a three- to six-day jury trial in the case. Jury selection is set to begin on Monday at 8:30 a.m. ET.

Biden faces up to 25 years in prison if convicted, the US Justice Department. However, the Justice Department noted that actual sentences for federal crimes are typically less than maximum penalties.

Hunter Biden's legal troubles could "consume" his father, US President Joe Biden, ahead of the 2024 presidential election, US media reported in December, citing five Biden aides and confidants. Joe Biden worries that his son could backslide into drug addiction, the report said.

Joe Biden will not pardon his son if he is convicted for his alleged criminal activity, the White House said in December.

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Biden Permits Firing US Missiles Into Russia to Prop Up Kiev Regime - Ex-Pentagon Analyst

WASHINGTON, June 2 (Sputnik) - The political confusion and disarray in Washington has been exposed by President Joe Biden's reported decision to permit Ukraine to fire US-supplied weapons at targets inside Russia, veteran Defense Department analyst and retired US Air Force Lt. Col. Karen Kwiatkowski told Sputnik.

"This decision is a continued sign of political disarray in Washington and within NATO leadership. he Biden administration is praying that Ukraine can continue some kind of resistance until early November," Kwiatkowski said in reference to the time when the US presidential election is scheduled to be held.

On Thursday, US media reported that Biden had already taken the decision to permit the Kiev regime of Volodymyr Zelenskyy to fire US-supplied weapons at targets within Russia.

The decision clearly reflected the fears of Biden and his top officials that Ukraine might totally collapse before the November 5 US presidential election and therefore he was desperate to

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prop it up at least until then at all costs, even at the risk of provoking a thermonuclear confrontation with Russia, Kwiatkowski said.

"This political disarray, disorganization and frustration has been obvious and growing as the militarily and economically weak Western coalition of the partially willing walks the tightrope of a proxy war against a nuclear power," Kwiatkowski said.

However, Biden's reported shift in policy was enormously dangerous not only to his own country but to the entire world, she said.

"This shift in Biden policy on Ukraine's use of US weapons inside Russia, around Kharkov only for now, is escalatory. It unleashes the Russian military as well, to bring a swift end to this war through force, rather than negotiation," Kwiatkowski said.

Biden had expected Ukraine to provide him with a war victory in under a year when the current conflict broke out in February 2022, fostered by massive US military support for Zelenskyy in Kiev and urging him to ignore Russia's efforts to reach a peaceful negotiated settlement, she said.

However, Biden is now frustrated as what should have been for his party a demonstration of strength and judgment, has instead made him and his party unpopular," Kwiatkowski said.

Also, high inflation and a stagnating economy in addition to losing wars tend to be politically deadly for a US president running on his record, she said.

Neither Biden nor Vice President Kamala Harris is attending the June "peace talks" in Switzerland, but are trying to focus on desperately regaining the voter blocks in the United States that were critical in the previous matchup with former President Donald Trump, she said.

"A darker and just as possible strategy by the US administration is that they wish to incite a major Russian response to the US-UK-France Ukrainian escalation of a doomed war effort," Kwiatkowski said.

This fitted into the old and recycled Democrat narratives falsely linking Trump and Russia as the Democrats' hope this will somehow help re-elect Biden and save the ruling parties in the United Kingdom and France.

Each nervous Western partner was now evaluating their own political and military options as they watched the UK and US plans on Ukraine implode, she said.

"Best case for Biden, he is able to oversee a nuclear crisis that allows him to cancel or suspend elections, or otherwise silence his American critics in a time of nuclear 'war,'" Kwiatkowski said.

However, this dark approach offered both serious consequences for Ukraine and Western Europe and also introduced massive uncertainty, she said.

"It would likely backfire, not in a nuclear conflict that some in the US government seem to want, but in the political destruction of the European Union and NATO," Kwiatkowski said.

Biden's move to permit the more indiscriminate use of US weapons by the Kiev regime revealed his callous and cynical attitude toward the Ukrainian people, she said.

"This latest Biden decision tells us he wants more Ukrainians to die and he wants the end of Ukraine as a wholly abstract problem," Kwiatkowski added.

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The decision clearly reflected the fears of Biden and his top officials that Ukraine might totally collapse before the November 5 US presidential election and therefore he was desperate to prop it up at least until then at all costs, even at the risk of provoking a thermonuclear confrontation with Russia, Kwiatkowski said.

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Biden's move to permit the more indiscriminate use of US weapons by the Kiev regime revealed his callous and cynical attitude toward the Ukrainian people, she said.
"This latest Biden decision tells us he wants more Ukrainians to die and he wants the end of Ukraine as a wholly abstract problem," Kwiatkowski added.

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RPT - Kiev Firing US Arms into Russia Will Push Moscow to Expand Buffer Zone - ex-US Army Col.

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - Permission by the United States and its allies for the Zelenskyy regime to use Western-supplied weapons to strike Russian territory will not prevent a Ukrainian defeat in the conflict, but will force Russia to expand a "buffer zone" to stop attacks on its border areas, US Army Lt. Col. and veteran international consultant Earl Rasmussen told Sputnik.
In a major policy shift, Biden authorized the use of US weapons against military installations in Russia. A State Department spokesperson insisted that the authorization was limited to what they called "counter-fire purposes" in Kharkov (also known as Kharkiv) region. The US has not authorized the use of long-range missiles, including ATACMS, inside Russia, the spokesperson told Sputnik on Thursday.
"This will not change the ultimate outcome of the conflict, which Russia is destined to win," Rasmussen said. "What it will do is encourage Russia to expand the buffer zone that has been discussed and to potentially directly strike US and other NATO facilities supporting these actions."
While the Pentagon most likely was trying to limit the shift, recent statements by former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland and Secretary Antony Blinken clearly showed that there was strong lobbying going on in the background to change the US position, Rasmussen observed.
"It is possible that secretly Ukraine was allowed already or at least Western intelligence and targeting information has likely been used on earlier strikes," he said. "Yes, it is an escalation and most likely Russia will counter in some way.
US policy makers continue to blunder forward with ever more dangerous decisions which unfortunately will likely end in a direct conflict or potentially worse, Rasmussen warned.
"Such decisions show that there are major influencers strongly seeking major escalation. Moreover, many of the political leaders are heavily politically committed for some reason to Project Ukraine and refuse to accept that it is a failure and would rather destroy their own countries and world than accept reality," he said.
Rasmussen noted that he has mentioned for several years that "we are moving down a

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dangerous path. That path is not getting any safer, if anything it is becoming more treacherous."

As situations continue to escalate in the Middle East and Asia, history will not look favorably on the current group of Western leaders as they lead their countries into the abyss, Rasmussen said.

Earlier in May, President Vladimir Putin said that Ukraine is to blame for the Russian offensive in the Kharkov region since Kiev continues to shell civilians in the Russian border city of Belgorod.

Russia is thus forced to create a buffer zone because of Ukraine's continued deadly shelling of Belgorod, he warned.

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RPT - Biden Letting Kiev Strike Russia Risks Moving From Proxy to Real War - Ex-US Diplomat

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden authorizing Kiev to fire US weapons into parts of Russia coupled with belligerent moves by other Western nations risks turning the Ukraine conflict from proxy war to real war, former US diplomat and State Department consultant on US-Russia relations James Carden told Sputnik.

In a major policy shift, Biden authorized the use of US weapons against military installations in Russia. A State Department spokesperson insisted that the authorization was limited to what they called "counter-fire purposes" in Kharkov (also known as Kharkiv) region. The US has not authorized the use of long-range missiles, including ATACMS, inside Russia, the spokesperson told Sputnik.

"Will it lead to escalation? Hopefully not, but it clearly opens the door -- this, combined with Macron's push to send trainers, may move us from 'proxy' war to 'real' war," Carden said.

In only the last few days, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov have issued twin warnings against enabling Ukraine to strike inside Russia.

"But, worryingly, our elites in the West have developed a bad habit of not listening," Carden observed. "Time will tell but this is a startling development indeed."

Attempts to strike Russia with US weapons are already being made, and it eloquently attests to the extent of the US involvement in the Ukraine conflict, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

President Putin warned NATO nations earlier this week that they should realize "what they are playing with" when they allow Ukraine to use long-range Western weapons to strike deep into Russia.

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RPT - Biden Crossed Line in Letting Ukraine Use US Weapons to Hit Russia - Peace Activist

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden "crossed the line" in making the decision to permit Volodymyr Zelenskyy to use US-supplied weapons to attack certain targets

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within Russia, global peace activist Dr. Helen Caldicott told Sputnik.

In a major policy shift, Biden authorized the use of US weapons against military installations in Russia for "counter-fire purposes" in Kharkov (also known as Kharkiv) region, a State Department spokesperson told Sputnik on Thursday. The US has not authorized the use of long-range missiles, including ATACMS, inside Russia, the spokesperson said.

"Putin has from time to time threatened to use nuclear weapons during the Ukrainian dispute but for the United States to cross the line and allow Zelenskyy to use American weapons on Russian targets is beyond dangerous," Caldicott, who is also a co-founder of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Physicians for Social Responsibility, said.

Caldicott said that such a move was reckless beyond imagination and that it had brought the dangers of global thermonuclear war far closer.

"One former US president [Donald Trump] is now a felon while the current president is threatening the world with the possible use of nuclear weapons," she said.

Caldicott compared the imminent threat of nuclear war to how close it was during the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962.

"[Then-US Secretary of Defense] Robert McNamara once told me that we were three minutes to nuclear war during the Cuban Missile Crisis, now the nuclear threat is upon us again," she said.

Caldicott is the author of many books including "War in Heavens: The Arms Race in Outer Space" and "The New Nuclear Danger." The Smithsonian Institution has named her as one of the most influential women of the 20th century.

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Blinken Discusses New Gaza Proposal With Counterparts From Turkey, Jordan, Saudi Arabia

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken held telephone calls with his counterparts from Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan to discuss Israel's new three-part proposal to potentially achieve a permanent ceasefire agreement in Gaza that will include the release of all hostages, the State Department said in a press release.

Earlier in the day, US President Joe Biden said that Israel had offered a new comprehensive proposal with a roadmap that would lead to an enduring cessation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip, as well as the release of all hostages.

"Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken spoke today with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud," the release said on Friday. "The Secretary discussed the proposal on the table to achieve an immediate ceasefire, secure the release of all hostages, and end the war. The Secretary outlined how the deal will greatly benefit the people of Gaza, including through a massive influx of humanitarian assistance, the return of Palestinians to North Gaza, and the beginning of recovery and reconstruction work."

In separate press releases, the State Department said Blinken had similar discussions about the proposal with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan and Jordan’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Ayman Safadi.

Blinken emphasized to his counterparts that Hamas should accept the deal and that every

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country with a relationship with Hamas should press it to do so without delay, the State Department said.

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Blinken Discusses New Gaza Proposal With Counterparts From Turkey, Jordan, Saudi Arabia

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Biden, Belgian Counterpart Discuss Efforts to Seize Frozen Russian Assets - White House

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden during a meeting with his Belgian counterpart Alexander De Croo at the White House earlier discussed efforts to seize frozen Russian assets, the White House said in a press release.

"In particular, they reaffirmed their commitment to continue supporting Ukraine and discussed efforts to make the greatest use of immobilized sovereign assets for the benefit of Ukraine," the release said on Friday.

After the start of Russia's military operation in Ukraine in 2022, the EU and G7 froze almost half of Russian foreign currency reserves amounting to about 300 billion euros ($325 billion). About 200 billion euros is in the EU, mainly in the accounts of Belgium's Euroclear — one of the world's largest settlement and clearing systems.

The United States and its G7 partners expect to have a plan presented to G7 leaders in mid-June.

The Kremlin has maintained that any attempts to confiscate Russian assets amount to theft and a violation of international law.

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Trump Raises $53Mln in 24 Hours After Conviction, Averaging $2Mln Per Hour - Campaign

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump's presidential campaign said in a press release that it raised a record $53 million in the span of 24 hours following his New York conviction.

"In the 24 hours since Crooked Joe Biden and his New York henchmen got their sham trial verdict, the Trump Campaign has raised $52.8 million through the online digital fundraising platform," the release said on Friday.

The new total means Trump's campaign is receiving an average of $2 million in donations each hour, according to the release.

More than one third of these contributions are from new donors to the campaign, the release said, adding that it showcases a growing opposition to the jury's decision.

On Thursday, a New York jury found Trump guilty on all 34 criminal counts of falsifying

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business records to cover up a hush money payment to adult film actress Stormy Daniels.
Trump said the verdict was a disgrace and part of a sham trial pushed by the Biden administration via a weaponized judicial system and a partisan judge in order to interfere in the 2024 presidential election. Trump is the presumptive Republican presidential candidate.
Trump also said he will appeal the verdict while his campaign and various legal scholars noted that it does not affect his right to run for president of the United States.

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Biden Put US on Road to World War III by Allowing Strikes Into Russia - Ex-CIA Analyst

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration has gradually plunged the United States into Ukraine's war with Russia and has put the country on the path to a potential thermonuclear World War III, veteran former CIA analyst and former US Army intelligence officer Philip Giraldi told Sputnik on Friday.
"This is horrific!" We have become incrementally involved in a war that could have been avoided and for which the only plausible justification given has been to 'weaken Russia,'" Giraldi said.
US-Russian tensions, which are already worse than they have been since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, plunged further on Thursday when the US media reported that President Joe Biden had already given Ukraine permission to use US weapons to strike inside Russia allegedly near the area of the city of Kharkov.
"Russia, in turn, has warned that any escalation by NATO and/or the United States will be responded to using all of Moscow's capabilities to defend itself," Giraldi said.
The former CIA analyst warned that this decision could prove to be the point of no return in triggering a direct war between the United States and Russia.
"Providing Ukraine with weapons that will by design be used to attack deep into Russia will be seen as an act of war and what will develop from that could be catastrophic for all involved," Giraldi said.
Biden's reported decision could prove very quickly to have disastrous ramifications for the United States and its allies far beyond the current areas of conflict in Ukraine, he said.
Russia's responses could include direct strikes on US bases in Europe and Asia as well as possible retaliation against the United States and select allies in Europe as well, Giraldi said.
The long chain of disastrous decisions by Biden and his top officials revealed a level of incompetence and irresponsibility that was impossible to fathom, he said.
"I have long thought Biden and his advisers to be stupid beyond all belief, but I now find that even that assessment was too kind," Giraldi said.
The dangers of a total destructive thermonuclear global war were now greater than ever, Giraldi added.
Previously, other NATO member states, including the United Kingdom, France and Sweden, have given the Kiev regime permission to use the weapons systems they have supplied to attack Russia.

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Biden Extends Suspension of Tariffs on Ukrainian Steel Due to Crisis - White House

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden is extending for another year the suspension of US tariffs on imports of Ukrainian steel due to Russia's special military operation, the White House said in a press release.

"I have determined that it is necessary and appropriate, at this time, to maintain the current tariff level as it applies to products of other countries," Biden said in the release on Friday.

The United States has suspended tariffs on US imports of Ukrainian steel since May 2022.

The United States will continue to monitor the steel industry to determine whether it should extend or terminate the suspension of tariffs on Ukrainian steel imports, the release added.

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Biden Extends Suspension of Tariffs on Ukrainian Steel Due to Crisis - White House

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Blinken, Kuleba Discuss Finalization of Bilateral Security Arrangements - US State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba held a phone call to discuss the finalization of long-term bilateral security arrangements, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a statement.

“[Blinken and Kuleba] agreed to finalize bilateral talks on long-term security arrangements in the next several weeks,” the statement said on Friday.

Earlier on Friday, Blinken said that he expects many NATO countries to finalize bilateral security agreements with Ukraine before the alliance’s summit in July.

Blinken highlighted the United States’ steadfast support for Ukraine, including its ability to address Russian military activity in Russian territory, the statement said.

Blinken also affirmed the US’ support for the upcoming Summit on Peace in Ukraine, the statement added.

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Kongsberg Defense Wins $141Mln US Air Force Order For Joint Strike Missile - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - The US Air Force has issued a $141 million contract to Kongsberg Defence and Aerospace in Norway to produce the first tranche in an order for Joint Strike Missiles, the Defense Department announced.

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"Kongsberg Defence and Aerospace [of] Kongsberg, Norway has been awarded a ... $141 million ... contract action for the Joint Strike Missile production Lot 1," the Defense Department said in a press release on Friday.

The contract provides for all up rounds, containers, and test equipment for the Joint Strike Missile, the release said.

Work on the contract will be performed in Kongsberg, Norway, over the next four and a quarter years and is expected to be completed by August 31, 2026, the release added.

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Austin in Talks With Chinese Counterpart Raises US Concerns on Taiwan, Ukraine, Space

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin in a meeting with Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun brought up an array of US security concerns over China's activities related to Taiwan, Ukraine and space, the US Defense Department said in a press release.

"The secretary expressed concern about recent provocative activity by China's army around the Taiwan Strait, and he reiterated that China should not use Taiwan's political transition - part of a normal, routine democratic process - as a pretext for coercive measures," the release said on Friday. "The secretary also reaffirmed the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait."

In addition, Austin went over the United States' concerns of China's alleged role in supporting Russia's defense industrial base, and he warned that the United States and its allies are prepared to take further action to step in between its cooperation with Moscow.

Austin told Dong that China's growing nuclear, space and cyber development of capabilities are a concern to the United States, the release said.

Austin also mentioned freedom of navigation issues in the South China Sea, emphasizing that US military activities in the region are being conducted under international law. North Korea's missiles tests and China's confrontations with the Philippines in the region were also discussed, the release said.

The meeting between the defense leaders lasted 75 minutes and their discussions were characterized as "clear, direct, candid, firm and professional," the release added.

The United States and China will continue active discussions about future engagements between defense and military officials at multiple levels, according to the release.

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Starliner Helium Leak Still Active But Will Not Halt 1st Crewed Flight on Saturday - NASA

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - The continuing helium leak through a P2D2 duster flange is still active on Boeing's CST-100 Starliner but remains well within accepted margins of safety and it will not delay the first crewed flight of the spacecraft scheduled for Saturday just after noon

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EDT, NASA officials told a press conference at Kennedy Space Center in Florida.
"We have 3,000 PSI (pounds per square inch pressure) in a helium tank and a [safety] margin of 500 PSI [and] this rate of leakage is a small percentage of that," NASA Commercial Crew Program Manager Steve Stich told reporters on Friday. "[The Starliner] would lose half a pound a [of helium] a day and they have 50 pounds on board."
NASA cancelled an earlier launch attempt on May 6 and eventually replaced a faulty valve and it was then that the helium leak in the Starliner's service module was discovered, US space agency and Boeing officials said.
The Starliner launch with veteran US astronauts Barry "Butch" Gilmore and Sunita "Suni" Williams remains scheduled for Saturday, June 1 at 12:25 p.m. EDT and it scheduled to dock at the International Space Station (ISS) on Sunday at 1:50 p.m. EDT and to return to Earth on June 10.

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UN Chief Hopes Biden's Three-Part Proposal Leads to Lasting Peace in Gaza - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, June 1 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres hopes the new proposal announced by US President Biden will achieve a permanent peace in Gaza, UN Spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.
"For months the Secretary-General has been pushing for a ceasefire, full and unfettered humanitarian access, and the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held in Gaza. The Secretary-General strongly hopes that this will lead to an agreement by the parties for lasting peace," Dujarric said on Friday in response to Biden's announcement.
Earlier in the day, US President Joe Biden said that Israel had offered a new comprehensive proposal with a roadmap that would lead to an enduring cessation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip, as well as the release of all hostages.

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Boeing Starliner Set for Crewed Launch Attempt on Saturday - NASA

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) - The Boeing CST-100 Starliner looks ready to make its long-delayed first crewed flight to the International Space Station (ISS) taking off just after noon on Saturday, company and NASA officials told a press conference at Kennedy Space Center in Florida.
"We are on track for the June 1 launch, 12:25 pm (EDT) is the time," NASA Commercial Crew Program Manager Steve Stich told reporters. "It has been a long road to get here. ... We've got a really good shot at the weather. We're ready to go fly."
The long-delayed Starliner was due to fly with a manned crew in July 2023 and then after repeated delays was rescheduled to launch on May 5 with veteran US astronauts Barry "Butch' Gilmore and Sunita "Suni" Williams. However, problems with a valve replacement and a

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continuing low level helium leak forced repeated postponements.
Although the helium leak continues, "We are ready to conduct [the crewed flight] safely. The teams have been taking the right steps," NASA Associate Administrator Jim Free said.
The Starliner will be launched on an Atlas 5 booster rocket and is scheduled to dock at the ISS at 1:50 p.m. EDT on Sunday.
The Starliner is scheduled to leave the space station on its return flight to earth with Gilmore and Williams on June 10, according to NASA.

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IMF Board to Decide on Disbursing $2.2Bln for Ukraine in Coming Weeks - Representative

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) executive board will make a final decision on disbursing a new $2.2 billion tranche of financing for Ukraine in the coming weeks, an IMF representative told Sputnik.
"It'll be in the coming weeks," the representative said when asked about the date when the IMF executive board can make a decision on disbursing the funds.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, June 1 (Sputnik) -

PROPOSED GAZA CEASEFIRE DEAL
* US President Joe Biden said on Friday that Israel has offered Hamas a new three-phase comprehensive proposal with a roadmap that would lead to an enduring cessation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip as well as the release of all remaining hostages.
* The United States will help ensure that Israel lives up to its obligations under the new proposed three-phase deal, Biden said.
* Israel's proposal will require a lot of work over the coming months and years if an agreement is reached with Hamas, a senior US administration official said.
* US congressional leaders on Friday officially invited Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to address a joint session of Congress.

TRUMP COURT CASE
* Former US President Donald Trump said on Friday that he will appeal the guilty verdict delivered by a New York jury in the so-called “hush money” case against him.
* Political rivals in the United States are actually being eliminated by all legal and illegal methods, and this is obvious to the whole world, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in a comment on the guilty verdict against Trump.

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CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* Ukraine has lost up to 3,415 soldiers in the Donetsk direction in battles with Russia's Southern Army Group over the past 24 hours, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Friday.
* Russia and Ukraine have exchanged 75 prisoners of war each as a result of negotiations, while humanitarian actions were mediated by the United Arab Emirates, the Russian Defense Ministry said.
* Russia is not using North Korean missiles in Ukraine contrary to widespread claims, Russian Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Anna Evstigneeva said.
* US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that he expects that many more NATO countries will reach individual bilateral security agreements with Ukraine by the time of the upcoming NATO summit in July.
* NATO will unveil a new robust aid package for Ukraine during the alliance's Washington summit in July, Blinken said.
* NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that he had proposed to allocate 40 billion euros ($43.4 billion) to help Ukraine annually and make these funds' allocation obligatory.

HOUTHI ATTACKS

* Yemen's Ansar Allah movement, whose members and supporters also known as Houthis, threatened to respond directly and immediately to US and UK strikes on Yemen by hitting targets in the Red and Arabian seas, Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree said on Friday.
* Yemen's Ansar Allah movement, also known as Houthis, has launched missile and UAV attacks on a US aircraft carrier in the Red Sea in response to the bombing of the country, Houthi political office member Hezam al-Asad told Sputnik.

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Starliner Flying Urgent Replacement Urine Processor to ISS on Saturday Flight - NASA

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - Planners for the first crewed Boeing CST-100 Starliner mission to the International Space Station (ISS) had to change the flight manifest at the last minute to include a 150 pound (68 kilos) replacement urine processor as the existing one on board had broken down, NASA officials told a press conference on Friday,

"We were surprised by an onboard anomaly in a urine processor that turns urine into drinking water," NASA ISS Program Manager Dana Weigel told reporters.

The existing urine processor's pump on the ISS had failed earlier than scheduled and it had been anticipated to continue operating until this fall, Weigel said.

"Huge kudos goes to the whole team for the quick turnaround," Weigel said.

Had the current ISS urine processor not been replaced, the current astronauts and cosmonauts on board the space station would have had to store much more of their urine to be reprocessed for drinking water, Weigel added.

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NTSB Says Investigating Near Collision of Planes at Ronald Reagan Washington Airport

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) said on Friday that it has begun an investigation into an incident at the Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport in the vicinity of the US capital when two planes nearly collided on the runway earlier this week.

"NTSB is investigating a possible runway incursion between an American Airlines Airbus A319 and a Hawker Beechcraft Super King Air at DCA on May 29," the agency said via the social media platform X.

At about 10:20 a.m. on Wednesday, American Airlines Flight 2134 with a destination in Boston was cleared for take-off even though the smaller Hawker aircraft had already received permission to land on an intersecting runway at the airport, according to media reports.

On Thursday, the US Federal Aviation Administration announced its decision to investigate the incident - the second at the airport this spring. In April, a JetBlue airplane nearly collided with a Southwest Airlines jet.

Following the latest incident, US Senator Tim Kaine, representing the state of Virginia, said in a statement via X that the airport has been operating at capacity.

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Biden Crossed Line in Letting Ukraine Use US Weapons to Hit Russia - Peace Activist

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden "crossed the line" in making the decision to permit Volodymyr Zelenskyy to use US-supplied weapons to attack certain targets within Russia, global peace activist Dr. Helen Caldicott told Sputnik.

In a major policy shift, Biden authorized the use of US weapons against military installations in Russia for "counter-fire purposes" in Kharkov (also known as Kharkiv) region, a State Department spokesperson told Sputnik on Thursday. The US has not authorized the use of long-range missiles, including ATACMS, inside Russia, the spokesperson said.

"Putin has from time to time threatened to use nuclear weapons during the Ukrainian dispute but for the United States to cross the line and allow Zelenskyy to use American weapons on Russian targets is beyond dangerous," Caldicott, who is also a co-founder of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Physicians for Social Responsibility, said.

Caldicott said that such a move was reckless beyond imagination and that it had brought the dangers of global thermonuclear war far closer.

"One former US president [Donald Trump] is now a felon while the current president is threatening the world with the possible use of nuclear weapons," she said.

Caldicott compared the imminent threat of nuclear war to how close it was during the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962.

"[Then-US Secretary of Defense] Robert McNamara once told me that we were three minutes

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to nuclear war during the Cuban Missile Crisis, now the nuclear threat is upon us again," she said.

Caldicott is the author of many books including "War in Heavens: The Arms Race in Outer Space" and "The New Nuclear Danger." The Smithsonian Institution has named her as one of the most influential women of the 20th century.

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Israel Does Not Believe 2nd Explosion in Rafah Strike Was From Its Munition - US Official

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - The Israeli authorities do not believe that the second explosion during the Israel Defense Forces' (IDF) strike in Rafah over the weekend was caused by their munition, a senior Biden administration official said on Friday.

"There was a secondary explosion, and I think the Israelis are looking into what exactly that was. They do not believe it was from their munition," the official told reporters.

The first strike targeted two Hamas leaders, the official said.

The Israeli authorities shared with the Biden administration all the information they have at present, the official also said.

"Unfortunately, something happened after the first strike," the official added.

On Sunday, Israel struck a refugee camp northeast of Rafah. The Palestinian civil defense service said that at least 40 people died and dozens more were injured in the attack. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the strike a tragic incident and said an investigation into the incident has been undertaken.

Israel sent troops into the city of Rafah on May 7, seven months after an attack by Hamas on Israel from Gaza, prompting the worst escalation of the conflict in the Palestinian enclave in decades. More than 35,000 Palestinians have been killed during Israel military operations.

Israel's war cabinet has vowed to expand the military operations in Rafah until it has accomplished its declared goal of eliminating Hamas.

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Belgium Won't Allow Kiev to Use Its Military Equipment Outside Ukraine - Prime Minister

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - Belgium will not allow Kiev to use its military equipment outside of Ukraine, Prime Minister Alexander De Croo said on Friday during a White House visit.

"He also said that Belgium will not allow Ukraine to use its military equipment outside of Ukraine," the White House press pool said.

Belgium is the biggest supplier of F-16 for Ukraine, De Croo stressed before the US visit.

Belgium will supply Ukraine with 30 F-16 fighter jets by 2028, with the first aircraft expected to arrive before the end of this year, Belgian Foreign Minister Hadja Lahbib said on Tuesday.

Russia will regard supplies of US-made F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine as a nuclear threat, Russian

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Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told Sputnik on Thursday.

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IMF, Ukraine Reach Staff level Agreement, Allowing Kiev to Get About $2.2 billion

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) – The International Monetary Fund and Ukraine have reached a staff-level agreement on an extended fund facility (EFF), allowing Kiev to gain access to about $2.2 billion, the IMF said on Friday.

"The International Monetary Fund (IMF) staff and the Ukrainian authorities have reached staff-level agreement (SLA) on the fourth review of the 4-year Extended Fund Facility (EFF) Arrangement. Subject to approval by the IMF Executive Board, Ukraine would have access to about US$2.2 billion (SDR 1,669.82 million)," the statement said.

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US Congressional Leaders Invite Netanyahu to Address Congress - Letter

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - US congressional leaders in a letter on Friday officially invited Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to address a joint meeting of Congress.

"On the behalf of the bipartisan leadership of the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate, we would like to invite you to address a Joint Meeting of Congress," the letter said.

The letter does not provide a proposed date for Netanyahu to address Congress.

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Republican US Senators Say Will Block Democratic Bills, Nominees Due to Trump Conviction

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - A group of Republican senators said on Friday that they will block the expedited consideration of Democratic legislation and the confirmation of some Democratic nominees in response to the prosecution and conviction of former President Donald Trump in a New York court.

On Thursday, a New York jury found Trump guilty of falsifying business records related to a so-called "hush money" payment to adult film actress Stormy Daniels. Trump has denied the accusations and expressed an intent to appeal the verdict.

"The White House has made a mockery of the rule of law and fundamentally altered our politics in un-American ways. As a Senate Republican conference, we are unwilling to aid and abet this White House in its project to tear this country apart," the senators said in a letter.

The letter is signed by eight Republican senators, including Mike Lee, JD Vance, Rick Scott and

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Marco Rubio.
The senators will not allow any increase to non-security related funding for the Biden administration or any appropriations bill that funds “partisan lawfare,” the letter said.
The senators will also not vote to confirm the Biden administration’s political or judicial appointees or allow expedited consideration of Democratic legislation or authorities that are not directly relevant to the safety of Americans, the letter said.
The group invites all concerned senators to join their effort, Lee said in a statement via social media platform X. Strongly worded statements are not enough, Lee added.
Trump has denounced the case as a “scam” and a form of election interference amid the 2024 US presidential race. However, President Joe Biden said it is reckless and dangerous to characterize the trial as rigged.

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imf says reached agreement with ukrainian authorities on EFF, allowing ukraine to gain access to about $2.2bln once approved by board

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Gaza Ceasefire Proposal to Need Lots of Work in Coming Years If Deal Reached - US Official

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - Israel's three-pronged proposal to reach a ceasefire in Gaza will require lots of work over the coming months and years if an agreement is reached with Hamas, a senior US administration official said on Friday.
"This will require an awful lot of work over the coming months, years, should we be fortunate enough to close this deal," the official told reporters.

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Most Republican Voters Not Swayed by Trump Conviction, Some Increasing Support - Poll

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - A majority of Republican voters in the United States are not changing their voting choices based on a New York jury’s decision to convict former US President Donald Trump of falsifying business records, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll released Friday.
Most Republican respondents, 56%, will not change their vote based on the conviction, the poll report said.
More than one-third of Republican voters, 35%, are more likely to support Trump based on the conviction, the poll report said. Just 10% of Republican voters are less likely to vote for Trump due to the conviction, the poll report said.
Similarly, 56% of independent respondents would not change their voting decision based on the

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conviction, the poll report said. One-quarter (25%) of independents are less likely to vote for Trump and 18% are more likely to vote for him following the conviction, the poll report said.

The poll surveyed 2,556 US adults on May 30-31, in the wake of the jury's guilty verdict, the poll report said.

On Thursday, the jury found Trump guilty on 34 counts of falsifying business records to cover up a so-called "hush money" payment to adult film actress Stormy Daniels. Trump has denied the accusations against him and expressed an intent to appeal the verdict.

Trump has also denounced the case as a "scam" and a form of election interference amid the 2024 US presidential election. US President Joe Biden said on Friday that it is reckless and dangerous to characterize the trial as rigged, adding that Trump had "every opportunity" to defend himself in court.

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Gaza Needs Interim Admin. to Help With Stabilization, Pathway Forward – Senior US Official

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) – The Gaza Strip needs an interim administration in the future that can facilitate stabilization and a pathway forward after the hostilities end, a senior Biden administration official said on Friday.

"We have to work to reform the PA [The Palestinian Authority] in the West Bank, which is ongoing, and ultimately having an interim administration in Gaza that can help with stabilization and a pathway forward there," the official said during a press briefing.

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Israel's New Proposal Has 3 Phases, Last One Would Involve Gaza Reconstruction - Biden

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - Israel has offered Hamas a new three-phase proposal to reach a deal on a permanent ceasefire and release of all hostages in the Gaza conflict, US President Joe Biden said on Friday.

"Israel has offered a comprehensive new proposal, it's a roadmap to an enduring ceasefire and the release of all hostages," Biden said during a press conference. "This proposal has been transmitted by Qatar to Hamas ... this new proposal has three phases."

Biden explained that the first phase would last for six weeks and include a temporary ceasefire, full withdrawal of Israeli forces from all populated areas of Gaza, and the release of a number of hostages from both sides.

The second phase, Biden said, would be a negotiated permanent end to all hostilities in the conflict, and it could include the release of all remaining hostages and a full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza if Israel's security guarantees are satisfied.

The third phase would be the commencement of a major reconstruction plan for Gaza, Biden said, which would also include aid from international partners to do so.

The United States, Egypt and Qatar are expected to play key roles in trying to keep this

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initiative alive, Biden noted.

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Oil Markets in For Worst Month of 2024 Amid Output Spikes, OPEC+ on Watch

NEW YORK, May 31 (Sputnik) - Crude prices were headed on Friday for their worst month since the year began as US output stood at three-month highs and producers in the OPEC+ alliance prepared to meet to try and rescue the market from further losses.

With an hour to settlement, the front-month contract for US-origin West Texas Intermediate crude was at $77.33 per barrel, down 58 cents, or 0.7%, on the day. For all of May, the US crude benchmark lost 5.6%, the most for a month since a 5.7% deficit in December.

UK-origin Brent crude, the global benchmark for oil, was at $82.36 per barrel, down 52 cents, or 0.7%. The global crude benchmark showed a 5.8% slide for May, the sharpest since a near 11% dive in October.

The price slump came as the Energy Information Administration, the data wing of the US Department of Energy, reported crude production being up 0.6% in March to 13.2 million barrels per day, the highest since December.

The agency said a day earlier that large builds in fuel stockpiles last week offset crude draws, raising questions about energy demand in the run-up to summer — the busiest time for travel in the country. Gasoline and distillates balances rose by over 2 million barrels each versus a 4-million-barrel draw in crude, the agency said. Gasoline is the No. 1 motor fuel in the United States. Distillates are primarily processed into the diesel required by trucks, buses and ships, and also go into making airplane fuel.

Oil traders are awaiting Sunday's OPEC+ meeting, which is expected to reinforce the alliance's plan to cut 2.2 million barrels per day in output through September. OPEC+ groups the 13-member Saudi-led Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries with 10 other oil producing nations steered by Russia.

Helima Croft, head of global commodity strategy at RBC Capital Markets, told clients in a note on Wednesday that the alliance had no wish for "more barrels [to be added] to the market [to] trigger another price move to the downside."

But while OPEC+ is an important component of the bullish market psyche for oil, some analysts say that demand — in terms of the crude barrels processed by refiners and the fuel used by consumers — will be the ultimate arbiter of prices.

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Biden Says Urged Israeli Leadership to Stand Behind Proposed Deal Despite Pressure

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Friday that he urged the Israeli leadership to stand behind the new proposed deal on a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and the release of hostages despite pressure from those in Israel who disagree with the deal.

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"I know there are those in Israel who will not agree with this plan and will call for the war to continue indefinitely, some are even in the government coalition, and they've made it clear they want to occupy Gaza. They want to keep fighting for years, and the hostages are not a priority to them. Well, I've urged the leadership in Israel to stand behind this deal despite whatever pressure comes," Biden said in his remarks on the situation in Gaza.

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US to Help Ensure Israel Lives Up to Its Obligations Under Proposed Deal - Biden

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - The United States will help ensure that Israel lives up to its obligations under the new proposed three-phase deal on a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and hostages release, US President Joe Biden said on Friday.
"If Hamas fails to fulfill its commitments under the deal, Israel can resume military operations, but Egypt and Qatar have assured me and they are continuing to work to ensure that Hamas doesn't do that. The United States will help ensure that Israel lives up to their obligations as well," Biden said in his remarks on the situation in Gaza.

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US Will Work With Partners to Rebuild Homes, Hospitals in Gaza Destroyed in War - Biden

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - The United States will work with international partners to rebuild homes, schools and hospitals destroyed during the war in Gaza if a ceasefire is reached between Israel and Hamas, President Joe Biden said on Friday.
"The United States will work with our partners to rebuild homes, schools and hospitals in Gaza to help repair communities that were destroyed in the chaos of war," Biden said during a press conference.

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Biden Says Israel Has Offered Proposal to Ensure Enduring Cessation of Hostilities in Gaza

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Friday that Israel has offered a new comprehensive proposal with a roadmap that would lead to an enduring cessation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip as well as the release of all hostages.
“Israel has offered a comprehensive new proposal. It's a roadmap to an enduring ceasefire and the release of all hostages,” Biden said. “This proposal has been transmitted by Qatar to Hamas,”

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Biden Says Irresponsible to Call Trump Verdict Rigged Just Because Someone Doesn't Like It

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Friday that it is reckless for any person to label the jury's verdict in former President Donald Trump's "hush money" case as rigged just because they do not like it.

"It's reckless, it's dangerous, it's irresponsible for anyone to say this was rigged just because they don't like the verdict," Biden said. "Now he ll be given an opportunity as he should to appeal that decision just like everyone else has that opportunity."

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Retired US Navy Admiral Robert Burke Arrested in Criminal Bribery Scheme - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - Retired US Navy Adm. Robert Burke, who oversaw operations in Europe, Russia, and Africa, has been arrested for his alleged involvement in a bribery scheme from 2020 to 2022, the Justice Department said on Friday.

"As alleged in an indictment unsealed today, from 2020 to 2022, Robert Burke, 62, of Coconut Creek, Florida, was a four-star admiral who oversaw Naval operations in Europe, Russia and most of Africa and commanded thousands of civilian and military personnel," the Justice Department said in a statement.

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Biden Says Trump Was Given Every Opportunity to Defend Himself in ‘Hush Money’ Case

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - Donald Trump was given every chance to defend himself, US President Joe Biden said on Friday, after his predecessor was found guilty on all 34 counts of falsifying business records in the "hush money" case.

"Donald Trump was given every opportunity to defend himself," Biden said.

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Khiari Calls on Pyongyang to Facilitate Return of All UN Personnel to North Korea

UNITED NATIONS, May 31 (Sputnik) - The United Nations is encouraging North Korea to facilitate the return of all international personnel into the country, including UN personnel, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific Khaled Khiari said on Friday.

"We encourage the DPRK [North Korean] authorities to facilitate the full return of the international community, including the United Nations resident coordinator and the UN country team," Khiari said during a UN Security Council meeting on North Korea.

The return would enhance international support for the people of North Korea and for the implementation of the United Nations' Agenda 2030, Khiari said.

UN staff and other international personnel left North Korea during the coronavirus pandemic but never returned because of the country's pandemic-related border closure. North Korea has claimed to be coronavirus-free but has not welcomed international staff to return.

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Musk Says Social Media Town Hall With Trump Will Prove 'Interesting'

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - Billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk seemingly confirmed on Friday that his social media platform X will host a town hall discussion with former US President Donald Trump.

"This will be interesting," Musk said in a post to the platform, in response to reports of the event.

The platform intends to host a similar event with independent presidential candidate Robert Kennedy, Jr. US President Joe Biden declined an invitation to participate in a debate or a town hall, the reports said.

The events will also be broadcast by television network NewsNation, the reports added.

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US, North Korea Should Restart Dialogue at 'Early Date' - Chinese Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, May 31 (Sputnik) - The United States and North Korea should adopt a rational approach and resume dialogue as soon as possible despite the previous diplomatic failure at engagement, Chinese Ambassador to the United Nations Fu Cong said on Friday.

"[T]he imperative now is for all parties to adopt a rational and practical approach to resume engagement, mutual trust, restart dialogue at an early date," Fu said during a UN Security Council meeting on North Korea.

The United States and its allies are organizing military exercises in the region that can only increase tensions and cause possible turmoil, Fu said.

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On Thursday, North Korea test-launched about ten short-range ballistic missiles and they flew approximately 350km (217 miles), according to South Korean media reports.

On May 20, a North Korean Foreign Ministry spokesperson said that the country was forced to increase its overall nuclear deterrence readiness after the United States conducted another subcritical nuclear experiment at its Nevada national security site.

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WFP Has Not Seen Hamas Looting Aid, Engages to Prevent Criminality - Country Director

UNITED NATIONS, May 31 (Sputnik) - The World Food Programme (WFP) has not seen Hamas taking assistance from UN organizations and is working hard to prevent criminality by engaging with communities, WFP Country Director Matthew Hollingworth said on Friday.

"We have not seen Hamas or the de facto authority taking assistance from the World Food Programme or other UN organizations. What we have seen is that criminality in areas, but we are working extraordinarily hard to engage with communities to help us prevent it," Hollingworth said during a press briefing.

The remarks came in response to a reporter's question about whether the World Food Programme had witnessed Hamas looting and hoarding supplies.

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 36,000 people have been killed so far in the Gaza Strip, according to local authorities.

International aid organizations have reported that the population of Gaza is experiencing severe malnutrition and famine amid Israel's blockade and military operations.

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Blinken Suggests US Could Expand Ukraine's Permitted Scope of Targets Within Russia

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken suggested on Friday that US President Biden could potentially expand the scope of targets inside Russia where Ukraine is permitted to use US weapons.

"Going forward, we'll continue to do what we've been doing, which is, as necessary, adapt and adjust," Blinken said during a press briefing.

On Thursday, US officials confirmed that Biden had recently approved Ukraine's use of US weapons to strike inside Russian territory near Kharkov (also known as Kharkiv), including on a preemptive basis.

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The disclosure marked a major shift in US policy of "not encouraging or enabling" attacks inside Russia.

Attempts to strike Russia with US weapons are already being made, and it eloquently attests to the extent of the US involvement in the Ukraine conflict, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

President Vladimir Putin warned NATO nations earlier this week that they should realize "what they are playing with" when they allow Ukraine to use Western weapons to strike inside Russia.

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US House Subcommittee Subpoenas DA Bragg to Testify on Trump Prosecution June 13

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - US House Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government Chairman Jim Jordan on Friday requested Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg and lead prosecutor in the "hush money" case Matthew Colangelo to provide their testimony about the political prosecution of former US President Donald Trump at a hearing scheduled for June 13.

On Thursday, a New York jury found Trump guilty on all 34 criminal counts of falsifying business records to cover up a hush money payment to adult film actress Stormy Daniels.

"We write to respectfully request your testimony at a hearing before the Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government of the Committee on the Judiciary titled, 'Hearing on the Weaponization of the Federal Government,' on June 13, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.," Jordan wrote in separate letters to Bragg and Colangelo.

The hearing will focus on examining actions of state and local prosecutors to politically prosecute federal officials, including the recent political prosecution of President Donald Trump by the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, the letter said.

Following the announcement of the jury verdict on Thursday, Jordan called it "a travesty of justice" and an action that is "designed to keep President Trump off the campaign trail and avoid bringing attention to President Biden's failing radical policies."

Trump called the verdict a disgrace and part of a sham trial pushed by the Biden administration via a weaponized judicial system and a partisan judge to interfere in the 2024 presidential election. Trump is the presumptive Republican presidential candidate.

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Russia's UN Mission Dismisses Claims About Use of North Korean Missiles in Ukraine

UNITED NATIONS, May 31 (Sputnik) - Russia is not using North Korean missiles in Ukraine as it is widely claimed, Russian Deputy Ambassador to the UN Anna Evstigneeva said on Friday.

"As for assertions about Russia's use of North Korean missiles as part of its special military operation in Ukraine, these are simply untrue," Evstigneeva told UN Security Council members

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during a meeting on North Korea.
An alleged inspection report of three former sanctions experts from the UK, Japan and South Korea on this topic was not independent or trustworthy in the least, she said.

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Russia Concerned by Tokyo, Seoul Strengthening Nuclear Cooperation With US - UN Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, May 31 (Sputnik) - Russia has concerns in connection with confusing signals from Japan and South Korea regarding their strengthening cooperation with the United States in the nuclear sphere, Russian Deputy Ambassador to the UN Anna Evstigneeva said on Friday.
"We remain concerned about contradictory signals from America's allies in Northeast Asia, namely Tokyo and Seoul, regarding so called strengthened cooperation with Washington in the nuclear sphere," Evstigneeva said during a UN Security Council meeting on North Korea.
Russia demands clear answers from the US regarding the possible deployment of its nuclear weapons on its allies' territory, she added.

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US President Carter Joined 1st Military Simulation With Nuclear Strike, Response - Archive

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - Former US President Jimmy Carter was the first president to participate in a simulated military scenario involving a nuclear strike on the United States and subsequent US nuclear response, according to documents published by The George Washington University's National Security Archive on Friday.
"On 6 October 1977, President Jimmy Carter and top US national security officials dialed into a secret 'Missile Attack Conference' (MAC) to coordinate a response to a simulated surprise nuclear strike on the United States. Organized by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), the mock war scenario was the first to involve the US President and may have prompted Carter to authorize a retaliatory nuclear missile launch," the archive said.
Carter was uniquely positioned to become the first president to join in such a simulation, due to his advanced physics education and personal experience with nuclear submarines, the archive said. Carter also favored cuts to both US and Soviet strategic forces, the archive said.
The Joint Chiefs of Staff developed the simulation, dubbed Ivory Item, to familiarize the president with procedures of the Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP) - the secret list of US strategic nuclear targeting options - the archive said.
The SIOP material indicated that the US had three possible responses to a surprise intercontinental ballistic missile attack, at least two of which involved "Major Attack Options" that likely included the use of more than a thousand nuclear warheads, the archive said.
It is likely that Carter approved retaliatory missile strikes during the exercise, the archive said.

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Future declassifications of documents on the exercise, which are already under appeal, could provide further info on the matter, the archive added.

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Trump Says Will Appeal Guilty Verdict in New York 'Hush Money' Case

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said on Friday that he will appeal a guilty verdict delivered in the so-called "hush money" case against him in New York.

"We're going to be appealing this scam. We're going to be appealing it on many different things," Trump said during a press conference.

On Thursday, a jury found Trump guilty on 34 charges of falsifying business records related to a payment to adult film actress Stormy Daniels, with whom Trump allegedly had an affair. Trump has denied the accusations against him, as well as criticized characterizations of the payment as "hush money," instead calling it a standard non-disclosure agreement.

Trump has also referred to the case as a form of election interference amid the 2024 US presidential election. Trump said the courts can target "anyone" if they can target him.

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trump says will appeal 'scam' guilty verdicts in new york trial

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Kiev Firing US Arms into Russia Will Push Moscow to Expand Buffer Zone - ex-US Army Col.

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - Permission by the United States and its allies for the Zelenskyy regime to use Western-supplied weapons to strike Russian territory will not prevent a Ukrainian defeat in the conflict, but will force Russia to expand a "buffer zone" to stop attacks on its border areas, US Army Lt. Col. and veteran international consultant Earl Rasmussen told Sputnik.

In a major policy shift, Biden authorized the use of US weapons against military installations in Russia. A State Department spokesperson insisted that the authorization was limited to what they called "counter-fire purposes" in Kharkov (also known as Kharkiv) region. The US has not authorized the use of long-range missiles, including ATACMS, inside Russia, the spokesperson told Sputnik on Thursday.

"This will not change the ultimate outcome of the conflict, which Russia is destined to win," Rasmussen said. "What it will do is encourage Russia to expand the buffer zone that has been discussed and to potentially directly strike US and other NATO facilities supporting these

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actions."

While the Pentagon most likely was trying to limit the shift, recent statements by former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland and Secretary Antony Blinken clearly showed that there was strong lobbying going on in the background to change the US position, Rasmussen observed.

"It is possible that secretly Ukraine was allowed already or at least Western intelligence and targeting information has likely been used on earlier strikes," he said. "Yes, it is an escalation and most likely Russia will counter in some way.

US policy makers continue to blunder forward with ever more dangerous decisions which unfortunately will likely end in a direct conflict or potentially worse, Rasmussen warned.

"Such decisions show that there are major influencers strongly seeking major escalation. Moreover, many of the political leaders are heavily politically committed for some reason to Project Ukraine and refuse to accept that it is a failure and would rather destroy their own countries and world than accept reality," he said.

Rasmussen noted that he has mentioned for several years that "we are moving down a dangerous path. That path is not getting any safer, if anything it is becoming more treacherous."

As situations continue to escalate in the Middle East and Asia, history will not look favorably on the current group of Western leaders as they lead their countries into the abyss, Rasmussen said.

Earlier in May, President Vladimir Putin said that Ukraine is to blame for the Russian offensive in the Kharkov region since Kiev continues to shell civilians in the Russian border city of Belgorod.

Russia is thus forced to create a buffer zone because of Ukraine's continued deadly shelling of Belgorod, he warned.

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Biden Letting Kiev Strike Russia Risks Moving From Proxy to Real War - Ex-US Diplomat

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden authorizing Kiev to fire US weapons into parts of Russia coupled with belligerent moves by other Western nations risks turning the Ukraine conflict from proxy war to real war, former US diplomat and State Department consultant on US-Russia relations James Carden told Sputnik.

In a major policy shift, Biden authorized the use of US weapons against military installations in Russia. A State Department spokesperson insisted that the authorization was limited to what they called "counter-fire purposes" in Kharkov (also known as Kharkiv) region. The US has not authorized the use of long-range missiles, including ATACMS, inside Russia, the spokesperson told Sputnik.

"Will it lead to escalation? Hopefully not, but it clearly opens the door -- this, combined with Macron's push to send trainers, may move us from 'proxy' war to 'real' war," Carden said.

In only the last few days, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov have issued twin warnings against enabling Ukraine to strike inside Russia.

"But, worryingly, our elites in the West have developed a bad habit of not listening," Carden

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observed. "Time will tell but this is a startling development indeed."

Attempts to strike Russia with US weapons are already being made, and it eloquently attests to the extent of the US involvement in the Ukraine conflict, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

President Putin warned NATO nations earlier this week that they should realize "what they are playing with" when they allow Ukraine to use long-range Western weapons to strike deep into Russia.

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UPDATE - US Inflation Tracker PCE Flat in April, Taking Rate Cut Heat Off Fed

(Modifies headline; adds details, comments and context in paragraphs 4-12)

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - A US inflation tracker closely followed by the Federal Reserve showed zero growth in April, according to data on Friday that gave the central bank flexibility over its decision on interest rates.

The Personal Consumption Expenditures Index, often simply known as the PCE, was unchanged from its annualized March growth of 2.7% as the Fed awaited signs that inflation was cooling enough for it to cut rates. Another key US inflation gauge — the Consumer Price Index, or CPI — eased in April by growing 3.4% on the year versus 3.5% in March.

The Fed's target for annual inflation is 2%.

"This follows the CPI data which was tamer, but it is only one report," economist Greg Michalowski said on the Forex Live portal, referring to the flat PCE inflation number. "Fed officials have said that it will take more than one [report to decide on a rate cut]."

The Fed's much-emphasized US inflation target of 2% per annum is unlikely to be reached until 2026, meaning policymakers will not have much to do the next two years unless price growth turns volatile, the central bank's chief for New York John Williams said Thursday.

"I forecast inflation to reach 2% in early 2026," Williams, the New York Fed President, said in a speech to the Economic Club of New York on Thursday. "I don't feel [any] urgency to act on monetary policy [in the interim]."

The Fed intends to bring US rates down from their highest levels since 2002. But the central bank is wary of making rate cuts when inflation is still stronger than its 2% per annum target.

The CPI went from an annualized growth of 3.1% in January to 3.2% in February and 3.5% in March, before retreating to 3.4% in April.

It hit a four-decade high in the aftermath of the 2020 coronavirus breakout, growing by as much as 9.1% in the year to June 2022.

Responding to that, the Fed hiked interest rates 11 times, bringing them to a range of between 5.25% and 5.5%, versus the pre-pandemic range of between zero and 0.25%.

The current range of rates has been unchanged since July 2023 due to uncertainties in the inflation outlook.

The Fed has an opportunity to review interest rates at its next policy meeting on June 12. Should it pass on that, it will have four more chances to make a change before the year-end:

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July 31, September 18, November 7 and December 18.

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Johnson Says US Supreme Court Should Step In, Set Straight Trump 'Hush Money' Conviction

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - US House Speaker Mike Johnson said on Friday that he believes the US Supreme Court should intervene to right the guilty verdict for former President Donald Trump in the so-called "hush money" trial in New York.

"I do believe the Supreme Court should step in," Johnson said during an interview with Fox News.

Johnson added that he thinks the US Supreme Court justices are concerned about Trump's conviction and will "set it straight," but added that doing so will take time.

On Thursday, a New York jury found Trump guilty on all 34 criminal counts of falsifying business records to cover up a hush money payment to adult film actress Stormy Daniels.

Johnson criticized the guilty verdict on Thursday and called it a shameful day in US history.

Trump said the verdict was a disgrace and part of a sham trial pushed by the Biden administration via a weaponized judicial system and a partisan judge in order to interfere in the 2024 presidential election. Trump is the presumptive Republican presidential candidate.

Trump also said he will appeal the verdict while his campaign and various legal scholars noted that it does not affect his right to run for president of the United States.

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US Senator Manchin Says Ends Ties With Democratic Party, Registers as Independent

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - US Senator Joe Manchin said on Friday that he is ending his ties with the Democratic Party and registering as an independent.

"My commitment to do everything I can to bring our country together has led me to register as an independent with no party affiliation," Manchin said in a statement via the social media platform X.

In November, Manchin said that he will not pursue reelection to the US Senate in 2024, where he has represented the state of West Virginia as a Democrat.

In January, Manchin co-sponsored the Rebuilding Economic Prosperity and Opportunity (REPO) for Ukrainians Act to provide additional assistance to Ukraine by using assets confiscated from Russia. Russian officials have said the confiscation of Russian sovereign assets amounts to theft in violation of international law.

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US Sanctions 4 Iranian Companies, Individual Linked to Iran's Aviation Industry - Treasury

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - The US Treasury Department has sanctioned four Iranian companies and one individual linked to Iran's aviation industry, a registry listing revealed on Friday.

The sanctioned companies include Fanavarihaye Hava Pishran Sazeh Sepehr Co LLC; Kish Mechatronics Co;, Mersad Mohajer Co LLC; and Rayan Fan Kav Andish Co. The sanctioned individual is Afshin Khajeh Fard of Tehran.

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Biden to Deliver Remarks on Middle East This Afternoon – White House

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden is expected to deliver remarks on the situation in the Middle East in the afternoon, according to a daily guidance published by the White House on Friday.

"In the afternoon, the President will deliver remarks on the Middle East," the guidance said.

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Trump Campaign Says Broke Fundraising Record After Guilty Verdict in 'Hush Money' Case

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump's 2024 campaign said on Friday that the amount of donations broke the fundraising record after a New York jury found Trump guilty in the so-called "hush money" case against him.

"Today, the Trump campaign announced a record shattering small dollar fundraising haul following the sham Biden trial verdict totaling $34.8 million - nearly double the biggest day ever recorded for the Trump campaign on the WinRed platform," the campaign said in a statement.

On Thursday, a jury found Trump guilty on 34 charges of falsifying business records to cover up a payment to adult film actress Stormy Daniels. Trump denies the accusations against him and has condemned the case as a form of election interference amid the 2024 US presidential race.

Nearly 30% of subsequent donations came from first-time donors, the statement said.

The "political witch hunt" against Trump has awakened his supporters like never before, the statement added.

The donation website was seemingly overloaded and experienced some technical issues due to the traffic volume. Trump is grateful for the outpouring of support, according to the statement.

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West Thoroughly Involved in Ukraine Conflict Widening War - Ex-US Official

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - The West is thoroughly involved in the ongoing Ukraine conflict and is also widening it, former US Assistant Treasury Secretary Paul Craig Roberts told Sputnik commenting on the latest US announcement that President Joe Biden allowed Ukraine to use its weapons near Kharkiv.

Roberts pointed out that the Ukraine conflict has been widening ever since it started with the West sending every weapon to Ukraine that initially it said it would not.

"Troops would never be sent, but the French Foreign Legion is now sent, and the NATO consensus is building to send NATO troops," he said. "[Russian President Vladimir] Putin's slow paced 'limited military intervention' permitted the West to get thoroughly involved in the conflict thus widening the war."

A State Department spokesperson told Sputnik on Thursday that Biden has greenlighted Ukrainian strikes using US-supplied weapons inside the Russian territory for counter-fire purposes in the Kharkov (also known as Kharkiv) region of Ukraine, but has not authorized the use of long-range missiles, including ATACMS, inside Russia.

"There is no reason for long-range missiles supplied to Ukraine by Washington except to hit distant targets. Long-range missiles are not battlefront weapons," Roberts asserted. "If the missiles are not intended to be used for their purpose, why give them to Ukraine?"

Roberts went on to say that although Russia has won in its stated goal of liberating Donbas, that region is not the endgame for the West.

"Putin has won his version of the war - the liberation of Donbas - but Washington's version of the war is not limited to Donbas," he said. "If Putin doesn't quickly use the necessary force to bring the conflict to a quick end, he will be faced with NATO troops in Western Ukraine and the incorporation of Ukraine west of the Dnieper into NATO with nuclear missile bases on Russia's expanded border."

Ukraine has received billions of dollars in donations and loans from its allies since Russia launched its special military operation in February 2022. The United States alone has provided more than $100 billion in military, economic and humanitarian aid. Russia has repeatedly warned countries supplying weapons to Ukraine that it sees military shipments as legitimate targets.

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ANALYSIS - Trump Conviction Makes America Look Like Banana Republic

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump's conviction on 34 charges in a New York court on minor, non-political charges will just infuriate his many supporters and increase their passions, analysts told Sputnik.

Trump said that the so-called "hush money" trial, in which he was convicted on Thursday on 34 counts of falsifying business records to cover up an alleged affair with adult film actress Stormy Daniels, was rigged and disgraceful.

"This was a disgrace. This was a rigged trial by a conflicted judge who is corrupt," Trump said

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at the courthouse, following the jury's decision. He said the real verdict would occur on Election Day on November 5.

ENRAGED SUPPORTERS

"This will only infuriate many more supporters and will drive them all the more solidly into the Trump camp," Covert Action Magazine managing editor and political analyst Jeremy Kuzmarov said.

The jury's decision does not end the judicial process in the case, which is likely to be long drawn out, Kuzmarov advised.

"I am sure Trump will appeal the verdict. Trump's followers think the charges were frivolous, so it won't affect his election chances," he said. "Joe Biden has misgoverned so badly and is so out of touch with reality and senile that almost anybody could beat him."

The trial and its verdict have discredited the US justice system both in the eyes of scores of millions of Americans and around the world, Kuzmarov pointed out.

"For many people, the Trump trial compromised the integrity of the court system and concept of an independent judiciary. America looks more and more like a banana republic," he said.

Trump probably will not even face any jail time for the charges he was convicted on though it is possible he could, Kuzmarov noted.

SILLY CRIMES

"Although it sounds bad that he was convicted on 34 counts, the crimes he committed were silly ones, paying hush money to a porn star," Kuzmarov said. "He and other leaders have done far worse things than this, including ordering illegal bombing strikes and wars that killed thousands of people needlessly and destroyed countries, but they picked this offense."

Nevertheless, the now unavoidable consequence of the trial was how badly it discredited the reputation of the United States around the world, Kuzmarov stressed.

"The US generally looks bad. Besides the perception of the judiciary being politicized, there is the fact that you have a president who is of such tawdry character that he would have a one-night stand with a porn star and then have to pay her off," he said.

Trump, Biden and their supporters all present comparative appalling pictures of the United States and its political system in the eyes of the wider world, as well as to many Americans, Kuzmarov emphasized.

"Trump is an embarrassment but so are his enemies in the Democratic Party and this is where we are at in 2024. American politics has devolved into a carnival where depravity and corruption prevail everywhere," he said. "This at a moment when the US empire is declining, and America has lost its credibility as a moral force around the world."

HANGING JUDGE

US constitutional historian and political analyst Dan Lazare agreed that the trial, conducted in one of the most partisan Democratic strongholds in the United States, is seen by Trump's supporters as an outrage that will further discredit the US political system.

"It's a travesty, a trial presided over by a hanging judge and a guilty verdict delivered by a jury in one of the bluest [Democrat] counties in the United States. [Manhattan District Attorney] Alvin Bragg has proved nothing other than the fact that he's a political hack," he said.

The clearly partisan nature of the trial and conviction could rebound to Trump's political advantage, Lazare advised.

"The verdict may scare off a few wavering centrists who are horrified by the idea of a convicted

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felon running for the presidency. But my sense is that it will infuriate many more and will drive them all the more solidly into the Trump camp," he said.

Trump could and would appeal the verdict and remain a potent national force, Lazare predicted.

"I doubt there's any chance of him winding up behind bars before the election. Otherwise, my sense is that he'll go on the warpath and drive his followers to a frenzy by lashing out the Biden administration. The temperature will go up even more. This race is turning out to be ... interesting," he said.

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Vancouver Synagogue Targeted by Incendiary Device in Overnight Attack – Jewish Federation

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) – A synagogue in Canada's British Columbia Province was targeted in an overnight attack with an incendiary device, the Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver said on Friday.

"At approximately 9:30 p.m. [12:30 a.m. EST] this evening, an incendiary device was thrown at the front doors of Schara Rzedeck synagogue," the federation said in a statement. "Thankfully, no one was injured and damage to the building was minor."

The federation called the incident a "deliberate act of hate" aimed at intimidating the Jewish community and expressed concern about the potential for violence as antisemitic rhetoric reaches "feverish" levels in Vancouver and the region.

The Vancouver Police Department and the Fire Inspector determined that the synagogue was safe to be reopened after a thorough search of the building, the statement said. The incident remains under investigation by law enforcement in close coordination with the federation's director of community, it added.

The incident prompted several new precautionary measures, including increased police patrols around Jewish institutions, the statement said.

On Wednesday, the Belz Yeshiva Ketana school at the Young Israel of Montreal synagogue was targeted by gunfire. The attack followed another incident on Saturday morning, when several masked suspects emerged from a vehicle to shoot multiple times at the Bais Chaya Mushka, Chabad girls' school in Toronto.

The recent attacks have prompted strong condemnation from civil society and lawmakers alike, including prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who expressed his disgust over the incidents, calling them "plain and simple" antisemitism.

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Austin, Singapore Officials Discuss Expanding Force Posture Cooperation - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, May 31 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin met with Singaporean Prime Minister Lawrence Wong and Minister of Defense Ng Eng Hen to discuss opportunities to deepen bilateral force posture cooperation among other issues, Pentagon press

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secretary Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder said on Friday.

"Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III met today with Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong and Minister of Defense Ng Eng Hen on the margins of the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore," Ryder said in a statement. "They discussed opportunities to expand bilateral force posture cooperation to support deeper interoperability and address shared challenges."

The officials also discussed efforts to expand joint training and witnessed the signing of a new memorandum of understanding between the US Defense Innovation Unit and the Singaporean Ministry of Defense to advance the use of dual-use technologies, the statement said.

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The most adamant and feverish Ukraine supporters do not actually support it at all and are instead promoting its use as a pawn in the United States and the West's geopolitical chessboard.

Ukraine and its Western supporters have repeatedly insisted that Ukraine's 1991 borders be restored, an impossible ask even at the start of the war that has only appeared more deluded as time has gone on.

"You have to think about how does it benefit [Ukraine] to be bombed and brutalized and have its people killed and maimed for another three months? Half a year? How long is this meant to go on?" asked author Branko Marcetic on Sputnik's The Critical Hour, who recently wrote a piece in Responsible Statecraft on this subject.

In April, the Kiev regime ended consulate services for Ukrainian men abroad, a brazen attempt to force war refugees to the frontlines. This is on top of the countless videos posted on social media of Ukrainian men inside the country trying to avoid the draft, fighting with recruitment officers, and wearing old man masks in an attempt to go unnoticed.

These are clearly men who do not want to fight and die for a cause that even Western military analysts say is a lost cause. Yet Western leaders and online "supporters" gleefully send them to their deaths, while proclaiming that they are the ones supporting Ukraine.

"There is no other conflict in the world where this is the position," explained Marcetic. "That the country where troop morale is low as it is in Ukraine, has suffered the kind of casualties that it has… there's no other conflict where you have those conditions and the response is 'let's keep this going indefinitely because there'll be more enemy forces killed.'"

The weapons that shaped warfare in the 20th century still play significant roles on the battlefield in the 21st, but they are dwarfed in importance by one invention, from which multiple theaters have been affected: the drone.

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"[US media] admitted how useless the Abrams [tank] is when tens of millions of dollars per tank can be taken out by a $500 drone. It is a new model of warfare," Mark Sleboda, a security and international relations expert told Sputnik's Fault Lines on Friday.

"But it is an evolution of warfare that is occurring before our eyes. So, the Chinese and Americans are certainly paying very close attention," he noted earlier in the interview.

It is an opinion shared by former Marine and UN Weapons Inspector Scott Ritter. Speaking on the Danny Haiphong show, he explained how everything from tactics to logistics has been changed by drones.

"These FPV drones are a nightmare for soldiers," Ritter explained. "If I tried to take Marines into combat using the tactics that I was taught," Ritter continued "[With] two platoons online, basic fire etcetera, my base of fire would disappear because it'd be swarmed by FPV drones… then my Marines attacking would be hit by these drones and they're all dead."

This was a lesson that the Armed Forces of Ukraine failed to learn during their counteroffensive. Rabotino was intended to be the first minor step during that offensive that would lead to Tokmak which would serve as the staging ground for an assault on Melitopol.

But as armor assault after armor assault was destroyed, it became apparent that the Ukrainians would never reach their goal. But, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky needed something to show his Western benefactors, so Rabotino became the goal. It took 71 days to capture the tiny village with a pre-war population of about 500 people, largely using the same tactics they began with. Ukraine lost dozens of expensive tanks and thousands of men capturing and then holding the village. The Ukrainian offensive never went any further and in May, Russia recaptured the village.

In WWI, the generals who failed to learn from the lessons of the Civil War and the Russo-Japanese War suffered the consequences on the battlefield. Russia learned its lessons already. Ukraine did not and we see the results of that. The United States pioneered drone warfare in the 2000s, but as evidenced by the number of MQ-9 Reapers taken down by the Houthis in Yemen, those are no longer effective. Will the lumbering behemoth of NATO be able to adjust as quickly as Russia and China, or will they, like the Generals of WWI, be stuck fighting with the tactics and equipment of the last century?

Chile is the latest in a growing list of countries that have joined South Africa in their case against Israel for genocide in the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

President Gabriel Boric announced his country's intention to join the case during a speech, accusing the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) of using "indiscriminate and disproportional" force.

"These acts demand a firm and permanent response of the international community," he added.

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Chile is part of a growing list of countries that have expressed support for or joined South Africa's case against Israel. Earlier this week, Mexico announced it too would join.

Chile has the largest Palestinian population in the world outside of the Middle East.

In January, the ICJ issued a preliminary ruling saying that it was "plausible" that Israel was committing genocide and ordered it to take action to prevent genocide from happening in Gaza while allowing aid to reach needy Palestinians.

The US Department of Justice (DOJ) is attempting to prevent the release of the audio of the infamous "memory interview" between US President Joe Biden and special counsel Robert Hur, arguing that 'deepfakes' may appear as a result.

Hur was investigating Biden's handling of classified documents he obtained as a senator and vice president. Hur declined to press charges because he thought Biden would appear to the jury as a "sympathetic, well-meaning, elderly man with a poor memory." It also noted that Biden had trouble remembering when he was vice president and which year his son Beau died.

The DOJ issued a filing on Friday that argued "The passage of time and advancements in audio, artificial intelligence, and 'deep fake' technologies only amplify concerns about malicious manipulation of audio files. If the audio recording is released here, it is easy to foresee that it could be improperly altered, and that the altered file could be passed off as an authentic recording and widely distributed."

While the DOJ admits that there is plenty of "other raw material to create a deepfake of President Biden's voice" available, it argues that if the public became aware that the legitimate recording was released, they would be more apt to believe a fake recording is legitimate.

It is not known how the court will respond to the strange reasoning. If a legitimate copy of the recording were released, it stands to reason it would become easier –not more difficult– to disprove fake versions.

The filing also comes after Biden used his executive privilege to stop the release of the tape to House Republicans who had sought to obtain it as part of their investigation into the Biden family. The latest filing was in response to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request.

Over the past week, North Korea has been dropping hundreds of bags filled with garbage over South Korea using balloons in response to South Korean activists dropping anti-Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) leaflets over North Korea using the same method. On Sunday, South Korea warned it would offer an "unbearable" response as North Korea said it would temporarily halt the trash balloons.

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"South Korean authorities are egging despicable confrontational villains on to flock to areas along the Military Demarcation Line and scatter leaflets slandering the DPRK," a statement from the DPRK last month read.

"This is the gravest politically-motivated provocation against the DPRK and a de facto declaration of war against it," it added.

On Sunday, South Korean National Security Director Change Ho-jin described the North Korean trash balloons and alleged GPS jamming by North Korea as "absurd, irrational acts of provocation that a normal country can't imagine" while promising an "unbearable" response without clarifying what that may entail.

"We are going to halt wastepaper scattering over the border temporarily as our action was a countermeasure from A to Z.," a statement from the DPRK released on Sunday read.

But, if the ROK [Republic of Korea] clans resume anti-DPRK leaflet scattering, we will correspond to it by intensively scattering wastepaper and rubbish hundred times the amount of scattered leaflets and the number of cases, as we have already warned."

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