

6/7/24 Friday

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Joe Biden Accused of Plagiarism, Again

In 1965, current US President Joe Biden had his first documented case of being caught plagiarizing work after he admitted to lifting five full pages from a law review article without citation while in law school.

US President Joe Biden is being accused of lifting words from former US President Ronald Reagan while giving a speech commemorating the 80th anniversary of the D-Day invasion in Normandy.

First noticed by radio host Clay Travis, Biden appears to have borrowed several phrases from Reagan's speech, which took place at the same location to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the D-Day invasion.

"At last the hour had come. Dawn. Sixth of June, 1944" Biden said in his speech. "At dawn on the morning of the Sixth of June, 1944," Reagan said 40 years earlier.

Biden continued, "Two hundred and twenty-five American Rangers arrived by ship, jumped into the waves and stormed the beach."

"Two hundred and twenty-five Rangers jumped off the British landing craft and ran to the bottom of these cliffs," Reagan said in his version.

"They launched their ladders, their ropes, and grappling hooks, and they began to climb. When the Nazis cut their ladders, the Rangers used the ropes, and the Nazis cut the ropes, the Rangers used their hands," Biden said in his version of the speech. "They shot rope ladders over the face of these cliffs and began to pull themselves up. When one Ranger fell, another would take his place. When one rope was cut, a Ranger would grab another and begin his climb again," Reagan recounted in his.

Biden has made a habit of invoking Reagan during his presidency, a decision that has been described by insiders as trying to appeal to Republicans who distrust Trump. He dubbed his economic plan "Bidenomics" a play on the popular term Reaganomics. He has also evoked Reagan during speeches, unfavorably comparing former President Donald Trump to the Republican icon.

But there is a difference between invoking and plagiarizing, something Biden appears to come dangerously close to in his speech. While no sentence is copied word for word, the sentences are remarkably similar in both themes and content. The sentences also come in the same order. First Biden talks about the dawn of June 6, then he talks about the Rangers arriving by a ship and storming the beach and then the experience of climbing the cliffs using rope ladders, the same as Reagan.

Of course, similarities are expected when two people recount the same historic event, but in this case, the mirroring seems too complete to be mere happenstance. Hundreds of writers have described the Invasion of Normandy and it is unlikely any two of them would share as many parallels as the two Presidents' speeches.

It was also reported in Politico days before his speech that Biden was planning on invoking Reagan and hoped for a similar reaction to his speech.

"Biden aides are open about their desire for a rerun and inviting comparisons to 'The Gipper,' [a nickname for Reagan] with aides conceding that they have studied the Reagan trip closely and are looking to similarly capture the attention of a distracted, disillusioned public and remind them of how much is still at stake."

The problem is that Biden may have echoed Reagan too closely. In 2023, an editor for the Harvard Journal said that his first assignment in 2000 was editing an article by then-Senator Biden, which he found full of plagiarism. He said that he told higher-ups at the outlet and recommended they don't run the piece, but they instead fixed the quotes and citations and published the piece.

That editor, Roger Severino, [accused Biden](#) of "mosaic plagiarism" which he described as replacing or moving a few words to make it harder to detect, a practice not too dissimilar from what Biden appeared to do in parts of his Normandy speech.

"This indicates what's known in law as 'consciousness of guilt,'" Severino said of the article he edited.

The White House has denied Severino's claims. But it was only a recent mark in a string of plagiarism accusations that have haunted Biden throughout his political career.

In 1987, Biden's 1988 Presidential campaign was derailed when it was revealed that he lifted large parts of speeches from the then-leader of the UK Labour Party, Neil Kinnock. In that case, Biden stole not only lines from Kinnock but his life story as well. Biden falsely claimed that he and his wife were the first in their families to go to college, a claim that was true for Kinnock but not for Biden. He also claimed to come from a family of Pennsylvania coal miners, but he had not. Kinnock had come from a family of Welsh coal miners.

"Did they lack talent? Those people who could sing and recite and write poetry? Those people who could make wonderful and beautiful things with their hands? Those people who could dream dreams and see visions? Why didn't they get it? Was it because they were weak? Those people who could work eight hours underground and then come up and play football? Weak?" Kinnock said in his speech.

"Those same people who read poetry and wrote poetry and taught me how to sing verse? Is it because they didn't work hard? My ancestors who worked in the coal mines of Northeast Pennsylvania and would come up after 12 hours and play football for four hours?" Biden said in his.

Biden's father sold cars for a living and his campaign at the time could only point to a great-grandfather who worked as a mining engineer, hardly someone who slaved underground for "12 hours."

That wasn't enough to push Biden out of the 1988 race however, he continued to defend himself in the media until it was revealed that he also plagiarized former President John F Kennedy, his brother Robert, and Democratic Senator Hubert Humphrey in his speeches. Biden blamed some of those instances on his staff, and in others argued that political speeches aren't copyrighted, which is not true.

Then revelations that he was accused of plagiarism in law school came to light. The young Biden had copied five whole pages from a Law Review article without citation. He admitted

wrongdoing in a letter to faculty and begged them not to label him a “cheat.” They decided to give him an F in the class but allowed him to retake it.

It was also revealed during that time that Biden had lied about his academic record, telling a voter that he received a full scholarship and graduated in the top half of his class when he actually received a partial needs-based scholarship and graduated near the bottom of his class. His transcript, released by the campaign in an effort to show transparency after his academic exaggerations came to light revealed that Biden had received mostly Cs and Ds, with three exceptions: an A in physical education, a B in “Great English Writers” and an F in ROTC (Reserve Officers’ Training Corps).

During that same campaign, he also admitted that he lied about being a civil rights activist. “I was not an activist,” Biden admitted. “I worked at an all-black swimming pool in the east side of Wilmington, Del. I was involved in what they were thinking, what they were feeling. But I was not out marching. I was not down in Selma. I was not anywhere else. I was a suburbanite kid who got a dose of exposure to what was happening to black Americans.”

Biden previously said that he “participated in sit-ins to desegregate restaurants and movie houses.”

In 2020, Biden revived his claim of being a civil rights leader, recounting on at least three occasions that he was arrested in South Africa, along with the United States’ UN ambassador, while trying to visit the imprisoned Nelson Mandela.

Biden would later admit that he was never arrested in South Africa.

In 2019 during the 2020 Presidential primaries, the Biden campaign was caught taking entire sentences word for word from outside organizations for his campaign’s website. As he did with the Kennedy speeches more than 30 years earlier, Biden blamed his staff for the mix-up. The White House has not commented publicly on the similarities between Biden’s D-Day anniversary speech and Reagan’s.

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Rep. James Comer Promises More To Come in Biden Inquiry

US Rep. James Comer (R-KY) says criminal charges against Hunter and James Biden are “just the beginning” of his impeachment investigation into US President Joe Biden, promising that the President will be the next focus of the investigation.

“Remember, this is an investigation of Joe Biden,” Comer said during an interview with US media. “Hunter Biden, Jim Biden, Eric Schwerin, Devon Archer – these are all witnesses in an investigation of Joe Biden. This was always about Joe Biden.”

Comer is the chair of the House Oversight Committee which has an on-going [impeachment inquiry](#) into Joe Biden for an alleged influence campaign he ran with his family.

The interview came after the Oversight Committee asked the Justice Department to bring charges against Hunter and James Biden – the President’s son and brother, respectively – for lying to lawmakers during the investigation.

“What we have Maria, is [Hunter Biden](#), under oath, in a deposition, lying. He perjured himself two different times, at least, about Joe Biden’s involvement and participation in schemes. We

also have Jim Biden lying about the fact that Joe Biden met with Tony Bobulinski,” Comer alleged.

Last month, the House Judiciary and Oversight committees voted to move forward on contempt resolutions against Merrick Garland for refusing to release the audio tape of the interview between special counsel Robert Hur and Joe Biden, alleging that they had heard “bits and pieces” of the interview that “would suggest” the [transcript released](#) by Garland had been altered.

Garland would be the one responsible for bringing criminal charges against Hunter and James Biden, something Comer expressed some doubts about.

“Criminal referrals are very serious, in fact, Merrick Garland has prosecuted people that were referred criminally to the Department of Justice [by Congress] during the Trump administration, so Merrick Garland is on record taking Congressional criminal referrals very seriously. So, we are going to see how seriously he takes what we have referred here.”

Comer noted that the charges the committee has referred to the Justice Department have a five-year statute of limitations, so if Garland refuses to bring charges a new attorney general appointed by a future Donald Trump administration could still decide to pursue them.

Comer said he had no plans to end his investigation and promised an “imminent” report that would lay out the evidence for the crimes they accuse Joe Biden of specifically.

“This is just the beginning. But the next step would be accountability for Joe Biden and I think everyone that’s kept up with this investigation will be very eager to see what the next step is,” Comer said.

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This is only the latest instance of Biden being accused of plagiarism. He was caught copying five pages word-for-word from a Law Review article while he was in law school in the 1960s. In 1987, his Presidential campaign was derailed after it was revealed that he stole lines and even paragraphs in his speeches from other politicians. Then in 2020, his presidential campaign took entire sentences and paragraphs from outside organizations for the campaign’s website.

The White House has not commented on this latest case of alleged plagiarism.

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Wildfire Smoke Has Been Linked to More Than 52,000 Deaths in California Over 10 Years - Study

The study adds that exposure to toxic particles has led to \$432 billion in health expenses in just a decade.

A new study has found that 52,000 Californians have died over a 10-year period after being exposed to wildfire smoke containing PM2.5 - these tiny particles (named for their size of less than 2.5 micrometers) can embed themselves deep into a person's lungs and enter the bloodstream.

Researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles analyzed data between 2008 and 2018. Looking at PM2.5 airborne pollutants that were released from those wildfires, they found that their lethal impact on the population far outweighs deaths which can be attributed to direct, physical damage from wildfires.

According to the [New York State Department of Health](#), exposure to high levels of PM2.5 can increase the risk of health issues such as heart disease, asthma, and [low birth weight](#) (when a baby weighs less than 5 pounds).

These particles can also appear in outdoor sources like vehicle exhaust, burning wood, gas, and other fuels - not just wildfires. But the department notes that the particles can travel from wildfire sources that are hundreds of miles away. They can also appear indoors from sources including tobacco smoke, broiling or frying food, burning candles or oil lamps, fireplaces, and space heaters.

However, the report notes that pollutants from wildfires can be more harmful to a person's health than if it had originated from another source.

A previous study analyzed the impacts of wildfires in California during 2018, and estimated that 3,652 premature deaths occurred as a result - however the new study estimates over 12,000 deaths occurred during that time.

"A growing body of research suggests that particulate matter from wildfire smoke is more harmful to human health than particulate matter from other pollution sources," said [Rachel Connolly](#), the lead author of the study. "Society needs to invest in forest management and climate mitigation, both of which could yield significant health benefits."

"The findings are really a call to action for forest management and climate change mitigation," she added.

Friday's study has higher numbers than previous research because prior research only focused on the short-term health impacts of the pollution.

The study also found a hefty economic impact as a result of the fires: treating those who became sick from the fires as well as the economic impact of the wildfire pollutants resulted in costs between \$432 billion and \$456 billion.

[California](#) experienced one of the nation's worst fire seasons in 2018, during which 1.8 million acres burned. During the Camp Fire, more than 17,000 residences, 700 commercial/mixed residential structures and 5,800 minor structures were lost. Climate scientists have said that global warming has worsened both the longevity and frequency of California's hot summers.

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'There Should Be More Outrage': Bibi's Upcoming Address to Congress, and Hezbollah Tension

Some US officials have suggested that the ICC does not have jurisdiction over the conflict in Gaza, nor the US itself. And some US Republican lawmakers have suggested sanctioning the ICC members and their families for its decisions, which US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has suggested supporting.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is scheduled to address a joint session of Congress on July 24. The address comes at an awkward time, as the prime minister's government continues to wage an increasingly unpopular war in the Gaza Strip which has resulted in a humanitarian disaster. In addition, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has issued arrest warrants for Netanyahu, Hamas leader Yehiya Sinwar and other officials for war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Gaza Strip.

On Friday, Jeremy Kuzmarov, the managing editor of Covert Action magazine, sat down with [Sputnik's The Final Countdown](#). He suggests that Netanyahu's visit is to reaffirm US support, but added that the goal of destroying Hamas remains unrealistic.

"What Netanyahu wants is probably to firm up US support. Yes, Biden has started to criticize him a little bit - he called for him to pull back on Rafah, but he also provided billions and billions of military support for him to carry out his war on Gaza," Kuzmarov explained.

"It's sad the major leaders invited to Congress are two of the worst leaders of modern times. Volodymyr Zelensky and Netanyahu are arguably both major war criminals," he suggested.

"What does it say about the US Congress that they're inviting these leaders? They're doling out billions of dollars to these horrific leaders who plundered countries into war and the abyss. It's really sad. There should be more outrage," said the editor and author.

At least [40 people](#) were killed including 14 children and nine women in a strike on a UN school in the central Gaza Strip on [Thursday](#), said the Gaza Health Ministry. The munitions used by Israeli fighter jets appear to have been US-made, said three weapons experts who examined and verified footage, a [report](#) from The Washington Post claims.

The school, which is organized and operated by the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) is located in the Nuseirat refugee camp where some 6,000 civilians were sheltering after being displaced by the war, said UNRWA. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) claimed their aircraft attacked "three classrooms" with precision weapons while targeting a group of militants they say participated in the October 7 attacks.

"It's unclear what the Israeli war aims are and what they could achieve. They claim to want to destroy Hamas, but that seems totally unrealistic. This kind of assault on the people of Gaza will only empower Hamas and legitimize them as a principal resistance force," Kuzmarov explained. "So he has to explain what he hopes to achieve and how this war can end because if [his] goal is to destroy Hamas, this war could go on endlessly and even his hardline supporters may not want that."

"I think [Netanyahu] may be beating the drums of war with Iran. That's been the theme of Netanyahu throughout his political career; 'the evil of Iran, the development of their nuclear program, the threat of Iran,' and that dovetails with some of the neoconservatives in the US

who've long wanted regime change in Iran," the author explained. "So, this visit may be the drumbeat for war in Iran. And he's doing everything to provoke that. He murdered an Iranian commander in Syria, besides bombing their embassy in recent months."

"Behind the scenes, the [US and Israel] really cooperate very, very closely, including things like intelligence sharing and cooperation in the realm of intelligence as well as military," he added.

"They definitely have been discussing military intelligence cooperation and intensifying that cooperation. Meanwhile, Biden publicly tries to kind of distance himself a little bit from Netanyahu for political reasons."

In May, Netanyahu announced his government's intentions to take decisive actions against the Lebanese Hezbollah movement in the north, Sputnik reported at the time.

"At the beginning of the war, we said we would restore [security in the south and the north](#), and we will... We are ready for very strong actions in the north. One way or another, we will restore security in the north," the prime minister said.

Hezbollah is essentially controlling the government of Lebanon, said Sputnik's Ted Rall. and The group was considered a serious threat to Israel at the beginning of the Israel-Hamas war.

Israel's allies did not want to open up another conflict with Hezbollah, but now it appears as if Israel is trying to do just that, added Rall.

"I think we have to recognize that Israel is controlled by hardliners and extremists, and seeing that they've been planning a wider war for a long time, probably with the neoconservatives in the US, that they've had their sights on Hezbollah in southern Lebanon for a long, long time, just like they've had their sights on Iran," said Kuzmarov.

"And many believe that October 7th was engineered in some way by Israel. Israel was supporting Netanyahu's government. Extremists, they were supporting Hamas. It was out in the open that they [funded](#) them. They were doing everything to provoke them. There's the question of border security on the day of October 7th. Why wasn't there, the question of foreknowledge of the October 7th attacks," he added.

"There's evidence that they wanted this attack, or somehow helped engineer it, knew it was coming, and that was, you know, the part. By design, they needed some 9/11-type incident to justify a regional war, which is what these extremists always wanted."

Angie Wong then asked The Final Countdown's guest what he thinks the Israeli prime minister's end goal is, exactly, noting that the one thing he will not be asking Congress for is more money, unlike Zelensky. Netanyahu may instead be concerned about his legacy as he may be approaching the end of his power, she added.

"I think he's in a very desperate position now. He knows he can go to jail," said Kuzmarov of Netanyahu. "He's facing corruption charges. He's faced with a revolt among his own people."

"Whether it was engineered or allowed to go forward, October 7th was great for him because he was going to jail and he was facing revolt of his people. And that's a trick of a leader, you know, that they have to engineer a foreign war to save their skin, to divert the public's attention."

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'There should be more outrage': Bibi's upcoming address to Congress - analyst

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Radical Center on Way Out as Europeans Chafe Over Lack of ‘Ideological Flexibility’

Europe’s political establishment seems intent on indefinitely supporting Ukraine’s proxy war against Russia, whether European citizens approve or not.

A curious, and perhaps seemingly contradictory, term has arisen for a style of politics recently en vogue throughout Europe.

Politicians such as French President Emmanuel Macron and German foreign minister Annalena Baerbock have come to the fore promoting a style of politics often [dubbed](#) “radical centrism.” Such figures, placing themselves in opposition to various flavors of “populism,” cast themselves as pragmatic leaders who are nevertheless willing to engage in broad reform. Their policy is often typified by neoliberal economics, “green” politics, and unwavering support for Ukraine. But although such figures may be favored by mainstream media and establishment interests, they are increasingly unpopular among the European public.

“They don’t seem to have the ideological flexibility to realize how unpopular their policies are,” said Dr. George Szamuely, a senior research fellow at London’s Global Policy Institute. “So they continue tanking in the polls, but they don’t seem to make any adjustments.”

Szamuely specifically identified such politicians’ apparent support for “waging indefinite war in Ukraine,” which he pointed out was “clearly very unpopular in Europe.”

The political commentator joined [Sputnik’s The Final Countdown program Thursday](#) to comment on the matter as polling ahead of this weekend’s European Parliament elections suggests self-styled anti-establishment parties stand to benefit amid a rejection of Europe’s drive towards conflict with Russia.

“Obviously immigration is a major issue,” Szamuely observed. “Clearly the European governments haven’t done anything about that. This has been a sore point for many years.”

"There's something else which is a feeling of economic decline," he added. "Europe is not doing well economically. It's losing out relative to the rest of the world. And I think there's a feeling that something needs to be done."

Germany has made headlines in recent months as the historical industrial powerhouse reports dismal growth figures, with the country's economy set to [expand](#) by a mere 0.1% in 2024. Berlin has faced deindustrialization as Western sanctions barring it from access to low-cost Russian gas have dramatically increased operating costs.

Critics have also claimed pro-environmental policy is a drag on growth, with farmers alleging that restrictions on the use of fossil fuels are cutting into their narrow margins. Europe has been rocked by farmers' protests in response, with tractors flooding the [streets](#) in Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Greece, Germany, Italy, France and Belgium.

Many of the protests are also driven by [a rejection of free-trade policies](#) intended to boost Ukrainian agricultural imports. The war in Ukraine more broadly is a matter of controversy for many Europeans, Szamuely noted, blaming "the kind of centrist liberalism which has been the dominant ideology over the past 10 years or so, as represented by seeing Macron in France and Olaf Scholz in Germany."

"Macron has been historically unpopular now for several years," he said of the French President, who has repeatedly heightened tensions with Russia over the conflict with Ukraine. "And I think it's hard to see that he's making any kinds of adjustments. He still keeps talking about waging indefinite war in Ukraine. Now, this is clearly very unpopular in Europe, certainly unpopular in France and yet he continues doing this."

A recent poll by the French newspaper Le Figaro found that 68% of French people [disagreed with comments by Macron](#) about the possibility of sending Western troops to fight in Ukraine.

"Similarly in Germany, when you enter this traffic light coalition – which is gung ho for this war in Ukraine – even though the German public really doesn't want to do it," he continued. "The German public has made it absolutely clear in poll after poll that they don't want to get sucked into another war in the East. And yet it continues. So this is the problem, there doesn't seem to be the kind of ideological flexibility, a willingness to learn from past mistakes."

"Whatever the outcome, I don't think very much is going to change in Europe," Szamuely concluded. "There's gonna be all kinds of jockeying between various factions within the European Parliament, but I don't think policy will change very much."

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Russia-Africa Ties Reemerge as World Powers Vie for Influence

An historical defender of anti-racist and anti-colonial causes, Russia is once again forging links across the African continent on the principles of voluntary partnership and respect for national sovereignty.

As indigenous peoples successively threw off the yoke of colonialism during the mid-20th century, the continent of Africa emerged as an important front in the global battle between the United States and the USSR.

Having renounced [the colonial Sykes–Picot pact](#) as one of the first acts of its post-revolutionary government, Russia stood as a strong anti-imperialist force as Europe's territorial possessions became independent states. Soviet provision of financial aid and military support to anti-apartheid movements won the country goodwill throughout the continent, with many Africans seeing the USSR as a benevolent counterweight to Western domination.

Today, with Russia and the United States increasingly representing two distinct geopolitical poles once more, former ties between Moscow and Africa are reemerging on the basis of voluntary partnership and respect for national sovereignty. Author and researcher Dr. Gerald Horne, a professor of history at the University of Houston in Texas, joined [Sputnik's The Critical Hour program Thursday](#) to discuss the development.

"It sounds to me like they're getting the band back together," said host Garland Nixon, noting security agreements taking shape with Mali, Niger and the Central African Republic. "Russia's history and the Soviet Union's history during the Cold War in Africa is very rich, shall we say. As the US empire pushes a new Cold War narrative, it seems to me that this is the natural outcome of it."

"There's obviously something to which you say," responded Horne, who noted that many African countries face threats from [jihadist movements](#) funded by US Gulf allies. "Russia has to combat these same religious zealots oftentimes sponsored by US imperialism on their own soil. Not to mention in the vicinity – speaking of Syria, for example."

"And we also know that the North Atlantic countries, particularly France, have made a hash out of their former colonies, like the Central African Republic," he continued. "They have looted the CAR of one of its most precious resources, speaking of diamonds. They have not been effective in terms of combating any insurgencies that on the surface involve Christian forces versus Muslim forces."

Governments in the African Sahel have been particularly adamant about opposing Western influence in recent months, with countries [expelling French and then US troops](#) in succession. France is often viewed with resentment as a former colonial power in the region, which still maintains significant economic influence via the use of the Euro-pegged CFA franc currency. Polling shows that [approval has risen for Russia](#) across the region, with China also seen positively as the Asian power invests in infrastructure projects throughout the continent. Approval of the United States has declined as many countries reject the Biden administration's heavy handed attempts to force nations to cut ties with Russia in the wake of the country's special military operation in Ukraine.

"We understand why many African nations are now looking to Russia for assistance, because they see Russia as being less conflicted, given the fact that Russia has its own religious zealots that it's seeking to combat," said Horne. The expert predicted that countries like Nigeria would eventually reach out to Russia for assistance in combating armed groups like Boko Haram. In South Africa, the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party has lost its parliamentary majority for the first time in the country's modern history, forcing it to seek a coalition with one or more smaller parties.

The center-right Democratic Alliance (DA) party increased its vote share to 22%, but most of the opposition to the ANC positions itself on the left, represented by forces like the socialist uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) party and the anti-capitalist Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). Land

reform is a key demand of many components of the political opposition, who claim more action is required to address inequalities caused by apartheid.

"The United States would like to see the ANC go into coalition with the DA," said Horne. "But that would probably lead to a split and a rift within the ranks of the ANC, with many militants hotly opposed to having anything to do with this neo-apartheid party."

"South Africa faces a very difficult environment, not least because US imperialism is unhappy with South Africa, because it's bringing the case before the International Court of Justice against US ally Israel, because of South Africa's close alliance with Brazil, Russia, India, [and] China... the BRICS, for example."

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Corrupt Dealings: Spanish Drug Gangs Armed With Black Market Weapons From Ukraine

Military-grade armaments provided for Ukraine's war effort are instead being sold for profit on the black market, ending up in the hands of terrorists and dangerous criminals.

Police in Spain are [demanding](#) "urgent measures" as increasing numbers of Western-made weapons supplied to Ukraine are ending up in the hands of violent drug gangs, according to reports in local media.

The proliferation of the military grade arms is creating "a very great risk for citizens in general," said Pedro Carmona, a spokesman for Spain's Unified Association of Civil Guards, who called it a "very serious situation." The police union says the phenomenon has reached crisis levels in recent weeks, according to the El Independiente newspaper.

Last September, Spanish police reported seizing US-made AR-10 and APC223 rifles with "NATO caliber ammunition" during a raid on a drug smuggling gang in Barcelona. Last month, a firefight erupted between Civil Guard members and drug traffickers in the city of Cadiz, during which the criminals "unloaded numerous shots from automatic military-grade weapons" according to the newspaper.

The Spanish government's 2023 Annual National Security Report identified armed conflicts as contributing to "the greater availability of weapons" in the country given their "diversion into the illegal firearms trade."

The problem has been recognized for some time, with Europol reporting that weapons were being trafficked out of Ukraine and into the hands of criminal gangs just two months into the ongoing conflict with Russia. Investigations found Western-supplied Ukrainian weapons being [sold on the dark web](#) soon after.

Europol criticized Ukrainian authorities for providing firearms to civilians "without any records" in early 2022, pointing to the potential for the weapons to find their way onto the black market. But corrupt Ukrainian officials may be engaging in arms trafficking, as well. Russian UN representative Dmitry Polyansky [claimed](#) last year there is evidence Kiev officials "sell off" Western-provided aid for profit.

In January, Ukraine's SBU security service reported the [discovery](#) of a massive corruption scheme involving "high-ranking officials" from the country's Ministry of Defence pocketing \$40 million from funds earmarked for the purchase of shells from the supplier Lvov Arsenal. The

funds made their way to various foreign accounts, the investigation revealed, while no arms were ever produced. Just four months prior defense minister Oleksii Reznikov was fired after fraud was uncovered in deals to purchase food and clothing for Ukrainian troops.

Government corruption is historically recognized as endemic in Ukraine, a fact that has stymied efforts by the country to join the European Union. In 2015, British newspaper The Guardian [called](#) Ukraine "the most corrupt nation in Europe," a reality attested to by numerous reports. "During the past decade, Ukraine has gained a reputation as one of the world's most active suppliers of illegal small arms," claimed an [investigation](#) by US state media outlet PBS in 2002. "While Ukraine's legal arms industry has boomed, the international small arms black market may have proved far more lucrative."

"As the newly independent state moved toward a partnership with NATO and downsized its military, its Soviet weapons fell into disuse," the report continued. "Some were sold off legally, but many slipped through the cracks and into the black market. Poorly paid soldiers 'lost' their weapons, and some commanders were caught selling off entire military installations."

"A Ukrainian parliamentary inquiry concluded that between 1992 and 1998, Ukraine lost \$32 billion in military assets, in part through theft, discount arms sales and lack of oversight... And as these arms proliferated, so did evidence of international criminal networks that sold arms from Ukraine in flagrant violation of international sanctions and embargoes. Theft and corruption in the military facilitated the flow of illegal weapons from Ukraine... The ease with which arms shipments moved through official channels has led many observers to conclude that prominent Ukrainian officials were involved in the deals."

Previously, Finland's National Bureau of Investigation [reported that Western weapons](#) provided to Ukraine had found their way into the hands of criminal groups in the country, as well as gangs in Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands.

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Scott Ritter: Putin Seeks Resolution With NATO but Russia's Future is in BRICS

Russia is embracing a future beyond Western economic hegemony, the Russian President said at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum.

President Vladimir Putin "continues to hold the door open for a resolution" of conflicts between NATO and Russia, said [former US Marine Corps intelligence officer Scott Ritter](#), but the country will embrace a new multipolar world led by institutions like the BRICS economic bloc.

The leader closed out the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) with a presentation where he stressed the country's preparations for the BRICS summit in the Russian city of Kazan this fall. The bloc doubled in size at last year's summit, noted Ritter, and appears set to continue to expand as it challenges the Western-oriented G7 group.

A recent [report](#) demonstrated that BRICS economies maintain higher average growth than G7 nations. "With continued higher growth rates and the potential to add more members, BRICS looks likely to overtake the G7 in economic size within two decades," concluded the analysis.

“The theme that Vladimir Putin painted was one that showed Russia to be in a sound place economically, a growing economy, a diversifying economy, an economy that was adapting to the new reality of a multilateral, multipolar world, an economy that is very much linked to the future expansion and success of BRICS,” said Ritter of Putin’s closing comments at the 2024 SPIEF, which hosted representatives from 130 countries and saw the signing of more than 900 agreements.

“He is speaking openly about a currency that will replace the dollar-dominated global economy, not sometime in the theoretical future, but now, something that can emerge out of the BRICS summit,” he continued. “He de-emphasized the conflict in Ukraine. Vladimir Putin made it clear that Russia will win this conflict. He also made it clear that there are options on how this conflict can come to an end.”

Ritter noted that Putin “put the Istanbul solution back on the table” for a resolution of the conflict with Ukraine, but it would be modified “based upon the new reality.” Ukraine and Russia were engaged in peace talks shortly after the launch of Moscow’s special military operation in 2022, it was reported by former Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, but the United States interfered to end the negotiations. Another round of talks between the two countries that year was scuttled by former UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, also at the behest of Washington, it has emerged. In October 2022, Volodymyr Zelensky issued a decree making it unlawful for Kiev to engage in negotiations with Russia as long as it is governed by President Vladimir Putin. Zelensky must step down, Putin said, claiming he is a usurper as he rules beyond his elected mandate. The Russian president also sought to calm speculation about nuclear war and conflict with the United States, claiming that conditions have not been met for Russia to consider the use of its nuclear weapons.

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Western Hypocrisy Exposed by Support for Gaza ‘Holocaust’ – Analyst

The United States and Europe’s backing of Israel, which has killed more than 36,000 in its ongoing operation in the Gaza Strip, is doing permanent damage to Western hegemony, according to one observer.

A group of European countries spearheaded a vote by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to censure Iran this week, but Dr. Mohammad Marandi of the University of Tehran claims Western nations are increasingly “isolated” and without credibility due to their support for Israel’s deadly military campaign in Gaza.

The analyst discussed the issue Friday on [Sputnik’s The Critical Hour program](#).

“The whole thing is inconsistent because the E3 countries, they obey the United States,” said Marandi, referring to the European trio of France, Germany, and the UK that have previously joined together to engage in negotiations with Tehran. “When Trump pulled out of the [Iran nuclear] deal, they, too, imposed maximum pressure sanctions on Iran. And when Obama violated the deal, they, too, violated the deal alongside Obama.”

“So, the European countries know quite well that it is not Iran’s fault that we are in the current situation,” he argued.

Former US President Donald Trump suddenly ended the United States' participation in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly referred to as the Iran nuclear deal, in 2018. The agreement had been reached by the administration of former President Barack Obama in 2015, offering Iran sanctions relief in exchange for restrictions on its critical nuclear facilities.

Iran has historically held the title of the world's most sanctioned country, with the US imposing coercive measures against the country since the Iranian Revolution of 1979. The United States has continued to consider Iran a primary adversary, with foreign policy neoconservatives long [calling](#) for a US invasion of the country. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has also demanded Western action against Tehran, a strong public advocate of the Palestinian cause. "This organization is dominated by Western countries," said Marandi of the IAEA. "Independent countries have a smaller role – they all abstained." The final vote for the IAEA measure, which criticized Iran for not cooperating with the nuclear watchdog, was 20-2, with Russia and China voting against the resolution. Twelve countries abstained from the vote.

China, Russia and Iran [issued](#) a joint communication before the vote calling for talks to revive the former nuclear deal after European countries joined the US in abandoning its provisions. The statement said it "was time for the western countries to show their political will, to refrain from the endless cycle of escalation that has been going on for almost the last two years. Passing of the resolution was a mistake that will only lead to confrontation."

"As long as the Europeans and the Americans do not abide by their side of the bargain, they should have no expectations from the Iranians to abide by their side of the bargain," argued Marandi.

"After Trump pulled out of the deal, the Iranians continued to abide by their commitments in full for a full year after the Americans and the Europeans discontinued fulfilling their side of the bargain. And only after a year did Iran, in five stages, decrease their commitments until they reached where we are today."

"So the Iranians gave the Americans and the Europeans two years to change course, but they refused to do so," he said. "The world has changed now. The Americans and Europeans simply don't have the sort of power or clout that they had in the past... the United States and Europeans have isolated themselves."

Marandi claimed that tensions over Taiwan, a loss of economic potency, and backing of Israel have contributed to the West's loss of influence in the world as China and Russia spearhead the creation of alternative global institutions that undermine US attempts to impose political hegemony.

Evidence is mounting that lockstep support for Israel, in particular, is contributing to the West's loss of political legitimacy both internally and throughout the world. Recent polling reveals that half of Democratic Party [supporters](#) in the United States – and one-third of Jewish [Americans](#) – believe Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Yet US President Joe Biden has repeatedly proven incapable of challenging the US ally.

Observers have [argued](#) that the West more broadly has lost credibility over the issue as the values of the liberal world order it purportedly presides are openly defied.

A watershed moment occurred last month when the International Criminal Court announced it is seeking an arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Critics have [lambasted](#) the intergovernmental organization as the "International Caucasian Court" for its reputation for

primarily focusing on cases involving adversaries of European countries. The announcement that the court would pursue a case against Israel signaled that the international body was no longer able to ignore the conduct of a powerful Western ally.

"We have the genocide, the ongoing Holocaust going on in Gaza, which should be the top news every hour of every day," said Marandi. "The West is on the losing side for all of these conflicts. And, of course, they are being disgraced because of their support for the Israeli regime."

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Radical center on way out as Europeans chafe over lack of "ideological flexibility"

Although figures like French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz have won plaudits from mainstream media and establishment interests, they are increasingly unpopular among the European public noted Dr. George Szamuely, a senior research fellow at London's Global Policy Institute.

"They don't seem to have the ideological flexibility to realize how unpopular their policies are," said the commentator on Sputnik's The Final Countdown program. "So, they continue tanking in the polls, but they don't seem to make any adjustments."

Szamuely specifically identified such politicians' apparent support for "waging indefinite war in Ukraine," which he pointed out was "clearly very unpopular in Europe."

Massive farmers' protests have been driven by a rejection of free-trade policies intended to boost Ukrainian agricultural imports. The Ukraine conflict more broadly is a matter of controversy for many Europeans, Szamuely noted, blaming "the kind of centrist liberalism which has been the dominant ideology over the past 10 years or so, as represented by seeing Macron in France and Olaf Scholz in Germany."

"Macron has been historically unpopular now for several years," he said of the French President, who has repeatedly heightened tensions with Russia over the conflict with Ukraine. "He still keeps talking about waging indefinite war in Ukraine. Now, this is clearly very unpopular in Europe, certainly unpopular in France and yet he continues doing this." A recent poll by the French newspaper Le Figaro found that 68% of French people disagreed with comments by Macron about the possibility of sending Western troops to fight in Ukraine.

"Similarly in Germany, when you enter this traffic light coalition – which is gung ho for this war in Ukraine – even though the German public really doesn't want to do it," he continued. "The German public has made it absolutely clear in poll after poll that they don't want to get sucked into another war in the East. And yet it continues."

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Russia-Africa ties reemerge as world powers vie for influence

With Russia and the United States increasingly representing two distinct geopolitical poles, ties between Moscow and Africa are reemerging on the basis of voluntary partnership and respect for national sovereignty.

"It sounds to me like they're getting the band back together," said Garland Nixon, cohost of Sputnik's The Critical Hour program, noting Russian security agreements taking shape with Mali, Niger and the Central African Republic. "Russia's history and the Soviet Union's history during the Cold War in Africa is very rich, shall we say. As the US empire pushes a new Cold War narrative, it seems to me that this is the natural outcome of it."

"There's obviously something to which you say," responded author and researcher Dr. Gerald Horne, a professor of history at the University of Houston in Texas. Horne noted that many African countries face threats from jihadist movements funded by US Gulf allies. "Russia has to combat these same religious zealots oftentimes sponsored by US imperialism on their own soil. Not to mention in the vicinity – speaking of Syria, for example."

Russian provision of financial aid and military support to anti-apartheid movements during the 20th century won the country goodwill throughout Africa, with many seeing Moscow as a benevolent counterweight to Western domination.

"South Africa faces a very difficult environment, not least because US imperialism is unhappy with South Africa, because it's bringing the case before the International Court of Justice against US ally Israel, because of South Africa's close alliance with Brazil, Russia, India, [and] China... the BRICS, for example," said Horne.

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Corrupt dealings: Spanish drug gangs armed with black market weapons from Ukraine

Police in Spain are demanding "urgent measures" as increasing numbers of Western-made weapons supplied to Ukraine are ending up in the hands of violent drug gangs, El Independiente news outlet reported.

The proliferation of the military grade arms is creating "a very great risk for citizens in general," said Pedro Carmona, a spokesman for Spain's Unified Association of Civil Guards, who called it a "very serious situation."

The Spanish government's 2023 Annual National Security Report identified armed conflicts as contributing to "the greater availability of weapons" in the country given their "diversion into the

illegal firearms trade.” The problem has been recognized for some time, with Europol reporting that weapons were being trafficked out of Ukraine and into the hands of criminal gangs just two months into the conflict with Russia.

Europol criticized Ukrainian authorities for providing firearms to civilians “without any records” in early 2022, pointing to the potential for the weapons to find their way onto the black market. But corrupt Ukrainian officials may be engaging in arms trafficking, as well.

Russian President Vladimir Putin stated last year that “Ukraine is selling everything that can be sold,” commenting on Kiev regime’s black market weapons sales.

In January, Ukraine’s security service (SBU) reported the discovery of a massive corruption scheme involving “high-ranking officials” from the country’s Ministry of Defence pocketing \$40 million from funds earmarked for the purchase of shells from the supplier Lviv Arsenal. Just four months prior defense minister Oleksii Reznikov was fired after fraud was uncovered in deals to purchase food and clothing for Ukrainian troops.

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President Vladimir Putin “continues to hold the door open for a resolution” of conflicts between NATO and Russia, said former US Marine Corps intelligence officer Scott Ritter, but the country will embrace a new multipolar world led by institutions like the BRICS economic bloc.

The leader closed out the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) with a presentation where he stressed the country’s preparations for the BRICS summit in the Russian city of Kazan this fall. The bloc doubled in size at last year’s summit, noted Ritter, and appears set to continue to expand as it challenges and surpasses the Western-oriented G7 group.

“The theme that Vladimir Putin painted was one that showed Russia to be in a sound place economically, a growing economy, a diversifying economy, an economy that was adapting to the new reality of a multilateral, multipolar world, an economy that is very much linked to the future expansion and success of BRICS,” said Ritter of Putin’s closing comments at the 2024 SPIEF, which hosted representatives from 139 countries and regions.

“He is speaking openly about a currency that will replace the dollar-dominated global economy, not sometime in the theoretical future, but now, something that can emerge out of the BRICS summit,” he continued. “He de-emphasized the conflict in Ukraine. Vladimir Putin made it clear that Russia will win this conflict. He also made it clear that there are options on how this conflict can come to an end.”

Ritter noted that Putin “put the Istanbul solution back on the table” for a resolution of the conflict with Ukraine, but it would be modified “based upon the new reality.” De facto Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky must step down, Putin said, claiming he is a usurper after ruling

beyond his elected mandate. The Russian president also sought to calm speculation about nuclear war and conflict with the United States, claiming that conditions have not been met for Russia to consider the use of its nuclear weapons.

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Western hypocrisy exposed by support for Gaza 'Holocaust' – analyst

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"This organization is dominated by Western countries," he said of the IAEA. "Independent countries have a smaller role – they all abstained." The final vote for the IAEA measure was 20-2, with Russia and China voting against the resolution. Twelve countries abstained from the vote.

China, Russia and Iran issued a joint statement before the vote calling for talks to revive the former nuclear deal after European countries joined the US in abandoning its provisions. The statement said it "was time for the Western countries to show their political will, to refrain from the endless cycle of escalation that has been going on for almost the last two years. Passing of the resolution was a mistake that will only lead to confrontation."

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"We have the genocide, the ongoing Holocaust going on in Gaza, which should be the top news every hour of every day," said Marandi. "The West is on the losing side for all of these conflicts. And, of course, they are being disgraced because of their support for the Israeli regime."

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Hunter Biden Will Not Testify in Gun Trial - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) – Hunter Biden will not testify in his gun trial, CNN reported on Monday, citing his defense lawyer's remarks.

Biden's defense attorney Abbe Lowell permitted on Monday the judge to provide instructions to the jury that they should not hold it against Biden that he "did not testify" in the case.

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US Directs \$824Mln in Energy Aid to Ukraine - Special Representative

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) – US Special Representative for Ukraine's Economic Recovery Penny Pritzker said Monday that the US is directing \$824 million toward addressing Ukraine's energy situation, including \$500 million in new funds.

"I've announced here at the conference that the United States government is focusing \$824 million, 500 million of which is new dollars, 324 million are repurposed dollars, towards addressing the energy situation ... that Ukraine is facing," Pritzker said at a talk ahead of the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Berlin.

Pritzker said energy would be one of the key areas of the conference.

As of last month, USAID had provided nearly \$1 billion in energy assistance to Ukraine, including helping it repair and maintain its energy infrastructure during the winters.

Russia launched its special military operation in Ukraine in February 2022. The Russian armed forces started striking Ukrainian infrastructure on October 10, 2022, two days after a bombing attack against the Crimean Bridge, which was claimed by Ukraine's domestic intelligence agency. The strikes target energy, defense, military administration and communications facilities across the country.

In early April, Ukrainian energy company DTEK announced its plans to restore as many damaged power plants as possible by October, while Ukrenergo said the restoration of large energy facilities could take up to several years.

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Biden Admin. Weighs Unilateral Hostage Deal With Hamas - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration has discussed the possibility of negotiating a unilateral deal with Hamas to secure the release of five American hostages being held in the Gaza Strip if current ceasefire talks collapse, NBC News reported on Monday, citing current and former US officials briefed on the matter.

Such negotiations would be conducted through Qatar and would not involve Israel, the officials said.

However, the officials said they are not aware what the US would give Hamas in return for the release of American hostages. They, however, suggest that the Palestinian group could agree to

a deal as this would further strain relations between the US and its key Middle East ally and put additional pressure on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at home.

The US also hopes to recover the bodies of three other US citizens who are believed to have been killed by Hamas during the October 7 attack, the report said.

The discussions within the Biden administration have also explored whether the possibility of the US securing a deal with Hamas might pressure Netanyahu to accept a version of the current ceasefire proposal, according to the report.

The report comes after four Israeli hostages kidnapped on October 7 were released by the Israel Defense Forces in a raid that the Gaza Health Ministry says killed 274 Palestinians, including children.

Rescuing the Israeli hostages has only emboldened Netanyahu's determination to continue military operations in Gaza, rather than committing to a halt in hostilities, the report said, citing a senior administration official.

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US, Poland Form New Group to 'Coordinate Messaging' on Ukraine - State Department

WASHINGTON, June 10 (Sputnik) - The United States and Poland have formed a new group to coordinate Western messaging on the Ukraine conflict and counter official information from the Kremlin, the State Department announced in a press release on Monday.

"Today, the United States and Poland jointly launched a new Ukraine Communications Group (UCG) based in Warsaw to support Ukraine against Russia's aggression in the information space. The UCG will bring together like-minded partner governments to coordinate messaging, promote accurate reporting of Russia's full-scale invasion, amplify Ukrainian voices, and expose Kremlin information manipulation," the State Department said.

The group will comprise representatives from different countries and will collaborate to counter "deceptive narratives" about the conflict in Ukraine, it added.

Earlier in the day, the US and Poland signed a memorandum of understanding to strengthen cooperation on countering "foreign state information manipulation." In total, 18 countries have endorsed the US-led framework to combat "harmful information manipulation by foreign actors," according to the State Department.

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Thousands Rallying Outside White House in Peaceful Protest Against Conflict in Gaza

WASHINGTON, June 8 (Sputnik) - The mass pro-Palestinian protest is taking place outside the White House on Saturday, with people surrounding the residence of the American leader, a Sputnik correspondent reported.

Thousands of people are carrying Palestinian flags and banners saying "free Palestine," "Hands off Gaza," "Ceasefire now," "Biden Lies while Gaza Lies" are peacefully standing

outside the White House.

Despite the heat, more and more people are joining the rally. The crowd consists of people of all ages and various nationalities. Several groups of protesters are marching around the perimeter of the White House.

The adjacent streets have been shut down and the police presence at the site has been increased 10-fold.

The rally is being covered by the representatives of numerous international media outlets.

Israel has been conducting military operations in the Gaza Strip as a response to the attack in its territory by Palestinian movement Hamas on October 7, 2023. Israel's operations are aimed at eliminating Hamas fighters and rescuing the hostages, the authorities say. Over 36,800 people have been killed so far by Israeli strikes in the Gaza Strip, according to local authorities. The Jewish state's actions sparked the wave of protests worldwide.

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RPT: ANALYSIS - Prospect of Ukraine 'Child Soldiers' Shows US Desperate, Will Set Public Against Zelenskyy

WASHINGTON, June 8 (Sputnik) - The prospect of Ukraine lowering the mobilization age to 18 years demonstrates the desperation of both Washington and Kiev as the conflict with Russia grinds on, while the unpopular move will further stoke public anger against Volodymyr Zelenskyy, analysts told Sputnik.

Russian President Vladimir Putin told the world's leading news agencies this week he believes the United States will force Zelenskyy to lower the mobilization age to 18 and then get rid of him. It would take a year to implement it, Putin assessed.

In April, Zelenskyy signed legislation into law to lower the minimum conscription age to 25 from 27.

WEAPONS ARE COMPLETE WASTE WITHOUT MANPOWER

"This is clearly a sign of desperation," ret. US Army Col. and political commentator Earl Rasmussen said.

Regardless of the equipment or funds provided by the West, if there are no soldiers to train and operate the weapons, then they are a complete waste and do little to even weaken Russian forces, Rasmussen observed.

"Zelensky is already not popular, and this will only anger the public more who have watched generations eliminated for no reason other than to appease foreign geopolitical interests and potentially personal wealth," he said.

A recent poll published by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology found that half of Ukrainians accuse Zelenskyy of failing to deliver on his 2019 campaign promises.

"Zelenskyy is long overdue but may still be useful for the West until after the elections. Then we'll see," Rasmussen said.

His safety is far from guaranteed but the threat to him is greater from within his own government and military, the expert noted.

'CHILD SOLDIERS'

CovertAction magazine Managing Editor Jeremy Kuzmarov agreed that the reports of US policymakers urging tougher conscription laws in Kiev reflected "growing desperation on the part of the United States and Ukraine."

It also shows the utter hypocrisy of US leaders, Kuzmarov emphasized.

"They claim to be for human rights yet support the unethical use of child soldiers in this war. They know these soldiers will be used as cannon fodder in a war they provoked and that could have easily been ended," he said.

Biden's policy on Ukraine is now reminiscent of Laos in the 1960s when the CIA recruited child soldiers for its Hmong clandestine army to fight the communist Pathet Lao in a secret war, Kuzmarov recalled.

Former US diplomat and State Department consultant on relations with Russia James Carden also agreed that the reports revealed panic and desperation in the Biden administration.

Martial law was introduced in Ukraine on February 24, 2022. The next day, Zelenskyy signed a decree on general mobilization. The martial law and mobilization have been continuously extended since then. On May 9, the Ukrainian president signed bills to extend mobilization and martial law in the country for another 90 days. Under martial law, Ukrainian citizens aged from 18 to 60 are prohibited from leaving the country.

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Florida Authorities Say Three Serious Shark Attacks Occurred at Local Beach

WASHINGTON, June 8 (Sputnik) - Three individuals were injured in two separate shark attacks that occurred at a local beach near Panama City Beach, Florida, South Walton Fire Department Chief Ryan Crawford said during a press conference.

"We're here to share some important information on a series of shark bites that occurred earlier this afternoon here in Walton County," Crawford said on Friday. "We experienced two separate incidents earlier this afternoon in relative proximity to one another, about four miles apart, within about an hour-and-a-half of each other."

Crawford said the first incident involved a 45-year-old woman who was swimming with her husband when she was bitten by a shark in the midsection and pelvic area and suffered the amputation of her left arm.

That woman is in critical condition, Crawford added.

The second shark attack involved two teenage girls between the ages of 15 to 17, Crawford said.

One of the girls received significant injuries to one upper and one lower extremity of her body, both requiring the application of tourniquets, Crawford said. This victim was transported to the hospital in critical condition, he added.

The second girl suffered a flesh wound on her foot and was taken to the hospital in stable condition, according to Crawford.

Crawford said these types of shark attacks are highly unusual in the area but warned beachgoers to stay vigilant. He noted that extra steps have been taken to ensure the beach is safe.

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US Coast Guard Says Responding to Reports of Plane Crash in State of Washington

WASHINGTON, June 8 (Sputnik) - The US Coast Guard said in a statement that it is responding to reports of a plane crash in the state of Washington.

"@USCG [Coast Guard] units along with San Juan County Sheriffs are responding to reports of a plane crash between Orcas and Jones Island," the Coast Guard said via X on Friday afternoon.

Jones Island is approximately 70 miles from Seattle.

The Seattle Times newspaper said, citing the Federal Aviation Administration, that only the pilot was flying in the aircraft and there were no other passengers on board.

There's no further information on what type of aircraft is involved in the incident.

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Chinese Embassy Says Ready to Maintain Close Talks With Parties on Arms Control Issues

WASHINGTON, June 8 (Sputnik) - The Chinese Embassy in Washington told Sputnik in light of US efforts to resume dialogue with Beijing on arms control that it has never been part of any form of an arms race and it stands ready to engage in close consultations with partners to address this issue.

"We have never been part of any form of arms race," a Chinese Embassy spokesperson said on Friday. "The size of our nuclear arsenal is not on the same level with the US...We are ready to maintain close communication with other parties on this issue, which bears on global strategic stability and security."

Earlier in the day, White House National Security Council Director for Arms Control, Disarmament and Nonproliferation Pranay Vaddi said the United States is open to seeing an arms control proposal from China, but that Beijing has rejected US efforts to hold further dialogue on this issue after they last held talks in December.

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US Navy Upgrades Production on Modernized AEGIS-Class Destroyers - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, June 8 (Sputnik) - The US Navy has approved a more than \$55 million contract extension to Lockheed Martin to upgrade production requirements on the DDG-51 Arleigh Burke class missile destroyers and its AEGIS air defense systems, the Defense Department said.

"Lockheed Martin Rotary and Mission Systems [of] Moorestown, New Jersey is awarded a

\$55,496,035 ...modification ...contract for fiscal 2023 AEGIS Modernization (AMOD) and DDG-51 new construction production requirements," the Defense Department said in a release on Friday.

Work on the extended contract will be performed in Moorestown, New Jersey (80%) and Clearwater, Florida (20%) over the next four and a quarter years and is expected to be completed by September 2028, the release said.

The Naval Sea Systems Command in Washington will oversee work on the project as its contracting activity, the release added.

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US Army Orders More Stryker A-1 Fighting Vehicles From General Dynamics - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, June 8 (Sputnik) - The US Army has ordered more Stryker land vehicles from General Dynamics, the Department of Defense announced in a press release.

"General Dynamics Land Systems [of] Sterling Heights, Michigan, was awarded a \$65,995,190 ...contract for the production of Stryker Double V-Hull A1 vehicles," the Defense Department said in the release on Friday.

Work on the contract is scheduled to take two and a half years with an estimated completion date of December 31, 2026, the Defense Department said.

The Stryker is a group of eight-wheeled armored fighting vehicles that were originally derived from the Canadian LAV III, according to published sources.

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Most US Voters Rate Biden's Handling of China-Related Issues Poorly - Poll

WASHINGTON, June 8 (Sputnik) - A plurality of likely voters in the United States rate US President Joe Biden's handling of issues related to China poorly, according to a Rasmussen Reports poll.

Most respondents, 45%, rated Biden's handling of China-related issues as poor, the poll report said on Friday.

One-third of respondents (33%) rated Biden's handling of such issues as good or excellent, the poll report said.

The results are nearly unchanged from polling data from November, which followed a meeting between Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping, the poll report said.

The poll surveyed 1,099 likely US voters from June 2-4. The poll maintains a margin of error of plus-or-minus three percentage points with a 95% confidence level.

The poll comes ahead of the 2024 US presidential election in November, in which Biden is set to rematch former US President Donald Trump for control of the White House.

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US-Russian Citizen Pleads Guilty to Illegal Export of Firearm Parts to Russia-Statement

WASHINGTON, June 8 (Sputnik) — US-Russian citizen Dmitry Timashev pleaded guilty to conspiracy to violate the Export Control Reform Act by exporting firearm parts, components, and ammunition to Russia without the required authorization, the Justice Department said in a statement.

"A dual US-Russian citizen pleaded guilty today to conspiracy to violate the Export Control Reform Act by exporting firearm parts, components, and ammunition to Russia without the required authorization," the statement said on Friday.

According to the statement, Timashev pleaded guilty to conspiracy to violate the Export Control Reform Act by exporting firearm parts and ammunition to Russia without authorization, and faces up to five years in prison with sentencing on November 8.

The statement said that from July 2020 to 2023, Timashev coordinated with an associate in Russia to send weapon parts from the United States to Russia, in exchange for tuition for his daughter and rent for an apartment in Ekaterinburg, with packages initially sent to Russia until July 6, 2022, and then to Kazakhstan in February 2022.

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US Navy Orders More AN/SPY-6(V) Radars for \$667Mln - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, June 8 (Sputnik) - The US Navy has expanded its contract with Raytheon Missiles and Defense to manufacture AN/SPY-6(V) radars by more than two-thirds of a billion dollars, the Defense Department announced.

"Raytheon Missiles & Defense, Marlborough, Massachusetts, is awarded a \$677,715,433 ... modification contract to exercise options for hardware production of the AN/SPY-6(V) Family of Radars," the Defense Department said in a release on Friday.

Work on the contract will be performed in Andover, Massachusetts, (31%) and various locations across the United States, the release said.

Work on the extended contract is expected to take four and a quarter years and is scheduled to be completed by September 2028, the release added.

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Huge Migrant Inflow Increases Hotel Prices in New York City to Record Levels - Reports

UNITED NATIONS, June 7 (Sputnik) - The record level of immigrants entering the United States illegally has caused hotel prices in New York City to similarly increase to record highs

after a significant number of the immigrants settled there, the New York Times reported on Friday.

The report cited data from real estate analysis firm CoStar indicating that hotel prices in New York have increased by 8.5% in a year. In 2022, when some 200,000 immigrants arrived in New York, the average hotel stay per night was \$277.92. As the immigrants continued arriving in 2023, a hotel stay increased to \$301.61 per night.

About 135 hotels in new York from a total of 680 have signed up for a program in which they are paid up to \$185 per night if they turn into "shelters" for illegal immigrants. The arrangement has amounted to a loss of 16,532 hotel rooms.

More than 8 million immigrants have entered the United States illegally since Joe Biden became president of the United States, causing the greatest border crisis in US history.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, June 8 (Sputnik) -

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* The death toll from the Ukrainian military shelling the Sadove village in the Kherson Region increased to 21, region's governor Vladimir Saldo said on Friday.

* US President Joe Biden believes that the escalation of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine to the level of World War III would have disastrous consequences for the European continent and US national interests, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said.

* The Russian Airspace Forces destroyed two unmanned boats of the Ukrainian Navy in the Black Sea, which were heading toward Crimea, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

* Ukraine has attacked residential areas of Luhansk with five US-made ATACMS missiles, Russian air defense systems have downed four of them, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

ARMS CONTROL

* The United States is prepared to hold a discussion with Russia on the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) before it expires on February 6, 2026, and hopes Russia is ready to engage, National Security Council's Senior Director for Arms Control and Nonproliferation Pranay Vaddi said on Friday.

* The United States continues to abide by the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, Vaddi said.

* The United States considers it a "good thing" that Russia continues to see value in maintaining limits on deployed strategic nuclear weapons, Vaddi said.

* Changes that China is currently making to its nuclear arsenal will impact the US tenor and ability to strike a new arms control agreement with Russia, Vaddi said.

* Russia is not showcasing nuclear weapons, Russian President Vladimir Putin said.

* The United States takes seriously Russian President Vladimir Putin's remarks on how nuclear weapons should never be used and hopes he is true to his word, Vaddi told Sputnik.

* The United States would need a specific proposal from Russia to assess whether there is a possibility for arms control talks between the two countries before the Ukraine conflict ends, Vaddi told Sputnik.

UKRAINE PEACE CONFERENCE IN SWITZERLAND

* UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will not attend the Ukraine peace summit in Switzerland, but the organization will be properly represented, United Nations spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Friday.

* Russian President Vladimir Putin does not discuss with his partners their participation in the conference on Ukraine in Switzerland, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

* Russia is not ruling out US President Joe Biden's arrival in Switzerland to attend the upcoming Ukraine summit, as any surprises are possible, Peskov said.

MIDDLE EAST

* Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and his Israeli counterpart Israel Katz discussed the situation in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict zone during a phone conversation on Friday, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

* US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will travel to Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Qatar next week to discuss the latest proposal for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and for securing the release of the remaining hostages held by Hamas, the US State Department said.

* Israeli Ambassador Gad Eitan has received the decision by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to include the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in a special report as a party that commits violations against children, the Israeli mission to the United Nations said.

WESTERN AID TO UKRAINE.

* US President Joe Biden on Friday announced an additional \$225 million to help Ukraine rebuild its electric grid.

* The Pentagon announced that a new military aid package for Ukraine worth \$225 million includes air defense interceptors, artillery systems, munitions, and anti-tank weapons.

* NATO's top military officer Rob Bauer said that Ukraine would be smart to live up to the conditions placed on Western-provided weapons in order to ensure that it receives additional weapons capabilities from the allies.

PUTIN'S ADDRESS TO ST. PETERSBURG INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC FORUM

* The infrastructure of the Northern Sea Route will be further developed, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Friday.

* Russia remains one of the main participants in world trade despite all obstacles and sanctions, Putin said.

* The global economy is entering an era of radical changes, and the Russian economy is ready to embrace these challenges, Putin said.

* There is no other collateral than trust in the US economy today and the United States makes serious money on it, Putin said.

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USCENTCOM Reports Successful Defense Against Houthi Missile, Drone Attacks - Statement

WASHINGTON, June 8 (Sputnik) — The US Central Command (USCENTCOM) said on Friday that Iranian-backed Houthis launched four anti-ship ballistic missiles from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen over the Red Sea in the past 24 hours, with no injuries or damage to US, coalition, or commercial ships.

"In the past 24 hours, Iranian-backed Houthis launched four anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBM) from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen over the Red Sea. There were no injuries or damage reported by US, coalition, or commercial ships," the USCENTCOM said in a statement.

According to the statement, USCENTCOM forces destroyed four unmanned aerial systems (UASs), two anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBMs), and a UAS launched into the Bab al-Mandab Strait from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen.

"Separately, USCENTCOM forces successfully destroyed a Houthi patrol boat in the Red Sea," the statement said.

The statement added that it was determined that these systems posed an imminent threat to US, coalition forces, and merchant vessels in the region, and the action was taken to protect freedom of navigation and enhance the safety and security of international waters for US, coalition, and merchant vessels.

The Houthis have increased their attacks following the Gaza conflict. The Houthis vowed in November 2023 to attack any ships associated with Israel until it halts military actions in the Gaza Strip. Amid the Houthi attacks, some companies suspended shipments through the Red Sea. The attacks prompted the United States to form a multinational coalition, which includes the United Kingdom among others, to protect shipping in the area of the Red Sea, as well as to strike Houthi targets on the ground.

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Pentagon to Award Contract for TNT Plant Construction to Supply Ukraine, Israel - Notice

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - The US Defense Department is set to award a contract for the construction of a TNT facility to ramp up production of artillery shells intended for use by Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan, according to an updated solicitation notice published on Friday.

"The government intends for this sole source action to include a contract(s) for the design, construction, and commissioning of the TNT facility, as well as follow-on production," the updated notice said.

The initial solicitation notice was published in September 2023 to seek offers from interested companies to build a plant capable of producing 5-15 million pounds of TNT (2,4,6-trinitrotoluene) annually.

The updated notice clarifies that the department is forced to grant the contract as an "unsensitized contract action" or without agreeing on key terms, like price, because of the

urgency of the matter.

Defense News reported in February that the Pentagon was actively searching for ways to increase the output of 155mm shells with TNT being the key explosive used in its production.

An important step towards increasing the production of projectiles was the opening of a Turkish plant in Texas in late May, which plans to produce about 30,000 shells per month by the end of 2024.

Pentagon officials have said the United States plans to produce at least 100,000 155mm rounds per year by the end of 2025 as this type of shell remains the most in demand for Ukraine. To date, the United States supplied Kiev with nearly 3 million rounds of 155mm artillery shells.

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Canada Border Workers Pause Strike Until Next Week as Mediation Continues - Statement

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - More than 9,000 members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) employed by the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) have put potential strike action on hold until Wednesday as mediation continues, PSAC said on Friday.

"All strike action by 9,000 CBSA personnel is on hold as mediation will continue until Wednesday. Picket lines will not be in place until further notice," the PSAC said in a statement.

Late in May, the PSAC announced that 96% of its members had voted in favor of a strike mandate. PSAC is the country's largest federal public union, representing nearly 230,000 workers in every province and territory in the country.

As CBSA employees have been working without a contract for more than two years, PSAC is currently seeking a deal that includes fair wages, flexible telework and remote work options, as well as equitable retirement benefits and stronger protections around discipline, technological changes and working hours.

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Businessman Testifies in Court That He Bribed Sen. Menendez With Mercedes-Benz – Reports

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) – A US businessman testified in court that he bribed Senator Robert Menendez's wife Nadine with a Mercedes-Benz in exchange for getting access to the lawmaker's influence, The New York Times reported on Friday.

Earlier on Friday, New Jersey businessman Jose Uribe testified in a Manhattan district court as part of a lawsuit against Menendez, who faces 16 criminal charges for alleged crimes including bribery, wire fraud, acting as a foreign agent, and obstruction of justice. The senator has pleaded not guilty to the charges against him, the report said.

Uribe, who pleaded guilty in March, acknowledged under oath that he bribed Nadine Menendez to access "the power and influence" of her husband, who until recently had served as the chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, according to the report.

The businessman also told the court that he bribed Menendez along with other people, including Egyptian American businessman Wael Hana, who according to prosecutors also sent money to the senator and his wife, the report said.

According to the indictment, Uribe helped Nadine Menendez buy a new Mercedes-Benz C-300 convertible for about \$60,000, the report added.

Prosecutors allege that Menendez received bribes in exchange for using his authority to assist the Qatari government and benefit Egypt. Prosecutors also accuse Menendez's wife of engaging in a scheme to return the alleged bribe money under the guise of loan repayment.

The criminal trial against Menendez began in May and is still ongoing in the US District Court for the Southern District of New York.

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Ukrainian Organization Includes US Lawmakers, Trump on Ukraine Opposition List

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - A Ukrainian media organization with ties to the US government released a list of people and entities opposed to the United States' continued support of the regime in Kiev, including former US President Donald Trump and numerous US lawmakers.

The Data Journalism Agency, known as TEXTY, released a list of "groups opposing support for Ukraine" on Thursday. The organization said that the listed people and entities mirror narratives promoted by Russia.

The list includes 391 individuals and 76 organizations. Listed people include Trump, US journalist Tucker Carlson, entrepreneur Elon Musk, psychologist Jordan Peterson, former US congressman Ron Paul and political activist Medea Benjamin.

The list also features multiple US lawmakers, including Marjorie Taylor Greene, Paul Gosar, Rand Paul, Anna Paulina Luna and Andy Biggs.

Daniel McAdams, the Director of the Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity, which was included on the list, said on Friday that the list is intended to "smear" US politicians, journalists and influencers as tools of Russia.

McAdams noted that TEXTY is listed as an "Implementing Partner" of the US Agency for International Development's Transparency and Accountability in Public Administration and Services project. Moreover, TEXTY's founder is a participant in the US State Department's "TechCamp" project, McAdams said.

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Airplane Bound for Paris Returned Safely to Toronto - Air Canada

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - Flight AC872 bound for Paris was forced to return to the Toronto airport shortly after take off on June 5, where it landed normally, enabling the

passengers to board another airplane later that evening, Air Canada said on Friday.

Earlier in the day, media reported that a Boeing 777 operated by Air Canada flying from Toronto to Paris had to return to the Toronto Pearson International Airport after experiencing an engine problem shortly after takeoff.

"Flight AC872 from Toronto to Paris on June 5 returned to Toronto shortly after departure due to an engine issue that was determined to be a compressor stall. The aircraft landed normally, and it was met by first responder vehicles as a precaution before it taxied to the gate on its own," Air Canada said in a statement via X.

All 389 passengers and 13 crew members were accommodated in another flight later on Wednesday, the statement added.

Air Canada explained that the flames seen in videos circulating online were not coming from one of the aircraft's engines but rather from the disruption of the airflow, which in turn could have caused the fuel to ignite.

"Our pilots are highly skilled professionals well trained to safely manage such incidents and in this case was quickly stabilized as per our standard procedures," the statement said.

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Biden Aide on New START Talks Before End of Ukraine Conflict: Specific Proposal Needed

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - The United States would need a specific proposal from Russia to assess whether there is a possibility for arms control talks between the two countries before the Ukraine conflict ends, the National Security Council's Senior Director for Arms Control, Disarmament and Nonproliferation Pranay Vaddi told Sputnik.

"I can't answer that without any sort of specific proposal in mind," Vaddi said, when asked if arms control talks with Russia are possible before the conflict in Ukraine is over.

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NATO Looking for Deterrence, Not War With Russia - Admiral

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) – NATO is looking to deter Russia, but does not want a war with it, Chair of the NATO Military Committee Adm. Rob Bauer said on Friday.

"This is still the aim of the alliance. We are not looking for war, we are looking for a strong deterrence in order to make the Russians and the terrorist groups think ten times before they actually start going against us," Bauer said in a conversation at the Hudson Institute in Washington.

The admiral highlighted the importance of ensuring that the alliance is strong enough to be able to deter and prevent a war. He also pointed out that the business community and Western society as a whole does not concern itself with external and internal security, saying that this is a matter for the military and police.

"You are a part of the solution, ladies and gentlemen, whether you like it or not. If you get into a

war, you need more people because soldiers die, soldiers get wounded," Bauer said.

While having a professional army is good, the whole society should be a part of the solution in case of a potential conflict, he stressed.

Western countries have been providing massive military and financial aid to Kiev since the start of Russia's military operation in Ukraine in February 2022. The Kremlin has consistently warned against continued arms deliveries to Kiev, saying it will lead to escalation of the conflict.

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Russia Welcome to Offer Any Proposals on Leader-to-Leader Arms Control Talks - Biden Aide

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - Russia is welcome to make any proposals on possible leader-to-leader discussions with the United States on arms control issues, the US National Security Council's Senior Director for Arms Control, Disarmament and Nonproliferation Pranay Vaddi told Sputnik.

"I can't speak to that format, but of course if the Russian Federation has any proposals on discussions, they're welcome to offer it," Vaddi said, when asked whether he thinks there should be a leader-to-leader discussion on the matter. "What we have proposed is a meeting among the right level in our government to discuss nuclear risk and New START treaty topics, and that's what we would expect to follow up on."

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US Takes Seriously Putin's Statement That Nuclear Arms Should Never Be Used - Biden Aide

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - The United States takes seriously Russian President Vladimir Putin's remarks on how nuclear weapons should never be used and hopes he is true to his word, White House National Security Council's Senior Director for Arms Control, Disarmament and Nonproliferation Pranay Vaddi told Sputnik on Friday.

"I think those statements are inconsistent with other statements that he has made, but, of course, we are cognizant of, we take seriously the statements that are made by a leader like the president. And we hope that he is good for his word on that topic," Vaddi said.

Putin earlier on Friday said that Russia and the United States have the world's most advanced missile warning systems, while Europe has none and is defenseless.

The world should never see the use of nuclear weapons, the president said, asking not to unnecessarily mention the possibility of nuclear strikes.

Russia's defense industry demonstrates effective work, surpassing the capabilities of opponents, Putin added.

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US Has Used All Opportunities to Request New START Treaty Talks With Russia - Biden Aide

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - The United States has used every diplomatic opportunity to reiterate its request to Russia to revive the New START Treaty talks, the White House National Security Council's Senior Director for Arms Control, Disarmament and Nonproliferation Pranay Vaddi told Sputnik on Friday.

"In any diplomatic opportunities we've had, we've reiterated this request," Vaddi said.

Moscow sees no possibility for a strategic dialogue with Washington at the moment, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in January during his annual press conference. The West must stop its anti-Russian rhetoric to create the possibility for such talks.

Russia does not reject the possibility of negotiations, as well as "the possibility of a political and diplomatic settlement" on the issue of strategic stability, but Washington wants to resume control over the Russian nuclear arsenal under the guise of reciprocity, Lavrov stated.

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US Approves \$215M In Sale of AIM-120C-8 Air-to-Air Missiles to Denmark - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - The US State Department approved a possible \$215 million sale of AIM-120C-8 air-to-air missiles to Denmark, the Defense Department said on Friday.

"The State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to the Government of Denmark of AIM-120C-8 Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles and related elements of logistics and program support for an estimated cost of \$215.5 million," Defense Department said in a press release.

The release noted that Denmark ordered 84 of these missiles.

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Ukraine's Army Has Been Able to Thwart Russia's Advances After Receiving US Aid - Kirby

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - The Ukrainian army was able to thwart Russia's advances after receiving US military aid packages, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Friday.

"They have been able to thwart Russian advances, particularly around Kharkiv," Kirby told reporters.

He expressed confidence that the Ukrainians were able to achieve success after receiving several US military aid packages.

On Friday, US President Joe Biden announced \$225 million in additional aid for Ukraine.

Kirby insisted that the Russian military has "kind of stalled out" in Ukraine. He also expressed confidence that their advance in the Kharkiv direction is almost stopped.

Western countries have provided hundreds of billions of dollars worth of aid to Ukraine since the start of Russia's special military operation in February 2022. Military aid shipments began in

2022 with artillery munitions and training and have escalated to include tanks, advanced air-defense systems, missiles and cluster munitions.

The Kremlin has consistently warned against the West's continued arms deliveries to Ukraine, saying that they only prolong the conflict.

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United States Coast Guard, French Navy to Discuss Maritime Cooperation - Kirby

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - The United States and France plan to discuss increasing cooperation between their coast guards and navies, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Friday.

"The US Coast Guard and French Navy intend to participate in active discussions about increasing their cooperation," Kirby said during a gaggle.

Kirby added that US President Joe Biden and French President Emmanuel Macron on Saturday plan to discuss deepening maritime cooperation. The two leaders will make an announcement on building maritime law enforcement capacity and increasing US-France technical cooperation on port security in the Indo-Pacific, Kirby said.

According to the White House, the bilateral meeting between Biden and Macron will include discussions on continuing support for Ukraine, G7 efforts to seize frozen Russian assets, navigation issues in the Indo-Pacific region, the ongoing crisis in the Middle East, and efforts to combat climate change.

Biden and Macron will also discuss other matters important to the bilateral relationship that are related to trade, investing in nuclear energy capacity, and US-French cooperation to ensure proper security at the Summer Olympics in Paris.

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Blinken to Visit Egypt, Jordan for Talks on Gaza Ceasefire, Humanitarian Aid - Statement

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will travel to Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Qatar next week to discuss the latest proposal for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and for securing the release of the remaining hostages held by Hamas, the US State Department said on Friday.

"Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken will travel to Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and Qatar from June 10-12, 2024," the State Department said in a statement.

Blinken will discuss the latest proposal as well as the ongoing efforts to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinians in Gaza by enabling greater humanitarian assistance and improve regional stability, the statement said.

"In Jordan, the Secretary will attend a conference on the urgent humanitarian response to Gaza, co-hosted by Jordan, Egypt, and the United Nations," the statement said.

Last Friday, US President Joe Biden said that Israel had offered Palestinian movement Hamas

a new three-phase proposal with a road map that would lead to an enduring cessation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip and the release of all hostages.

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US Would Welcome Follow-up From Russia on Offer of Talks on New START Treaty - Biden Aide

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - The United States would welcome a follow-up from Russia on its proposal to hold a meeting to discuss the New START Treaty, National Security Council Senior Director for Arms Control, Disarmament and Nonproliferation Pranay Vaddi told Sputnik on Friday.

Vaddi said that in September of last year, Washington provided a non-paper to Russia proposing a meeting to discuss the New START treaty and managing nuclear risks, as well as any additional issues in that domain.

"The Russian Federation refused to talk to us. We're still open to that discussion, but we would welcome a follow-up from the Russian Federation if they would be willing to talk about this now," Vaddi said.

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Google, Collective Agree on Distribution of \$73Mln to Media Outlets Under Online News Act

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) – Google said on Friday it reached a deal with the Canadian Journalism Collective (CJC) to distribute its C\$100 million (\$72.7 million) annual contribution to news outlets as agreed under its deal to comply with the Online News Act.

In early August 2023, Meta (banned in Russia as an extremist organization) announced it would end Canadian news availability on its Facebook and Instagram platforms over a dispute surrounding the implications of the Online News Act, which sought annual financial compensation indexed to inflation for the news of several media outlets nationwide displayed on its platform.

Although Google had also warned it would follow Meta's steps unless its concerns were addressed, it left the doors open for negotiations. Talks bore fruit in late November as both parties reached a C\$100 million deal, effectively settling the dispute.

"Today, we're announcing that we have reached an agreement with a collective that will be responsible for distributing our \$100M CAD annual contribution to those news businesses identified through the open call we ran earlier in the year," Google said in a statement.

The Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission has been provided with the agreement as a last step prior to the issuance of an exemption order from the online regulations, the statement said. Google looks forward to receiving confirmation that it has been exempted in the coming weeks, it added.

The exemption will allow Google to continue providing accessible news to Canadians, the

statement said. It will also unlock the company's contribution under the "new model," marking a significant evolution in how we support journalism and the news industry in Canada, it continued.

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Biden Believes World War III Over Ukraine Would Be Disastrous for Europe, US - Kirby

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden believes that the escalation of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine to the level of World War III would have disastrous consequences for the European continent and US national interests, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Friday.

"The president has from the beginning [of the conflict in Ukraine] made it clear that we aren't looking for World War III here and we're not looking for a war with Russia.," Kirby said during a press briefing. "He has said time and time again that an escalation of this conflict to that degree is not only going to have disastrous consequences, potentially, across the European continent, not good for our interest in the United States either."

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Yemen's Houthis Have Detained 11 UN National Personnel Across Four Cities - UN Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, June 7 (Sputnik)- The Yemeni Houthis have detained 11 United Nations staff, the UN Spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Friday.

"Over the past three days, the Houthis detained 11 UN national personnel across Hajjah, Hudayah, Sa'ada and Sana'a: 6 OHCHR, 1 OSESGY, 1 UNDP, 1 UNICEF, 1 WFP, 1 UNESCO," the statement said.

It was reported that the political movement has also detained a few international staff from non-UN organizations. Earlier today, three of Yemen's officials told Reuters that the Houthis officers had detained nine UN employees, three employees of the US pro-democracy group National Democratic Institute, and three other staff from a local human rights group.

The Houthis have increased their attacks following the Gaza conflict. The Houthis vowed in November 2023 to attack any ships associated with Israel until it halts military actions in the Gaza Strip. Amid the Houthi attacks, some companies suspended shipments through the Red Sea. The attacks prompted the United States to form a multinational coalition, which includes the United Kingdom among others, to protect shipping in the area of the Red Sea, as well as to strike Houthi targets on the ground.

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CENTCOM Denies Houthis' Claims About USS Eisenhower Struck in Missile Attack

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - The US Central Command (CENTCOM) on Friday denied claims by the Houthis that the USS Dwight Eisenhower was damaged as a result of a recent missile attack by the Yemeni rebels earlier this month.

"[T]here is no truth to the Houthi's claim of striking the USS Eisenhower or any U.S. Navy vessel. This is an ongoing disinformation campaign that the Houthis have been conducting for months. While the Houthis intend to target our vessels, we can confirm there has never been a successful attack on any U.S. Navy vessel," CENTCOM said in a statement to Sputnik.

Earlier in June, the Houthis said that they were able to successfully strike the USS Dwight Eisenhower and several other ships in the Red Sea.

The Houthis vowed in November 2023 to attack any ships associated with Israel until it halts military actions in the Gaza Strip. Amid the Houthi attacks, some companies suspended shipments through the Red Sea. The attacks prompted the United States to form a multinational coalition, which includes the United Kingdom among others, to protect shipping in the area of the Red Sea, as well as to strike Houthi targets on the ground.

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NATO's Bauer Says There Should Be No Limits on Ukraine's Ability to Strike Inside Russia

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - NATO's top military officer Rob Bauer said on Friday there should be no limits on Ukraine's ability to strike military targets deeper inside Russian territory.

"In the law of armed conflicts, there's no limits in terms of the range," Bauer said during a Washington Post interview. "So militarily, again, if the target is deeper into Russia, then militarily you want to strike that target."

Bauer said deeper strikes into Russian territory would disrupt critical military logistics operations.

However, he noted that Ukraine would be wise to follow restrictions placed on its use of Western weapons if it wants to continue to receive support from allies.

President Joe Biden recently gave Ukraine permission to use US-supplied weapons to strike military targets just across Russia's border, but the use of ATACMS or strikes deeper into Russian territory are prohibited.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has warned NATO nations that they should realize "what they are playing with" when they allow Ukraine to use Western weapons to strike Russian territory. He also underscored that Russia will use all means at its disposal if the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity are threatened.

Russia also asked for a meeting of the UN Security Council to be held on June 14 to discuss the West's approval for Kiev to use its weapons on Russian territory.

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ANALYSIS - Prospect of Ukraine 'Child Soldiers' Shows US Desperate, Will Set Public Against Zelenskyy

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - The prospect of Ukraine lowering the mobilization age to 18 years demonstrates the desperation of both Washington and Kiev as the conflict with Russia grinds on, while the unpopular move will further stoke public anger against Volodymyr Zelenskyy, analysts told Sputnik.

Russian President Vladimir Putin told the world's leading news agencies this week he believes the United States will force Zelenskyy to lower the mobilization age to 18 and then get rid of him. It would take a year to implement it, Putin assessed.

In April, Zelenskyy signed legislation into law to lower the minimum conscription age to 25 from 27.

WEAPONS ARE COMPLETE WASTE WITHOUT MANPOWER

"This is clearly a sign of desperation," ret. US Army Col. and political commentator Earl Rasmussen said.

Regardless of the equipment or funds provided by the West, if there are no soldiers to train and operate the weapons, then they are a complete waste and do little to even weaken Russian forces, Rasmussen observed.

"Zelensky is already not popular, and this will only anger the public more who have watched generations eliminated for no reason other than to appease foreign geopolitical interests and potentially personal wealth," he said.

A recent poll published by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology found that half of Ukrainians accuse Zelenskyy of failing to deliver on his 2019 campaign promises.

"Zelenskyy is long overdue but may still be useful for the West until after the elections. Then we'll see," Rasmussen said.

His safety is far from guaranteed but the threat to him is greater from within his own government and military, the expert noted.

'CHILD SOLDIERS'

CovertAction magazine Managing Editor Jeremy Kuzmarov agreed that the reports of US policymakers urging tougher conscription laws in Kiev reflected "growing desperation on the part of the United States and Ukraine."

It also shows the utter hypocrisy of US leaders, Kuzmarov emphasized.

"They claim to be for human rights yet support the unethical use of child soldiers in this war. They know these soldiers will be used as cannon fodder in a war they provoked and that could have easily been ended," he said.

Biden's policy on Ukraine is now reminiscent of Laos in the 1960s when the CIA recruited child soldiers for its Hmong clandestine army to fight the communist Pathet Lao in a secret war, Kuzmarov recalled.

Former US diplomat and State Department consultant on relations with Russia James Carden also agreed that the reports revealed panic and desperation in the Biden administration.

Martial law was introduced in Ukraine on February 24, 2022. The next day, Zelenskyy signed a decree on general mobilization. The martial law and mobilization have been continuously extended since then. On May 9, the Ukrainian president signed bills to extend mobilization and martial law in the country for another 90 days. Under martial law, Ukrainian citizens aged from

18 to 60 are prohibited from leaving the country.

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Freeland on Modi's Reelection Amid Bilateral Diplomatic Tensions: 'Canadians Our Priority'

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - Canada believes in the importance of maintaining a constructive relationship with India but Canadians are "our priority," Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland said on Friday.

"It is also absolutely important for us as a country to stand up for Canada and Canadians here in Canada, and that will always be our priority, overriding every other," Freeland said during a press conference.

Freeland made the statement when asked to comment on Ottawa's hopes for improved bilateral relations following the reelection of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Canada was working hard on maintaining effective and constructive working relationships with all of its international partners, including India, which is a rising global economy, Freeland said.

Ties between Ottawa and New Delhi began to sour in June 2023 after Sikh separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, who advocated for the creation of an independent Sikh state in northern India called Khalistan, was gunned down by two masked gunmen in a parking lot in Surrey, British Columbia.

In September, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Ottawa was examining "credible allegations" linking Indian diplomatic and intelligence officials to the killing of Nijjar. India has repeatedly rejected the allegations, saying they are absurd.

Following the incident, Canada expelled a high-ranking Indian diplomat allegedly linked to the country's foreign intelligence. In response, the Indian authorities ordered a senior Canadian diplomat to leave India.

Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said in January that Canada's policy toward the Khalistan Liberation Force has a negative impact on Indian Canadian relations.

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Europe Must Ramp Up Weapons Production Capabilities for Ukraine - NATO Official

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - NATO's top military officer Rob Bauer said on Friday that European partners need to do more to ramp up their production capabilities of weapons and munitions that are going to Ukraine.

"We need to do more, and we need to therefore ramp up our production capacity in our part of the world to make sure those weapons and ammunition are going to be produced faster," Bauer said during a Washington Post interview.

Bauer emphasized that NATO member states need to continue providing support for Ukraine through additional funding, weapons, ammunition, and training.

In April, President Joe Biden signed a foreign aid bill that provided some \$60 billion for Ukraine,

replenishing funding for additional security assistance that had run dry in December. A significant portion of this funding is also expected to go toward ramping up US production of weapons going to Ukraine.

Western countries have provided hundreds of billions of dollars worth of aid to Ukraine since the start of Russia's special military operation in February 2022. Aid shipments began in 2022 with artillery munitions and training and have escalated to include tanks, advanced air-defense systems, missiles and cluster munitions. The Kremlin has consistently warned against the West's continued arms deliveries to Ukraine, saying that they only prolong the conflict.

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US Prepared for Talks on New START With Russia Before Treaty Expires in 2026 - White House

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - The United States is prepared to hold a discussion with Russia on the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) before it expires on February 6, 2026, and hopes Russia is ready to engage, National Security Council's Senior Director for Arms Control and Nonproliferation Pranay Vaddi said on Friday.

"I want to be clear, from a US perspective, we will be prepared for that discussion to happen [before it expires] on February 6, 2026. I hope Russia is ready to engage before then," Vaddi said during an Arms Control Association annual meeting.

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US Continues to Uphold Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty- White House

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) -The United States continues to abide by the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, Pranay Vaddi, Special Assistant to President Biden and Senior Director for Arms Control, Disarmament, and Nonproliferation at the National Security Council said on Friday.

"This administration also continues to uphold the nuclear non proliferation treaty as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non proliferation regime," Vaddi said.

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'Good Thing' Russia Continues to See Value in Maintaining Nuclear Arms Limits -White House

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - The United States considers it a "good thing" that Russia continues to see value in maintaining limits on deployed strategic nuclear weapons, National Security Council's Senior Director for Arms Control, Disarmament and Nonproliferation Pranay Vaddi said on Friday.

"I think we feel that Russia, at least, as of today, since the suspension of New Start, their illegal suspension of New Start last year, they at least continue to see value in maintaining limits on deployed strategic nuclear weapons. That's a good thing. We agree with that," Vaddi said during an Arms Control Association annual meeting.

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UN Chief Will Not Attend Ukraine Peace Summit in Switzerland - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, June 7 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will not attend the Ukraine peace summit in Switzerland, but the organization will be properly represented, spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Friday.

"He will not go and I think we've said that the UN will be represented at an appropriate level," Dujarric said during a UN briefing when asked if Guterres will travel to Switzerland to represent the UN at the peace summit on Ukraine. "And all the parties who have been organizing the summit have been informed."

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China's Changes to Nuclear Arms to Impact US Ability to Ink Deal With Russia – White House

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) – Changes that China is currently making to its nuclear arsenal will impact the US tenor and ability to strike a new arms control agreement with Russia, White House National Security Council's Senior Director for Arms Control and Nonproliferation Pranay Vaddi said on Friday.

"As it relates to the PRC, I hope that they will be willing to re-engage in our consultation on the arms control process soon, knowing that their behavior, the changes that they [China] are making will impact our ability and the tenor of the agreement that we may be able to strike with Russia," Vaddi said during the Arms Control Association's annual meeting.

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US Open to Seeing Arms Control Proposal From China But Beijing Rejected Talks - Official

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - The United States is open to seeing an arms control proposal from China, but Beijing has turned down US efforts to hold further bilateral talks on this issue, House National Security Council Director for Arms Control, Disarmament and Nonproliferation Pranay Vaddi said on Friday.

"So, we're open to seeing a proposal from the PRC [People's Republic of China], if they choose to make it, but I guess I should reiterate that we have a channel that we tried to create," Vaddi said at an Arms Control Association conference. "We had a consultation late last year. They

have formally rejected having that consultation again where we would discuss these issues, and so I'm not sure what the next move is there."

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US May Reach Point That Requires Increase in Arsenal Deployment Numbers - White House

WASHINGTON, June 6 (Sputnik) - The United States may get to a point where it will be necessary to increase its current nuclear arsenal deployment numbers, National Security Council's Senior Director for Arms Control, Disarmament and Nonproliferation Pranay Vaddi said on Friday.

"Absent a change in the trajectory of adversary arsenals, we may reach a point where an increase in the coming years from the current deployment numbers is required, and we need to be fully prepared to execute if the president makes that decision," Vaddi said.

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US Taking More Competitive Approach to Nuclear Arms Control – White House Official

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) – The United States is now taking a more competitive approach to nuclear arms control and non-proliferation amid a changed international environment and active development of arsenals by Russia, China and North Korea, the White House National Security Council's Senior Director for Arms Control and Nonproliferation Pranay Vaddi said on Friday.

"We've adjusted our strategy to account for a more complex and worsening security environment, but we are in no way abandoning our principles. We are taking a more competitive approach," Vaddi said during an Arms Control Association annual meeting.

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White House Says Prospects for Strategic Arms Control 'Dim'

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - Prospects for strategic arms control between the United States and its adversaries are dim, White House National Security Council Director for Arms Control, Disarmament and Nonproliferation Pranay Vaddi said on Friday.

"At least in the near term, the prospects for strategic arms control are dim," Vaddi said at an Arms Control Association conference.

Russia and China are forcing the US and its allies to prepare for a world where nuclear competition occurs without numerical constraints, Vaddi said.

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NATO Official Says Kiev Would Be Smart to Live Up to Conditions Placed on Western Weapons

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - NATO's top military officer Rob Bauer said on Friday that Ukraine would be smart to live up to the conditions placed on Western-provided weapons in order to ensure that it receives additional weapons capabilities from the allies.

"So, some nations said, 'I give you this weapon systems under the following conditions,' and if Ukraine has said, 'Yeah, good to go,' and they're living up to that, then that's smart, because otherwise they would not have been given the next round," Bauer said during a panel discussion hosted by the Hudson Institute.

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US to Keep Adjusting Nuclear Posture if Adversaries Do Not Change Behavior – White House

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) – The United States will keep adjusting its nuclear posture as long as Russia, China and North Korea remain on the same trajectory of nuclear arsenal development, the White House National Security Council's Senior Director for Arms Control and Nonproliferation Pranay Vaddi said on Friday.

"But without a change in trajectory that Russia, the PRC and North Korea, are on, the United States will need to continue to adjust our posture and capabilities to ensure our ability to deter and meet other objectives, going forward," Vaddi said during the Arms Control Association's annual meeting.

According to Vaddi, the United States has already taken a number of steps in this regard, including the pursuit of the B61-13 gravity bomb and the extension of the life of certain Ohio-class ballistic missile submarines.

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China, Russia Possess Chemical, Biological Capabilities Threatening US - White House

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - US adversaries, including Russia, China and North Korea, have biological and chemical weapons capabilities that threaten the United States, White House National Security Council Director for Arms Control, Disarmament and Nonproliferation Pranay Vaddi said on Friday.

"Russia, the People's Republic of China and North Korea are all expanding and diversifying their nuclear arsenals at a breakneck pace, showing little or no interest in arms control... They also possess capabilities relevant to chemical and biological warfare that pose a threat to the United States, allied and partner forces, as well as civilian populations," Vaddi said at an Arms

Control Association conference.

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US Will Not Make Nuclear-Powered Cruise Missiles, Space-Based Nuclear Arms - White House

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - The United States will not develop nuclear-powered cruise missiles or a space-based nuclear weapon, White House National Security Council Director for Arms Control, Disarmament and Nonproliferation Pranay Vaddi said on Friday.

"Unlike our adversaries, we will not develop radiation-spewing, nuclear-powered cruise missiles or nuclear weapons designed to be placed in orbit, which would be a clear violation of the Outer Space Treaty," Vaddi said at an Arms Control Association conference.

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us seeks to extend life of ohio class submarines - white house official

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us will not develop radiation spewing nuclear powered cruise missiles or nuclear weapons designed to be placed in orbit - white house official

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Israel Says Received UN Chief's Decision to List IDF for Violations Against Children

UNITED NATIONS, June 7 (Sputnik) - Israeli Ambassador Glad Erdan has received the decision by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to include the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in a special report as a party that commits violations against children, the Israeli mission to the United Nations said on Friday.

"Ambassador Erdan receives notification regarding Secretary-General's decision to include the IDF in the Secretary-General's Children and Armed Conflict Report as a party that commits violations against children," the Israeli mission said in a statement.

Erdan reacted by saying that "Israel's army is the most moral army in the world" and Guterres' decision is an immoral one that only aids terrorism and rewards Hamas, the statement said.

"The only one who is blacklisted today is the Secretary-General. Shame on him," Erdan said in the statement.

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NATO's Bauer Says Trump Was Right to Criticize Members Not Spending Enough on Defense

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) – Former US President Donald Trump was right to criticize those NATO members that for decades had not been not spending enough on their armed forces, NATO Military Committee chair Rob Bauer said on Friday.

"The core of the critique of President Trump was that nations did not invest enough in their own armed forces, and therefore in their ability to defend themselves, which is in line with Article Three of the [NATO] Treaty, ... and we have a lot of nations in the Alliance that have neglected that for many, many decades. So, I think that critique was right, it is correct that we had to repair that," Bauer said during a virtual discussion hosted by The Washington Post.

At the same time, Bauer called Trump's words at a rally in February that he would encourage Russia to attack a NATO member that did not spend enough on its defense dangerous and not helpful.

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NATO Official Says Alliance Must Review French Plan to Send Trainers to Ukraine

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - NATO's top military officer Adm. Rob Bauer said on Friday regarding France's proposal to send military trainers to Ukraine that the NATO alliance must first have discussions on this matter before any planning moves forward.

"If it comes to it, it is most likely something that NATO is going to get involved in," Bauer said during a Washington Post interview. "So, in that sense, I think it is extremely important before anything like that would happen, is that there is a discussion among political leaders in the [NATO] alliance."

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NATO's Top Military Officer Says There Won't Be Decision on Ukraine Entering Alliance

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - NATO's top military officer Adm. Rob Bauer said on Friday that there will not be a decision on Ukraine entering the alliance during the upcoming NATO leaders summit in Washington next month.

"I think it is clear that there will not be a decision on an accession of Ukraine entering NATO because, first and foremost, Ukraine is at war," Bauer said during a Washington Post interview. "If we would allow Ukraine in the alliance now, NATO would be at war with Russia. So that is not something we think is wise and therefore it's not going to happen, and Ukraine knows that."

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Guterres Says We Need to Move Back From Nuclear Brink, Resume Dialogue

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - The world's nuclear powers must move back from the brink and resume dialogue on arms control, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Friday during the annual meeting of the Arms Control Association in Washington.

"We need to move back from the nuclear brink," Guterres said, stressing that disarmament must start immediately with all countries stepping up. "But nuclear weapons states must lead the way. They must resume dialogue."

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US Lifts Sanctions on Russian Tycoon Kerimov's Business Partner Studhalter - Treasury

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration has lifted sanctions on Russian tycoon Suleiman Kerimov's business partner from Switzerland Alexander-Walter Studhalter, including his family members and network of companies, the US Department of the Treasury said on Friday.

In November 2022, the United States sanctioned Studhalter, his two sons and the financial network as part of sanctions against Kerimov for being affiliated with the Russian government.

Studhalter's network of companies that came under US sanctions in 2022 included Switzerland- and Russia-based management consultancy firm MG International AG, financial company Studhalter International Group AG, accounting and tax consultancy firm Swiss International Advisory Group AG, Germany-based holding company Papa Oscar Ventures GmbH, and Luxembourg-based holding company Eurimo Holding SA among others.

The sanctions also affected Studhalter's sons, Jeremy Eric Camille Studhalter and Hugo Ange Christophe Studhalter.

All sanctions against Studhalter, his companies, and his sons have now been completely lifted. It remains unclear what prompted the removal of sanctions by the United States.

In May, the United States also lifted Ukraine-related sanctions on former Swiss subsidiary of Russia's Sberbank, which had been in place since September 2022.

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

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

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nato's top military officer says trump is right to criticize alliance's members not investing enough in defense

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Western States Propose Bloodshed in Ukraine, Not Peace - Russian Deputy Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, June 7 (Sputnik) - The proposals by Western countries regarding Ukraine are not about reaching peace but rather about a continued war and bloodshed, Russian Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Anna Evstigneeva said on Friday.

"What they have proposed as a resolution is not a peace formula, but rather a formula for war and bloodshed," Evstigneeva said during a UN Security Council meeting on Ukraine.

Switzerland will host in mid-June a conference on a possible resolution of the conflict in Ukraine. Russia was not invited to the event and China, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, among other countries, decided not to attend.

Evstigneeva characterized the upcoming conference in Switzerland a "propagandistic meet-up among friends."

The Russian diplomat also said that the statements by the Western countries about aspiring to achieve a peaceful and sustained resolution to the conflict in Ukraine are "utterly false."

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Biden Suggests US Troops From World War II Would Want US to Oppose Russia at Present

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Friday that US troops who fought in the Second World War would want the United States to stand up to Russia and Russian President Vladimir Putin in the present day.

"Does anyone doubt that they [US troops from World War II] would want America to stand up against Putin's aggression here in Europe today?" Biden said during a speech. "Does anyone believe that these rangers would want America to go it alone today?"

Biden delivered the remarks from Pointe du Hoc, France, located near Omaha Beach in Normandy, where US troops fought on D-Day during the Second World War.

Despite the Soviet Union having fought alongside the United States and other allied countries in the war, Russia did not receive an invitation from France to participate in the celebrations of the 80th anniversary of D-Day, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

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US to Announce New Energy Aid for Ukraine Next Week – State Department

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) – The United States will announce additional assistance for the Ukrainian energy sector next week during the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Berlin, US Assistant Secretary of State Geoffrey Pyatt said on Friday.

“Since February 2022, the US has allocated over \$1 billion to address Ukraine’s energy sector needs, sending equipment to repair damage to the electricity grid, provide backup power generation, install warming shelters, and restore district heating systems. I assure you, there will be more that we will announce in Berlin,” Pyatt said during the conversation at a think tank in Washington.

On the sidelines of the Ukraine Recovery Conference, the G7+ Energy Coordination Group will hold a meeting focused on international assistance to Ukraine’s energy system, he added.

Pyatt warned that Ukraine’s energy system is in an extremely fragile state. He also urged Kiev’s partners to act immediately to rebuild Ukraine’s energy sector and to make it sustainable, more decentralized, modernized, and fully aligned with European standards.

The 2024 Ukraine Recovery Conference will take place in Berlin, Germany, on June 11-12. The forum’s organizers said their key goal is to mobilize continued international support for recovery, reconstruction, reform, and modernization of Ukraine.

Russia launched its special military operation in Ukraine in February 2022. The Russian armed forces started striking Ukrainian infrastructure on October 10, 2022, two days after a bombing attack against the Crimean Bridge, which Russian authorities believe was carried out by Ukrainian security services. The strikes target energy, defense, military administration and communications facilities across the country.

In early April, Ukrainian energy company DTEK announced its plans to restore as many damaged power plants as possible by October, while Ukrenergo said the restoration of large energy facilities could take up to several years.

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US Should Continue to Pursue Arms Control Dialogue With Russia - Congressman

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - The United States should continue to seek dialogue with Russia on arms control despite the meager opportunities, US Congressman John Garamendi said during an Arms Control Association annual meeting on Friday.

"Clearly, it doesn’t take much observation to know that the opportunity for dialogue between the United States and Russia is very, very little, but nonetheless, we should continue to pursue that," Garamendi said.

Garamendi also said that the United States should continue to support Ukraine in the conflict with Russia.

US Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Bonnie Jenkins said in May that the United States wants Russia to return to the negotiating table on arms control.

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Gaza Temporary Pier 'Successfully Reestablished' - US CENTCOM

(Updates with more details in paras 3-6)

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - The temporary pier built off the coast of Gaza has been successfully reestablished, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said on Friday.

"At approximately 2:15 p.m. (local Gaza time) on June 7, US Central Command (CENTCOM) successfully reestablished the temporary pier in Gaza, enabling - part of the US military's Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore (JLOTS) capability - in Gaza," CENTCOM said via the social media platform X.

Reestablishing the pier will allow for deliveries of much needed humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians in Gaza, CENTCOM said.

CENTCOM expects to resume deliveries of an increased volume of humanitarian assistance by sea in the coming days, Vice Adm. Brad Cooper said.

Cooper added that CENTCOM is moving with a sense of urgency and it is anticipated that 1 million pounds of aid will be delivered through the temporary pier over a two-day period.

In late May, the US military pier attached to the Gaza coastline to facilitate deliveries of humanitarian aid to the Palestinian enclave was damaged by bad weather only two weeks after it began operating. CENTCOM had to temporarily dismantle the pier to conduct repairs.

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UPDATE - US Adds 272,000 Jobs In May, Beating Forecasts And Cooling Rate Cut Bets

(Adds details, context and comments in paragraphs 1-16)

WASHINGTON, June 7 (Sputnik) - The United States added 272,000 jobs in May, some 65% more than in April and 51% above Wall Street's forecasts, the Labor Department's monthly non-farm payrolls report showed Friday, cooling expectations for an imminent Federal Reserve interest rate cut.

Economists on Wall Street had forecast an addition of 180,000 jobs for May, after the Labor Department initially reported a growth of 175,000 for April. In Friday's payrolls report, the department revised the April growth down to 165,000 — suggesting that May was an even bigger month for employment.

The stronger-than-expected employment growth, despite the jobless rate itself rising marginally to 4% from April 3.9%, gave fewer incentives for the Fed to hasten rate cuts, analysts. Money market bets for a rate cut by September fell to 55% after the jobs data, from a prior 70%.

The Fed meets on June 11-12 to decide on monetary policy amid expectations that the central bank will almost certainly leave rates unchanged at the current two-decade high of between 5.25% and 5.5%,

"An emerging view on Wall Street that the economy is slowing didn't find much support in a generally strong May jobs report," Jeffrey Bartash wrote on MarkeWatch Live. "The labor market remains pretty darned strong. The economy is growing fast enough to keep most people

working and companies are reluctant to lay off workers since good help is so hard to find.”

Aside from outright readings on inflation, the Fed has said that jobs, wage and consumer spending numbers would be key determinants for rate decisions. A few decision-makers at the central bank have even suggested a wait until 2025 for a rate cut.

The May non-farm payrolls report is yet another case of volatile labor data tripping up Wall Street's bets on interest rates.

In February, payrolls initially showed a 275,000 growth, surpassing market expectations for 200,000. That came after January's increase of 335,000 got revised down to 229,000.

And prior to the latest non-farm payrolls report, private-sector jobs numbers showed an addition of 152,000 workers for May, versus forecasts for 173,000 and April's growth of 188,000.

Separately, a report on job openings for April stood at a three-year low.

Variations in labor market data such as these have created a “noisy” picture for employment, prompting the Fed to wait for more clarity, some analysts say.

“More importantly, underlying details of the jobs report, such as wage inflation, as measured by the Average Hourly Earnings, and the Labor Force Participation rate, could be having an impact” too on how the Fed gauges inflation, said Eren Sengezer, analyst on FX Street.

Inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, hit a four-decade high in the aftermath of the 2020 coronavirus breakout, growing as much as 9.1% a year by June 2022.

The Fed, responding to runaway price growth, hiked interest rates 11 times since March 2022.

The current range for rates, at between 5.25% and 5.5%, are at their highest since 2002. They compare with the pre-pandemic range of between zero and 0.25%.

After its June 12 decision on rates, the Fed will have four more opportunities to make a change before the year ends: July 31, September 18, November 7 and December 18.