

6/12/24 Wednesday

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Zelensky to Ukrainians: Come Home to Prison

During a press conference at the so-called Ukraine Recovery Conference in Berlin on Tuesday, Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky called on his countrymen to return to Ukraine, ostensibly to help "rebuild" the country.

The call from Zelensky for Ukrainians to return to the country is a thinly veiled attempt to press-gang them into service and send them to the frontlines as cannon fodder, Mark Sleboda, a security and international relations expert told Sputnik's [The Critical Hour on Wednesday](#). Zelensky is hoping Ukrainians come back so their "press gangs can beat, conscript [them] off the streets, like we've seen in hundreds after hundreds of Telegram videos from people filming from the streets as the press gangs seize their husbands and their sons and fathers and drag them off to the trenches," Sleboda warned.

The request from Zelensky comes after the Ukrainian government suspended consulate services for Ukrainian men living abroad in an attempt to force them to return to Ukraine to renew their passports and some European countries, namely Poland and Lithuania, have said they will "[help](#)" Ukraine by sending military-aged men back to the country.

"We have suggested for a long time that we can help the Ukrainian side ensure that people subject to [compulsory] military service go to Ukraine," Polish defense minister Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz said in April.

Earlier this month Ukraine announced it would no longer allow Ukrainians with dual citizenship to leave the country, [prompting the US embassy](#) in Kiev to issue a warning to Ukrainian Americans to "shelter in place."

Meanwhile, the remaining men left in Ukraine are desperately trying to leave the country.

According to Ukraine's State Border Service, at least 45 Ukrainian men have died in recent weeks attempting to cross the Tisza River into Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and Serbia.

Last week, a video appeared on social media showing what appeared to be a Ukrainian border guard planting landmines along the border of Romania. Days later RIA Novosti reported that several Ukrainian men had been killed by the mines, which were manufactured by the US.

"Men haven't been able to leave the country since 2022," Sleboda noted, calling it "a giant prison for the Ukrainian people."

"So, as Zelensky is begging people to come back, his own citizens are desperately trying to flee the country," added Sleboda later. "Many of them dying in the process."

Over the past week, there have been two high-profile mass escapes from Ukraine, Sleboda added. "[A group of 32 escapees](#), many of them reportedly Ukrainian intelligence and police whom the conscription has resorted to cannibalizing their own security agencies to send to the front now," Sleboda described. "They were helping send people to the front, but they didn't want to go there themselves."

The other mass escape was a minibus, reportedly with 18 people inside of it, who managed to escape into Hungary, according to Sleboda and images online, "And Hungary is a good location

for this, of course, because there's no chance, at least in Hungary, that the government there will send them back to Ukraine at some point."

But most Ukrainians aren't so lucky and are forced to brave minefields and deadly waters or be forced to the front, where according to Russian Defense Minister Andrey Belousov, [35,000 Ukrainians died in May alone](#).

That same month, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Kiev, where [he went to a bar](#) and played a rendition of Neil Young's "Rockin' in the Free World." Perhaps The Eagles would have been more appropriate:

You can check out anytime you like, but you can never leave.

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### All The Censorship in the World Can't Hide That the West Is Failing

On June 2, The Washington Post published an article on independent media outlet The Gray Zone, accusing them of having ties to Russia and Iran based largely on their employment of Wyatt Reed, a former writer for Sputnik and other outlets. Though the Post had to change its headline and retract some of its article, the hit piece remains online.

Despite all the censorship and restrictions placed on their citizenry, the elite of the United States and the collective West cannot hide the fact that it is a declining empire that has been fleecing its taxpayers for decades to maintain and improve the lifestyles of the most wealthy.

As of 2023, the top 10% financially in the US controlled 66.9% of the wealth, with the top 1% holding 30.6% of the wealth on its own. Meanwhile, the bottom 50% of the country held only 2.5% of wealth.

That wealth inequality is becoming so drastic that Americans have been seeing its effects for themselves, no analysis or news reports needed. In December, [chronic homelessness](#) hit an all-time high in the US. In February, the [collective credit card debt](#) of Americans also reached an all-time high, surpassing \$1.13 trillion.

As a result, Americans are understandably concerned about the economy, with a recent poll showing that 55% of Americans believe that [the US economy is in a recession](#), despite a high stock market, low unemployment, a rising GDP and countless officials and articles and news reports telling Americans that they are wrong, the economy is actually doing great.

Who are you going to believe, me or your lying eyes? The Biden administration and mainstream media outlets seem to be asking Americans at every possible turn.

"[Americans are] forced to each and every day walk outside their house, go to work, eat lunch on the street, in the drive to work, and go, 'Wow, there's a lot of tents up here. Wow, that's a lot of trash. Wow, a lot of shuttered businesses. What is going on?'" explained the host of AM-Wake Up, Steve Poikonen, while on [Sputnik's The Critical Hour](#) on Tuesday.

"And then they see a bunch of goons on TV, like Paul Krugman, trying to tell you that the economy's never been better and that everything is fine. It's a disconnect that is not going to work out well for the elite in the future."

The Gray Zone is not the only outlet attacked by Russophobic smear campaigns. Other outlets, like Consortium News and The Real News Network, among others, have been labeled

disinformation agents by government-funded “non-governmental organizations” like the Hamilton 68 dashboard, which labeled not only the Consortium News’ editor a purveyor of “Russian disinformation” but hundreds of X accounts, including ordinary citizens.

In May, rapper and MintPressNews contributor Lowkey was accused by one of the biggest newspapers in the UK of being promoted by a bot network from Russia, China and Iran on X. Lowkey has several protest songs supporting Palestine and often posts pro-Palestinian messages on social media.

However, as pointed out by MintPressNews in [their response article](#), the report relied almost entirely on an Israeli company named Cyabra, which was funded by the country’s military intelligence and half of its employees have left the company to rejoin the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) to fight in Gaza. According to MintPress, the report by Cyabra did not mention Lowkey by name and did not reveal its methods or a list of accounts it was accusing.

In the social media age where every individual is essentially their own media outlet, the attacks are a direct assault on free speech in the West, particularly on the internet.

“We’ve seen very few instances over the last couple decades where anyone in the judiciary, let alone the [US] Supreme Court, is willing to take a stand to actually protect or preserve the marketing of the Constitution and the First Amendment,” argued Poikonen.

The censorship is “about all [the elite] have, with a bunch of other histrionics and then whatever version of events they can manufacture to try to sell the story,” Poikonen said earlier. “But we see them fall apart in real-time, thanks to the legitimate independent media and as citizen journalists on the ground in places where things are happening.”

Still, independent journalists and outlets need to be cautious of the corrupting influence of the elite, who would like to turn independent media into a tool of the mainstream media.

“There are people in independent media that are scrambling and climbing over each other [to] proceed to tables that the good Lord told them to flip over,” Poikonen explained. “We can stop trying to get seats at those tables. We’re going to be in a [much] better spot regardless of what kind of censorship goes on because you can’t stop the truth and you can’t stop everyone from telling [it].”

Moral crisis: confusion between the US and Israel continue to rise up

Confusion between the US and Israel appeared to continue as the UN Security Council adopted a US-drafted ceasefire resolution for Gaza based on a proposal that was outlined by US President Joe Biden. The US claimed that Israel accepted the proposal, however Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu has publicly rejected it and maintains little to no possibility of a ceasefire. “So on the one hand, the UN has passed this resolution. The US says that Israel supports it, Israel says it doesn’t support it,” said Radhika Desai, an author and professor in the Department of Political Studies and the director of the Geopolitical Economy Research Group at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, sat down with Sputnik’s The Critical Hour. “I would say that one thing that has not changed in this situation is the US continued and dogged support for Israel no matter what. But what has changed is that there are now the beginnings of cracks within the coalition in Israel. Benny Gantz has resigned because he thinks that Netanyahu is not being aggressive enough,” continued Desai. On Saturday the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) announced that they had rescued four of their hostages, including a Russian national, who had been kidnapped from the Nova music festival on October 7. While news of the rescue was welcomed by the US - who helped aid the mission - many condemned Israel’s actions after the

Gaza Health Ministry said that at least 274 Palestinians had been killed as a result. "If you look at the sheer number of bombs that had been dropped on this tiny strip of land called Gaza. It is now increased and beyond is now surpassed the level of all the bombs used in World War II. Just consider that," said Desai. "[Israel says] that Hamas is using civilians as human shields. You left hardly any space for Hamas. Of course, Hamas and civilians are all going to have to take shelter in the same place." Follow the link to learn more

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#### Austin Says Ukraine Will Be Able to Hold Defense Lines in Kharkiv

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said after the Ukraine Defense Contact Group meeting in Brussels on Thursday that he thinks Ukraine will be able to hold the defense lines in and around Kharkiv.

"One of the things that the Ukrainians have been focused on over the past several months ... is building out their defensive lines and they've been fairly effective in building those defensive lines, which has created a better stability," Austin said. "But what we've seen is Ukraine has been very good at holding their defensive lines and I think they will be able to continue to do that there in Kharkiv as well."

Austin also said that the situation on the Kharkiv front is somewhat more stabilized now than it was been over the past several weeks.

Earlier in June, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said the Ukrainian army was able to thwart Russia's advances after receiving additional US military aid packages.

Western countries have provided hundreds of billions of dollars worth of military and financial 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 and other armored vehicles, advanced air-defense systems, long-range missiles and cluster munitions.

Russia has repeatedly warned against the collective West's continued arms deliveries to Ukraine, saying that they will only prolong the conflict.

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#### Pentagon Chief Claims If Ukraine Loses, Europe Would 'Fall Under Putin's Shadow'

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin claimed on Thursday that Ukraine's defeat in the conflict with Russia would put Europe "under President Vladimir Putin's shadow."

"Ukraine matters to the United States and to the entire world. If Ukraine falls under Putin's boot, Europe would fall under Putin's shadow," Austin said during a press conference after the Ukraine Defense Contact Group meeting in Brussels.

The United States understands the "stakes" of the current conflict in Ukraine, Austin said. "The outcome of the war in Ukraine will help set off a trajectory for global security for decades to come," he added.

Putin on multiple occasions has said that Russia has no plans to go to war with NATO.

The West is pushing a narrative about an alleged Russian threat to "fool" its own population, boost its defense spending and justify arms supplies to Ukraine, Putin said.

Claims about Russia's alleged plans to attack NATO sound like nonsense, Putin also said, pointing to a huge gap in defense spending between Russia and the United States alone.

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#### Austin Says US Policy on Strikes Deep Into Russia Has Not Changed

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The United States has not changed its policy on not encouraging or enabling Ukraine to conduct strikes deep into Russian territory, Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin said on Thursday.

"As you know, Ukraine requested permission to conduct counter fire in the Kharkiv area using US weapons, and President Biden granted them permission to do that," Austin said during a press conference after the Ukraine Defense Contact Group meeting in Brussels. "Our policy on using long range strike capabilities to conduct strikes deep into Russia, that's not changed."

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#### US Won't Make Any Change To Patriot Battery Coverage in Poland - Austin

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The United States will not make any changes to its Patriot missile coverage in Poland, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said on Thursday in response to reports that the US will send a battery in the country to Ukraine.

"There will be no change in our Patriot coverage in Poland," Austin said during a press conference after the Ukraine Defense Contact Group meeting in Brussels.

The New York Times on Tuesday reported that President Joe Biden approved the deployment of a US Patriot system in Poland to Ukraine.

Polish Deputy Defense Minister Cezary Tomczyk said earlier on Thursday that a Patriot air-defense system in Poland would be replaced by another battery from another country.

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#### Austin Says No Announcements on Additional Patriot Systems for Ukraine Today

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The United States has no announcements today on providing additional Patriot systems to Ukraine, Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin said on Thursday.

"Regarding Patriots, air defense has been on the top of my agenda for a long time," Austin said during a press conference after the Ukraine Defense Contact Group meeting in Brussels. "I don't have any announcements on Patriot batteries today. But what I can tell you – I continue to work on this, and I'm in constant contact with my Ukrainian counterpart. We're gonna do everything we can to make sure that Ukraine has the capabilities that they need and we get it as quickly as we can."

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#### US Astronauts Postpone Spacewalk Due to 'Spacesuit Discomfort Issue' - NASA

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - US astronauts on the International Space Station have postponed a planned spacewalk due to a spacesuit discomfort issue, NASA said on Thursday.

"The spacewalk today, June 13, at the International Space Station did not proceed as scheduled due to a spacesuit discomfort issue," NASA said in a statement.

NASA astronauts Tracy Dyson and Matt Dominick were scheduled to scrape microorganisms off the hull of the space station to give clues about how organic life survives in space, ISS Deputy Program Manager Dina Contella told reporters on Tuesday.

The two were also planning to complete the removal of a malfunctioning electronics device called a radio frequency group from a communications antenna, NASA officials said.

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#### WWII Soldiers Would 'Want Biden Impeached' If They Saw His Russia Policy - US Historians

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The heroes of WWII would want US President Joe Biden "impeached" if they knew the truth about his policies toward Russia and actions that led to the Ukraine conflict, US historians told Sputnik.

Biden claimed in his speech in Normandy last week that US troops who fought on D-Day would support his policy on Russia.

"President Biden's statement that World War II veterans would want us to stand up to Russia today is a fool's bluster. The ordinary soldier in 1945 wanted nothing more than an end to war," US historian Anton Chaitkin said.

Chaitkin recalled that then-US President Franklin Roosevelt had warned in his speech on February 12, 1943, that the Axis propagandists were employing all their old tricks to divide the United Nations and incite conflict between the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the United States, and China.

"I would say, in line with President Roosevelt, that President Biden is serving up Nazi propaganda," he said.

Historian and radio commentator Bruce de Torres agreed that Biden's comments in Normandy were false history and lies that were made for cheap political propaganda purposes.

"Could the World War II troops know the truth, they would want Biden impeached," he said.

"He's ignoring how the United States has been ignoring Russia's wants-needs-desires-warnings against NATO enlargement and specifically its warnings that Russia will not tolerate Ukraine joining NATO or having US military bases, and ignoring what the US did to cause the fighting there now."

California State University Emeritus Professor of Politics Beau Grosscup said that Biden had displayed "ignorance and contempt" for history.

"To speak for all veterans whose accomplishments were part and parcel, indeed greatly aided by fellow Russian soldiers, is the epitome of political chutzpah and convenience. I doubt that it will impact the already severely damaged US-Russian relations," he said.

The Normandy landings of US, UK, and Canadian forces took place on June 6, 1944, in what is the largest naval, air, and land operation in history. Nearly 7,000 allied naval vessels and an estimated 156,000 troops landed in France's Normandy. Total allied casualties are estimated at 10,000 soldiers.

For comparison, more than 1 million Soviet soldiers fought, and hundreds of thousands were killed in the 1943 Battle of Kursk, which is commonly recognized as a turning point of World War II that determined Nazi Germany's defeat. In total, more than 27 million Soviets died in the WWII.

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G7 Leaders to Discuss Use of Russian Assets at Summit in Italy - Sullivan

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - G7 leaders will discuss the use of frozen Russian assets at a summit in Italy, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said on Thursday.

The 50th G7 summit takes place from June 13-15 in the city of Fasano in Apulia, Italy.

"There's been very good progress in the discussions among the G7 delegations here to reach an agreement for how to make that happen [to use Russian assets], and hopefully, by the time the leaders meet today, we will have a common vision for the way forward," Sullivan said.

The leaders will decide on key points regarding using Russian assets, but some issues will be worked through by experts later, Sullivan added.

On Wednesday, the G7 countries reportedly reached a consensus on allocating \$50 billion to Ukraine by the end of 2024 using proceeds from frozen Russian assets. The decision is expected to be formally approved at the G7 summit.

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

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Biden at G7 to Discuss Sanctions Coordination With Zelenskyy, G7 Leaders - Sullivan

MOSCOW, June 13 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden will participate in a G7 session with his Ukrainian counterpart, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and the bloc's leaders to discuss coordination of

sanctions against Russia, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said on Thursday.

"The president will participate in a session with President Zelenskyy of Ukraine and the G7 leaders on G7 support for Ukraine across the board, and that will be an opportunity to talk about coordination on sanctions, which the United States announced yesterday, and other G7 partners will be announcing over the coming days," Sullivan told a briefing.

The G7 summit is taking place in Italy's Apulia region from June 13–15.

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Sullivan Says Expects G7 to Collectively Urge China to Make Progress on Debt Restructuring

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Thursday that the G7 countries will issue a common call on China to make progress on restructuring debt for the developing countries.

The 50th G7 summit will take place from June 13 to 15 in the city of Fasano in Apulia, Italy.

"I think you'll hear a common voice from G7 about what the right path forward is, [which] will be aligned on that and that. I think, will set these developing countries up to have a more constructive conversation with China than they've been able to have today," Sullivan said ahead of the G7 summit.

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RPT: ANALYSIS - Biden's D-Day Speech Inaccurate, Bellicose Propaganda to Distract From Domestic Failures

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden's speech in Normandy to commemorate the 80th anniversary of D-Day was a historically inaccurate attempt to justify his support for Ukraine's war effort and divert attention from his domestic policy failures amid his reelection campaign, scholars told Sputnik.

Biden claimed in his speech that US troops who fought on D-Day would support his policy on Russia.

"It is appalling what Biden said. Obviously, it was historically inaccurate. The speechwriters should have known that. It was done for pure political propaganda," University of Illinois Professor of Law Francis Boyle said.

Boyle said Biden has been desperate to distract the American people from the obvious failure of his domestic economic and social policies.

The allied troops who landed on D-Day were deeply grateful to their Soviet allies for taking on

the main burden of fighting and destroying the Nazi Wehrmacht in the East, Boyle recalled.

"They knew at the time that Hitler had more than 180 divisions directly engaged in fighting the Red Army in the East and only 28 divisions on the entire Western front," he said.

University of Pittsburgh Professor of International Affairs Michael Brenner said that instead of using the D-Day anniversary as an excuse to further falsely condemn and demonize Russia, Western leaders should be thanking the Russian people for saving so many Western lives through their own combat sacrifices during World War II.

"Were it not for the Russians in World War II, the casualties suffered by Americans would have been double or triple," Brenner said.

American University in Moscow President Edward Lozansky pointed out that the lies in Biden's speech were just the latest in his record of false accusations against Russia.

"Saying during the D-Day ceremony that US troops who fought in World War II would want the United States to stand up to Russia today adds to the long list of Joe Biden lies," Lozansky said.

During his speech, Biden praised US war veterans and the allied war efforts, however, he did not mention the role of the Soviet Union in the war.

The Normandy landings of US, UK and Canadian forces took place on June 6, 1944, in what is the largest naval, air and land operation in history. Nearly 7,000 allied naval vessels and an estimated 156,000 troops landed in France's Normandy. Total allied casualties are estimated at 10,000 soldiers.

For comparison, more than 1 million Soviet soldiers fought, and hundreds of thousands were killed in the 1943 Battle of Kursk, which is commonly recognized as a turning point of World War II that determined Nazi Germany's defeat.

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NASA Says No Emergency Situation on ISS, Audio From Training Session Aired by Mistake

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - There is no emergency situation on the International Space Station (ISS) after an audio from a training session was mistakenly aired earlier on the NASA live stream and caused some panic among the public, a NASA spokesperson has told Sputnik. "There is no emergency situation going on aboard the International Space Station," the spokesperson said on Wednesday.

The spokesperson explained that at approximately 5:28 p.m. CT (22:28 GMT), the NASA live stream aired audio from a simulation audio channel on the ground, indicating a crew member was experiencing effects related to decompression sickness.

The audio was mistakenly aired on the NASA live stream and is not related to a real emergency, the spokesperson said. The simulation is used to train crew members and ground teams for various scenarios in space.

NASA added that the ISS crew members were sleeping at the time of the incident, and they all remain healthy and safe.

A spacewalk is scheduled at 8 a.m. ET (12:00 GMT) on Thursday, according to NASA.

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#### Boeing Makes Push to Avoid Federal Charges Over Alleged Breach of Safety Deal - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - US aerospace firm Boeing issued a response to the US Justice Department this week, claiming it did not violate an agreement made in light of two fatal 737 Max aircraft crashes that occurred several years ago, Bloomberg reported, citing people familiar with the matter.

The report on Wednesday said Boeing told the Justice Department that it disagrees with its determination last month that the company breached a 2021 deferred-prosecution agreement.

The Justice Department had determined that Boeing breached its obligations in multiple parts of an agreement made in 2021 by "failing to design, implement, and enforce a compliance and ethics program to prevent and detect violations of the US fraud laws throughout its operations."

The Justice Department has until July 7 to decide whether Boeing should face a punishment, which may include criminal charges or agreeing to a new agreement with additional conditions, the report said.

Under the initial agreement in the spotlight in this case, Boeing paid \$2.5 billion in penalties and vowed to improve its safety and compliance protocols.

However, the Justice Department said that Boeing is subject to criminal prosecution after the company went through a series of safety mishaps this year, including a door plug that blew off an Alaska Airlines flight shortly after takeoff.

The report said current or former Boeing executives are unlikely to be prosecuted if the Justice Department decides to pursue criminal charges.

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#### US CENTCOM Says Houthi Sea Drone Damaged Commercial Ship Tutor in Red Sea

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - A Houthi sea drone struck and significantly damaged the Greek-owned commercial vessel Tutor earlier in the Red Sea, US Central Command (CENTCOM) said in a statement.

"One Iranian-backed Houthi unmanned surface vessel (USV) struck M/V Tutor, a Liberian flagged, Greek-owned and operated vessel, in the Red Sea. M/V Tutor most recently docked in Russia. The impact of the USV caused severe flooding and damage to the engine room," CENTCOM said in a statement via X on Wednesday.

CENTCOM added that US forces also successfully destroyed three anti-ship cruise missile launchers in a Houthi-controlled area of Yemen and one drone launched from a Houthi-controlled area of Yemen over the Red Sea.

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US Condemns Houthi Detentions of United Nations, Diplomats, NGO Staff - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) — The United States condemns the recent detentions of UN, diplomatic, and non-governmental organization (NGO) staff by the Houthis, the State Department said in a statement.

"The United States strongly condemns the recent detentions by the Houthis of United Nations, diplomatic, and non-governmental organization staff," the statement said on Wednesday.

Furthermore, the US condemns the Houthis' efforts to spread disinformation through televised forced and fake confessions regarding the role of detained current and former US mission local staff, the statement said.

Yesterday, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk called on Yemen's Ansar Allah rebel movement, also known as the Houthis, to "immediately and unconditionally" release six workers of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) detained along with other UN staff.

On June 10, the Houthis said they had detained whom they called spies linked to the US Central Intelligence Agency for allegedly carrying out intelligence and sabotage activities in Yemen for decades.

In addition, the Houthis accused the detainees of using their positions at the US embassy to carry out "subversive activities," and after the US embassy left Sanaa, they "continued to carry out their subversive programs under the cover of international organizations."

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Musk Says US Should Sanction Ukraine NGO Data Journalism Agency For Targeting Americans

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - US billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk said in a statement that the United States should sanction the US-funded Ukrainian non-governmental organization Data Journalism Agency as a terrorist organization after it created a so-called enemies list targeting many prominent American conservatives and lawmakers who have differing views of US support for Ukraine.

Earlier in the day, the Republican-led US House of Representatives Appropriations Committee advanced legislation to defund the Data Journalism Agency after it created the blacklist smearing Americans who oppose providing more funding to Ukraine.

"It's a good first step," Musk said via X on Wednesday regarding efforts to defund the group. "[The Data Journalism Agency] They should be added to the list of sanctioned terrorist organizations."

The Data Journalism Agency put out its blacklist last week, smearing a range of American figures like former President Donald Trump, Independent presidential candidate Robert F.

Kennedy Jr., Sen. Ted Cruz, Sen. Tim Scott, Gov. Ron DeSantis, Congressman Paul Gosar, among others.

"If voting against every dime spent on the war in between Russia and Ukraine puts me on Ukraine's enemy list, then it is a badge of honor," Gosar told Sputnik regarding the Ukrainian NGO targeting him.

In light of this so-called enemies list, Sen. JD Vance and Congressman Matt Gaetz sent a letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken demanding more information about the State Department-linked Ukrainian nongovernmental organization by June 28.

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#### US Pro-Immigration Groups File Lawsuit to Block Biden's New Border Restrictions - Filing

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - A group of pro-immigration rights groups joined together to file a lawsuit to block President Joe Biden's new executive order that cracks down on illegal migration on the US southern border, court documents revealed.

The complaint stated on Wednesday that Biden's new border policy "blatantly violates" federal law that guarantees a migrant's right to seek asylum in the United States even if they enter the United States illegally between a port of entry along the US-Mexico border.

The complaint asks the court to declare Biden's executive order unlawful and to strike it down.

The coalition of immigration rights groups behind the lawsuit includes the American Civil Liberty Union (ACLU), the National Immigrant Justice Center, Center for Gender & Refugee Studies, Jenner & Block LLP, the Texas Civil Rights Project, the Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center and the Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services, the complaint noted.

Last week, Biden issued a new executive order barring migrants who illegally cross the US southern border from claiming asylum in the United States.

The new restrictions will be removed when daily illegal entries on the US southern border hit or fall below 1,500 for seven consecutive days. The restrictions will snap back if daily illegal entries on the US southern border exceed 2,500 illegal crossings for seven straight days.

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#### Attempts to Isolate Russia on World Stage Failed, Moscow Not Threatening Anyone - Antonov

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - Attempts by Russia's adversaries to isolate it on the world stage have failed, Russian Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov said during remarks at a Russia Day event.

"Attempts by Russia's adversaries to achieve international isolation of our country have failed," Antonov said on Wednesday.

Russia is developing as a peace-loving country and is not threatening anyone, Antonov said. The emergence of a multipolar world is evidenced by the fact that many countries in Asia,

Africa, the Middle East and Latin America – a global majority – have not only rejected the Western sanctions coalition against Russia, but demonstrated their readiness to strengthen cooperation with Russia on a wide range of issues, Antonov said.

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russia is not threatening anyone, attempts by adversaries to isolate moscow have failed - ambassador to us

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Attorney General Garland Says US House Contempt of Congress Measure ‘Deeply Disappointing’

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives’ measure to hold Attorney General Merrick Garland in contempt of Congress is deeply disappointing, Garland said in a statement.

On Wednesday, the House of Representatives passed a measure recommending Garland be held in contempt of Congress for defying subpoenas to provide lawmakers with recordings from Special Counsel Robert Hur’s interview with US President Joe Biden as part of his investigation into Biden’s mishandling of classified materials.

“It is deeply disappointing that this House of Representatives has turned a serious congressional authority into a partisan weapon,” Garland’s statement said.

The measure disregards the constitutional separation of powers, the US Justice Department’s need to protect its investigations and the substantial amount of information it has provided to House panels, the statement said.

Biden eventually invoked executive privilege to reject the subpoenas, but the “last-minute” invocation of such privilege does not change the fact that Garland failed to comply with the subpoena, US House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jim Jordan said.

In February, Hur released a report on his investigation into Biden, which found that he willfully retained and disclosed classified materials. However, Hur concluded that it was not worth initiating a criminal case against Biden, because a jury may view him as a “sympathetic, well-meaning” elderly man with a poor memory.

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US Military Seeks to Have More Efficient Logistics Pipeline - Pentagon Official

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The US military has learned from the Ukraine conflict that it should further fine-tune its logistics pipeline in order to improve its capability to respond to threats, US Army Acquisition Corps Director Lt. Gen. Robert M. Collins said during a panel

discussion hosted by the Hudson Institute.

"I think what we've learned is that there is a degree of sophistication that we need to look at and how we can move faster at scale, more multifunctional," Collins said on Wednesday.

Moreover, the US Army, as a result of the Ukraine conflict, has focused some of its modernization efforts on improving munitions production and air defense capabilities, according to Collins.

Collins also mentioned that the US Army is looking into developing its drone capabilities and long-range capabilities in different regions around the world.

US Deputy Director for Strategy, Policy, and National Security Partnerships at the Defense Innovation Unit, Aditi Kumar added that the United States needs to ramp up existing defense production lines and support these capabilities, as well as bring in new players to diversify the US defense industrial base.

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US President Joe Biden Arrives in Italy For G7 Summit - White House

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) — US President Joe Biden arrived at Brindisi Airport in Italy's Puglia region after an eight-hour flight for the G7 Summit, the White House said in a statement.

"Air Force One was wheels down at Brindisi Airport in the Puglia region of Italy at 10:44 p.m. local time after a flight of nearly 8 hours," the statement said on Wednesday.

The statement added that US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre held a 54-minute gaggle about two hours into the flight.

The G7 summit is set to take place in Italy's Apulia region from June 13–15.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) -

CONFLICT IN MIDDLE EAST

\* The Hamas response to the proposal for a ceasefire in Gaza contains several changes to the deal, some of which are workable while some are not, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Wednesday.

\* United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Wednesday that proposals for a "day after" plan for Gaza will be put forward in the coming weeks and will include ideas for governance, security and reconstruction.

\* US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Wednesday that he is not sure whether it will be possible to bridge the gaps in the Gaza ceasefire proposal after Hamas put on the table a list of changes to the draft agreement.

MEASURES AGAINST RUSSIA

\* The United States in its latest round of sanctions has banned the export of information

technology (IT) consultancy, design, support and cloud-based services to any individual located in Russia, the Treasury announced on Wednesday.

- \* The United States has imposed new sanctions on more than 300 companies and individuals, including from China, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates, the US Department of the Treasury said on Wednesday.

- \* The United States has imposed sanctions on the Moscow Exchange, the largest exchange in Russia and targeted Russia's major insurance company Sogaz and Gazprom Invest, as part of a new package of restrictive measures against the country, the US Department of the Treasury said on Wednesday.

- \* Foreign financial institutions are risking being sanctioned for conducting transactions or providing services to designated Russian banks, the Treasury Department announced on Wednesday.

- \* Moscow will not leave Washington's decision to impose new sanctions against Russia without a response, Russian Foreign Ministry's spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Wednesday.

#### UKRAINE-RELATED ISSUES

- \* The United States will sign a bilateral security agreement with Ukraine on Thursday, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said.

- \* The bilateral security agreement between the United States and Ukraine does not include any commitments on the deployment of US forces into Ukraine, White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Wednesday.

- \* The text of the bilateral security agreement between the United States and Ukraine does not include any specific dollar figures, but rather a commitment to work with Congress on funding for Kiev, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Wednesday.

- \* NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said on Wednesday that he expects the NATO defense ministers to approve a plan on coordination of security assistance to Ukraine during a meeting on June 13-14.

#### US INFLATION

- \* US inflation is still too high and does not give the Federal Reserve enough confidence to cut interest rates as yet, the central bank's chairman Jerome Powell said Wednesday.

- \* The Federal Reserve is prepared to leave US interest rates at two-decade highs if the economy and inflation do not cool appropriately to warrant a rate cut, the central bank's chairman Jerome Powell said Wednesday.

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US House Passes Resolution to Hold Attorney General Garland in Contempt of Congress

(Update: adds background in paras 5-7)

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives passed a resolution on Wednesday to recommend holding US Attorney General Merrick Garland in contempt of Congress for failing to comply with congressional subpoenas.

House lawmakers passed the measure in a vote of 216 in favor and 207 opposed.

In May, the US House Judiciary and Oversight Committees advanced contempt of Congress

resolutions against Garland for refusing to provide the panels with recordings from Special Counsel Robert Hur's interview with US President Joe Biden as part of his investigation into Biden's mishandling of classified materials.

Biden later invoked executive privilege to reject the subpoenas for the recordings.

The "last-minute" invocation of executive privilege does not change the fact that Garland failed to comply with the subpoena, House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jim Jordan said.

"If Merrick Garland continues to refuse to comply with Congressional subpoenas and deny American citizens the transparency and information they deserve to determine the truth, he will face the consequences," House Majority Leader Steve Scalise said in a statement.

In February, Hur released a report on his investigation into Biden, which found that he willfully retained and disclosed classified materials. However, Hur concluded that it was not worth initiating a criminal case against Biden, because a jury may view him as a "sympathetic, well-meaning" elderly man with a poor memory

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US Demonstrations of Nuclear Capabilities at DPRK's Borders Are Dangerous - Nebenzia

UNITED NATIONS, June 12 (Sputnik) - Washington's demonstration of its nuclear potential at the borders of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is crossing the safe threshold, the Russian Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia said on Wednesday.

"We see in dangerous proximity to the DPRK borders the increasingly proactive demonstrations of Washington's nuclear capabilities," Nebenzia said in a UN Security Council meeting on the human rights situation in North Korea.

Russia has warned already in the past that these actions are bringing the conflict to a new level, which could have unpredictable consequences, he added.

Nebenzia also has objected to the meeting on human rights, saying that the Council is not the appropriate forum to discuss this topic.

Last month, Russia expressed concerns regarding confusing signals from Japan and South Korea over their strengthening cooperation with the United States in the nuclear sphere. Russia also demanded clear answers from the US regarding the possible deployment of its nuclear weapons on its allies' territory.

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US Lawmakers Advance Bill With Measure to Defund Ukraine NGO That Blacklisted Americans

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - The Republican-led US House of Representatives Appropriations Committee advanced legislation to defund a US-backed Ukrainian non-governmental organization that is blacklisting conservative Americans who oppose US funding for Ukraine, US Congressman Andrew Clyde said on Wednesday.

Last week, the US government-affiliated Ukrainian web publication "Data Journalism Agency" (TEXTY) put out a list smearing an array of prominent Americans who oppose providing more US funding to Ukraine. The list includes former President Donald Trump, Independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Sen. Ted Cruz, Sen. Tim Scott, and Gov. Ron DeSantis, among others.

"Today, the @HouseAppropsGOP passed the FY25 SFOPS [State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act] approps bill out of committee with my amendment to DEFUND the Ukrainian NGO that smeared conservative Americans and lawmakers who oppose Biden's Ukraine policy and funding," Clyde said in a statement via X.

US tax dollars have no place funding this "nonsense," Clyde added.

The State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act includes a provision that states that none of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available by this bill may be made available to the Data Journalism Agency or the Global Disinformation Index.

In light of this so-called enemies list, Sen. JD Vance and Congressman Matt Gaetz sent a letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken demanding more information about the State Department-linked Ukrainian non-governmental organization by June 28.

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Batch of Canadian-Made Armored Combat Support Vehicles Leave for Ukraine –National Defense

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) – The first batch of four Canadian-made Armored Combat Support Vehicles (ACSV's) has left Canada and is heading toward Ukraine, the Ministry of National Defense said on Wednesday.

The shipment is part of the C\$650 million (\$482 million) three-year military assistance commitment for Ukraine to procure 50 ACSV's announced by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau during the state visit of Volodymyr Zelenskyy to Canada in late September.

"The first four of 50 new Armoured Combat Support Vehicles (ACSV's) built by Canadian

workers for donation to Ukraine are departing for Europe, where members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) will be trained in their use this summer. The first 10 of these vehicles being donated are the ACSV ambulance variant," the ministry said in a statement.

The ACSV's will fulfill several battlefield purposes such as transporting troops, providing safety to command and control, and enabling medical evacuations, the ministry said. The first ten units of the ACSV's ambulance variant will be delivered to Ukraine by fall, it added.

Western countries have provided hundreds of billions of dollars worth of aid to Ukraine since the start of Russia's military operation in February 2022. 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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#### UN Declines to Comment on Legality of Using Russian Frozen Assets for Ukraine Funding

UNITED NATIONS, June 12 (Sputnik) - The United Nations has nothing to say on the legality of the decision to use Russian frozen assets to fund Ukraine, the UN Spokesman Farhan Haq said on Wednesday.

"I don't have anything to say about the legality of this. This is a bilateral effort between the United States and Ukraine," Haq replied during a UN briefing.

Earlier today, the G7 countries agreed to allocate \$50 billion to Ukraine by the end of 2024 using Russia's frozen assets. According to a source, the G7 group has already reached an agreement on the issue, and now experts need to make sure that it complies with the law and public financial regulations.

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

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#### US Justice Department Says Charged Arizona Man for Selling Guns for Use in Mass Shooting

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - A 58-year-old Arizona man faces criminal charges for allegedly selling guns intended for use in a mass shooting aimed at inciting a race war, the US Justice Department said in a statement.

A federal grand jury indicted Mark Adams Prieto for trafficking, transfer of a firearm for use in a hate crime, and possession of an unregistered firearm, the statement said on Tuesday.

"The indictment alleges that, between January 2024 and May 2024, Prieto had discussions with two individuals working with the Federal Bureau of Investigation to devise a plan to commit a mass shooting of African Americans and other minorities to incite a race war prior to the 2024 United States Presidential Election," the statement said.

Prieto was unaware that the two individuals were working with the government and believed that they shared his racist beliefs, the statement said.

The alleged plot targeted a concert in Atlanta that was scheduled for May 14 and May 15, the statement said. Law enforcement authorities arrested Prieto on May 14, while driving east from Arizona through New Mexico, the statement said.

Prieto faces a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison for the firearms trafficking and transfer of a firearm for use in a hate crime charges, and 10 years for the possession of an unregistered firearm charge, the statement said.

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Fed To Keep US Rates At 2-Decade High If Economy, Inflation Don't Cool Enough - Powell

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - The Federal Reserve will keep US interest rates at two-decade highs if the economy and inflation do not cool enough to warrant a rate cut, the central bank's chairman Jerome Powell said Wednesday.

"If the economy remains solid and inflation persists, we're prepared to maintain the rate where it is, as long as appropriate," Powell told reporters, adding that the "the opposite is also true, in terms of rate cuts."

The Fed left rates unchanged at a range of between 5.25% and 5.50% at the close of its policy-making Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting on Wednesday. That's the highest for US rates since 2002.

"We've stated that we do not expect it will be appropriate to reduce the target range for the federal funds rate until we have gained greater confidence that inflation is moving sustainably toward 2%," Powell said, referring to the Fed's long-term target for price growth. "So far this year, the data have not given us that greater confidence."

The May reading for the US Consumer Price Index (CPI), released hours before the conclusion of the FOMC meeting, indicated that inflation had cooled slightly to 3.3% per annum last month, from 3.4% in April.

The better-than-expected reading became a cheering point for rate-cut watchers, who bet on a quarter point rate cut each at the Fed's next two FOMC meetings on July 31 and September 18.

Powell, when asked about the chances of an easing at the two meetings, remained non-committal, giving answers that could be read either way.

"We are seeing what we wanted to see in the economy right now, we are getting good results here," he said. The Fed chair described the May CPI report as "a better inflation report than almost anyone expected."

But in the same breath, he said the central bank would want "to see what [the] data means for the balance of risk." To shed light on his thoughts, he cited labor market growth and inflation in housing — the two indicators closely watched for price pressures.

The labor market, the juggernaut of the US economy, continued to outperform in May, adding 272,000 jobs — some 65% more than in April and 51% above Wall Street's forecasts — despite the unemployment rate itself rising to 4% from a previous 3.9%.

Rents also stayed stubbornly high, growing 0.4% last month, the same as in April.

"There's an argument that job gains may be a bit overstated, but they're still strong [although] unemployment moved up a bit," Powell said. "And, of course, [in] housing services, you're

continuing to see high readings there.”

Until 2019, US inflation grew opposite to the current trend for more than a decade, with the Fed struggling to get to its 2% per year target for price growth in order to stimulate the economy.

The coronavirus outbreak in 2020 changed all that, with inflation supercharged by the resulting shutdown of the economy, disruption of supply chains and trillions of dollars in recovery spending by the government. By June 2022, the CPI hit a four-decade high 9.1% a year.

Responding to the runaway inflation, the Fed tightened monetary policy at 11 FOMC meetings between March 2022 and July 2023. That brought rates to the current high of 5.5% from the pre-pandemic low of between zero and 0.25%.

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Unified Command Successfully Clears 50,000 Tonnes of Bridge Wreckage Without Injuries-Gov.

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) — Unified Command has removed over 50,000 tonnes of bridge wreckage without any injuries over the past 11 weeks, Maryland Governor Wes Moore said on Wednesday during a press briefing.

"Over the last 11 weeks, unified command has removed over 50,000 tonnes of bridge wreckage from the water and importantly, they did it with no injuries," Moore said.

Earlier today, Maryland Governor Wes Moore, Lieutenant Governor Aruna Miller, and US Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg held a news conference to discuss the reopening of the Fort McHenry Federal Channel and the restoration of services to the Port of Baltimore following the March 26 collapse of Baltimore's Francis Scott Key Bridge.

In March, a commercial Singapore-flagged cargo ship hit the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore soon after it departed the port for Sri Lanka's Colombo.

The bridge collapsed, sending at least eight people from a construction crew working on the bridge into the water. Ship traffic in the port of Baltimore was suspended until further notice following the bridge's collapse.

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UPDATE - Any Hostile Shift in Canada's Arctic Strategy Will Harm Its Security - Russian Ambassador

(Adds details in para 5-7, background in paras 3,8)

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - Russia does not see Canada as a threat in the Arctic but if the Trudeau cabinet shifts to a confrontational stance in the region, it will harm Canada's security, Russian Ambassador in Ottawa Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik on Wednesday.

The Canadian government is readying to release a new Arctic strategy to address what it perceives to be a growing Russian threat in the region, Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly told Bloomberg on Tuesday.

The announcement came two months after National Defense released its defense policy

update in which it emphasized that the most pressing task for Canada was to assert its sovereignty in its northern regions and the Arctic.

"We don't see Canada as a threat there [Arctic], but obviously will have to take into account both a possible change in Ottawa's policy, as well as its coordination and joint planning with the US and within NATO in this regard," Stepanov said. "Obviously, if Trudeau's cabinet takes a confrontational stance versus Russia in the Arctic, it will be, first of all, detrimental to Canada's security."

Such a change would reflect a very near-sighted policy by Ottawa which would artificially create an adversary out of a neighbor – Russia – that happens to be a major military power, Stepanov said. The Arctic has become a contentious area and Moscow strongly advocates maintaining the status quo while it also seeks to avoid any militarization of the region, he added.

"Any attempts by NATO to extend its force projection to the Arctic will be met with an adequate military response from Russia," Stepanov stressed.

The Ambassador further noted that bilateral contact between Moscow and Ottawa is null, something he attributed to the Trudeau cabinet's choice of cutting all political contacts with Russia. Minimal interaction is maintained multilaterally within the working groups of the Arctic Council, he continued.

Russia has repeatedly expressed concern about the increased NATO military activities in the Arctic, saying that they raise the risk of unintended conflict in the region. Russia has also allowed for the possibility of withdrawing from the Arctic Council if this body's activities do not meet its interests.

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US V-22 Osprey Aircraft Won't Be Fully Operational Until Mid-2025 - Defense Official

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - The US fleet of V-22 Ospreys are not expected to be fully operational until mid-2025 amid efforts to address a series of safety issues with the military aircraft, the US Navy's program executive officer for special missions programs Gary Kurtz said on Wednesday.

"I will not certify the V-22 to return to unrestricted flight operations until I am satisfied that we have sufficiently addressed the issues that may affect the safety of the aircraft," Kurtz said during a congressional hearing. "Based on the data that I have today, I'm expecting that this will not occur before mid-2025."

According to US Naval Air Systems Commander Vice Adm. Carl Chebi, four V-22 Ospreys have been involved in mishaps that have killed 20 service members in the last two and a half years.

US Congressman Stephen Lynch during the hearing called for the V-22 to be grounded again until a problematic clutch for the V-22 Osprey is redesigned and installed to ensure improved safety of the aircraft.

The Osprey aircraft has a track record of accidents. On November 29, 2023, a US Air Force CV-22 Osprey from Yokota Air Base in Tokyo went down off the shore of Yakushima Island while performing a routine training mission. The crash killed all eight airmen on board.

In March, US forces lifted the worldwide ban on the tiltrotor aircraft that was introduced after the deadly crash in Japan.

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Biden Administration Pressured France to Cancel Russia's Invite to D-Day Event - Hersh

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration pressured the French government into revoking their invitation to Russia to attend a commemorative ceremony earlier this month honoring the 80th anniversary of D-Day, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Seymour Hersh said on Wednesday.

"I was told this week by an informed American official that representatives of Russia were initially scheduled to attend the celebration, but 'at the insistence' of the Biden administration the invitation was canceled," Hersh said in a Substack article.

Last week, White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby said that the French government made the decision to disinvite Russia.

US President Joe Biden attended the event in Normandy, where he failed to mention the role of the Soviet Union in defeating Nazi Germany in the Second World War.

More than 20 million Soviet citizens died fighting in the Second World War, Hersh said, noting that such a contribution should earn Russia a seat at the table for such events.

Hersh contrasted Russia's absence at the most recent anniversary event to the Soviet Union's appearance at the 40th anniversary event, where former US President Ronald Reagan acknowledged the significant Soviet contribution, despite the ongoing Cold War.

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Any Hostile Shift in Canada's Arctic Strategy Will Harm Its Security - Russian Ambassador

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"We don't see Canada as a threat there [Arctic], but obviously will have to take into account both a possible change in Ottawa's policy, as well as its coordination and joint planning with the US and within NATO in this regard," Stepanov said. "Obviously, if Trudeau's cabinet takes a confrontational stance versus Russia in the Arctic, it will be, first of all, detrimental to Canada's security."

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Nearly Quarter of Americans Say Neither Biden Nor Trump Mentally Fit – Poll

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) – Nearly a quarter (23%) of American voters see neither Joe Biden nor Donald Trump as possessing the "mental and cognitive health to serve as president," according to a CBS/YouGov poll published on Wednesday.

Donald Trump also retained a major lead over Biden, as 42% of voters said that only he had sufficient mental and cognitive health, compared to 27% saying the same for Biden.

While such views were related to partisanship, Democrats were more skeptical toward Biden than Republicans were toward Trump. Still, such Democrats said they planned to vote for Biden. The survey was conducted from June 5-7 with 2,063 American adults.

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Two Men Indicted for Illegally Exporting Snowmachines to Russia - US Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - Two Russian-born US citizens were indicted in Alaska for allegedly operating a scheme to export snowmachines worth nearly half a million dollars to Russia without required licenses, the Justice Department said on Wednesday.

"An indictment was returned yesterday in the District of Alaska charging Sergey Nefedov, 40, of Anchorage, Alaska, and Mark Shumovich, 35, of Bellevue, Washington, with allegedly operating a scheme to illegally export nearly half a million dollars' worth of snowmachines and associated parts from the United States to Russia without the required licenses and approvals," the Justice Department said in a statement.

The indictment alleges that between March 2022 and May 2023, Nefedov and Shumovich conspired with individuals in Russia and Hong Kong to evade US export restrictions on luxury goods to Russia by shipping snowmachines and parts through an intermediary company in Hong Kong.

The authorities seized all snowmachines involved, and Nefedov and Shumovich face charges including conspiracy to unlawfully export goods, false export information, smuggling, unlawful export without a license, and conspiracy to commit international money laundering, with penalties ranging from five to 20 years in prison, the statement said.

Nefedov is also charged with money laundering and making a false statement in violation of the Export Control Reform Act, both carrying up to 20 years in prison, according to the statement.

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Fed to Keep US Rates at 2-Decade High If Economy, Inflation Don't Ease as Thought - Powell

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - The Federal Reserve is prepared to leave US interest rates at two-decade highs if the economy and inflation do not cool appropriately to warrant a rate cut, the central bank's chairman Jerome Powell said Wednesday.

"If the economy remains solid and inflation persists, we're prepared to maintain the rate where it is as long as appropriate. The opposite is also true in terms of rate cuts," Powell told reporters.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Fed left rates unchanged in a range of between 5.25% and 5.50% at the close of its policy-making Federal Open Market Committee meeting. That range is the highest for US rates since 2002.

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US Inflation Still Too High, Hasn't Given Fed Enough Confidence to Ease Rates - Powell

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - US inflation is still too high and does not give the Federal Reserve enough confidence to cut interest rates as yet, the central bank's chairman Jerome Powell said Wednesday.

"We've stated that we do not expect it will be appropriate to reduce the target range for the federal funds rate until we have gained greater confidence that inflation is moving sustainably toward 2%," Powell told reporters after the Fed left US rates unchanged at a two-decade high of 5.25% and 5.50%. "So far this year, the data have not given us that greater confidence."

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US House Approves NDAA Amendment to Ban Gaza Reconstruction Funding

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives approved an amendment to the fiscal year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) on Wednesday to ban the use of US funds for reconstruction efforts in the Gaza Strip.

House lawmakers approved the amendment by voice vote. The amendment, introduced by US Congressman Brian Mast, prohibits US funds from building or rebuilding in the Gaza Strip.

The FY25 NDAA approves some \$895.2 billion in national defense discretionary programs. The US House of Representatives is set to consider 350 amendments to the legislation.

On October 7, 2023, Palestinian organization Hamas launched a surprise attack on Israel, which killed nearly 1,200 people. Israel subsequently launched a military operation in the Gaza Strip, which has killed more than 37,100 people in the Palestinian enclave, according to local authorities.

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US Resumes Aid Deliveries in Gaza Via Temporary Pier -Pentagon

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) – The Pentagon said Wednesday that it had resumed delivery of humanitarian aid into Gaza the previous day using its temporary pier.

“As of yesterday, June 11, Command resumed the delivery of humanitarian assistance into Gaza, with more than 500 metric tons of aid,” Pentagon spokesperson Sabrina Singh said at a press briefing.

Singh noted that the aid was currently only collected in the marshaling area for the World Food Program to distribute, and it was unclear when distribution would commence.

The US military pier had been suspended for two days due to bad weather. It had also previously been out of commission for 10 days for repairs.

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Federal Reserve Leaves US Interest Rates Unchanged After Slight Cool In Inflation

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - The Federal Reserve on Wednesday left US interest rates unchanged at two-decade highs despite a slight cool in May's consumer prices, with the central bank saying it needed more assurance of a steady decline in inflation before committing to an easing.

"The Committee decided to maintain the target range for the federal funds rate at 5-1/4 to 5-1/2 percent," the Fed's policy-making Federal Open Market Committee said in a statement. "In considering any adjustments to the target range for the federal funds rate, the Committee will carefully assess incoming data, the evolving outlook, and the balance of risks."

The 5.25-5.5% range is the highest for US rates since 2002 and has been in force for almost a year, since July 2023. The Fed's next rate decision will be on July 31.

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State Dept. Official Says Aware of Possible Putin Visit to North Korea

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - US Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell said on Wednesday that the United States is aware of reports about Russian President Vladimir Putin's possible visit to Pyongyang soon and is concerned about what capabilities Russia could potentially commit to providing to North Korea.

"I think we also have to recognize that there is the other part of this relationship, and that means, what is Russia going to provide in exchange to North Korea? Hard currency? Is it energy? Is it capabilities that allow them to advance their nuclear or missile products? We don't know, but we're concerned by that and watching carefully," Campbell said during a discussion

hosted by the Stimson Center in Washington.

On Tuesday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that Russia sees attempts by Western countries to carry out nuclear provocations and opposes them, but Moscow is not part of any nuclear arms alliance with Pyongyang or Beijing.

The entire scope of the Russia-North Korea relationship is something that the United States is following carefully and concerned about, Campbell emphasized.

Putin will reportedly visit Pyongyang this summer.

Campbell underscored that the United States has a very good understanding of what North Korea has provided Russia, which has allegedly had a substantial impact on the battlefield in Ukraine.

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Eight Ex-SpaceX Employees Sue Elon Musk Over Harassment, Retaliation Allegations - Lawyers

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - Eight former SpaceX employees are suing the company and Elon Musk alleging having faced harassment and retaliation after they submitted a letter about a "hostile work environment," Lief Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein LLP and Burgess Law Offices said on Wednesday.

"Lief Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein LLP and Burgess Law Offices filed an eight-count complaint against SpaceX and Elon Musk on behalf of eight SpaceX employees who submitted an open letter to SpaceX management challenging the illegal hostile work environment endemic to the company," the statement said.

The statement added that after submitting their letter to SpaceX management, the employees were terminated for seeking changes to align the workplace culture with state and federal law, alleging that Musk personally ordered their terminations.

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Gosar Says His Name on 'Enemies List' of US-Backed Ukrainian NGO is 'Badge of Honor'

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - US Congressman Paul Gosar told Sputnik that the inclusion of his name on a so-called enemies list put together by a State Department-linked Ukrainian nongovernmental organization is a badge of honor.

Last week, US government-affiliated Ukrainian web publication "Data Journalism Agency" (TEXTY) put out a list smearing an array of prominent Americans who oppose providing more US funding to Ukraine.

"If voting against every dime spent on the war in between Russia and Ukraine puts me on Ukraine's enemy list, then it is a badge of honor," Gosar said in a statement.

The list includes former President Donald Trump, Independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Sen. Ted Cruz, Sen. Tim Scott, Gov. Ron DeSantis, among others.

In light of this list, Sen. JD Vance and Congressman Matt Gaetz sent a letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken demanding more information about the State Department-linked Ukrainian nongovernmental organization by June 28.

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Senior State Dept. Official Says China Still Committed to Managing Stabilized Ties With US

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - US Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell said on Wednesday that based on recent meetings with Chinese officials, Beijing is still committed to managing a stabilized relationship with the United States.

"I met with Executive Vice Foreign Minister Ma [Zhaoxu] in Washington about a week and a half ago, and at least from those meetings, I think we still believe that China is determined to work in a way that stabilizes US-China relations and not creates undue areas of friction and tension that can escalate in ways that are unpredictable and dangerous," Campbell said during a discussion hosted by the Stimson Center in Washington.

Campbell added that the United States believes China's primary focus is on its economy and seeking to reassure investors and others, but it doesn't mean that Washington is lowering its guard against Beijing.

The Biden administration does not seek to limit China's economic growth but will take steps to address national security concerns, such as Beijing's access to sensitive US technology, Campbell said.

Moreover, Campbell gave the Trump administration enormous credit for "appropriately diagnosing" the challenges that the United States is facing from China.

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US Deputy Secretary of State Will Travel With Sullivan To India Next Week - Statement

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) — US Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell said on Wednesday that he and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan will be in India next week to advance areas of coordination.

"I'll be with Jake Sullivan in India next week as we advance areas of coordination with India," Campbell said during a Stimson Center event.

Last week, the White House said that Sullivan would travel to New Delhi to engage the new government on shared US-India priorities, including a trusted strategic technology partnership.

This comes after last week's announcement by the Indian Election Commission of the final election results. The National Democratic Alliance won 292 out of 543 seats in the lower house of parliament, effectively securing a legislative majority. Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) received 240 seats, while the main opposition, the Indian National Congress party, received 99 seats.

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#### Watchdog Group Says US Congress Earmarks Cost \$22.7Bln in Fiscal Year 2024

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - US lawmakers approved \$22.7 billion in earmarks in Fiscal Year 2024, the Citizens Against Government Waste (CAGW) said on Wednesday in the most recent edition of its so-called Congressional Pig Book.

"The 2024 Congressional Pig Book exposes 8,222 earmarks, 11.2 percent more than the 7,396 in fiscal year (FY) 2023, costing \$22.7 billion, 13 percent less than the \$26.1 billion in FY 2023," the CAGW report said.

The \$22.7 billion figure is the fifth-highest total since CAGW released its first Congressional Pig Book in 1991, the report said. CAGW has identified 132,434 earmarks costing \$460.3 billion since FY 1991, the report said.

Earmarks were revived in FY 2022 after an 11-year moratorium on the practice.

All but one Democratic lawmaker received an earmark, totaling \$12.42 billion, compared to 62.4% of Republican lawmakers, who received \$8.97 billion in earmarks, the report said.

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#### Russian Flotilla in Cuba Does Not Pose Threat to US - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) – The Pentagon said Wednesday that it is monitoring the Russian military flotilla in Cuba, but the exercise does not pose a threat to the United States.

"We of course take it seriously but these exercises don't pose a threat to the United States," Pentagon spokesperson Sabrina Singh said at a press briefing.

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#### Eight Former SpaceX Employees Sue Elon Musk Alleging Harassment, Retaliation Over Letter About Hostile Work Environment - Lawyers

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#### Commerce Dept. Announces New Export Control Restrictions Against Russia Ahead of G7 Summit

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) — The Commerce Department's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS), together with the Treasury and State Departments, announced additional export control restrictions and related actions against Russia, the BIS said in a statement on Wednesday.

"In advance of the G7 Summit, today, and in concert with the Department of the Treasury and the Department of State, the Commerce Department's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) is announcing several significant additional export control restrictions and related actions against Russia," the Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) said in a statement on Wednesday.

According to the statement, key actions include cracking down on shell companies, cutting off business software exports to Russian and Belarusian defense industries, and restricting more trade items to Russia and Belarus.

"Cutting off trade to foreign companies through the Entity List. Issuing Temporary Denial Orders (TDO), which cuts off not only the right to export items subject to the Export Administration Regulations (EAR) from the US but also to receive or participate in exports from the US or reexports of items subject to the EAR. Restricting distributors and transshippers," the statement read.

The statement added that today's rule restricts entities supporting Russia's military-industrial base and activities against US national security and foreign policy interests.

Earlier today, the Treasury Department released a new sanctions package that includes more than 300 companies and dozens of individuals in Russia and other countries, including China, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates.

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Biden Reached New Low in Deciding to Arm Pro-Nazi Brigade in Ukraine - US Congressman

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden has reached a new low after his administration decided to remove US restrictions on arms supplies to Ukraine's terrorist Azov battalion (banned in Russia), a move which will only prolong the conflict, US Congressman Paul Gosar told Sputnik on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, the Washington Post, citing the US State Department, reported that the Biden administration has lifted the ban on arms supplies to and training of the Azov battalion. The State Department did not respond to Sputnik's requests for comment on this matter.

"A new low, even for Joe Biden, his administration is not even hiding the fact that America is now arming Ukraine's evil pro-Nazi brigade, thus prolonging a bloody and deadly proxy war," Gosar said in a statement.

Established in 2014 by Ukrainian extremists and ultra-nationalists in the wake of the Maidan coup, Azov was included in the National Guard of Ukraine in November of that year. The battalion has come under severe criticism for its support of Nazi ideology and use of Nazi symbols as well as its human rights violations against the Russian-speaking population of Eastern Ukraine.

Russian Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov called the reported decision by the United States outrageous, adding that it raises serious concerns about US readiness to fight terrorism.

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## Musk Says 'Disrespectful' for US Media to Claim Amazonian Tribe Got Addicted to Porn

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - Billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk said on Wednesday that it was disrespectful for US media to claim that a remote Amazonian tribe became addicted to pornography after getting access to Musk's Starlink internet service.

"It was disrespectful and unkind of The New York Times to say that about the tribe," Musk said in a statement via social media platform X.

On June 2, The New York Times published a report about the impact of newfound Starlink internet access on the Amazonian Marubo tribe. The report mentioned the consumption of pornography by minors and concerns among some tribe members about the impact of pornography consumption, including observations of more aggressive sexual behavior by young men.

On June 11, The New York Times published a follow-up report, claiming that the initial report was misinterpreted by other media outlets, which highlighted the pornography-related issues. The New York Times said that their report never suggested that the Marubo people were "addicted" to pornography, as some other outlets reported.

The virality of the claim upset some members of the Marubo community, the latter report said. The initial report overemphasized the negative impacts of the internet on the tribe, the report quoted one Marubo leader as having said.

Sputnik did not cover the initial report, but reached out to SpaceX – the owner of Starlink — for comment. However, the request went unanswered.

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## US International DFC Announces \$350 Million in Ukraine Conflict Risk Insurance - Statement

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) — The US International Development Finance Corporation's (DFC) CEO Scott Nathan announced a \$350 million political risk insurance program for Ukraine, the DFC said in a statement on Wednesday.

"The US International Development Finance Corporation's (DFC's) Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Scott Nathan announced today a new financing package that includes political risk insurance transactions for Ukraine worth more than \$350 million, employing one of the agency's signature tools to address the most urgent Ukrainian economic needs and lay a foundation for the country's long-term recovery," the statement said.

The program includes \$150 million in political risk insurance for Ukraine's agriculture sector and \$152 million for a Ukrainian manufacturing company, the statement said.

It also includes a \$50 million reinsurance facility brokered by insurance broker Aon and \$5 million to support Ukrainian students' access to higher education, the statement added.

The insurance will cover any damages to properties caused by the conflict.

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### Oil Prices Off Their Highs as US Announces Another Large Stockpile Build

NEW YORK, June 12 (Sputnik) - Oil prices on Wednesday came off their highs after the United States reported another large weekly build in crude and fuel stockpiles that raised questions about demand leading up to the busiest season for travel.

The Energy Information Administration (EIA), the data keeper for the US Energy Department, cited an inventory increase of more than 3.7 million barrels of crude in its Weekly Petroleum Status Report for the week that ended on June 7.

The EIA also cited a gain of nearly 2.6 million barrels in leading automobile fuel motor gasoline and almost 900,000 barrels more in distillates, which are largely processed into the diesel.

Reacting to the data, crude futures traded on the New York Mercantile Exchange moved down from the day's highs toward session lows.

By 11:30 a.m. in New York (16:30 GMT), some three hours to the close of Wednesday's trade, the front-month July contract for West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude was up just five cents, or 0.06%, to \$77.95 per barrel. Earlier, the WTI crude had risen to as high as \$79.32 from a session low of \$77.89.

UK-origin Brent crude's most-active August contract was at \$82.03 per barrel, up 11 cents, or 0.13%. The global crude benchmark hit a session high of \$83.34 earlier after an intraday low of \$81.97.

Until this week, oil prices had been under pressure for three weeks due to an unflattering supply-demand picture in the United States, the world's largest consumer of the commodity. Brent lost a cumulative 5.3% during that period while the West Texas Intermediate tumbled 5.8%.

Oil prices fell in the prior weeks on worries about whether OPEC+ will provide adequate support with output cuts to offset any weakness in demand during the summer - the busiest season for driving in the United States.

OPEC, the global oil producing alliance, has since resolved to cut output through 2025, extending commitments initially set till the end of summer. The alliance, which groups the 13-member Saudi-led Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries with ten other oil producing nations steered by Russia, hopes to remove some 2.2 million barrels per day from the market.

But OPEC+ has also suggested that if demand improves, it might add more than 500,000 barrels per day to the market by December, and 1.8 million daily by June 2025. That has taken away some of the upside for oil prices.

Since this week began, oil prices have rebounded about 3% - notwithstanding Wednesday's inventory data and the impact that could have through the week.

A breakdown of the inventory data showed crude stockpiles rising 3.73 million barrels during the week to June 7, on top of the 1.233 million barrel build noted in the prior week to May 31. Energy analysts on Wall Street had anticipated a decline of 1.5 million barrels instead for the latest week.

The increase for gasoline was 2.566 million barrels over a prior 2.102 million. Wall Street's bet

was for a 1.5 million barrel build.

In distillates, there was a growth of 881,000 barrels above the prior week's 3.197 million. Wall Street's forecast came in at 2.147 million.

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Sullivan on Russian Warships in Cuba: We've Seen This Before, Expect to See in Future

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Wednesday said the US is closely watching a visit by Russian warships to Cuba, but Washington has seen such visits before and expects to see them again in the future.

Russia's Admiral Gorshkov frigate entered the port of Havana in Cuba on Wednesday, a Sputnik correspondent reported. Earlier in the day, a detachment of Russian naval vessels started to arrive at the port for an official visit from June 12–17.

"We have seen this kind of thing before and we expect to see this kind of thing again," Sullivan said during a press briefing.

The Cuban Foreign Ministry said last week that the Admiral Gorshkov frigate would arrive in the Caribbean island nation accompanied by a nuclear-powered submarine, the Kazan, and two auxiliary vessels for a six-day stay.

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US SOUTHCOM Says Making No Force Posture Changes Amid Russia Naval Port Visit to Cuba

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - US military forces have not made any posture changes in response to the arrival of a group of Russian naval vessels to the Havana port in Cuba but will monitor the situation closely, a US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) spokesperson told Sputnik on Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, a group of Russian naval vessels started to arrive at the Havana port as part of a larger international cooperation mission. The official visit in Cuba will take place from June 12–17.

"We are not surprised by this given Russia's long history of Cuban port calls," the spokesperson said. "While our force posture has not changed, we remain staunchly focused on our national defense mission."

SOUTHCOM said it tracks any activities of concern near the US homeland very closely, adding that it's aware of Russian naval ships transiting the Western Hemisphere and docking in Cuba and possibly in Venezuela, too.

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#### Biden Expects to See Indian Prime Minister Modi at G7 Summit – Sullivan

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden expects to meet with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the upcoming G7 summit in Italy, but it has not been scheduled yet, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Wednesday.

"He [Biden] expects to see Prime Minister Modi here. It's up to the Indians to formally confirm his attendance. Our expectation is that the two of them will have the opportunity to encounter one another," Sullivan said during a press briefing.

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#### US-Ukrainian Security Agreement Does Not Include Specific Dollar Figures – Sullivan

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) – The text of the bilateral security agreement between the United States and Ukraine does not include any specific dollar figures, but rather a commitment to work with Congress on funding for Kiev, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Wednesday.

"It [the agreement] does not include specific dollar figures. It includes a commitment to work with Congress on sustainable funding going forward, which we will do, and it lays out a framework for how we work with Ukraine and with other allies and partners to ensure Ukraine has what it needs in terms of the physical capacity as well as the intelligence and other capacities to be able to defend itself effectively and to deter Russia," Sullivan said during a press briefing.

The security agreement also incorporates steps needed for Ukraine to eventually become a NATO member, Sullivan added.

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#### US, Allies Working Toward 'Specific' Framework for Using Frozen Russian Assets - Sullivan

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - The United States and its allies are working toward a specific framework for using frozen Russian assets, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said on Wednesday.

"What we are working towards is a framework that is not generic, that is quite specific in terms of what it would entail," Sullivan said during a gaggle.

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

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#### Bilateral Security Pact With Ukraine Does Not Include Deployment of US Forces - Sullivan

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - The bilateral security agreement between the United States and Ukraine does not include any commitments on the deployment of US forces into Ukraine, White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Wednesday.

"They have asked for our weapons and assistance as they fight to defend their territory, they have not asked our forces to join the fight," Sullivan told reporters. "So, this agreement does not include any commitment to using our forces to defend Ukraine."

Sullivan said the US and Ukraine will sign the agreement on Thursday.

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#### US Sanctions Over 300 Individuals, Entities in Russia, Other Countries - Treasury Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) – The United States has imposed new sanctions on more than 300 companies and individuals, including from China, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates, the US Department of the Treasury said on Wednesday.

According to the US State Department, the new sanctions are intended to inflict damage on the Russian economy amid the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

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#### US Will Sign Security Agreement With Ukraine on Thursday - Sullivan

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - The United States will sign a bilateral security agreement with Ukraine on Thursday, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said.

"I'm pleased to share that our negotiations with Ukraine have concluded and we will sign this agreement tomorrow," Sullivan said during a gaggle.

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#### Trump to Meet With US House, Senate Republican Lawmakers on Thursday - Source

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump will meet with Republican lawmakers from Senate and House of Representatives on Thursday, a congressional source told Sputnik.

"President Trump is meeting with both, at different times," the source said on Wednesday.

US media reported earlier in the week, citing a Trump campaign official, that the meeting with Senate Republicans will cover key issues concerning border security, foreign policy and the economy.

Trump is the Republican Party's presumptive presidential nominee after securing the majority of

delegates needed for the nomination.

An aggregation of national polls by RealClearPolitics shows Trump leading Biden by half a point, and leading in all seven so-called swing US states.

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US Sanctions Russian Banks Tochka, Bankovskie Innovatsionnye Sistemy – Treasury Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) – The United States has imposed sanctions on Tochka Bank and Bankovskie Innovatsionnye Sistemy Bank in Russia as part of a new package of restrictive measures against the country, the US Department of the Treasury said on Wednesday.

The new sanctions package includes more than 300 companies and dozens of individuals in Russia and several other countries, including China, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates.

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bilateral security agreement with ukraine does not include deployment of us forces - white house's sullivan

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us will conclude and sign security agreement with ukraine tomorrow - white house's sullivan

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US Sanctions Over 300 Individuals, Entities in Russia, Other Countries - Treasury Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) – The United States has imposed new sanctions on more than 300 companies and individuals, including from China, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates, the US Department of the Treasury said on Wednesday.

According to the US State Department, the new sanctions are intended to inflict damage on the Russian economy amid the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

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US Sanctions Russian Youth Movement Chaired by Putin - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - The United States has targeted the Russian youth movement Movement of The First in its latest round of sanctions, the State Department said in a

fact sheet on Wednesday.

"All Russian Public State Movement Of Children And Youth (Movement Of The First) is a Russia-based organization that is responsible for the forced militarization and re-education of Ukraine's children and provided Russian passports to Ukraine's children," the State Department said. "The Movement Of The First was established by the Government of the Russian Federation and is chaired by President Vladimir Putin."

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Foreign Financial Institutions Risk Sanctions for Transacting With Russian Banks -Treasury

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - Foreign financial institutions are risking being sanctioned for conducting transactions or providing services to designated Russian banks, the Treasury Department announced on Wednesday.

"This means that foreign financial institutions risk being sanctioned for conducting or facilitating significant transactions, or providing any service, involving any person blocked pursuant to E.O. 14024, including designated Russian banks such as VTB Bank Public Joint Stock Company (VTB) and Public Joint Stock Company Sberbank of Russia (Sberbank)," the release said.

The Treasury Department pointed out that it has updated information on five sanctioned Russian financial institutions placed on its Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List.

Any foreign financial institution dealing with the designated Russian banks will face risk of secondary sanctions, the Treasury Department said.

"Specifically, OFAC has updated the listings for Promsvyazbank Public Joint Stock Company to include its locations in Beijing, People's Republic of China (PRC), Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, and New Delhi, India; for State Corporation Bank for Development and Foreign Economic Affairs Vnesheconombank to include its locations in Beijing, PRC and Mumbai, India; for Sberbank to include its locations in Beijing, PRC and New Delhi and Mumbai, India; for VTB to include its locations in New Delhi, India, and Beijing and Shanghai, PRC; and for VTB Capital Holdings Closed Joint Stock Company to include its location in Hong Kong, PRC," the Treasury Department said.

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US Imposes Sanctions on Arktik SPG 1, Arktik SPG 3 – Treasury Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) – The United States has imposed sanctions on the Arktik SPG 1 and Arktik SPG 3 companies implementing a project for the production of liquefied natural gas in Russia, the US Treasury Department said on Wednesday as it announced a new package of restrictive measures against the country.

The new sanctions package includes more than 300 companies and dozens of individuals in

Russia and some other countries, including China, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.

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US Sanctions Sogaz Insurance Company, Gazprom Invest - Treasury

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - The United States has targeted Russia's major insurance company Sogaz and Gazprom Invest in its latest round of sanctions against Moscow, the Treasury announced on Wednesday.

"Gas Industry Insurance Company Sogaz (Sogaz) is an insurance company that provides insurance to Russian military personnel and personnel of leading defense entities, including U.S.-designated UAC, Joint Stock Company Experimental Design Bureau Novator, and Federal State Enterprise Ya M Sverdlov Plant. Sogaz has also been sanctioned by Australia, Canada, the EU, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom (UK)," the press release said.

In addition, the latest sanctions target OOO Gazprom Invest that designs and constructs gas industry facilities.

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US Imposes Sanctions on Moscow Exchange – Treasury Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) – The United States has imposed sanctions on the Moscow Exchange, the largest exchange in Russia, as part of a new package of restrictive measures against the country, the US Department of the Treasury said on Wednesday.

The new sanctions package includes more than 300 companies and dozens of individuals in Russia and some other countries, including China, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates.

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US Imposes Russia-Related Sanctions on Hundreds of Companies - Treasury

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - The United States has imposed new Russia-related sanctions on hundreds of companies, including companies from China, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, the US Treasury Department said on Wednesday.

The new sanctions package includes more than 300 companies operating in the technology, defense and related materiel sectors of the Russian economy.

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US treasury says under new rules, foreign financial institutions risk sanctions for conducting or facilitating transactions with blocked russian banks

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US Imposes Sanctions on More Than 30 Individuals in Russia - Treasury

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - The United States has sanctioned dozens of persons in Russia in the latest round of restrictive measures imposed on the country, the Treasury Department announced on Wednesday.

The sanctions target more than 30 people and include the head of Gagauzia Yevgenia Gutsul, the Treasury Department said.

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Gagauzia Head Gutsul Among Those Targeted in New US Sanctions - Treasury Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) – The United States has imposed sanctions on the head of Moldova's autonomous region of Gagauzia, Yevgenia Gutsul, the US Department of the Treasury said on Wednesday.

The Biden administration is sanctioning Gutsul for being linked to Moldovan businessman Ilon Shor, who was sanctioned by the US in October 2022, the department said in a press release.

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US Bans Export of IT Consultancy, Design, Support Services to People in Russia - Treasury

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - The United States in its latest round of sanctions has banned the export of information technology (IT) consultancy, design, support and cloud-based services to any individual located in Russia, the Treasury announced on Wednesday.

"As a result, the following activities are prohibited, except to the extent provided by law, or unless licensed or otherwise authorized by the Office of Foreign Assets Control: The exportation, reexportation, sale, or supply, directly or indirectly, from the United States, or by a United States person, wherever located, of IT consultancy and design services or of IT support services or cloud-based services for Covered Software to any person located in the Russian Federation," the document said.

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## Canada to Release Arctic Foreign Policy This Fall to Address 'Russian Threat' - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - The Canadian government is readying to release a new Arctic strategy to address what it perceives to be a growing Russian threat in the region, Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly told Bloomberg on Tuesday.

Canada needs to assess that it no longer lives in a "high North, low tensions" reality on which Ottawa and members of the Arctic Council based their foreign policies, Joly said.

The foreign minister explained that the former approach known as "Arctic exceptionalism" was based on the somewhat calm and cooperative relations between the eight members of the Arctic Council.

However, this policy "disintegrated" after Russia began its special military operation in Ukraine, Joly said. Moscow now poses "a threat" to Canadian Northern security, Joly said.

Canada will therefore release its Arctic foreign policy in the fall that will be based on a 2019 framework developed jointly with Indigenous Peoples, she said.

The new strategy will include a new international chapter influenced by Sweden and Finland having recently joined NATO, Joly said.

Canada will work on military cooperation, hold military exercises, share intelligence with the aforementioned countries and coordinate defense procurements, Joly added.

The announcement comes two months after National Defense released its defense policy update in which it emphasized that the most pressing task for Canada was to assert its sovereignty in its northern regions and the Arctic.

Russia has repeatedly expressed concern about the increased NATO military activities in the Arctic, saying that they increase the risk of unintended conflict in the region. Russia has also allowed for the possibility of withdrawing from the Arctic Council if this body's activities do not meet its interests.

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## US Defense Officials Privately Admit Possibility of Gaza Pier Destruction - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - US defense officials have privately admitted the possibility of the floating pier for delivering humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip being destroyed but do not consider such a scenario inevitable, the Wall Street Journal reported on Wednesday.

The US military built the \$230-million floating pier in mid-May, but the pier failed after operating for ten days and was partially destroyed by strong waves off the coast of Gaza. The US military needed a week to fix the damage and pier operations resumed on June 8.

The pier was hastily constructed and never designed to withstand high waves, which are expected to get worse over the summer, the report said.

Key issues regarding the pier's operation were not fully resolved before its launch, including how to maintain a steady flow of aid from Cyprus to the Gaza coast, the report added.

Some defense officials have expressed skepticism about the potential level of coordination of actions among the US and Israeli militaries, the Cypriot government and the US Agency for International Development amid the ongoing military operations in Gaza, according to the

report.

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RPT - Guterres Says Will Skip Ukraine Peace Summit Due to Prior Commitment

(Repeats to fix headline)

UNITED NATIONS, June 12 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Wednesday he will not attend a peace summit on Ukraine in Switzerland because of a prior commitment, adding that there is nothing political about it.

"The UN has an observer status ... and it will be represented at the adequate level. I have also unfortunately a personal commitment to which I cannot escape in the same day, so there is no political significance," Guterres said during a press conference in Geneva.

The United Nations still has not revealed who will represent it at the event.

Switzerland will host the high-level conference at the Buergerstock resort outside of Lucerne from June 15-16. Around 90 countries and organizations have confirmed their participation. Russia has not received an invitation, but even if it did, it would not attend the conference, spokesman for the Russian Embassy in Bern, Vladimir Khokhlov, told Sputnik in April.

The Kremlin has described the upcoming conference as a "waste of time."

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Canada's Blair to Visit Belgium for Ukraine Contact Group, NATO Meetings - Ministry

WASHINGTON, June 12 (Sputnik) - Canadian Minister of National Defense Bill Blair will travel to Brussels, Belgium from June 13-14 to meet with his NATO counterparts and take part in a Ukraine Defense Contact Group meeting, the ministry said on Wednesday.

"The Honourable Bill Blair, Minister of National Defence, will visit Brussels, Belgium ... During his trip, the Minister will meet with Allies and partners to strengthen international support for Ukraine, bolster Euro-Atlantic security, and discuss Canada's defence policy update, Our North, Strong and Free," the ministry said in a statement.

On June 13, the minister will participate in the 23rd meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group hosted by the United States at the NATO headquarters in Brussels, the ministry said. Later the same day and the following one, Blair will join a meeting of NATO defense ministers, it added.

Blair is set to hold a media availability on June 14 with a focus on Canada's defense policy update, the ministry said.

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.