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'Less Than Nothing': US, Ukraine Agreement is Symbolic and Lacks Longevity - Analyst

During US President Joe Biden and Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky's meeting, the US will also reportedly reveal plans to take Russia's frozen assets and give them to Ukraine.
The US and Ukraine signed a bilateral security pact on Thursday during the G7 summit in Italy. The agreement follows months of negotiations between the two parties, and has resulted in a 10-year commitment for the training of Ukraine's forces, as well as other continued military assistance by the US. However, the agreement could easily be undone by future presidents, as the pledge is an executive agreement and not a treaty.
The agreement could also be recognized as a step towards' Ukrainian membership in NATO, Sputnik reported, citing Reuters. On Thursday, Moscow-based international relations and security analyst Mark Sleboda joined Sputnik's The Critical Hour to discuss the recent agreement.
"This [agreement] is totally symbolic. This is absolutely nothing; in fact, it's less than nothing," Sleboda said.
"It's got to be incredibly frustrating and disappointing to [Kiev]," he added. "This tells the Kiev regime that you get what you're already getting. We're going to do it 10 years into the future, but it is an executive decision. It is not a treaty, which means it can easily just be reversed by [former President] Donald Trump or [Vice President] Kamala Harris or anyone else who assumes the office."
"These promises mean absolutely nothing unless you specify a money amount that it's going to. Money is behind everything. And, it has no specific amount of money behind the weapons, behind the trading, behind the - a little bit less with the intelligence, but so forth," he explained. "And without that, this is a meaningless piece of paper. So, this is obviously being done to give Zelensky some kind of booby prize to take home."
"[Zelensky is] not getting into NATO. The US has got no real new wonder-weapons to give him, I guess. They can't promise him any more money than they've already gotten through Congress, at least not for the time being," Sleboda said.
This move by the US suggests an attempt to veil the US government's failures, and to show that the US is "dedicated", said Sputnik's Garland Nixon. He added that 94% of American people want the Ukraine conflict to end through a diplomatic resolution, but this move by the US is "performative".
"The Biden administration knows that it has very little limited time and very little pull over Congress. It doesn't want to promise anything publicly that it can't back up or adhere to, even assuming that it's capable of being reelected in November, which is unlikely," Sleboda said.
NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said on Wednesday that nuclear weapons are NATO's "ultimate security guarantee" and a means to preserve peace, Reuters reported. He also said the Netherlands had declared the first F-35 fighter jets ready to carry nuclear arms,

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adding that the US was modernizing its nuclear weapons in Europe. The NATO chief also accused Russia of “dangerous nuclear rhetoric”.

“NATO doesn't have a nuclear arsenal. NATO doesn't have an army. It is an organization. It is management. It has nothing else. The US has a nuclear arsenal. The UK has a nuclear arsenal. France has a nuclear arsenal. The US has nuclear weapons, 100 at least of them, B61 gravity bombs deployed in Europe, in Germany, in Turkiye, in Belgium, in the Netherlands, and in Italy,” the Moscow-based analyst said.

“This has long been planned. It's been long in coming,” he added. “And, the Netherlands are getting F-35s. Okay. It's not like these gravity bombs couldn't be dropped from F-16s. The Netherlands is handing off its old junk F-16s to the Kiev regime. And it's getting a sweetheart deal on buying the F-35s.”

“I would remind Jens Stoltenberg that it's not your nukes. You don't have nuclear weapons,” he said.

In April, Biden signed a $61 billion military aid package for Ukraine. Afterwards, Zelenksy said that the US and Kiev would work to create a long-term bilateral security agreement similar to agreements Ukraine had signed with France and Germany, Sputnik reported.

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Tourists in Greece Go Missing, Faint Due to Extreme Heat

One of three search and rescue missions took five days before the body of a British television presenter was found.

Greece has come under a sweltering heat wave with temperatures soaring to 109.4 degrees Fahrenheit (43 degrees Celsius). Officials in Greece now fear that tourists are unprepared for the oppressive heat, as over the past week, three search and rescue operations had to be put into effect for tourists who have gone missing during solo hikes on the islands.

Dimitris Katatzis, the head of one of the search and rescue teams, said that their missions were made more difficult because neglectful tourists would veer off whatever trail they were on to see a site and then get lost, The Guardian reported.

“Yesterday we saw a couple [of foreigners] walking a trail in 106F (41C) without hats,” he told local media. “It defies logic.”

The heat in Greece has grown to such a dangerous level that schools have shut down, and the culture ministry was forced to close Greece’s most popular tourist attraction: the ancient Acropolis site, as well as other archaeological sites. In an effort to keep tourists safe, the site was shut down from noon until 5pm, local time, Euronews reported.

Tourists were fainting as they lined up to see the ancient site which 4 million tourists visited last year. Meanwhile, Red Cross volunteers were handing out thousands of free bottles of water as the Athens town hall set up cooling stations. The national meteorological service, EMY, described this year as a first in which record-temperatures have been registered this early in the season.

British TV presenter Michael Mosley was found dead on the Greek island of Symi, close to a coastal resort on Sunday. Mosley’s widow says he walked “an incredible climb” before taking the

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wrong route and collapsing where he could not easily be seen by a rescue team. The heat is believed to have been a key result of the 67-year-old's death.

Emergency services were also dispatched for Eric Calibet, a 59-year-old retired Los Angeles police officer who was last seen making a solo trek across the Cycladic isle on Tuesday. By late Thursday he was reported missing. And during that same week, a third search and rescue mission was set out for a 74-year-old Dutch national, who was also pursing a five-hour hike when he went missing.

"I'd like to see more CCTV cameras and the lighting of these trails," said Eleftherios Papakalodoukas, Symi's mayor. "If there is a lesson to be learned from the tragedy [of Mosley's death], it is that these paths need to be better looked after so that people don't get lost."

The heatwave in Greece is reportedly driven by southerly winds bringing hot air and dust from North Africa. The extreme temperatures which began last week are expected to cool off by the weekend.

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Disproportionate Violence: Israel, Hamas Struggle to Reach Ceasefire as Both Come Under Review

The Egyptian ministry said that Doha and Cairo, as well as the US would continue their mediation efforts until common ground is found regarding a ceasefire deal. Meanwhile, Hamas has said that they reiterated their previous stance including a permanent ceasefire and the withdrawal of IDF troops from Gaza.

This week, Hamas and Palestinian groups responded to mediators Egypt and Qatar for a ceasefire plan for Gaza, the Egyptian and Qatari government said on Tuesday, Reuters reported. While the statement from Hamas was not disclosed, Hamas reportedly proposed a new timeline for a permanent ceasefire and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza, including Rafah. A Hamas official said that the "ball is now in the Israeli courtyard."

On Friday, US President Joe Biden had laid out a "three-phase" Israeli proposal for a ceasefire in Gaza. But on Thursday, the president said he was not confident that an agreement on a Gaza ceasefire deal would be reached soon. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the US, Qatar, Egypt, and Israel will work "with urgency" in the coming days to see if they can bridge gaps in a possible ceasefire deal.

Jeremy Kuzmarov, an author and the managing editor of Covert Action magazine joined Sputnik's The Final Countdown on Wednesday to offer his views on the ceasefire deal. When asked what the Israeli response to a possible ceasefire deal will be, Kuzmarov suggested that the Israelis won't budge on their position any time soon.

"Firstly, for political reasons, Netanyahu wanted this war and I think wants it to continue. If the war ends, he's in the hot seat really and that could be the end for him - and he's facing potential jail time. So this war helps sustain his political career," said Kuzmarov.

"Also, the Israeli hardliners, they really wanted to crush the Palestinians and they felt confident that they could do that. And they have ample weapons being supplied from the US. So they

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don't really have the incentive to end the war, because at this point, it wouldn't be a victory for Israel," he added. "Hamas is still around."

The ceasefire deal was reportedly outlined by the US president, said Sputnik's Angie Wong. The plan would include an immediate to temporary ceasefire following the release of hostages, and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from "populated" areas of Gaza.

"I think Israel wants to really take that area over. They have ambitions for that area," the show's guest explained. "I think that was always the ambition of the Likud movement and the hardliners in Israel to push for a greater Israel and more cooperation of the occupied territories into Israel, and direct rule over them and to expand Israel's power and domain in the region," the author said.

"And they've been aggressively attacking neighboring countries like Lebanon, like Syria. They seem to want a war against Iran as well and they may want to expand Israel's territorial power in the Middle East," he added. "And they are kind of ultra-militarists. They're not shy about using military force and they don't really want to pull those forces back. They want to pursue their goals, whatever the human cost."

A UN inquiry alleged that both Israel and Hamas committed war crimes in the early stages of the war in Gaza, The Times of Israel reported. Independent experts conducted two parallel reports which focused on the October 7 Hamas attack and Israel's military offensive in Gaza. The report also found that Israel's actions should be constituted as war crimes against humanity because of the immense number of civilians who have been killed in the war.

"The commission found that the crimes against humanity of extermination; murder; gender persecution targeting Palestinian men and boys; forcible transfer; and torture and inhuman and cruel treatment were committed," the report found.

"Firstly, the violence is disproportionate. Yes, Hamas committed atrocities on October 7th that should be condemned but Israel has killed at least 30,000 Gazans," Kuzmarov said, referring to the number, provided by the Gaza Health Ministry. "So, the scale of atrocities is obviously much higher on the Israeli side, and that's what even people who supported Israel's right to self-defense have been now speaking out against because they say Israel's response is disproportionate."

"I think [October 7 is] horrible. [These] were kids going to a rock concert who got killed and that's horrific. But, there's a historical context that the Israelis don't even acknowledge, and that is the context of occupation and colonization," he added. "The long history of human rights abuses and draconian imprisonment of political activists, political actors in Gaza in jails [...] these are just some of the abuses the Israelis have committed. That's going to trigger a backlash inevitably."

"The horrific bloodshed and suffering of these Gazan and Palestinian populations doesn't really strike the consciousness of most Israelis," Kuzmarov suggested. "I mean, there is a small peace movement in Israel, and that may be true of the Jewish community in North America."

Disproportionate violence: Israel and Hamas struggle to reach ceasefire as both come under review

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of the immense number of civilians who have been killed in the war. “Firstly, the violence is disproportionate. Yes, Hamas committed atrocities on October 7th that should be condemned but Israel has killed at least 30,000 Gazans,” said Jeremy Kuzmarov, an author and the managing editor of Covert Action magazine joined Sputnik’s The Final Countdown. “So, the scale of atrocities is obviously much higher on the Israeli side, and that's what even people who supported Israel's right to self-defense have been now speaking out against because they say Israel's response is disproportionate.” This week, Hamas and Palestinian groups responded to mediators Egypt and Qatar for a ceasefire plan for Gaza, the Egyptian and Qatari government said as reported by Reuters. But later the US President Joe Biden said he was not confident that an agreement on a Gaza ceasefire deal would be reached soon. “The horrific bloodshed and suffering of these Gazan and Palestinian populations doesn't really strike the consciousness of most Israelis,” Kuzmarov suggested. “I mean, there is a small peace movement in Israel, and that may be true of the Jewish community in North America.”

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Russian Ships Arrive in Cuba in Latest Blow to US Hegemony

Meanwhile the United States undermines claims it is “defending democracy” by supporting extremist elements amid Ukraine’s proxy war against Russia, claims one analyst.
Four tactical ships from Russia’s storied Northern Fleet arrived in Cuba this week, docking in the port of Havana Wednesday.
“Military exercises are a normal practice in various regions of the world,”noted Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov. “This is also a normal practice for states, especially for such a large maritime power as Russia. And this is also a common practice in carrying out such visits.”
“We see no cause for concern in this case,” he added.
But the visit demonstrates Russia’s large and growing role in global affairs, particularly amidst the United States’ continued escalation in Moscow’s sphere of influence, claims author Nicolai Petro.
The analyst joined Sputnik’s The Critical Hour program to discuss the recent development.
“This is an indication that Russia wants to exercise a global role, particularly in response to what it perceives as NATO and American encroachments on its areas of vital interest,” said Petro, a professor of political science at the University of Rhode Island. “As Putin said recently – I'm paraphrasing – the more you do it to us, the more we're going to do it to you.”
The Admiral Gorshkov frigate that arrived as part of the group of ships is reportedly capable of firing hypersonic missiles, a next-generation armament Western countries have yet to develop. The frigate was accompanied by a nuclear-powered submarine, although there is no indication the vessel is carrying nuclear weapons.
NATO countries began a naval exercise in the Baltic Sea earlier this week, reportedly the largest military exercise in the bloc’s history. The US-led alliance frequently engages in provocative war games off the coast of countries it deems as adversaries, including China, North Korea, and Iran. In May NATO completed a five-month-long set of drills dubbed “Steadfast Defender 2024,” mobilizing some 90,000 troops for the alliance’s largest exercise since the end of the Cold War.

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Still, officials in Washington are likely to oppose Russia's cooperation with Havana, Petro claimed.

"I think congressmen and people who comment in major media outlets are not going to want to make that equation, 'look at what we are doing, therefore, we understand why they would be doing the same thing to us in order to establish parity and mutual respect,'" he argued.

"I don't think that's how they're going to respond because that's not how they think. They think in terms of America's, frankly, God-given right to be the global hegemon."

The US frequently engages in naval patrols under the pretense of maintaining "freedom of navigation," perhaps most often off the coast of China. In March the US deployed special forces to the Kinmen Islandsonly one mile from the Chinese mainland.

Prominent figures within the US military have claimed the country will go to war with China within the next few years in order to stem Beijing's economic rise. In the meantime the United States continues to operate through its global proxies and satellite states, partnering with forces such as jihadists in Syria and political extremists in Israel.

Earlier this week the US Congress lifted a ban on supplying weapons to the notorious Azov Battalion* in Ukraine, a neo-Nazi regiment responsible for the torture and abuse of civilians.

"This is something that I think was given no fanfare in the United States media, probably even less than the European media," said Petro. "This is just another indication about how far the West is willing to go to ignore and overlook the obviously unsavory aspects of those close to power in Ukraine – some would say in power, others might argue close to power – who are not going away."

"To the extent that Ukraine's not doing well in its fight against Russia, they are likely to emerge at least in an intermediate period as more influential, as if carrying the torch for the last ideals of Ukraine," he claimed, referring to the Azov Battalion* and other neo-Nazi elements in the Ukrainian government.

"But what is worth noting, I think, for an American audience in particular, is the ease with which this Nazi or neo-Nazi heritage has been ignored by the West."

The steadfast US support for such extremist elements gives lie to the US argument that it is "defending democracy" in Ukraine, pointed out host Wilmer Leon.

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Will Average Western Citizens Pay the Price for G7's Theft of Russian Funds?

Analysts worry Thursday's announcement could spell dire consequences for the economic stability of the United States and its allies, as G7 leaders reached a deal this week to seize the interest from Russian assets to fund the ongoing proxy war in Ukraine.

News of the development emerged Thursday, although the group of Western economies has yet to formally approve the action. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni confirmed the reports, drawing a distinction between the expropriation of earned interest and the outright seizure of Russian savings held in European banks. "We are certainly not talking about confiscating these assets," Meloni claimed at the G7 meeting in Fasano.

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But the move is nonetheless highly controversial in the precedent it sets, claims analyst Dr. George Szamuely, and may be seen as a prelude to the wholesale theft of the funds. The analyst at the London-based Global Policy Institute joined Sputnik's The Final Countdown program on Thursday to discuss how the development will harm financially strained Western citizens.

"It doesn't in any way conform to international law," said Szamuely of the G7's plan, "and let's keep in mind this has never been done before."

"It is customary to freeze accounts of your adversaries during wartime," the author continued. "It is not customary to then help yourself to that money and put it to whatever uses you want and, in this case, the uses it's being put to are for Ukraine to buy weapons in order to kill Russians. So Russian money is being used to kill Russians. That is just so beyond outrageous."

The majority of frozen Russian assets at play are held in European banks, noted Szamuely. Leaders across the continent have urged restraint as plans involving Russian funds have been discussed in recent months, fearing repercussions and reputational damage to European financial institutions.

Yet, in a striking demonstration of the United States' power over its NATO allies, Washington eventually prevailed and forced through the plan.

The move carries significant risks in its weaponization of the Western financial system, with observers claiming the confiscation will likely convince global financial interests to further decouple out of fear of the safety of their own assets.

"China has a lot of American assets and European assets, and assets around the world," noted host Angie Wong. "That could be seized at any moment. And the same treatment could be made of them if they don't play the way the G7 wants them to play."

"Isn't this going to backfire on the US and some of the G7 leaders?" Wong asked. "Because ultimately that just means you're not going to get the foreign investments from Russia or China, maybe Saudi Arabia, whoever their next target is going to be."

"I would've thought so and I would've thought that it would elevate pressure on China, Russia, India, and other countries to set up their own alternative financial systems," said Szamuely, referring to efforts that are already under way within the BRICS economic bloc.

China is one of the largest holders of US treasury bonds, the financial instruments the United States uses to finance its substantial deficit spending. But last month the country sold off a record $53.3 billion in US bonds, sounding alarm bells for observers who fear the consequences of countries divesting from US treasuries. The trend has forced the US Federal Reserve to take on unprecedented powers in purchasing US treasury bonds when there is a shortage of foreign buyers, which some believe helps drive inflation.

But the consequences of the loss of dollar hegemony could prove even more disastrous. Observers point out that the trend is already well underway with Russia, China, India and other countries increasingly inking deals to pursue trade denominated in their own currencies. The BRICS bloc has also investigated the possibility of creating its own currency.

The dollar's role as the de facto global reserve currency is so crucial that it has helped drive US foreign policy, with analysts claiming Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi's plans to create a gold-backed African currencyprovided impetus for his Western-backed overthrow.

"[Dedollarization] means the demise of American power, because American power is based on the ability to pay bills by printing money," noted US economist Paul Craig Roberts. "That would

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mean a massive US inflation. It'd be a kind of inflation that results from currency collapse. There's nothing monetary authorities can do about that. Those kinds of inflations are the real inflations, the real deadly ones."
Thursday's announcement, observers worry, brings the United States one step closer to that bleak reality.
Russian ships arrive in Cuba in latest blow to US hegemony

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Four tactical ships from Russia's storied Northern Fleet arrived in Cuba this week, docking in the port of Havana.

"This is an indication that Russia wants to exercise a global role, particularly in response to what it perceives as NATO and American encroachments on its areas of vital interest," said Petro, a professor of political science at the University of Rhode Island, who responded to the development on Sputnik's The Critical Hour program. "As Putin said recently – I'm paraphrasing – the more you do it to us, the more we're going to do it to you."

The Admiral Gorshkov frigate that arrived as part of the group of ships is reportedly capable of firing hypersonic missiles, a next-generation armament Western countries have yet to develop. The frigate was accompanied by a nuclear-powered submarine, although there is no indication the vessel is carrying nuclear weapons.

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Will average Western citizens pay the price for the G7's theft of Russian funds? (Part 1)

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The G7's plan to seize the interest earned by Russian assets is highly controversial in the precedent it sets, claims analyst Dr. George Szamuely, and may be seen as a prelude to the wholesale theft of the country's funds.

"It doesn't in any way conform to international law," said Szamuely. "And let's keep in mind this has never been done before."

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The move carries significant risks in its weaponization of the Western financial system, with observers claiming the confiscation will likely convince global financial interests to further decouple out of fear of the safety of their own assets.

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Will average Western citizens pay the price for the G7's theft of Russian funds? (Part 2)

"Isn't this going to backfire on the US and some of the G7 leaders?" Wong asked. "Because ultimately that just means you're not going to get the foreign investments from Russia or China, maybe Saudi Arabia, whoever their next target is going to be."

"I would've thought so and I would've thought that it would elevate pressure on China, Russia, India, and other countries to set up their own alternative financial systems," said Szamuely, referring to efforts that are already under way within the BRICS economic bloc.

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Thursday's announcement, observers worry, brings the US one step closer to that bleak reality.

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US Defense Secretary Austin Says Does Not Expect Expansion of NATO in Near Future

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said on Friday that he does not foresee an expansion of the NATO alliance in the near future, despite the wishes of some countries such as Ukraine to join the alliance.
"In terms of NATO expansion, I think that's a decision that 32 members of the NATO alliance will make at some point in time. I don't see any desire or indication that we will pursue expansion at any point in the near future," Austin said in Brussels after a meeting of NATO defense ministers.

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Austin Says Putin Not in Position to Dictate Conditions for Peace in Ukraine

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) – The United States believes that Russian President Vladimir Putin is not in a position to dictate conditions for peace in Ukraine, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said on Friday.
"He [Putin] is not in any position to dictate to Ukraine what they must do to bring about peace … that's exactly the kind of behavior that we don't want to see," Austin said during a press conference from the NATO headquarters in Brussels.

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Austin stated that the Russian president could, if he wanted to, put an end to its ongoing special military operation in Ukraine "today."

Earlier in the day, Putin said that Russia will immediately cease fire and declare its readiness for negotiations with Ukraine if Kiev withdraws troops from the territory of new regions of Russia. Russia also demands that Ukraine abandon plans to join NATO and maintain a neutral, non-aligned, nuclear-free status.

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

WASHINGTON, June 14 (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

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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 Loan Plan Keeps Option Available to Seize All of Russia's Frozen Assets - US Official

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - The United States and its G7 partners will have the option to seize Russia's entire assets under their new plan to use profits generated from its interest, a senior US administration official told reporters.

Earlier, G7 countries agreed on a loan structure to provide at least $50 billion to Ukraine in loans, which will be funded by revenue generated by the interest on Russia's frozen assets, but they will not confiscate the principal amount of those funds.

"The income comes from the interest stream on the immobilized assets, and that's the only fair way to be repaid," the official said. "The principal is untouched for now, but we have full optionality to seize the principal later if the political will is there."

This funding will go toward providing Ukraine military support, budget support, humanitarian support, and reconstruction support, the official said.

The official mentioned that there are costs and risks to this plan but emphasized that it's outweighed by the prospect of letting Russia succeed in Ukraine.

The United States has pledged to provide Ukraine $50 billion under this new loan plan and will begin making funds available this year but there is no timeline as to when Ukraine will get the whole amount, according to the official.

Other countries have yet to determine how much they will contribute under this initiative, the official added.

Moreover, the official said that if a peace settlement is reached in Ukraine, they intend to either have Russia pay for reconstruction costs upfront or keep this plan in place.

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

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Trump Says Russian MMA Legend Khabib Nurmagomedov 'Smart,' Urged Him to End Wars

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said Russian mixed martial arts (MMA) legend Khabib Nurmagomedov is a smart individual who urged him to put an end to conflicts.

"Khabib came up to me after the fight the other night… he said to me: 'We have to stop the wars. We have to stop the killing.' He was so smart, he understood it," Trump said during a podcast interview with entertainer Logan Paul on Thursday.

During the UFC 302 event on June 1 in New Jersey, Nurmagomedov was seen talking to

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Trump about ending the conflict in the Gaza Strip. Trump was overheard saying that he would "get it stopped."

Trump said that neither the Gaza conflict nor the Ukraine conflict would have occurred under his presidency, adding that he could put an end to the conflict in Ukraine while still president-elect - if he wins the election in November.

Trump also praised Nurmagomedov as one of the greatest MMA fighters in the sport's history.

Nurmagomedov, a native of Dagestan, is widely considered one of the greatest MMA athletes of all time, having won the UFC Lightweight Championship and beating names like Conor McGregor and Dustin Poirer while maintaining an undefeated 29-0 professional record.

Nurmagomedov retired from MMA in October 2020 after his father and coach Abdulmanap Nurmagomedov passed away from COVID-19 complications. The athlete met with Russian President Vladimir Putin several times throughout his career and was awarded BBC's 2020 World Sports Star of the Year and a spot in the UFC Hall of Fame.

Nurmagomedov began coaching other Russian MMA fighters after his retirement from competition, including current UFC lightweight champion Islam Makhachev, who defended his belt in front of Trump at UFC 302.

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Pentagon Awards SpaceX, ULA and Blue Origin $5.6Bln in Contracts for Future Space Launches

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - The Defense Department announced that aerospace companies SpaceX, United Launch Services (ULA) and Blue Origin have been awarded a combined $5.6 billion in contracts to launch US national security satellites into space over the next five years.

"Blue Origin Florida LLC...Space Exploration Technologies Corp... and United Launch Services LLC have been awarded a multiple-award, firm-fixed-price, indefinite-delivery/indefinite-quantity contract with a maximum cumulative ceiling of $5,600,000,000 for the National Security Space (NSS) Launch Phase 3 Lane 1 launch services procurement," the Defense Department said in a press release on Thursday.

The contract is for launch services delivering US national security payloads into their intended orbits through June 2029, the release said. However, it's unclear which space company will get a majority of the shares from the contract.

The contract can be extended another five years from June 2029, the release said.

The Washington Post reported last month that a senior US defense official recently expressed concern that ULA, a joint venture between Boeing and Lockheed Martin, is falling short of living up to its expectations to meet US demands to counter China in space.

ULA initially secured 60% of the Defense Department's contracts to launch national security payloads into space under a current contract known as Phase 2. SpaceX is responsible for the remaining 40% of US national security launches, but has dramatically outpaced ULA's capability. ULA launched three rockets last year using other rocket programs while SpaceX launched almost 100 using its reusable Falcon 9 rocket, mostly to build its Starlink internet

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satellite constellation.

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Trump Says Not Convinced in Existence of UAP, But Open to Possibility

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said that he is not convinced in the existence of unidentified anomalous phenomena (UAP, also known as UFOs), but is open to the possibility of alien life.

"Am I a believer [in UAP]? No, I can't say I am. But I have met with people that are serious people that say there's some really strange things that they see flying around out there," Trump said on Thursday during a podcast interview with entertainer Logan Paul. "I've never been convinced, even despite that."

Trump said that military pilots have told him about their own personal experiences with UAP.

People that are "very smart" have expressed their belief in UAP during meetings on the matter, Trump said.

Trump said that there is a chance that the deep state has hidden information on the matter from him.

The existence of alien life in the universe is "very possible" given the size of the universe, Trump said.

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UPDATE - New Canadian Sanctions Against Russia Gesture of Despair - Ambassador

(Adds details in para 3-6, background in paras 8)

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) – WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - The latest round of Canadian sanctions against Russia are a hardly noticeable "dead letter" and a gesture of despair, Russian Ambassador in Ottawa Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.

"This is another round of so-called sanctions that are meaningless. The anti-Russian restrictions introduced by Prime Minister Trudeau's cabinet remain in fact a dead letter and are hardly noticed by anyone, since they have no effect on the interests of our individuals and entities," Stepanov said on Thursday.

The absurd sanctions imposed by Canada cause nothing but a smile, the ambassador said. However, Ottawa should expect a tit-for-tat response based on the principle of reciprocity.

Moreover, the latest move by the Trudeau Cabinet is merely a gesture of despair by Ottawa reflecting its international impotence, the ambassador said. Sanctions imposed for a second time on admired hockey legend Vladislav Tretyak further put into evidence Canada's "bitterness and anger," he continued.

The ambassador also commented on the sanctions imposed on several Russian media outlets, highlighting what he said was Ottawa's hypocrisy for not abiding by their own words.

"The hypocrisy of the Canadian authorities is obvious: only in words they are committed to

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democracy and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of speech and the press, but in fact they violate without blushing those principles by trying to impose sanctions against the Russian media," Stepanov said.

Earlier on Thursday, Canada imposed Russia-related sanctions on 11 individuals and 16 entities among which were Pobeda Airlines, Russia's new Industry and Trade Minister Anton Alikhanov, and news outlets such as Rossiyskaya Gazeta and the Saint Peterburg Channel. The restrictions also target the Russian Interior Ministry's training center in Managua, Nicaragua.

Since the start of Russia's special military operation in February 2022, Canada has committed more than C$14 billion ($10.1 billion) in financial, humanitarian, military and other assistance to Ukraine. Ottawa has also sanctioned over 3000 individuals and entities from Russia, as well as alleged "enablers" in Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova.

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US Space Force Renews Starlink Services Contract in Ukraine for 6 More Months - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - The US Space Force renewed a contract for Starlink services in Ukraine for another six months through November, a Defense Department spokesperson said in a statement to Sputnik.

"Space Systems Command (SSC)'s USSF Commercial Satellite Communications Office (CSCO) extended a stand-alone contract awarded in April 2023 that provides Starlink services in Ukraine," the statement said on Thursday. "This contract was recently extended by six months from 1 June 2024 to 30 November 2024."

Last month, the New York Times reported, citing Ukrainian officials, that Russia has deployed advanced technology that has disrupted Ukraine's use of the Starlink service on the battlefield.

SpaceX founder Elon Musk said it's costing him significant resources to protect Starlink services in Ukraine.

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

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Tesla Shareholders Reapprove Musk's $55.8Bln Pay Package, Will Move Company HQ to Texas

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - Tesla investors have reapproved CEO Elon Musk's $55.8 billion compensation package and also gave the green light to move the company's headquarters to Texas from Delaware, Tesla General Counsel and Corporate Secretary Brandon Ehrhart said during the annual shareholder meeting.

"Our stockholders have approved the ratification of the 100% performance-based stock option award to Elon Musk that was approved by stockholders in 2018," Ehrhart said on Thursday.

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Earlier this year, Musk's compensation package was struck down by an equity court in Delaware that sided with an investor who sued Tesla, claiming his compensation was too much.
Ehrhart also announced at the meeting that Tesla shareholders approved the redomestication of Tesla from Delaware to Texas.
After the meeting, Musk told shareholders that the company is not just opening a new chapter for Tesla, but starting a new book.

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New Canadian Sanctions Against Russia Gesture of Despair - Ambassador

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - The latest round of Canadian sanctions against Russia are a hardly noticeable "dead letter" and a gesture of despair, Russian Ambassador in Ottawa Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.
"This is another round of so-called sanctions that are meaningless. The anti-Russian restrictions introduced by Prime Minister Trudeau's cabinet remain in fact a dead letter and are hardly noticed by anyone, since they have no effect on the interests of our individuals and entities," Stepanov said on Thursday.
Earlier on Thursday, Canada imposed Russia-related sanctions on 11 individuals and 16 entities among which were Pobeda Airlines, Russia's new Industry and Trade Minister Anton Alikhanov, and news outlets such as Rossiyskaya Gazeta and the Saint Peterburg Channel. The restrictions also target the Russian Interior Ministry's training center in Managua, Nicaragua.

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US House Rejects NDAA Amendment to Prohibit Transfer of Cluster Munitions

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives rejected an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to prohibit the transfer of cluster munitions.
House lawmakers rejected the amendment in a vote on Thursday of 134 in favor and 286 opposed.
The FY25 NDAA approves some $895.2 billion in national defense discretionary programs. The US House of Representatives has been considering hundreds of amendments to the bill.
The United States has provided cluster munitions to Ukraine as part of its numerous military aid packages for the regime in Kiev.
Russian officials have repeatedly warned against continued arms deliveries to Ukraine, contending that such actions would prolong the conflict. Russian Foreign Ministry Sergey Lavrov has warned that Russia will consider any cargo containing weapons for Ukraine as a legitimate target.

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US House Rejects NDAA Amendment to Prohibit Funds From Aiding Ukraine

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives rejected an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to prohibit funds made available in the legislation from being used to aid Ukraine.

House lawmakers rejected the amendment in a vote on Thursday of 74 in favor and 343 opposed.

The FY25 NDAA approves some $895.2 billion in national defense discretionary programs. The US House of Representatives has been considering hundreds of amendments to the bill.

Russian officials have repeatedly warned against continued arms deliveries to the regime in Kiev, contending that such actions would prolong the conflict. Russian Foreign Ministry Sergey Lavrov has warned that Russia will consider any cargo containing weapons for Ukraine as a legitimate target.

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Ukraine Unlikely to Militarily Defeat Russia, Conflict in Stalemate - Milley

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - The Ukrainian military is unlikely to defeat Russia on the battlefield, former US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley said during an interview at a Washington Post event.

"It's not likely that the Ukrainian military can militarily eject the 200,000-300,000 Russian troops that are still in Russian-occupied Ukraine," Milley said on Thursday.

Russia is also unlikely to take over all of Ukraine, Milley said. Consequently, the conflict is essentially in a military stalemate, Milley said.

Earlier on Thursday, US Senator JD Vance said the United States cannot help Ukraine fight Russia indefinitely. US military leaders have been skeptical in classified settings about Ukraine's ability to achieve any strategic breakthrough, Vance said.

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Canada, Netherlands Sign Science, Technology, Innovation MOU – Foreign Ministry

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) – Canada and the Netherlands have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to enhance cooperation in science, technology, and innovation, the Canadian foreign ministry said on Thursday.

"Today, Global Affairs Canada signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Netherlands aimed at advancing STI [science, technology, and innovation], which will help

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address current global challenges and drive economic growth in both countries," Global Affairs Canada (GAC) said on Thursday.

Both countries seek to further their collaboration on STI-related initiatives in areas such as trade, investments, and technology, GAC said. It added that the agreement is expected to strengthen existing partnerships and help develop new ones to ensure greater access to "leading technologies" and scientific advances.

Among the key areas of cooperation included under the MOU are collaboration on global challenges such as those related to food and energetic security, as well as climate, GAC said.

It will also promote international collaboration on research projects, encourage businesses to participate in STI initiatives, and facilitate access to research, technologies, markets, and talents, it continued.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) -

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* US President Joe Biden and Volodymyr Zelensky signed on Thursday a ten-year security agreement on the sidelines of the Group of Seven (G7) summit in Italy.
* The United States and Ukraine regard their newly-signed ten-year security agreement as a supporting bridge to the latter's eventual membership in NATO, according to the text of the agreement.
* The United States and Ukraine will expand intelligence sharing and enhance military interoperability in line with NATO standards, the White House said.
* The United States will assist Ukraine in defending itself and deter potential future aggression not by sending boots on the ground, but by providing it with weapons and ammunition, US President Joe Biden said.
* Five countries have committed to provide Patriot batteries and other air defense systems to Ukraine, Biden said.
* Spain will not supply Kiev with its Patriot air defense system deployed in Turkey, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said.
* The Netherlands will supply Ukraine with the first F-16 fighter jets after the end of summer, with a total of 24 aircraft to be delivered, the Dutch Defense Ministry said.
* Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni on Thursday confirmed that the G7 countries have agreed to provide 50$ billion to Ukraine in loans, but added that Russia's frozen assets will not be confiscated.
* Zelenskyy announced that Ukraine and Japan have sealed a security agreement providing for a transfer of $4.5 billion to Kiev in 2024 and continual support for the next ten years.

MIDLE EAST TENSIONS

* The Houthis launched two anti-ship cruise missiles on Thursday that struck the cargo carrier

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M/V Verbena, leaving a mariner severely injured, according to US Central Command.
* The UN Security Council should look to resume efforts toward a political solution to the Yemen crisis and ensure it reflects the situation on the ground, Russian Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia said.

GAZA
* President Joe Biden said on Thursday that he is not confident an agreement on a ceasefire in Gaza will be reached soon.
* The US State Department said on Thursday that it was inappropriate for Israel to transfer to Israeli victims $35 million of withheld tax revenue that it had collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority.

IRAN-RUSSIA RELATIONS
* Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke by telephone with acting Iranian President Mohammad Mokhber to discuss cooperation between the two countries and the implementation of joint projects, the Kremlin said on Thursday.
* A full implementation of all agreements is currently on the agenda and Iran is determined to implement them, Mokhber said.

US-CHINA TRADE TIES
* China's "unfair" trade practices may hinder efforts to build healthy Sino-US economic ties, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in a speech delivered to the New York Economic Club on Thursday.

YUKOS CASE
* Russia's cassation appeal in the Yukos case is currently at the administrative stage in the Supreme Court of the Netherlands, with the date of ruling not determined as of yet, court spokeswoman Thea Tjeerdema told RIA Novosti.
* The administrative stage will be followed by a phase of in-writing debates between the parties to the process, Tjeerdema said.

NATO
* The NATO-Ukraine innovation cooperation roadmap has been endorsed and the allies are preparing to endorse a joint analysis and education center in Poland, Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said on Thursday.
* NATO welcomes the upcoming Ukraine peace conference in Switzerland and supports efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict, Stoltenberg said.

NEW CANADIAN SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA
* The Canadian government announced on Thursday a new round of Russia-related sanctions targeting 11 individuals and 16 entities, including the airline Pobeda, Industry and Trade Minister Anton Alikhanov and several Russian news outlets such as Rossiyskaya Gazeta and the Saint Peterburg Channel.
* The sanctions also target the Russian Interior Ministry's training center in Managua,

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Nicaragua.

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Congressman Gaetz Says Trump Bashed Level of US Funding Going to Ukraine

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - US Congressman Matt Gaetz said on Thursday that former President Donald Trump during a meeting with Republican lawmakers criticized the billions of dollars Washington has approved in Ukraine aid funding.

"TRUMP ON UKRAINE: 'They're never going to be there for us,'" Gaetz said in a statement via X. "Trump trashing the Ukraine Aid to Speaker [Mike] Johnson's face is so epic."

Gaetz said Trump suggested that the United States should increase pay for US service members instead of sending $60 billion to Ukraine.

In April, President Joe Biden signed a foreign aid bill that provided some $60 billion for Ukraine, replenishing funding for additional security assistance that had run dry in December.

US House Speaker Mike Johnson had been blocking the path for the foreign aid bill but eventually allowed a vote on the measure after having talks with Biden administration officials. Johnson received backlash from several of his most conservative Republican colleagues because he did not use the foreign aid bill as leverage to get a Republican border policy bill through Congress to address the crisis on the US southern border.

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UN, NGOs Call on Houthis For Immediate Release of Humanitarian Staff -Joint Statement

UNITED NATIONS, June 13 (Sputnik) - The United Nations and other non-governmental organizations put out a joint statement on Thursday urging the Yemeni Houthis to release the detained humanitarian workers.

"We, the Principals of the affected United Nations (UN) entities and International Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), call for the immediate and unconditional release of all personnel held in Yemen by the Houthi de facto authorities. We are extremely concerned about the Houthi de facto authorities' recent detention of 17 members of our organizations [UN entities and INGOs] and many others associated with civil society organizations, national and international NGOs, and other organizations supporting humanitarian activities," the statement said.

The statement added that the detentions are globally unprecedented and complicate the work of reaching vulnerable people in Yemen.

The joint statement was signed, among others, by the World Food Programme, World Health Organization and Save the Children International.

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.

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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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Houthi Attack Damages Cargo Ship, Leaves Mariner Severely Injured – US Central Command

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) – Houthis launched two anti-ship cruise missiles on Thursday that struck the cargo carrier M/V Verbena, leaving a mariner severely injured, according to US Central Command.

"Today the Iranian-backed Houthis launched two anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCM) into the Gulf of Aden. Both missiles struck M/V Verbena, a Palauan-flagged, Ukrainian-owned, Polish-operated bulk cargo carrier," CENTCOM posted on X. "M/V Verbena reported damage and subsequent fires on board. The crew continues to fight the fire. One civilian mariner was severely injured during the attack."

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US House Panel Says Advanced $833Bln FY25 Defense Appropriations Bill

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The US House Appropriations Committee advanced the $833 billion Fiscal Year 2025 Defense Appropriations Act, the panel said on Thursday.

The committee advanced the legislation in a vote of 34 in favor and 25 opposed, the panel said in a statement.

The bill provides a total discretionary allocation of $833.053 billion, which is $8.57 billion more than the FY24 level, the statement said. The legislation refocuses the US Defense Department on its core mission of delivering combat-ready forces to deter war and ensure national security, the statement said.

An amendment to include $300 million in aid for Ukraine was rejected in a vote of 32 in favor and 25 opposed.

The US House of Representatives is currently working on the FY25 National Defense Authorization Act as well, which sets policies related to how funds can be spent.

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M/V Verbena damaged in houthi missile attacks, one civilian mariner severely injured - centcom

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US House Panel Releases $833 Billion Defense Spending Bill That Drops $300 Million in Aid for Ukraine

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US Watchdog Finds Another $1.9Bln More in Accounting Error of Value of Aid Given to Kiev

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The US Defense Department Inspector General said in a report on Thursday that it found the Pentagon overvalued defense equipment given to Ukraine by an additional $1.9 billion, bringing the total value of its accounting errors to $8.1 billion.
"The DoD OIG [Inspector General] determined that based on its sample review, the DoD overvalued defense articles provided to the GoU by an additional $1.9 billion," the report said. "Combined with the previously acknowledged $6.2 billion error, the total of overvalued defense articles provided through PDA is $8.1 billion."

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US, Ukraine See New Bilateral Security Deal as Bridge to Ukraine's NATO Membership - Text

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - Washington and Kiev regard their newly-signed security agreement as a supporting bridge to Ukraine's eventual membership in NATO, according to the text of the agreement signed on Thursday.
"The Parties recognize this Agreement as supporting a bridge to Ukraine's eventual membership in the NATO Alliance," the document states. "In the event that Ukraine becomes a member of NATO, the Parties shall meet and confer on the future status of this Agreement."

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US, Ukraine to Expand Intel Sharing, Enhance Military Interoperability Under New Agreement

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The United States and Ukraine will expand intelligence sharing and enhance military interoperability in line with NATO standards, the White House said on Thursday in a fact sheet on the newly-signed bilateral security agreement.
Earlier in the day, President Joe Biden and Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed a 10-year bilateral security agreement.
"Together, we will expand intelligence sharing, enhance interoperability between our militaries in line with NATO standards, and work with our allies and partners to position Ukraine as a long-term contributor to European security," the fact sheet said.

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In the event of "future armed attack or threat of armed attack against Ukraine," the two countries will consult within 24 hours at the most senior levels to "determine appropriate next steps and additional defense needs," according to the text of the agreement.

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Microsoft Says Its Customers Hit With 300Mln Cyberattacks Each Day Worldwide

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - Microsoft customers around the world experience up to 300 million cyberattacks each day, company president Brad Smith said on Thursday.
"We see our customers attacked more than 300 million times every day," Smith told the House of Representatives Homeland Security Committee.
Microsoft over the last four years has trained some 203,000 people in the United States on cybersecurity, according to Smith.
However, Smith said more help is needed from the federal government to defend against cyberattacks, such as assistance to help US critical infrastructure providers upgrade their technology.
The US government in partnership with the private sector needs to create some kind of deterrent to cyberattacks, Smith added.

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Five Countries Committed Patriot Batteries, Other Air Defense Systems to Ukraine – Biden

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) – Five countries have committed to provide Patriot batteries and other air defense systems to Ukraine, US President Joe Biden said on Thursday.
"We have acquired commitments from five countries so far for Patriot batteries and other air defense systems," Biden said during a joint press conference with Volodymyr Zelenskyy. "We've let it be known to those countries that are expecting from us air defense systems in the future, that they're going to have to wait. Everything we have is going to go to Ukraine until their needs are met."
Earlier in the day, Biden and Zelenskyy signed a 10-year bilateral security agreement.

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US State Dept. Approves Possible $678Mln Missile Sale to Netherlands - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The US State Department approved a potential $678 million sale of air-to-air missiles to the Netherlands, the Pentagon's Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) said on Thursday.
The Netherlands requested to buy 174 Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles-Extended

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Range (AMRAAM-ER) and four AMRAAM-C8 guidance sections, DSCA said in a statement.
The proposed sale supports the United States' foreign policy and national security goals by improving the security of a NATO ally, the statement said.
The sale would not alter the basic military balance in the region or adversely impact US defense readiness, the statement said.

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Biden Says US Position Unchanged on Longer-Range Weapons into Russia

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden said Thursday that the US position on restricting Ukrainian forces from using US-supplied longer-range weapons inside Russia remained unchanged.
"In terms of longer-range weapons into the interior of Russia, we have not changed our position on that sort," Biden said at a joint press conference with Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Italy.

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Biden Says He Abides By Jury's Decision in His Son Hunter's Federal Gun Case

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Thursday that he will abide by a Delaware jury's decision to convict his son Hunter Biden and will not issue a pardon for him.
"I am extremely proud of my son Hunter, he has overcome an addiction, he is one of the brightest most decent men I know," Biden said. "I said I'd abide by the jury decision, I will do and I will not pardon him."
Earlier this week, a jury in the state of Delaware found Hunter Biden guilty of making a false statement for acquisition of a firearm, making a false statement with respect to information required to be kept in records and possession of a firearm by a person who is an unlawful user of or addicted to a controlled substance.
Hunter Biden faces up to 25 years in prison and a $750,000 fine, although first-time offenders often receive a lighter sentence than the maximum.

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Biden Says US-Ukraine Security Agreement Includes Major Ukraine Reforms for EU Accession

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Thursday that the newly-signed bilateral security agreement with Ukraine includes major commitments from Kiev to conduct reforms in line with EU accession goals and NATO programs.
"This agreement accelerates Ukraine's integration into the European, Atlantic, and Transatlantic

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communities. It includes major commitments from Ukraine to implement democratic, economic, and security reforms in line with the European Union's accession goals and NATO's programs of reform," Biden said during a joint press conference with Volodymyr Zelenskyy.
Earlier in the day, Biden and Zelenskyy signed a 10-year bilateral security agreement.

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us state department approves possible $678 million sale of Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles-Extended Range missiles to Netherlands - pentagon

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US to Help Ukraine Defend Itself Not by Sending Troops But by Providing Weapons – Biden

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) – The United States will assist Ukraine in defending its country and deterring potential future aggression not by sending boots on the ground, but by providing it with weapons and ammunition, US President Joe Biden said on Thursday.
Biden made the remarks after he and his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky signed a 10-year security agreement on the sidelines of the Group of Seven meeting in Italy.
“A lasting peace for Ukraine must be underwritten by Ukraine's own ability to defend itself now and to deter future aggression anytime in the future. The United States is going to help ensure that Ukraine can do both, not by sending American troops to fight in Ukraine, but by providing weapons and ammunition,” Biden said.

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biden says he abides by jury decision in his son hunter's federal gun case

Sputnik

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Biden, Zelenskyy Sign 10-Year Bilateral Security Agreement

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden and Volodymyr Zelensky signed on Thursday a 10-year security agreement on the sidelines of the Group of Seven summit in Italy.
The bilateral security agreement does not include any commitments on the deployment of US forces to Ukraine, White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Wednesday,
The agreement does not include any specific dollar figures, but rather a commitment to work

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with Congress on "sustainable funding" for Kiev going forward, Sullivan said.

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US Federal Aviation Administration Chief Admits Agency 'Too Hands Off' With Boeing

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The head of US flight safety on Thursday admitted to his agency's lapses in monitoring Boeing, saying it had been more concerned with paperwork than inspecting the airplane maker, whose 737 MAX 9 had a door blown out midair in January this year.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) was "too hands off to focus on paperwork on audits and not focused enough on inspections," its administrator Mike Whitaker told a hearing held by a US Senate committee on commerce.

But Whitaker said that was no longer how the FAA did things, at least not since the January 5 Alaska Airlines flight between Portland, Oregon and Ontario, California, where the plane door came off.

"The FAA should have had much better visibility into what was happening at Boeing before January 5," Whitaker said. "We have changed that approach over the last several months and those changes are permanent. We have now moved to a more active comprehensive oversight model - the audit plus inspection approach - which allows the FAA to have much better insight into Boeing's operations."

Whitaker added that the FAA's permanent in-person inspectors would visit a Boeing factory in South Carolina on Friday.

In the incident involving the 737 MAX 9, a door plug - or structure installed to replace an optional emergency exit door - blew out shortly after takeoff, causing an uncontrolled decompression of the aircraft.

The airplane returned to Portland, where it had taken off, for an emergency landing. All 171 passengers and six crew members survived, with only three on board having minor injuries.

The National Transportation Safety Board, which is investigating the matter, published a preliminary report on February 6, saying four bolts, intended to secure the door plug, had been missing when the incident occurred. Boeing's records showed the plug had been re-installed with no bolts prior to delivery of the aircraft.

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Microsoft Requiring Some 800 Employees in China to Relocate to Keep Job - President

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - Microsoft is requiring some 800 of its China-based employees who work in cloud computing and artificial intelligence to relocate out of the country if they want to keep their jobs, company president Brad Smith said on Thursday.

The relocation effort is part of the Biden administration's crackdown on China's access to

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advanced US technology due to national security concerns.

"We do have an engineering team that we have been reducing, and we announced most recently that we were offering about 800 people ... the opportunity to move out of China, and they were going to need to move out of China in order to keep the job they have," Smith told the US House of Representatives Homeland Security Committee.

Moreover, Smith mentioned that data centers run by Microsoft in China benefit multinational companies who do business in China.

China does not have access to these data centers, Smith noted.

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State Dept. Slaps Visa Ban on Company Executive for Aiding Migration From Nicaragua

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The United States has imposed visa restrictions on an executive of a charter flight company for allegedly facilitating irregular migration from Nicaragua, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Thursday.

"The United States is taking steps to impose visa restrictions on an executive of a charter flight transportation company for facilitating irregular migration to the United States via Nicaragua from outside the Western Hemisphere," Miller said in a statement, without disclosing the individual's name.

Miller warned that flight companies are "preying" on vulnerable migrants by operating services designed to facilitate irregular migration to the US and claimed that the government of Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega continues to "financially benefit" from their exploitation.

The restrictions seek to promote accountability for those involved in the business, Miller said. No smugglers, private companies or public officials should profit from the migrants' vulnerability, he added.

The US vows to continue imposing visa restrictions on "unscrupulous" transportation company owners, executives and seniors officials as part of a broader effort to combat "exploitative practices," Miller continued.

In mid-May, a senior US administration official said that the Biden administration alerted air carriers and other members of the aviation industry on measures to prevent irregular migration related to Nicaragua amid a considerable surge in migrants traversing the region through the Central American country.

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US Says Israel Should Not Redirect Palestinian Tax Revenues - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - The US State Department said on Thursday that it was inappropriate for Israel to transfer to Israeli victims $35 million of withheld tax revenue that it had collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority.

"No, they are not appropriate. We have made quite clear to the government of Israel that these

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funds belong to the Palestinian people. They should be transferred to the Palestinian Authority immediately; they should not have been held; they should not be delayed," State spokesperson Matthew Miller said at a press briefing.

Miller added that the move by Israeli Finance Minister Betzalel Smotrich hurts not only the Palestinian people, but also Israel as well, as it risked destabilizing the West Bank.

Smotrich had announced on Tuesday that the withheld tax revenues would be transferred to Israeli families who had members killed in Palestinian attacks.

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US Says Charges Against Gershkovich False, Demands Immediate Release From Russia

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The charges against Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich are false and the Russian government should release him right away, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Thursday.

"The charges against him are false and the Russian government knows that they are false. He should be released immediately," Miller said during a press briefing.

The US government will persist in its efforts to bring home Gershkovich and former US Marine Paul Whelan, and work to secure their release.

Earlier on Thursday, US Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs Roger Carstens said in a congressional testimony that the United States had hoped to broker a deal with Russia to free Gershkovich before his indictment, but efforts to secure his freedom continue.

Russian Prosecutor General's Office spokesperson Andrey Ivanov said that the Gershkovich case will be considered by a court in Yekaterinburg.

Russia's Federal Security Service detained Gershkovich in March 2023 on suspicion of trying to collect classified defense information for the United States.

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Trump Says Deployment of Russian Naval Vessels in Cuba 'Unthinkable'

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump on Thursday condemned the deployment of several Russian naval vessels docked in Cuba this week.

"We don't want to see Russian ships right off the coast of Florida, which is where they are right now. That's unthinkable," Trump said during a press conference after meeting with Republican lawmakers in Washington.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said earlier that conducting military exercises in different regions of the world is a normal practice, especially for such a large maritime power as Russia.

According to US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), the US fast-attack submarine Helena made a pre-planned deployment to the US naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Wednesday that Washington has seen such visits before and expects to see them again in the future. US officials have previously noted that

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the Russian naval deployment to Cuba does not pose a threat to the United States.

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Biden, Zelenskyy Sign 10-Year Bilateral Security Agreement - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden and Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed a 10-year bilateral security agreement, Reuters reported on Thursday.

The text of the agreement recognizes the deal as a step towards Ukrainian membership in NATO, the report said.

Under the terms of the agreement, US and Ukrainian officials will meet within 24 hours in the event of an armed attack against Ukraine to discuss a response, the report said.

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UNSC Should Look to Resume Efforts Toward Yemen Settlement, Reflect Realities - Nebenzia

UNITED NATIONS, June 13 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council should look to resume efforts toward a political solution to the Yemen crisis and ensure it reflects the situation on the ground, Russian Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia said on Thursday.

"And at the same time we continue to believe that the Security Council should closely study the prospects for the resumption of the international legal basis for a Yemeni settlement in order to ensure that this reflects the realities on the ground," Nebenzia said during a UN Security Council meeting on Yemen.

Given that that large-scale hostilities have been halted, it presents an opportunity to step up reconciliation efforts, Nebenzia stated.

Nebenzia, however, noted that the Gaza conflict has had an impact on the Yemen settlement.

The Houthis, also known as the Ansar Allah movement, have been striking what they say are Israel-linked ships in the Red Sea since November in response to the war in Gaza. The attacks prompted the United States to form a multinational coalition, which includes the UK among others, to protect shipping in the area of the Red Sea, as well as to strike Houthi targets on the ground.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said that Moscow sees no justification for either Houthi strikes on commercial ships in the Red Sea, or the actions by the US and the UK in Yemen. Air strikes by the US and the UK are being carried out without a mandate from the UN Security Council and disrupt peace efforts in Yemen, the minister stated.

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Phoenix Police Discriminate Against Minorities, Violate Speech Rights - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The Phoenix Police Department (PhxPD) and City of Phoenix discriminate against minority groups and violate free speech rights, the US Justice Department said on Thursday.

"Following a comprehensive investigation, the Justice Department announced today that the Phoenix Police Department and the City of Phoenix engage in a pattern or practice of conduct that violates the US Constitution and federal law," the Justice Department said in a statement.

PhxPD discriminates against black, Hispanic and Native American people when enforcing the law, the statement said. PhxPD also violates the rights of people engaged in protected speech and expression, the statement said.

Additionally, PhxPD uses excessive force, including unjustified deadly force, the statement said.

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FAA Says Boeing May Have Improperly Installed Fuselage Fasteners on 787 Dreamliners

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The aerospace company Boeing recently disclosed to US regulators that it may have improperly installed fuselage fasteners on some of its 787 Dreamliner aircraft, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) said in a statement to Sputnik on Thursday.

"Boeing disclosed that it may have improperly installed fuselage fasteners on some 787 Dreamliner aircraft," the FAA said.

The FAA is investigating and is working closely with Boeing to determine the next steps to address the issue.

In addition, the FAA said it has determined that this is not an immediate flight-safety issue.

In May, the Wall Street Journal reported that Boeing is struggling to ramp up production of its 787 Dreamliner jets after a supplier's capability to provide parts for the aircraft was hampered by US sanctions imposed on Russia.

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Two-Thirds of US Voters Concerned About Cheating in 2024 Presidential Election - Poll

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - Two-thirds of likely voters in the United States are concerned that cheating could impact the 2024 US presidential election, according to a Rasmussen Reports poll released Thursday.

Sixty-six percent (66%) of respondents are concerned about cheating affecting the outcome of the election, including 40% who are very concerned, the poll report said.

Former US President Donald Trump and current officeholder Joe Biden are set to compete for control of the White House in a rematch of the 2020 race. Independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has also received considerable support ahead of Election Day.

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The poll surveyed 1,051 likely US voters from June 5-6. The poll maintains a margin of error of plus-or-minus three percentage points with a 95% confidence level.

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Biden Says He's Not Confident Will Reach Gaza Ceasefire Deal Soon

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden told reporters on Thursday that he is not confident that an agreement on a Gaza ceasefire deal will be reached soon, according to a White House press pool report.

"No," Biden said when asked if he's confident they will reach a Gaza ceasefire agreement soon.

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UPDATE - China's 'Unfair Trade Practices' Threaten Healthy Sino-US Ties - Yellen

(Adds details and context, paragraphs 3-13)

NEW YORK, June 13 (Sputnik) - China's "unfair trade practices" may hinder efforts to build healthy Sino-US economic ties, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Thursday.

China's variety of practices — from restrictive investment policies to economic coercion — undermine fair competition, Yellen said in a speech delivered to the New York Economic Club. "If China continues on this path, I fear that its policies may interfere significantly with our efforts to build a healthy economic relationship," she added.

Particularly concerning were Beijing's "enduring macroeconomic imbalances," Yellen said.

China, she explained, was a global outlier in terms of its very high saving rate: 45 to 50 percent of gross domestic product for roughly 20 years. That was twice the size of the average economy in the 38-member Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development which groups some of the world's most vibrant economies.

Such high savings reflect a lack of sufficient domestic consumption demand and risk leading to an expansion in China's external surplus, which was being directed at manufacturing and resulting in excess capacity in select industries with unusually high investment rates.

This problem of China's has become a global one, particularly one for America, as Beijing cannot rapidly grow without causing displacement globally, Yellen said.

In response, China cannot assume that the United States and the rest of the world will rapidly absorb huge quantities of excess production to the detriment of domestic industries in other countries.

"This overcapacity threatens American firms and workers, along with those around the world. We saw in the past how overcapacity can decimate businesses here at home," the Treasury secretary said. "We are now seeing the risks of that happening again, in key industries that matter to our long-term growth, such as electric vehicles, lithium-ion batteries, and solar, but also across a range of manufacturing industries."

Yellen said the scale of China's subsidies and industrial policies was hard to quantify due to

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lack of transparency.

"But even conservative estimates suggest that they far exceed that of other countries, which is why we see economies ranging from advanced to emerging markets launch trade investigations," she said.

China's overcapacity risks US supply chains being artificially over-concentrated, posing additional security and economic concerns, Yellen said. "I have heard these concerns from American and foreign businesses," she added.

Yellen, who has visited China more often in the past year than any other Biden administration official, said she will continue pressing her concerns with the powers-that-be in Beijing.

She said the United States will also pursue its approach of friendshoring, which involves deepening ties with a wide range of trusted partners and allies to diversify supply chains and support long-term growth of the US private sector.

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US to Continue Efforts on Brokering Deal With Russia to Free Gershkovich - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The United States had hoped to broker a deal with Russia to free Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich before his indictment but efforts to secure his and former US Marine Paul Whelan's freedom will continue, US Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs Roger Carstens said in a congressional testimony on Thursday.

"We were all hopeful that we were able to broker a deal with the Russians before this happened. But it doesn't stop or slow us down. We can keep continuing to pursue not only Evan's [Gershkovich] freedom but also Paul Whelan's freedom as well," Carstens told the US House Subcommittee on Oversight and Accountability.

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Ottawa Unveils 2030 Nature Strategy, Tables Accountability Bill – Environment Canada

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) – The Government of Canada has released its 2030 Nature Strategy and tabled the Nature Accountability Bill in relation to environmental commitments made by Ottawa, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change said on Thursday.

"Today, the Honourable Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, announced the release of Canada's 2030 Nature Strategy and introduced an Act respecting transparency and accountability in relation to certain commitments Canada has made under the Convention on Biological Diversity (the Nature Accountability Bill)," the ministry said in a statement.

Accordingly, the strategy will lay out ways in which the Canadian government will implement its nature protection goals under the Kunming-Montréal Global Biodiversity Framework, the ministry said. This will be done by determining areas of action and by identifying what more needs to be built in support of existing nationwide initiatives, it added.

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Through the Nature Accountability Bill, the Trudeau government seeks to enshrine Ottawa's commitment to the protection of nature for generations to come, the ministry said. Notably, it will require the development of the aforementioned strategy and reports on its implementation in order to ensure transparency and accountability, it continued.

"The 2030 Nature Strategy will support building a nature-positive Canada to help us grow a clean, competitive, and resilient economy, attract investment, and position our companies and industries as global leaders," the ministry said.

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UPDATE - Canada Targets Airline Pobeda, Industry Minister Alikhanov in New Russia Sanctions

(Adds details in para 4-5, background in para 6)

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) – The Canadian government announced on Thursday a new batch of Russia-related sanctions targeting 11 individuals and 16 entities including airline Pobeda, the Russian industry and trade minister, and a number of news outlets.

"The Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs, today announced that Canada is imposing additional sanctions under the Special Economic Measures (Russia) Regulations in coordination with Canada's international partners at the G7 Summit in Italy, which is being held from June 13 to 15, 2024," Global Affairs Canada (GAC) said in a statement.

Among those sanctioned are Pobeda Airlines, Russia's new Industry and Trade Minister Anton Alikhanov, and several Russian news outlets such as Rossiyskaya Gazeta and the Saint Peterburg Channel. The restrictions also target the Russian Interior Ministry's training center in Managua, Nicaragua.

Other entities include among others the Novorossiysk Shipping Company, the Research and Development Association, the New Media Development Fund, and Voice of Europe.

Today's announcement also includes export prohibitions related to computer numerically controlled machine tools which Ottawa believes could be used by Russian companies in the production and manufacturing of weapons, GAC said.

Since the start of Russia's special military operation in February 2022, Canada has committed more than C$14 billion ($10.1 billion) in financial, humanitarian, military and other assistance to Ukraine. Ottawa has also sanctioned over 3000 individuals and entities from Russia, as well as alleged "enablers" in Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova.

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UN Condemns Attack on Russian Journalists in Donetsk - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, June 13 (Sputnik) - The United Nations stands against all attacks on the media including today's deadly incident in which Russian journalists were attacked in the Donetsk region, the UN Spokesman Farhan Haq said on Thursday.

"We stand opposed to all attacks on media wherever they are media need to be free to go

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about their work without harm done to them or any hindrance," Haq said in the UN briefing.
Earlier on Thursday, NTV confirmed on its Telegram channel that its correspondent Alexey Ivliyev, cameraman Valery Kozhin and a third accompanying officer had been wounded in the DPR and taken to hospital.
Kozhin later died as a result of his injuries, according to the mayor of the DPR city of Gorlovka (Horlivka), Ivan Prikhodko.

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US Southern Command Says Fast-Attack Submarine Visiting Guantanamo Bay, Cuba

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The US fast-attack submarine Helena is visiting the United States' naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, the US Southern Command said on Thursday.
"The fast-attack submarine USS Helena is in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba as part of a routine port visit as it transits the US Southern Command geographic area of responsibility while conducting its global maritime security and national defense mission," Southern Command said in a statement via social media platform X.
The vessel's location and transit were previously planned, the statement added.
The Helena's visit to Cuba coincides with a Russian military flotilla's visit to the port of Havana, Cuba earlier this week.
The Russian exercises in the area do not pose a threat to the US, Pentagon Deputy Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said on Wednesday.

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China 'Unfair' Trade Practices May Hurt Efforts for Healthy Sino-US Ties - Yellen

NEW YORK, June 13 (Sputnik) - China's "unfair" trade practices may hinder efforts to build healthy Sino-US economic ties, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in a speech delivered to the New York Economic Club on Thursday.
"China also pursues a variety of unfair trade practices - from restrictive investment policies to economic coercion - that further undermine fair competition," Yellen said. "If China continues on this path, I fear that its policies may interfere significantly with our efforts to build a healthy economic relationship."

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USAID in Early Phase of Plans to Upgrade Railway System in Western Ukraine - Notice

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WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The US Agency for International Development (USAID) is in the early stages of planning a possible project to upgrade a railway system that stretches from the Ukrainian city of Lviv to a terminal near the Poland-Ukraine border, the US General Services Administration said in a notice on Thursday.

"The potential project's key objective is the extension of the European TEN-T core network from the Poland/Ukraine border to the city of Lviv," the notice stated. "It is envisaged that the project will commence in 2025."

The notice mentions that the railway project covers 47 miles between Lviv and the Mostyska II freight terminal.

The federal government isn't soliciting bids at the moment but is requesting certain information from interested contractors, according to the notice.

Contractors have until July 1 to submit information requested by USAID.

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US, UK, Canada Accuse Russia of 'Plotting' to Sway Moldova's Presidential Election

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom claimed on Thursday that Russia is "plotting" to influence the outcome of Moldova's presidential election this fall.

"Today, in defense of our shared democratic values, we are taking this step to warn our democratic partners and Allies that Russian actors are carrying out a plot to influence the outcomes of Moldova's fall 2024 presidential election," the joint statement said.

The three countries stated that they share President Maia Sandu's "strong concerns about the Kremlin's use of criminal groups to finance political activities and undermine Moldova's democratic institutions."

The statement claimed that Russia intends to "incite protests" in Moldova if a pro-Russia candidate does not win. They also accused Russia of seeking to "foment negative perceptions of Western governments and Moldova's incumbent leadership" while using "disinformation and propaganda online, on the air, and on the streets."

They also promised additional sanctions on individuals and entities attempting to "destabilize Moldova's democratic institutions."

On October 20, Moldova's pro-EU President Sandu will seek reelection. Moldovans will also vote on whether the Eastern European country should seek to join the European Union.

The Russian Foreign Ministry has denied interfering in the internal affairs of any country, including Moldova.

In April, ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said that unlike Moldova, Russia will not interfere with Chisinau's voting arrangements for Moldova's presidential election at its diplomatic missions in Russia.

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Canada Targets Airline Pobeda, Industry Minister Alikhanov in New Russia Sanctions

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"The Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs, today announced that Canada is imposing additional sanctions under the Special Economic Measures (Russia) Regulations in coordination with Canada's international partners at the G7 Summit in Italy, which is being held from June 13 to 15, 2024," Global Affairs Canada (GAC) said in a statement.

Among those sanctioned, Pobeda Airlines, Russia's new Industry and Trade Minister Anton Alikhanov and several Russian news outlets such as Rossiyskaya Gazeta and the Saint Peterburg Channel. The restrictions also target the Russian Interior Ministry's training center in Managua, Nicaragua.

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Russia Condemns US, UK 'Pointless Strikes' in Red Sea - Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, June 13 (Sputnik) - Russia condemns the United States' and United Kingdom's strikes in the Red Sea and considers them "pointless," Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said on Thursday.

"[W]e condemn the strikes by the US- and UK-led coalition targeting the sovereign territory of Yemen. This aggression is being perpetrated in violation of the UN Charter. It is pointless insofar as it cannot stop the attacks in the Red Sea," Nebenzia said during a meeting of the UN Security Council on the situation concerning Yemen.

Nebenzia said that these "reckless instances" of the use of force by NATO countries leave behind them a stain of blood.

On June 7, United Nations spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said the Allah Ansar movement in Yemen - whose supporters are popularly known as Houthis - had detained 11 UN personnel. Three days later, the Houthis said they detained spies linked to the US Central Intelligence Agency for allegedly carrying out intelligence and sabotage activities in Yemen.

The Houthis vowed in November 2023 to attack any ships associated with Israel until it halts military actions in the Gaza Strip. The attacks prompted the United States to form a multinational coalition to protect shipping in the Red Sea as well as to strike Houthi targets on the ground.

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canada sanctions russia's new minister of Industry and Trade Anton Alikhanov

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canada imposes sanctions on Russian airline Pobeda

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US Senator Says Washington Cannot Help Ukraine Fight Russia 'Indefinitely'

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The United States cannot prop up the regime in Kiev to fight Russia indefinitely, US Senator JD Vance said on Thursday.

"The leverage that we have over the Russians is not, in my view, that we can indefinitely keep the Ukrainians in a successful defensive posture. Let me be clear about this: There is no way with our capacity and what Russia has been doing that we can hold off the Russians indefinitely," Vance said in an interview with The New York Times.

Vance said that he never believed the US-backed Ukrainian counteroffensives against Russia would succeed.

The senator noted that the US military leaderships were skeptical in classified settings about Ukraine's ability to achieve any strategic breakthrough.

Vance recommended freezing current conflict lines and guaranteeing both Ukraine's neutrality and independence. Russia views Ukrainian neutrality as an "existential" issue, Vance said.

The United States should focus on bolstering Taiwan's defenses against potential efforts by Beijing to unify the island with the mainland, Vance said.

However, the United States is unable to do so because it is sending "all the damn weapons" to Ukraine instead, Vance added.

Russia officials have repeatedly warned against continued arms deliveries to the Kiev regime by the US-led collective West, saying that such actions would lead to prolonging the conflict. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has warned that any cargo containing weapons for Ukraine will become a legitimate target.

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Nominee for Envoy Says US Should Engage in Libya as Russian Influence is Biggest Challenge

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - Russian influence in Libya is the biggest challenge facing that country and it is critical for the United States to be engaged on the ground there, the nominee to serve as the United States' ambassador to Libya, Jennifer Gavito, said during her confirmation hearing on Thursday.

"You have touched on what I think is the biggest challenge facing Libya. Certainly the lack of a unified government is also a great challenge, but it's exacerbated by Russia's deeply destabilizing impact there," Gavito told the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee when asked about Russian activities in Libya.

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Gavito also said it is concerning that Russia intends to strengthen its foothold in Libya.
Therefore, it is critical that the United States be "on the ground" in Libya to engage people across the political spectrum, Gavito added.

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US House Speaker Johnson Says Will Meet With Trump at Mar-a-Lago on Monday

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - US House Speaker Mike Johnson said on Thursday that he will meet with former President Donald Trump on Monday at his Mar-a-Lago residence.
"I'll be with him [Trump] again at Mar-a-Lago on Monday," Johnson said during a press conference, following a meeting between Trump and House Republican lawmakers.
Trump is also set to meet with Senate Republicans later on Thursday.

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US Supreme Court Blocks Effort to Restrict Access to Abortion Drug Mifepristone - Ruling

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The US Supreme Court on Thursday ruled against an attempt to restrict access to the abortion medication mifepristone.
Several anti-abortion groups and doctors attempted to require the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to rescind approval of mifepristone or related regulatory actions. A district court agreed with the plaintiffs and enjoined FDA's approval of the drug, but the Supreme Court stayed the lower court's order pending appeal and granted certiorari on challenges to the regulatory actions.
"Held: Plaintiffs lack Article III standing to challenge FDA's actions regarding the regulation of mifepristone," the Supreme Court said in its ruling.
Article III of the US Constitution confined the jurisdiction of federal courts to cases and controversies, preventing them from operating as an open forum for citizens to pursue general complaints about government business.
Although the plaintiffs hold "sincere legal, moral, ideological, and policy objections" to the use of mifepristone, their arguments do not establish Article III standing, the ruling said.
The Supreme Court reversed and remanded the lower court ruling in a unanimous decision.

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