

6/18/24 Tuesday

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden Freezes as Washington Burns

At a celebrity-filled fundraising event in Los Angeles on Saturday, US President Joe Biden appeared to stare off into the crowd for several seconds until former President Barack Obama led him off the stage as the event's band started to play behind them.

US President Joe Biden decided against attending Ukraine's so-called peace summit in Switzerland over the weekend, sending Vice President Kamala Harris in his stead, who reportedly left the event after a few hours. Ukraine could have used his help, it seems, as the conference was declared a failure. China did not attend the meeting at all and a record eleven countries refused to sign on the final document, including the US' southern neighbor Mexico. Biden instead went to the aforementioned celebrity fundraising event, which brought in \$30 million according to his campaign. As protesters accused the President of supporting a genocide outside, the President had his already infamous freeze on screen. Democratic operatives and media outlets tried to [brush it away](#) as a nothing burger, apparently thinking we would find their "fact-checks" more credible than our lying eyes.

"He's not in control. He has never been in control," asserted senior political analyst Michael Maloof on [Sputnik's The Critical Hour](#), speculating that Obama and the Clintons are the ones "pulling the strings."

"They just wanted a puppet. That's all they've gotten with him and they're content with that."

As Biden's mental decline is becoming harder to ignore, so has the decline of US hegemony, and the US failure in Ukraine is only one point on a long list of items. The United States is finding itself increasingly isolated because of its support of Israel in Gaza.

Meanwhile, what the US has long derisively called the "hermit nation" is coming out of its shell, with Russian President Vladimir Putin and a delegation of high-ranking officials visiting North Korea on Tuesday following the signing of a "strategic partnership agreement."

But it's not only America's adversaries who are defying it. Its allies are beginning to as well.

Saudi Arabia, considered one of [Washington's best allies](#) in the Middle East, is building a strong relationship with China and has openly considered selling oil in yuan instead of the dollar, part of a growing trend of de-dollarization around the globe.

"If these countries... get off the dollar, it's going to actually create incredible inflation here in the United States because of the lack of use of the dollar internationally," explained Maloof. "And you're talking about more than 40 countries that are looking very seriously at that right now. [Biden has] terrible problems on the front burner. Nobody is being held responsible."

Meanwhile, the so-called 'greatest ally' to the US, Israel, has repeatedly [defied](#) Biden's stated redlines, invading Rafah despite US warnings against it. Weeks later, after Biden announced that Israel offered a ceasefire agreement, Israel refused to confirm that they authored the agreement and has yet to agree to a ceasefire despite Biden's assurances to the public that they would.

After Biden temporarily paused a single weapon shipment to Israel in response to its invasion of Rafah, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu publicly undressed the President, who responded approving an \$18 billion arms sale to the country.

A little more than a week before his frozen moment on stage, Biden had another mishap during the 80th anniversary celebration of the D-Day Landings and the Battle of Normandy. There, he appeared to wander off while watching a paratrooper performance, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni seemingly had to redirect Biden towards the performance.

Days later, Biden was seen on camera bizarrely touching his forehead to a confused-looking Pope Francis during a meeting of G7 leaders in Italy. The day before, US CENTCOM admitted that the [Yemen Ansar-Allah movement \(Houthis\)](#) hit a Ukrainian-owned ship in the Gulf of Aden, injuring one crew member and sparking a fire. Their attacks have continued to blockade Israel's Eilat seaport, despite significant diplomatic and military pressure from the United States.

"They're trying to push the US hegemonic concept around the world and maintain US power," Maloof argued. "They're in a death struggle right now with the rising multipolar world."

But Biden is mentally incapable of a simple photo-op without some sort of gaffe, much less the decline of a global empire.

On Tuesday, one day after the White House dismissed videos of Joe Biden's apparent mental decline as "cheap fakes," Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim told Chinese media that his country would like to join BRICS, the economic bloc formed by Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa as an informal alternative to the G7.

Ibrahim also praised Chinese leader Xi Jinping while offering thinly veiled criticism of the United States, saying that he would not be swayed by US accusations that Chinese company Huawei would be a security threat if it helps develop Malaysia's 5G mobile data system.

"If they have compelling evidence to suggest that any company or any country is causing mischief, then all right. They should adduce evidence," he said. "But otherwise, we will not succumb to that sort of pressure. It is no longer neocolonialism or colonial rule. We are an independent nation."

"You wouldn't have heard this talk five years ago," noted Maloof. "We're seeing a change."

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

On Israel, White House Lives in 'Parallel Reality'

On Tuesday, US special envoy Amos Hochstein met with Lebanese officials, including Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, a day after visiting with Israeli officials. The trips were made in an attempt to prevent a full-on war between the two countries after exchanges escalated in the region.

Hezbollah and Israel have been exchanging fire since Israel launched its siege on Gaza following Hamas' surprise attack on October 7. Hezbollah said it launched its campaign in response to Israel's actions in Gaza and that it will stop once a ceasefire is implemented in the area.

[Hochstein stated](#) that Hamas needs to "just say yes and accept" the ceasefire deal outlined by US President Joe Biden nearly three weeks ago. Those comments are part of a trend among

high-ranking US officials that Israel has accepted the ceasefire deal and only Hamas is preventing a pause in fighting.

"[With] the statements from the White House officials, they seem to live in a parallel reality from everyone, including Israeli officials," Esteban Carrillo, a Beirut-based journalist and the editor of The Cradle, [told Sputnik's Fault Lines](#).

While [Hamas](#) has reportedly made some [amendments to the deal](#), it has responded positively while Israel has refused to say if it will accept it and promised to keep fighting until Hamas is defeated. Israeli officials have also refused to confirm if the ceasefire deal presented by Biden was their creation, as US officials claim.

"Just today, a top Israeli negotiator told the Israeli media that there would be absolutely no room to negotiate any of the amendments that Hamas asked for in response to the ceasefire proposal," Carrillo explained, adding that the negotiator said the war will continue after the Israeli assault on the southern city of Rafah is completed. "These are their words. This is not anybody putting words in their mouth."

While the US continues to provide political cover for the Israelis by insisting that Israel has accepted a deal, its officials have been clear that they expect their actions in Gaza to continue for the foreseeable future. The day after Biden gave his speech outlining the ceasefire deal, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insisted that their conditions for ending the war "have not changed." Days earlier, Israeli national security adviser, Tzachi Hanegbi said Israel expects at least "another seven months of fighting," extending the killing until 2025.

An estimate by the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) said that they expect the war to [continue until 2026](#) and that a full-scale war with Lebanon will begin in September.

"[US Secretary of State Antony] Blinken and [US Defense Department spokesperson Matthew] Miller [are] saying that Hamas is the one being intransigent. No, it's Israel that is being completely intransigent and they have been so for the past several decades," Carrillo argued. In 2006, Israel and Hezbollah fought to what is generally described as a tie, with more than 1,200 IDF soldiers wounded and another 120 dead, including the two soldiers who were captured at the Zar'it-Shtula incident, Israel failed to meet its objectives in that conflict and in the meantime Hezbollah has become increasingly sophisticated and powerful.

"This is what the US has also been warning them," Carrillo said. "It's time to de-escalate the North because you're going to get your asses kicked."

On Tuesday, Hezbollah released drone footage of Haifa and other parts of northern Israel, highlighting critical Israeli military and civilian infrastructure, including weapon depots, military bases and sea and airports.

Netanyahu said earlier this month that his country is "prepared for a very intense operation" against Lebanon.

Haifa, about 17 miles (27km) from the closest Lebanese border, is Israel's most active port. Its importance has increased since the Ansar Allah (Houthi) movement in Yemen successfully shut down the Port of Eilat through its blockade of Israel in the Red Sea.

More than 60,000 Israelis have been ordered to evacuate from communities near the border with Lebanon, and many of the towns have been virtually abandoned since October.

On Israel, White House lives in 'parallel reality'

“[With] the statements from the White House officials, they seem to live in a parallel reality from everyone, including Israeli officials,” Esteban Carrillo, a Beirut-based journalist and the editor of The Cradle, told Sputnik’s Fault Lines.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

On Tuesday, US special envoy Amos Hochstein said that Hamas (<https://t.me/SputnikInt/58906>) needs to “just say yes and accept (<https://t.me/SputnikInt/59073>)” the ceasefire deal outlined by US President Joe Biden nearly three weeks ago. Those comments are part of a trend among high-ranking US officials that Israel has accepted the ceasefire deal and only Hamas (<https://t.me/SputnikInt/59223>) is preventing a pause in fighting.

Israel has refused to say if it will accept it and promised to keep fighting (<https://t.me/SputnikInt/59429>) until Hamas is defeated. Israeli officials have also refused to confirm if the ceasefire deal presented by Biden was their creation, as US officials claim.

“Just today, a top Israeli negotiator told the Israeli media that there would be absolutely no room to negotiate any of the amendments that Hamas asked for in response to the ceasefire proposal,” Carrillo explained, adding that the negotiator said the war will continue after the Israeli assault on the southern city of Rafah is completed. “These are their words. This is not anybody putting words in their mouth.”

An estimate by the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) said that they expect the war to continue until 2026 and that a full-scale war with Lebanon will begin in September.

On Tuesday, Hezbollah released drone footage of Haifa (<https://t.me/SputnikInt/59521>), highlighting critical Israeli military and civilian infrastructure, including weapon depots, military bases and sea and airports.

Haifa, about 17 miles (27km) from the closest Lebanese border, is Israel’s most active port. Its importance has increased since the Ansar Allah (Houthi) movement (<https://t.me/SputnikInt/58493>) in Yemen successfully shut down the Port of Eilat through its blockade (<https://t.me/SputnikInt/59394>) of Israel in the Red Sea.

More than 60,000 Israelis have been ordered to evacuate from communities near the border with Lebanon, and many of the towns have been virtually abandoned since October.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Comes Under Extreme Heat as 'Heat Dome' Worsens Temperatures

Burlington, Vermont could experience its hottest three-day stretch in 30 years in a region that rarely sees such sweltering temperatures for the month of June.

The US is broiling in extreme heat and high humidity this week which is expected to last into the weekend for some parts of the country. More than [80 million people](#) came under heat alerts, with the National Weather Service's Heat Risk forecast issuing its highest levels of threat to human health for much of Ohio, some of Illinois, Michigan, Pennsylvania and New York.

A separate [report](#) found that more than 270 million Americans are experiencing a record-smashing heat wave that has not been seen in decades. Temperatures across the US are soaring at or above 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32.2 degrees Celsius) and are being held in place by a heat dome.

Heat domes occur when strong, high pressure traps hot air over a region and blocks cool air from traveling in. The Midwest, the Northeast and the Mid-Atlantic are believed to be under a heat dome that originated in the south-west where many cities were placed under heat warnings last week.

The blistering heat has raised concern about illnesses in people who work outdoors and those who are more susceptible to extreme temperatures. Officials in areas experiencing extreme heat have cautioned people to wear light clothing and to stay in the shade or indoors if they have to be out in the heat for an extended period of time.

Across the US, cooling centers have opened up. New York governor Kathy Hochul announced that she had activated the National Guard to assist with heat-related emergencies that may arise over the next several days.

"The longevity of dangerous heat forecasted for some locations has not been experienced in decades," the National Weather Service (NWS) said. "Warm overnight temperatures... will offer little relief, especially to those without adequate or reliable cooling."

The Northeast and parts of the Upper Midwest have come under heat warnings in the category of Level 3 and Level 4; the former "affects anyone without effective cooling and/or adequate hydration" with "impacts likely in some health systems, heat-sensitive industries and infrastructure," according to the [NWS](#).

The latter is a "level of rare and/or long-duration extreme heat with little to no overnight relief that affects anyone without effective cooling and/or adequate hydration" with impacts likely in "most" health systems, heat-sensitive industries and infrastructure.

Burlington, Vermont may experience its hottest three-day period not seen in 30 years this week, the NWS said. The highs are expected to be in the upper 90s, with the same forecast expected for Buffalo, New York. Meanwhile, Rochester, NY could experience temperatures that surge past 100, and Washington, DC will experience their worst heat this weekend with highs in the upper 90s to the low 100s. Of all the cities, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania may experience the longest duration of heat.

Climate change has continued to warm our globe, and scores of others have already reportedly died from heat-related illnesses including those in Saudi Arabia, India and Greece. Last week, Greece came under a sweltering heat wave with temperatures soaring to 109.4 degrees Fahrenheit (43 degrees Celsius).

The heat in [Greece](#) grew to such a dangerous level that schools were forced to close, and the culture ministry temporarily barred entry to Greece's most popular tourist attraction: the ancient Acropolis site, as well as other archaeological sites. At least [five](#) tourists in Greece have died with most of those deaths assumed to be linked to the heat.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

President Putin Strengthens Ties with North Korea in Official Visit

The Russian leader's visit to the DPRK this week is a reciprocal gesture following North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's visit to Russia in September. Putin will then travel to Vietnam at the invitation of Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong.

Russian President Vladimir Putin approved a new comprehensive strategic partnership agreement with North Korea on Tuesday, [Sputnik](#) reported. While the signature is primarily "symbolic," one analyst told Sputnik, the accepted proposal will "outline the prospects for further cooperation" and will be seen as a global message to others.

Mark Sleboda, a Moscow-based international relations security analyst joined [The Critical Hour](#) on Tuesday to discuss Russia and North Korea's recent partnership.

"Putin has arrived in Pyongyang with a pretty heavy delegation," Sleboda said. "In many ways a bit smaller, but it is also reminiscent of the very large entourage that Putin just went to China with."

"Putin [arrived] to a lot of fanfare," said Sleboda. "Putin even penned an article in North Korea's, the DPRK's daily newspaper and his, Putin is kind of known for his measured, low key, pragmatic, calculated rhetoric, I would say, over the last two decades. This is not that Putin [who] wrote that article."

"He said Russia has continuously supported and will support the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea (DPRK) and the heroic Korean people in their struggle against the treacherous, dangerous and aggressive enemy in their fight for independence, identity and the right to freely choose their development path. He also thanked North Korea for their unwavering support for the Russian special military operation in Ukraine," the security analyst said.

"And he also described Pyongyang as our committed and like-minded supporter ready to confront the ambition of the collective West, which is, he says, to prevent the emergence of a multipolar world order based on justice, mutual respect for sovereignty and consideration of each other's interests. And he noted that the 'rules-based order' the US has been trying to impose on the world [...] is nothing more than a global neocolonial dictatorship that relies on double standards."

The analyst said that Russia's decision to sign a strategic partnership is "reminiscent" of what many Western countries have done with Ukraine. He then added that North Korea has "long been a thorn" in the US side since they began developing nuclear weapons. In May, Russian Security Council Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev warned that Ukraine and its allies would receive a "devastating response" to the possible use of long-range Western weapons on Russian territory.

"Not only, of course, was that recent comment from Medvedev, but last year, South Korea - not openly admitting it, but Korean and US officials have leaked confirming this to the press - that South Korea transferred millions of artillery shells to the US to hand off to Ukraine for use in the conflict there," Sleboda claimed.

Earlier, the Washington Post reported that South Korea had become a larger supplier of 155 mm artillery ammunition to Ukraine than all European countries combined. However, there were suggestions that the shipments were indirect and the ammunition was transferred to the US to allow it to supply its ammunition to Ukraine. South Korea denied direct ammunition deliveries to Ukraine.

"That was instrumental for the Kiev regime to launch its failed NATO proxy summer counteroffensive last year. Those were largely South Korean and also Japanese shells."

"[It's] widely assumed that what North Korea is getting out of all of their cooperation deals with Russia is Russian knowledge, Russian experience, helping with their space program, including the launch of sophisticated satellite reconnaissance. Satellites which will be in aid to their own missile program more than likely. There is, of course, a great deal of dual-use similitude between space program and missile program - missile launch program."

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

'Lying for the Paycheck': Money Sways Public Opinion, Laughs at Democracy

A Harris Poll report published in February showed that a majority (70%) of Americans want to push Ukraine toward a negotiated peace deal with Russia, even as Western media seems prepared to continue beating their war drums.

An [article](#) published in Pearls and Irritations claims that US presidential elections are rigged because mainstream political opinion is shaped by the powerful and wealthy who "control the sources from which Americans have been trained to get their information", writes Caitlin Johnstone, the author of the article.

"So long as the rich and powerful can manipulate public opinion at mass scale through the corporate media, through Hollywood, and through Silicon Valley algorithm manipulation, they can rig elections however they want," she adds.

On Monday, Steve Poikonen, the host of AM Wake Up and Slow News Day joined [Sputnik's The Critical Hour](#) to discuss Johnstone's article.

"[Propaganda during the Nazi regime] would've never been as effective were it not for the intelligentsia and the chattering class and academia reinforcing it over and over and over," Poikonen suggested. "So it's kind of a merger of these things that allows for complete and total narrative control. What Caitlin is talking about is an international conglomerate of people who don't like us, and they have not liked us generationally for a very, very, very long time."

"If you're going to discuss how you may want to extricate yourself from some of it, definitely firing most of the media model is where you would start. These people have proven themselves to be liars. They've proven themselves to be lying for the paycheck. They've proven themselves to be bad at it. It is impossible for me to see how, other than a money laundering operation, any of the major media outlets are still operating right now," Sputnik's guest said.

Johnstone writes that even with a well functioning voting system and no money in politics, capitalism will always allow the wealthy the ability to rig elections by manipulating public opinion. And Sputnik's Garland Nixon suggested that democracy does not exist when those who vote aren't informed.

"George Carlin said it best," Poikonen noted. "Governments don't want a population capable of critical thinking, they want obedient workers - people who are just smart enough to run the machine and just dumb enough to passively accept their situation."

"And that's what the American education system - modeled on the Prussian education system - has been about from about the time Rockefeller had his first textbook printed," he added.

"That was the plan, the deliberate dumbing down and oversaturation with counter reinforcing propaganda, which has become in the era of cable news, certainly now in the digital age, a 24-hour a day, seven day a week onslaught [on] our ability to think critically or rationally about any given situation," the show's guest said.

French Army General Peirre Schill suggested in an interview posted on Sunday that the Russia-Ukraine conflict has proven the flow of wartime information must be controlled "to influence both national and international public opinion," [RT reported](#).

"The army plays a crucial role in the information domain," Schill said. "Without the capacity to convince and to counter adverse influence, any military engagement can fail. The emergence of social networks has reinforced this notion and has significantly accelerated the dissemination of information, whether true or false, while increasing its volume, reach and resonance."

France deployed more than 500 troops to assist Ukraine just four days after the conflict first began. Those forces have grown to over 1,000 soldiers, and aid from France now includes an air defense detachment and a forward command element, RT reported citing Schill.

"We are now going to present General Schill to the rest of the French community, whereupon he's going to tell them how he is going to cage all information and let out the little bits that make him and his buddies and their funders look like good people," Poikonen said sarcastically.

"[They try] if at all possible to criminalize any other opinion that may not reinforce [their view]. And I think that's more or less the crux of what General Schill was getting at, too. They were certainly trying to find some mechanisms by which to reinforce their displeasure at the extreme amount of 'Russian disinformation' that has been leaking into the good French people's ears and eyeballs simply by changing the channel," he added.

Despite a New York jury verdict [convicting former President Donald Trump](#) of 34 counts in his hush-money trial, Trump holds a slight edge in public polls and has a greater chance of winning this year's presidential election than the previous one, [The Washington Post](#) reported in May. However, this year's presidential election has come to be known as the election "most Americans don't want". Sputnik's Wilmer Leon noted the common adage that the "least of two evils is still evil".

"That's exactly what it is. People are seeking reinforcement rather than any sort of enlightenment. They're seeking entertainment when they need to be informed. The landscape that we have for the media is set up for that. That's what cable was and is," said Poikonen. "It's entertainment that brings you some sort of value and the validation and reinforcement that you're seeking. But it's not, nor will it ever be actual news."

'Lying for the paycheck': money sways public opinion, laughs at democracy

Steve Poikonen, the host of AM Wake Up and Slow News Day joined Sputnik's The Critical Hour to discuss Caitlin Johnstone's article, in which she suggested that US presidential elections are rigged because mainstream political opinion is shaped by the powerful and wealthy. "Governments don't want a population capable of critical thinking, they want obedient workers - people who are just smart enough to run the machine and just dumb enough to passively accept their situation," said Poikonen. Johnstone writes that even with a well functioning voting system and no money in politics, capitalism will always allow the wealthy the ability to rig elections by manipulating public opinion. And Sputnik's Garland Nixon suggested that democracy does not exist when those who vote aren't informed. "That was the plan, the deliberate dumbing down and oversaturation with counter reinforcing propaganda, which has become in the era of cable news, certainly now in the digital age, a 24-hour a day, seven day a week onslaught [on] our ability to think critically or rationally about any given situation," the show's guest added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Whelan's Family Says White House Got Tight-Lipped on Efforts to Release Him

WASHINGTON, June 19 (Sputnik) - The White House has begun providing less information to Paul Whelan's family about efforts being made to release the former US Marine who is serving a 16-year prison sentence in Russia for espionage, his family said on Wednesday.

"The reality is that the US does not appear to have made more than one offer to secure Paul's release since then and that was in late 2023. It's become harder to know, though, as the White House has reduced the information they make available to our family," the family said in a statement.

The US government promised to redouble its efforts to release Whelan but does not seem any further ahead than in those days of December 2022.

"False promises. False hopes," the statement said.

The family pointed out that in a recent call with US Ambassador to Russia, Lynne Tracy, Whelan's relatives made it clear that calling his case a "priority" of the White House had caused the word to lose all meaning.

"Paul's case does not appear to be a priority. Or the people who say it is use that word in a very different way from how it's defined. This strong consular support, weak White House support hearkens back to Paul's first 1,000 days," the statement added.

Whelan, a former US Marine, was arrested in Moscow in December 2018 and subsequently sentenced to 16 years in prison on espionage charges. Whelan, who is also a citizen of Canada, Ireland and the United Kingdom, has maintained his innocence, insisting that he came to Russia to attend a friend's wedding.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

CORRECTION - Canadian Sanctions Over Navalny's Death Based on Groundless Accusations – Stepanov

(corrects date in para 6)

WASHINGTON, June 19 (Sputnik) – The latest sanctions imposed on Russian individuals over their alleged ties to the death of Alexey Navalny are based on groundless accusations, Russia's Ambassador to Canada Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.

Earlier in the day, Global Affairs Canada announced that Ottawa had imposed sanctions on thirteen high-ranking employees of Russia's investigation agency, penitentiary service, and police force, over their alleged involvement in Navalny's death.

The measures were also taken in response to what Ottawa considers to be Moscow's gross and systematic violations of human rights.

"With persistence worthy of better application, the Trudeau cabinet continues to come up with new anti-Russian sanctions and groundless accusations against our country based on fake stories," Stepanov said on Tuesday. "This is mostly done to show off to domestic audiences and in front of its allies."

While Russia is not at all bothered by such posturing by the government of Canada, Tuesday's sanctions won't be left unanswered by Moscow, and Canada can expect retaliatory steps on the basis of reciprocity, Stepanov added.

On February 16, the Russian prison service said Navalny died while incarcerated, adding that an investigation into the cause of death was underway.

US President Joe Biden said on the same day that the United States does not know how Navalny died, but nevertheless blamed Russian President Vladimir Putin for it. The Kremlin has called the statements by Biden and other Western politicians outrageous and unacceptable.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Ex-Trump National Security Adviser Urges Resumption of Nuclear Testing

WASHINGTON, June 19 (Sputnik) - Former White House National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien said in an op-ed in the journal Foreign Affairs that the United States should resume nuclear testing in order to help maintain superiority over China and Russia on nuclear weapon capabilities.

"The United States has to maintain technical and numerical superiority to the combined Chinese and Russian nuclear stockpiles. To do so, Washington must test new nuclear weapons for reliability and safety in the real world for the first time since 1992—not just by using computer models," O'Brien wrote in the article published on Tuesday.

O'Brien served as a national security adviser for former President Donald Trump from 2019 to 2021 and is expected to play a key role in a potential second Trump presidency.

O'Brien added that the United States should also resume production of uranium-235 and plutonium-239, which are the primary fissile isotopes of nuclear weapons, if it's difficult to facilitate negotiations on a new arms control deal with China and Russia.

The nuclear triad has become more important in recent years as China and Russia have

modernized their nuclear arsenals, O'Brien noted.

US adversaries have exploited the Biden administration's weaknesses, resulting in the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, O'Brien said, adding that Trump maintained peace through strength.

In Ukraine, O'Brien believes Trump wants a negotiated settlement that ends the conflict, but projects that he will continue to provide lethal aid to Ukraine, financed by European countries, while keeping the door open to diplomacy with Russia. However, O'Brien mentions that Trump would keep Moscow off balance with a degree of "unpredictability."

O'Brien also suggests the United States could further strengthen its economy by easing regulations in the United States that would welcome more investment while cracking down on alleged unfair trade practices by China, including through additional tariffs.

In addition, he also suggested further bolstering key US allies throughout the Pacific to counter China and reimposing a maximum pressure campaign on Iran to curb unrest in the Middle East.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Air Force Failed to Properly Assess Impact of Retiring Some F-22 Raptor Jets - Report

WASHINGTON, June 19 (Sputnik) - The US Air Force is planning to retire its Block 20 tranche of F-22 Raptor interceptors without first documenting and presenting to Congress the full implications of its decision, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) cautioned in a new report.

"The US Air Force proposed to divest - [that is] retire - its F-22 Block 20 aircraft without fully documenting the implications," the report said on Tuesday. "Block 20s are used for training and aren't upgraded with the same capabilities as the rest of the fleet."

Block 20 Raptors have not been upgraded with advanced air-to-ground attack capabilities, more advanced radar, improved cockpit displays and AIM-9X and AIM-12D missiles like the rest of the F-22 fleet, the report said.

"In its proposal to Congress, the Air Force didn't note key details such as how to train without Block 20s or whether they should be upgraded instead of retired. Congress didn't have enough data to make a decision," the report added.

Lockheed Martin, the aircraft's prime contractor, estimated that upgrades would cost at least \$3.3 billion and take approximately 15 years to complete but did not provide supporting data either, according to the report.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Deputy Secretary of State, Indian Officials Discuss Indo-Pacific Security - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 19 (Sputnik) - US Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell met with senior Indian government officials to discuss matters related to security in the Indo-Pacific region, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a press release.

"Deputy Secretary of State Kurt M. Campbell met today with Indian Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra and Deputy National Security Advisor Vikram Misri in New Delhi, India to discuss their enduring commitment to strengthening the U.S.-India partnership," Miller said in the release on Tuesday.

Miller added that both sides discussed ways to strengthen regional and multilateral coordination across the Indo-Pacific region, including through the Quad partnership.

Campbell was in India following Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's reelection

India's National Democratic Alliance won 292 out of 543 seats in the lower house of parliament, effectively securing a legislative majority. Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) received 240 seats, while the main opposition, the Indian National Congress party, received 99 seats.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Canadian Sanctions Over Navalny's Death Based on Groundless Accusations – Stepanov

WASHINGTON, June 19 (Sputnik) – The latest sanctions imposed on Russian individuals over their alleged ties to the death of Alexey Navalny are based on groundless accusations, Russia's Ambassador to Canada Oleg Stepanov told Sputnik.

Earlier in the day, Global Affairs Canada announced that Ottawa had imposed sanctions on thirteen high-ranking employees of Russia's investigation agency, penitentiary service, and police force, over their alleged involvement in Navalny's death.

The measures were also taken in response to what Ottawa considers to be Moscow's gross and systematic violations of human rights.

"With persistence worthy of better application, the Trudeau cabinet continues to come up with new anti-Russian sanctions and groundless accusations against our country based on fake stories," Stepanov said on Tuesday. "This is mostly done to show off to domestic audiences and in front of its allies."

While Russia is not at all bothered by such posturing by the government of Canada, Tuesday's sanctions won't be left unanswered by Moscow, and Canada can expect retaliatory steps on the basis of reciprocity, Stapanov added.

On February 16, 2021, the Russian prison service said Navalny died while incarcerated, adding that an investigation into the cause of death was underway.

US President Joe Biden said on the same day that the United States does not know how Navalny died, but nevertheless blamed Russian President Vladimir Putin for it. The Kremlin has called the statements by Biden and other Western politicians outrageous and unacceptable.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Navy Pays Almost \$212Mln to Replace Flight Control Surfaces on F/A-18 Jets - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, June 19 (Sputnik) - The US Navy is paying Boeing almost \$212 million to repair 11 configurations of flight control surfaces used on its F/A-18 E/F and EA-18G aircraft, the

Defense Department announced.

"The Boeing Company [of] St. Louis, Missouri is being awarded \$211,986,000 for a ... delivery order for the repair of 11 various configurations of flight control surfaces used on the F/A-18 E/F and EA-18G aircrafts," the Defense Department said in a press release on Tuesday.

Work on the project will be performed in Jacksonville, Florida (83%); and St. Louis, Missouri (17%), the release said.

The project is scheduled to take four and a half years with an estimated completion date of December 2028, the release added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Canada Sanctions 13 Individuals Over Alleged Involvement in Navalny's Death - Ministry

(Updates with details in para 4)

WASHINGTON, June 19 (Sputnik) - The government of Canada has imposed a new round of Russia-related sanctions targeting 13 individuals over their alleged involvement in the death of Russian national Alexey Navalny, the country's foreign ministry said in a statement.

"The Honorable Melanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs, today announced that Canada is imposing additional sanctions on 13 individuals under the Special Economic Measures (Russia) Regulations," Global Affairs Canada said on Tuesday.

The sanctions have been imposed on the individuals over their alleged involvement in Navalny's death and what Ottawa considers gross and systematic violations of human rights by Russia, the statement said.

The Canadian government in a separate press release listed the sanctioned individuals, which include Andrey Nikolayevich Egorov, Dmitry Ivanovich Tsymbalenko, Edgar Manvelovich Seropyan, Sergey Vitalievich Patlatyuk, Arslan Nyamynovich Mushayev, Vasily Viktorovich Uzdyayev, Dmitry Viktorovich Sharovarov, Aleksandr Vladimirovich Fyodorov, Ruslan Aleksandrovich Semashko, Sergey Anatolyevich Moroz, Lena Alekseevna Korobka, Leksei Anatolyevich Aleksandrov, and Yulia Mikhailovna Popova.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Northrop Grumman Partners With US Navy in Nine Indo-Pacific Readiness Exercises -Statement

WASHINGTON, June 19 (Sputnik) - Northrop Grumman has collaborated with the US Navy on nine projects to improve operational readiness in the Indo-Pacific region, the company announced in a press release.

"Northrop Grumman collaborated with the US military on nine separate experiments to improve operational readiness in the Indo-Pacific region," the release stated on Tuesday. "These experiments took place during biennial military exercises conducted by US Indo-Pacific Command focusing on joint training in a multi-domain environment."

Capabilities enabled by Northrop Grumman technologies boosted the Joint Force's ability to detect, locate, track, and engage adversarial threats at sea, in the air, on land, and in cyberspace, the company said.

"Some of the Northrop Grumman-built platforms that participated in the exercise include(d) the B-2 Spirit [stealth bomber], E-2D Advanced Hawkeye (airborne warning and surveillance aircraft), Ground/Air Task Oriented Radar (AN/TPS-80 G/ATOR), Integrated Battle Command System (IBCS) and Maritime Targeting Cell (MTC)," the release said.

US warfighters' participation in the field training exercises enabled them to leverage and demonstrate innovative military capabilities and provided an opportunity for Northrop Grumman to gain customer feedback and real-world insight for improved solutions, the release explained.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Admits Final Peace Talks on Ukraine Will Require Russia's Participation - UN Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, June 19 (Sputnik) - The Ukraine Summit in Switzerland was designed for initial discussions, not formal negotiations, as Russia's presence will be necessary for final talks, American Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield said during a UN Security Council meeting on Ukraine.

"But for everything this Summit was, it's important to note what it was not. Namely, this Summit was not a formal negotiation," Thomas-Greenfield said on Tuesday, adding that an end to the conflict would require both Ukraine and Russia at the table "in good faith."

Switzerland hosted a high-level conference on Ukraine at the Buergerstock resort outside of Lucerne from June 15-16.

Russia did not receive an invitation, but even if it had, it would not have attended the conference, Vladimir Khokhlov, the spokesman for the Russian Embassy in Bern, told Sputnik in April.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden 'Humiliating' US on World Stage - Trump

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden is humiliating the United States on the world stage with his behavior during events such as the Group of Seven (G7) summit in Italy last week, former President Donald Trump said during a speech in Wisconsin.

"Joe Biden is humiliating our country on the world stage," Trump said on Tuesday. "He wandered off the G7 in Europe... he looked like he didn't know where the hell he was, but he didn't know where he was."

Trump also criticized an interaction between Biden and Pope Francis, as well as Biden's behavior during a Juneteenth celebration and a campaign event alongside former President Barack Obama.

The White House has dismissed videos appearing to show Biden's alleged cognitive decline as

so-called "cheap fakes" that have been deceptively edited.

Biden, 81, is the oldest president in US history and would be 86 at the end of a potential second term in office.

Earlier this month, a Rasmussen Reports poll found that 57% of likely US voters believe Biden's mental sharpness is in decline.

Last week, Trump campaign spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt said that US adversaries are plotting how to take advantage of Biden's alleged cognitive decline.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Air Force Starts Training New Tactical Wings at Nellis Base This Summer - General

WASHINGTON, June 19 (Sputnik) - The US Air Force is currently building a training plan for its new restructuring in operational combat wings and will start implementing new training programs for it at its Weapons School in Nevada this summer, Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations Lt. Gen. Adrian Spain announced.

"We are standing up the Weapons School and operational tests [for the new training procedures] at Nellis [Air Force Base] this summer," Spain told an Air Force Association podcast on Tuesday.

The Air Force has weapons schools operating at the highest level and will have to use them to the "highest degree for advanced training and operational readiness," Spain said.

The US Air Force Weapons School at Nellis Air Force Base trains tactical experts and leaders to control and exploit air, space and cyber on behalf of the joint force.

Every six months, the Weapons School graduates approximately 150 weapons officers and enlisted tacticians, according to reports.

Spain said the Air Force has to come up with a reasonable number of combat wings that are deployable with reserve units.

"The number we are shooting at is 24 with 16 active duty and eight in rotational reserve. The reserve component [from the US Air Force National Guard] is a huge part of this," Spain said.

Spain leads the development and implementation of policy directly supporting global operations, force management, training and readiness for the Air Force.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UN Participating in Swiss Conference on Ukraine 'Unacceptable' Under UN Charter - Nebenzia

UNITED NATIONS, June 19 (Sputnik) - Russia regrets that the United Nations participated in the conference on Ukraine in Switzerland under an observer status, an act contrary to the UN Charter, Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia said.

"We regret that at these gatherings there was the participation of representatives of the UN Secretariat, calling it participation as an observer. This is unacceptable conduct under Article 100 of the UN Charter," Nebenzia said on Tuesday during a UN Security Council meeting on

Ukraine.

Article 100 of the UN Charter stipulates that the UN secretary-general will not seek or receive instructions from any government or from any other authority external to the organization in performing their duties.

The UN secretary-general and staff will refrain from any action which might reflect on their position as international officials responsible only to the United Nations, according to Article 100 of the UN Charter.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Colorado Shooter Sentenced to 190 Years in Prison for Club Q Attack - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 19 (Sputnik) - Anderson Lee Aldrich was sentenced to 55 concurrent life sentences and an additional 190 years in prison without parole for the 2022 attack at Club Q in Colorado, the Justice Department's Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Kristen Clarke said during a press briefing.

"Today, Anderson Lee Aldrich was sentenced to 55 life sentences running concurrently, plus 190 years without the possibility of parole for the brazen and calculated attack against innocent people at Club Q on November 19 of 2022," Clarke said Thursday.

Aldrich pleaded guilty federal charges related to the killing five people and injuring 19 others during a shooting at a gay nightclub in November 2022. The victims were between the ages of 22 and 40.

A state judge in Colorado had already sentenced Aldrich to life in prison plus 2,208 years without the possibility of parole.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, June 19 (Sputnik) -

PUTIN VISIT TO NORTH KOREA

* Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in North Korea on a state and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un greeted him at the airport, a Sputnik correspondent reported on Tuesday.

* Putin's visit emphasizes the global nature of security for NATO and the importance of partnering with Asia, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday that it is standard for agreements like the bilateral security deal between the United States and Ukraine to include language allowing for termination of the agreement.

* The Ukrainian military have lost up to 455 soldiers in clashes with Russian army group West

in the past 24 hours, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

WESTERN AID TO UKRAINE

- * The Swiss parliament's committee on security policy wants to authorize the reexport of Swiss arms to Ukraine, despite the country's neutral status, according to a statement published on the parliament's website on Tuesday.
- * A more fair cost sharing on Ukraine among NATO allies and better coordination of aid to Kiev will reduce the burden on the United States, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said.
- * Italy might send long-range missiles to Ukraine as part of the ninth military aid package, which is currently being prepared, Italian newspaper Il Fatto Quotidiano reported.

ARMS CONTROL

- * Russia takes a very responsible approach toward nuclear deterrence issues and it is necessary to clarify some parameters for the situations described in the nuclear doctrine, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said on Tuesday.
- * NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg's statements on the possibility of putting the alliance's nuclear forces on alert contains some threats, Ryabkov said.

NEW NATO SECRETARY GENERAL

- * NATO is close to agreeing on Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte's candidacy as the new secretary-general of the alliance, incumbent Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said on Tuesday.
- * Hungary is ready to support Rutte's bid for a NATO secretary general position, Prime Minister Viktor Orban said.

MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

- * Israel approved and validated operational plans for an offensive in Lebanon as part of the situational assessment carried out on Tuesday, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said.
- * Israel is "very close" to a decision to "change the rules" against the Hezbollah movement and Lebanon, Foreign Minister Israel Katz said.
- * The United States, like other countries, does not want to see a spillover of the Middle East conflict, Pentagon spokesperson Pat Ryder said on Tuesday, commenting on a potential Israeli offensive in Lebanon.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Canada Sanctions 13 Individuals Over Alleged Involvement in Navalny's Death - Ministry

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - The government of Canada has imposed a new round of Russia-related sanctions targeting 13 individuals over their alleged involvement in the death of Russian national Alexey Navalny, the country's foreign ministry said on Tuesday.

"The Honorable Melanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs, today announced that Canada is imposing additional sanctions on 13 individuals under the Special Economic Measures (Russia)

Regulations," Global Affairs Canada said in a statement.

The sanctions have been imposed on the individuals for their alleged involvement in Navalny's death and in what Ottawa considers to be gross and systematic violations of human rights, the statement said.

The sanctioned individuals are high-ranking employees of Russia's investigation agency, penitentiary service and police force, the statement said.

Canada alleges the individuals participated in the alleged 2020 nerve agent poisoning of Navalny as well as his arrest and detention in January 2021.

On February 16, 2021, the Russian prison service said Navalny died while incarcerated, adding that an investigation into the cause of death was underway.

US President Joe Biden said on the same day that the United States does not know how Navalny died, but nevertheless blamed Russian President Vladimir Putin for it.

The Kremlin has called the statements by Biden and other Western politicians - outrageous and unacceptable.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Senate Republican Blocks Attempt to Fast Track Bump Stock Ban

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - Republican US Senator Pete Ricketts blocked an attempt by Democratic colleague Martin Heinrich on Tuesday to fast track legislation that would ban bump stocks, following a US Supreme Court decision overturning a regulatory ban on the firearm accessories.

Heinrich sought to pass the legislation by unanimous consent, to which Ricketts objected.

The US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) reclassified semi-automatic firearms with bump stocks as machineguns, after the 2017 Mandalay Bay shooting. Last week, the Supreme Court ruled that the ATF violated its statutory authority in imposing the ban.

Bump stocks do not alter the basic mechanisms of a firearm, but enable users to more easily utilize a technique that harnesses the recoil of a gun to rapidly shoot; it is possible to bump fire a gun without a bump stock.

Former US President Donald Trump was a vocal proponent of a bump stock ban. Current officeholder Joe Biden also criticized the Supreme Court's decision and expressed support for banning bump stocks.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Canada Sanctions 13 Individuals Over Alleged Involvement in Navalny's Death - Ministry (Updates with more details, background in paras 4-8)

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - The government of Canada has imposed a new round of Russia-related sanctions targeting 13 individuals over their alleged involvement in the death of Russian national Alexey Navalny, the country's foreign ministry said on Tuesday.

"The Honorable Melanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs, today announced that Canada is imposing additional sanctions on 13 individuals under the Special Economic Measures (Russia) Regulations," Global Affairs Canada said in a statement.

The sanctions have been imposed on the individuals for their alleged involvement in Navalny's death and in what Ottawa considers to be gross and systematic violations of human rights, the statement said.

The sanctioned individuals are high-ranking employees of Russia's investigation agency, penitentiary service and police force, the statement said.

Canada alleges the individuals participated in the alleged 2020 nerve agent poisoning of Navalny as well as his arrest and detention in January 2021.

On February 16, 2021, the Russian prison service said Navalny died while incarcerated, adding that an investigation into the cause of death was underway.

US President Joe Biden said on the same day that the United States does not know how Navalny died, but nevertheless blamed Russian President Vladimir Putin for it.

The Kremlin has called the statements by Biden and other Western politicians - outrageous and unacceptable.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Admits That Dams in Pacific Northwest Hurt Native Tribes, Environment - Interior Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - The United States for the first time admitted that dams built in the country's Pacific Northwest harmed the surrounding environment and Native American tribes living in the region, the US Department of the Interior said on Tuesday.

"The construction of large multipurpose, hydroelectric dams throughout the Columbia River Basin beginning at the turn of the 20th century blocked anadromous fish from migrating into certain reaches of the Basin, flooded thousands of acres of land, sacred sites, and ancestral burial grounds, and transformed the ecosystem," the Interior Department said in a press release.

According to the Interior Department, this acknowledged marks the first time that the US government has comprehensively detailed the harms that federal dams have had and continue to inflict on tribes in the Pacific Northwest.

The release notes that 11 different dams along the Columbia River Basin in the Pacific Northwest of the United States have harmed a total of eight different Native American tribes, many of which lost access to fish in their communities.

The Interior Department said these losses have had traumatic impacts on tribal communities, including by altering their traditional diets, depriving tribal members of the ability to exercise traditional ways of life, and fundamentally changing how tribal members teach and raise children in the cultural and spiritual beliefs that center around these fish.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Boeing Looking Into New Claims That Faulty Parts Used on Aircraft Hidden From FAA - CEO

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - Boeing is investigating new claims that faulty parts were used in aircraft and hidden from the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), company CEO David Calhoun said on Tuesday.

Earlier in the day, US Senator Richard Blumenthal said a Boeing employee told congressional investigators that the company lost track of hundreds of faulty parts and may have ended up installing them in its 737 MAX airplanes. The Boeing employee said company supervisors ordered him to hide the faulty parts from the FAA and are now subjecting him to retaliation.

"I read that complaint this morning... and I followed up. It had been received in our system and that the quality team has been and is looking," Calhoun told the US Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee.

Calhoun also said that Boeing will immediately crack down on employees who are involved in mismanagement on the production line.

Boeing has taken action against employees engaging in retaliation against whistleblowers and will continue to do so, Calhoun added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

China Calls on US to Work on Ending War in Ukraine, Achieving Peace - Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, June 18 (Sputnik) - China calls on the United States to stop its provocations related to the conflict in Ukraine and work toward achieving peace, Chinese Deputy Ambassador to the UN Geng Shuang said on Tuesday.

"We in particular, call on the United States to work for an early end of the war and for the restoration of peace," Shuang said during a UN Security Council meeting on Ukraine.

Instead of sabotaging prospects for peace, the US should end its provocations, he added.

On Friday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Russia would immediately cease fire and begin negotiations with Ukraine after Kiev withdraws troops from the regions incorporated into Russia in 2022 and officially abandons plans to join NATO.

The US and its Western allies have provided hundreds of billions of dollars worth of aid to Ukraine since the start of Russia's special military operation in February 2022. The Kremlin has consistently warned against the West's continued arms deliveries to Ukraine, saying that they only prolong the conflict.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has warned that any cargo containing weapons for Ukraine will become a legitimate target for Russian strikes.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Canada Sanctions 13 Individuals Over Alleged Involvement in Navalny's Death - Ministry

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - The government of Canada has imposed a new round of Russia-related sanctions targeting 13 individuals over their alleged involvement in the death of Russian national Alexey Navalny, the country's foreign ministry said on Tuesday.

"The Honorable Melanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs, today announced that Canada is imposing additional sanctions on 13 individuals under the Special Economic Measures (Russia) Regulations," Global Affairs Canada said in a statement.

The sanctions have been imposed on the individuals over their alleged involvement in Navalny's death and what Ottawa considers gross and systematic violations of human rights by Russia, the statement said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Pentagon Says 'No One Wants Wider Regional War' Amid Potential Israel Offensive in Lebanon

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) – The United States, like other countries, does not want to see a spillover of the Middle East conflict, Pentagon spokesperson Pat Ryder said on Tuesday, commenting on a potential Israeli offensive in Lebanon.

"I am not going to get into hypotheticals or speculate on what might happen, other than to say, no one wants to see a wider regional war, and we will stay focused on that," Ryder told reporters.

Ryder emphasized that the US is working with its partners, including Israel, to encourage a diplomatic resolution.

Ryder pointed out that the US is concerned about tensions and will continue to work on calming the situation. "Preventing a wider regional conflict has been a primary focus for this department and the US government," he said.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said earlier in the day that Israel approved and validated operational plans for an offensive in Lebanon as part of a situational assessment carried out on Tuesday.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

White House Says No Other Pauses in Israel Munition Shipments - Press Secretary

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - The White House said on Tuesday that there were no other pauses in place of shipments to Israel other than the suspension of a single munitions shipment in May.

"We continue to have these constructive discussions with Israelis for the release of that particular shipment... There are no other pauses or holds in place," White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said at a press briefing.

On May 8, the United States said it had paused a high payload shipment of heavy bombs to Israel and was reviewing other near-term shipments because of a possible Israel ground offensive in Rafah.

The suspended shipment contained thousands of 2,000-pound and 500-pound bombs. Jean-Pierre said there were no updates on the matter.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Boeing Faces Supply Constraints That Have Not Been Resolved Today - CEO

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - US aerospace firm Boeing continues to face supply constraints that have yet to be resolved, Boeing CEO David Calhoun said in testimony to Congress on Tuesday.

"As we try to respond to unbelievable demand for airplanes out there, we have a supply constraint that is very real, and it is not resolved today," Calhoun told the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee.

The post-pandemic moment in the aerospace industry has been unbelievably difficult to navigate, Calhoun said, adding that the company lost many experienced employees.

Calhoun underscored that the company's supply chain is experiencing "enormous" post-pandemic turnover.

In response to reports that Boeing used questionable titanium from China in some of its aircraft, Calhoun said the company did not purchase that titanium directly from the Chinese supplier, and they were not aware until later that it had been acquired by one of the company's subcontractors.

Earlier on Tuesday, US Senator Richard Blumenthal said a Boeing employee told congressional investigators that the company lost track of hundreds of faulty parts and may have ended up installing them in its 737 Max planes. The Boeing employee said company supervisors ordered him to hide the faulty parts from the Federal Aviation Administration and are now subjecting him to retaliation.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Boston Police Report Statewide 9-11 Outage in Massachusetts

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - Emergency telephone number system 911 is currently down in Massachusetts, the Boston Police Department (BPD) said on Tuesday.

"9-11 is currently down statewide," the police said in a statement.

In case of an emergency, individuals should pull a Fire Box or contact their local BPD station for assistance, the police advised.

"Boston Police will be patrolling with their blue lights activated for high visibility," the statement said.

The statement added that individuals needing assistance should approach an officer. It also provided a list of phone numbers and names of local stations.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Debt to Rise to 122% of GDP in 2034 - Congressional Budget Office

(Adds details on budget deficit in paras 4, 5)

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - The US federal debt held by the public is projected to rise to 122% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2034, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) said Tuesday.

"Debt held by the public rises from 99 percent of GDP this year to 122 percent in 2034, surpassing its previous high of 106 percent of GDP," the CBO said in an updated forecast to its Budget and Economic Outlook.

The federal budget deficit for fiscal 2024 was forecast at \$1.9 trillion by the CBO.

The cumulative deficit over the 2025-2034 period is larger by \$2.1 trillion or 10%, the CBO said. The largest contributor to the cumulative increase was the incorporation of recently enacted legislation into CBO's baseline, according to the outlook.

"A \$1.6 trillion increase [is] attributable to legislative changes," the agency said in the updated forecast, adding that it particularly increased projections of discretionary spending to account for the "\$95 billion in funding for aid to Ukraine, Israel, and countries in the Indo-Pacific region under the 2024 emergency supplemental appropriations act."

The CBO said GDP growth for this year has, meanwhile, been forecast to slow to 2% from 3.1% in calendar year 2023, the CBO said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Debt to Rise to 122% of GDP in 2034 - Congressional Budget Office

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - The US federal debt held by the public is projected to rise to 122% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2034, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) said Tuesday.

"Debt held by the public rises from 99 percent of GDP this year to 122 percent in 2034, surpassing its previous high of 106 percent of GDP," the CBO said in an update to the Budget and Economic Outlook.

The federal budget deficit for fiscal 2024 is forecast at \$1.9 trillion by the CBO.

GDP growth for this year has, meanwhile, been forecast to slow to 2% this year from 3.1% in calendar year 2023, the CBO said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

One in Four Canadians May be Living Under MDI Poverty-Level Standard – Food Banks
Canada

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) – Over one in four Canadians might currently be living under the Material Deprivation Index (MDI) poverty-level standard, Food Banks Canada (FBC) said in a report on Tuesday.

“As shown ... 25 percent of Canadians likely have a poverty-level standard of living according to a material deprivation threshold of two items or more,” the FBC report said. “Seventeen percent are over the three-item deprivation threshold and are therefore even more likely to be experiencing a poverty-level standard of living.”

The incidence of poverty throughout Canada being estimated using the MDI measures is significantly higher in all provinces than the data collected through the Market Basket Measure (MBM), the report said. Nationally, the poverty rate was 25.1% using the MDI, contrasting sharply with 7.4% using the MBM.

The MDI, an indicator from the European Union's Statistics on Income and Living Conditions, assesses the inability to afford essential or desirable items, distinguishing between individuals unable to afford certain goods and services and those who lack them due to preference or necessity, the report stated, citing Eurostat.

The report comes amid increasing affordability challenges affecting Canadians. In its 2023 Hunger Count Report, FBC noted that nearly two million Canadians visited food banks across the country in March of that year, setting another record and marking a 32% increase over a year. Children made up one-third of food bank clients.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Deepening Russia-North Korea Cooperation ‘Should Be of Great Concern’ - White House

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) – The deepening cooperation between Russia and North Korea should be of great concern to all who are interested in peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday.

"You know, deepening cooperation between Russia and the DPRK [North Korea] is a trend that should be of great concern to anyone interested in maintaining peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula," Jean-Pierre said during a press briefing.

The United States does not believe that any country should give Russian President Vladimir Putin a platform to promote a "war of aggression" that is currently seen in Ukraine.

Earlier on Tuesday, Putin arrived in North Korea on an official state visit.

A Sputnik correspondent reported that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un greeted Putin upon arrival at the airport.

Putin will hold negotiations in various formats, mainly on Wednesday, but an informal meeting between the two leaders has also been planned.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Talks on Putin's Ukraine Peace Terms Should Be Free From US 'Dictates' - Antonov

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - The United States must abandon the policy of imposing its will on others and abstain from interfering in any discussions regarding Russian President Vladimir Putin's peace proposal on Ukraine, Ambassador in Washington Anatoly Antonov told Newsweek.

"Conversation on the above mentioned issues should be conducted without 'imperial' dictates and orders from the White House," Antonov said in a statement. "It is high time the United States recognized the futility of constant pursuit to enforce its will on all countries. Realized that it will no longer be possible to deter the growing shift towards multipolarity."

On Friday, Putin said that Russia would immediately cease fire and begin negotiations with Ukraine after Kiev withdraws troops from the territory of Russia's new regions and officially abandons plans to join NATO. Volodymyr Zelenskyy has called Moscow's proposal an ultimatum, while his adviser Mykhailo Podolyak alleged that the new Russian initiative did not contain a "real peace proposal."

"Russia pursues dialogue and peace, the parameters of which should not be discussed in a hurry, just for the sake of it, as well as pretty propaganda photos," Antonov said. "We remain ready for a serious, thoughtful conversation. We don't set any deadlines."

Putin's proposal is not an ultimatum, but a peace initiative based on the realities on the ground, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Inflation Fueled by Jobs, Spending, Record Stock Market - Federal Reserve Official

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - US inflation remains above the Federal Reserve's target of 2% per year due to stronger than expected jobs growth, spending and a stock market at record highs, Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond President Tom Barkin said on Tuesday.

"The dynamic underpinning spending [for inflation] is [the] strong jobs market and stock market at record levels," Barkin said, adding that consumer spending is also "still solid."

Barkin made the comment in a live-streamed interview with Market News International after newly released data showed on Tuesday a virtual stalling in US retail sales for a second straight month in May.

Retail sales grew by just 0.1% last month, the US Commerce Department reported, versus economists' forecasts for a 0.3% growth. April's figure, originally reported to be flat, was revised down to show a minus growth of 0.2% instead.

Compared with last month's report, retail sales expanded at 0.3% in May 2023, versus economists' expectations of a 0.1% decline. A year prior to that, in the recovery days of the COVID-19 pandemic, retail sales grew by 0.9% in May 2022.

Despite the stalling in retail sales, Barkin said inflation had been held up by growth across the economy, including in the stock market.

"The labor market numbers are very strong but inflation is still not at target," Barkin said. "A lot of economic signals have not worked so well this cycle."

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

On Wall Street, the S&P 500 index for the top 500 US stocks notched its fifth all-time peak in six days on Monday. The technology-heavy Nasdaq Composite index, meanwhile, hit its sixth-straight record high close.

The May reading for the US Consumer Price Index (CPI), released a week ago, indicated that inflation had cooled slightly to 3.3% per annum from 3.4% in April, but still well above the Fed's 2%-per-year target.

"I need to see sustainment and broadening in disinflation to give me confidence that we are heading back to 2% [on inflation]," Barkin said.

Earlier on Tuesday, Federal Reserve Bank of New York President John Williams refuted suggestions that 3% per year has become the "new norm" for US inflation and reiterated that the Fed is absolutely committed to achieving the 2% target.

Fed officials in recent weeks, led by Chairman Jerome Powell, have indicated that the central bank will leave US interest rates at two-decade highs if the economy and inflation do not cool enough to warrant a cut.

The current range for interest rates, at between 5.25% and 5.5%, is at the highest level since 2002, compared with the pre-pandemic low of between zero and 0.25%.

The stronger-than-expected inflation situation has prevented the Fed from lowering rates for almost a year now - since July 2023 - despite expressing its intent on many occasions to cut. The central bank has four more opportunities for a rate cut before the year ends: July 31, September 18, November 7 and December 18.

Barkin hinted that the Fed may have just one hike this year as opposed to its initial forecast of four.

"Scenarios where [there is] one rate cut [and] then [a] hold may be sensible," Barkin added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UN 'Concerned' Over Armed Activities in Gaza Amid US-Israel Arms Talks- Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, June 18 (Sputnik) - The United Nation's concern regarding armed activities is well-documented and remains steadfast, UN Spokesman Farhan Haq said on Tuesday.

"Our concern about all armed activities is on the record and that continues," Haq said during a briefing when asked if the United Nations is worried about the potential lifting of US arms restrictions on Israel.

On Tuesday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that US Secretary of State Antony Blinken assured him that the administration is diligently working to eliminate obstacles to the further supply of weapons and ammunition to Israel.

"It is inconceivable that in the past few months, the administration has been withholding weapons and ammunition to Israel," Netanyahu said in a video message posted on X.

The death toll from Israeli strikes on the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023, when the Israel-Hamas conflict escalated, has increased to 37,347 killed Palestinians while another

85,372 Palestinians have been injured, the enclave's health ministry said on Monday.

On October 7, 2023, Palestinian movement Hamas attacked Israel from Gaza, killing some 1,100 Israeli military personnel and civilians and abducting some 240 others. Israel launched strikes, ordered a complete blockade of Gaza, and started a ground invasion into the Palestinian enclave with the declared goal of eliminating Hamas fighters and rescuing the hostages.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Official Traveling to Japan, Netherlands to Urge Crackdown on Chinese Chips - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - The United States is sending a senior official to Japan and the Netherlands to urge the countries to impose restrictions on companies tied to the Chinese semiconductor sector, Bloomberg reported on Tuesday.

US Under Secretary of Commerce for Industry and Security Alan Estevez will meet with counterparts in the two countries to pressure them to restrict the activities of Dutch company ASML Holding NV and Japanese company Tokyo Electron Ltd in China, the report said, citing people familiar with the matter.

Machines made by ASML and Tokyo Electron are used to produce parts for high-bandwidth memory chips, the report said.

Estevez will urge Dutch and Japanese officials to crack down on China's ability to produce chips used in artificial intelligence (AI) technology by tightening restrictions on the companies' ability to maintain and repair their equipment, the report said.

The Biden administration is turning to allies to bolster its efforts to hinder China's semiconductor industry, the report said. However, the Dutch and Japanese governments have been reluctant to cave in to US pressure, the report said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trump Campaign Accuses Biden of Granting Amnesty for Votes - Statement

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump's campaign on Tuesday accused President Joe Biden of granting mass amnesty to migrants to secure votes after the White House said it would grant legal status to 500,000 undocumented spouses of citizens.

"Biden only cares about one thing — power — and that's why he is giving mass amnesty and citizenship to hundreds of thousands of illegals who he knows will ultimately vote for him and the Open Border Democrat Party," the Trump campaign's National Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said in the statement.

According to the Trump campaign statement, Biden's amnesty plan will increase migrant crime, drain millions from taxpayers, overburden public services, and divert funds from Social Security and Medicare for American seniors to support immigrants.

"Biden has created another invitation for illegal immigration through his mass amnesty order,"

the statement added.

The White House earlier on Tuesday said Biden would announce new actions to grant legal status to as many as 500,000 spouses of US citizens who have been in the country for 10 or more years and about 50,000 noncitizen children under the age of 21 whose parent is married to a US citizen.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

NASA Delaying Starliner's Return to Earth by 4 Days to Assess Problems - Program Chief

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - NASA officials have decided to delay the return flight to earth of the troubled Boeing Starliner spacecraft with US astronauts Barry Gilmore and Sunita Williams by four days from June 22 to Wednesday, June 26, NASA Commercial Crew Program Manager Steve Stich told a press conference at Kennedy Space Center in Florida on Tuesday.

"We are now targeting an undock and return no earlier than June 26," Stich said.

Stich said the NASA team needs more time to look at the data and do some analysis before making the return attempt.

He added that the Starliner was now scheduled to land at the US military's White Plains base in the New Mexico desert on Wednesday.

"It is landing at White Sands Space Harbor on Wednesday, June 26 at approximately 4:51 am Eastern [Daylight] Time," he said.

The Starliner docked with the International Space Station (ISS) on its first crewed mission on June 5 but experienced problems with five of its 28 thrusters and reported at least four separate helium leaks. NASA officials said the leaks were well within the acceptable margins of safety and that four of the thrusters had failed due to software problems that they had resolved.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Blinken Says Does Not Think Iran, Hezbollah Want to Broaden Gaza Conflict

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday that he does not think Iran, Lebanon and Hezbollah want to see the conflict in Gaza broaden into a regional war, and the United States continues diplomatic work to keep it contained.

"I don't think any of the potential belligerents actually want to see a war or conflict spread,"

Blinken said during a press conference in Washington alongside the NATO Secretary-General.

"I don't believe Israel does. I don't believe Hezbollah does. Lebanon certainly doesn't because it would suffer the most. I don't believe that Iran does."

However, Blinken noted that the escalating tensions between Israel and Hezbollah create potential risk that the conflict will spread.

US diplomatic efforts are ongoing to keep a new front from opening on Israel's border with Lebanon, Blinken added.

The death toll from Israeli strikes on the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023, when the

Israel-Hamas conflict escalated, has increased to 37,347, while 85,372 others have suffered injuries, the enclave's health ministry said on Monday.

US Special Envoy and Coordinator for International Energy Affairs Amos Hochstein arrived in the region this week for talks with senior officials on the need to prevent a war between Israel and Lebanon.

Hochstein last year brokered a maritime boundary agreement between Israel and Lebanon, paving the way for gas exploration in the area.

On October 7, 2023, Palestinian movement Hamas launched a large-scale rocket attack against Israel and breached the border, attacking both civilian neighborhoods and military bases. Nearly 1,200 people in Israel were killed and some 240 others abducted during the attack. Israel launched retaliatory strikes, ordered a complete blockade of Gaza, and started a ground incursion into the Palestinian enclave with the declared goal of eliminating Hamas fighters and rescuing the hostages.

The death toll from Israeli strikes on the Gaza Strip has reached at least 37,347, while 85,372 others have suffered injuries, the enclave's health ministry said on Monday.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Continues to Review Shipment of 2,000-Pound Bombs to Israel - Blinken

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - The United States continues to maintain a hold on the shipment of 2,000-pound bombs to Israel while it reviews concerns about their potential use in densely populated areas, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday.

"We are continuing to review one shipment that President [Joe] Biden has talked about with regard to 2,000-pound bombs because of our concerns about their use in a densely populated area like Rafah," Blinken said during a press conference alongside NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg.

All other US security aid for Israel continues to be delivered uninterrupted, Blinken said.

US security aid for Israel provides a strong deterrent that helps prevent more conflict and the United States remains committed to providing such support, Blinken added.

The death toll from Israeli strikes on the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023, when the Israel-Hamas conflict escalated, has increased to 37,347 killed Palestinians while more 85,372 Palestinians have been injured, the enclave's health ministry said on Monday.

On October 7, 2023, Palestinian movement Hamas attacked Israel from Gaza killing some 1,100 Israeli military personnel and civilians and abducting some 240 others. Israel launched strikes, ordered a complete blockade of Gaza and started a ground invasion into the Palestinian enclave with the declared goal of eliminating Hamas fighters and rescuing the hostages.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

NY Court of Appeals Dismisses Trump's Appeal of Gag Order in 'Hush Money' Case

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - The New York Court of Appeals on Tuesday dismissed former US President Donald Trump's appeal of the gag order in his New York criminal case, saying that it involves no substantial constitutional question.

"Appeal dismissed without costs, by the Court sua sponte, upon the ground that no substantial constitutional question is directly involved," the court said in its decision.

In late May, a jury found Trump guilty on 34 charges of falsifying business records related to payments made to adult film actress Stormy Daniels and others.

Trump has maintained that the payments to Daniels, former Playboy model Karen McDougal and a former doorman at Trump Tower were all made as part of standard non-disclosure agreements and is seeking to appeal his conviction.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Air Force Creating Training Plan For Tactical Wings Model - Deputy Chief of Staff

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - The US Air Force is building up a new training plan for its redeployment of resources in tactical air wings integrated into the Joint Force, Deputy Air Force Chief of Staff for Operations Lieutenant General Adrian Spain told an Air Force Association podcast on Tuesday.

"We are building up the training plan for the Air Force task forces," he said.

As part of the redeployment, the Air Force will temporarily reduce in numbers by around 100 aircraft as it phases out obsolescent aircraft and brings in smaller numbers of new ones, Spain acknowledged.

"A slight temporary reduction in numbers in the fighter force was planned, and deemed an acceptable risk. ...We can't do all of the things all of the time. ..There is an insatiable demand from combat commanders, [for Air Force operational support]," he said.

The Air Force aims to complete 1.6 million to 1.7 million flying hours per year but because of a lack of enough aircraft, pilots, and resources, it has not executed more than 1.1 million flying hours in a very long time, Spain acknowledged.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Blinken Says 'Standard' for Security Deal With Ukraine to Include Termination Clause

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Tuesday that it is standard for agreements like the bilateral security deal between the United States and Ukraine to include language allowing for termination of the agreement.

"Any international agreement, of one kind or another, always has a mechanism in it for one of the parties to pull out of that agreement. That's standard operating fair in any of these agreements," Blinken said during a press conference alongside NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg.

Article XI of the agreement signed by US President Joe Biden and Ukrainian counterpart

Volodymyr Zelenskyy allows either party to terminate the deal after written notification through diplomatic channels.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Air Force Test Launches Mk21 Reentry Vehicle for Sentinel ICBM System

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - A Mk21A reentry vehicle being developed for the Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) program has been test launched in California, the US Air Force (USAF) announced on Tuesday.

"An operational test launch of an unarmed Mk21A reentry vehicle was launched from Vandenberg Space Force Base aboard a Minotaur I rocket, Monday, June 17, at 11:01 p.m. Pacific Time (2:01 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time)," the US Air Force said in a press release.

Lockheed Martin is developing and manufacturing the Mk21A RV for the USAF, the release said.

"The Mk21A program is currently in early development and overseen by the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center," the release added.

The Minotaur series of launch vehicles is based on the Peacekeeper and Minuteman rocket motors integrated by Northrop Grumman, according to the release.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Congressman Massie Says Reintroduced Bill to End Federal Taxes on Tips

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - US Congressman Thomas Massie said on Tuesday that he and other House Republican lawmakers reintroduced a bill to end federal taxes on tips.

Massie, Congressman Matt Gaetz and Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene reintroduced the bill, dubbed the Tax Free Tips Act, Massie said in a statement via social media platform X.

The legislation was initially introduced by former US Congressman Ron Paul. Former US President and presumptive 2024 Republican Party presidential nominee Donald Trump has also expressed support for ending federal taxes on tips.

"Both Ron Paul and Trump are right. Taxes on tips should end," Massie's statement said.

The US Internal Revenue Service (IRS) considers tips as federally taxable income. The IRS recommends that workers track their tips and report tips to their employers for tax withholding.

Workers may be subject to a penalty equal to 50% of taxes owed on unreported tips, according to the IRS.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

State Dept. Says Imperative Not to Reinforce China's Near-Monopoly on Critical Minerals

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - The United States sees it as a top priority for the world not to maintain China's dominance in critical minerals, US Assistant Secretary of State Geoffrey Pyatt said on Tuesday.

Pyatt pointed out that the world is going to need "massively increased volumes" of cobalt, lithium, nickel, copper, and other rare minerals.

"Our first imperative is to ensure that China's near-monopoly is not reinforced on those critical energy minerals," Pyatt told reporters.

Pyatt emphasized the importance of countries like Angola in this regard.

"But Angola has not done a lot to develop those resources," he said, adding that the government in Luanda is now very interested in opportunities for developing processing industries.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) said in May that the concentration of critical minerals in particular countries, like China, heightens the risk to global supplies. The IEA also warned that a sharp decline in prices of critical minerals is masking future supply strains.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UPDATE: World Needs 'Lot of Non-Russian Gas Resources in Years Ahead' - US State Dept.

(Updates with an additional comment, more details and background in paras 5-11)

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - The international community needs "a lot" of energy resources that do not come from Russia in the coming years, US Assistant Secretary of State Geoffrey Pyatt said on Tuesday.

"We are in a world which is going to need a lot of non-Russian gas resources in the years ahead," Pyatt told reporters.

Pyatt accused Russia of weaponizing its significant gas resources and expressed confidence that European countries will never consider Russia a reliable supplier of energy.

"So those supplies need to be replaced even as we continue to phase out our fossil energy and accelerate the deployment of the global sources," Pyatt said.

The assistant secretary of state underscored the importance of gas, particularly liquefied natural gas (LNG), in changing the global energy system.

"We view gas, especially LNG, coupled with investments and monitoring, as a contributor to energy transition to a fully decarbonized energy system, which is what we seek as fast as possible," Pyatt said.

Russia has repeatedly denied all accusations that it has weaponized its energy resources in the conduct of its foreign policy.

On Sunday, US media reported that Russia last month overtook the United States in providing gas supplies to Europe despite significant attempts by authorities to block the supplies.

In May, Russian gas and LNG accounted for 15% of total supplies to the European Union, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Macedonia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The share of US LNG supplies amounted to 14% - the lowest level since August 2022, according to the data.

Reducing energy dependence on Russia became one of the European Union's top priorities after the start of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine in February 2022, when the bloc

decided to phase out its fuel imports from Russia.

The decision led has led to sharp increases in gas prices in the European Union and the bloc has presented several measures to address the situation, including joint purchasing, price caps and increased energy conservation efforts as well as increasing imports from the United States.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Air Force Has Shortfall of 1,800 Pilots For Operations - Deputy Chief of Staff

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - The US Air Force now has a shortage of 1,800 operational, trained pilots at any one time that has more than doubled over the past decade, Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations Lieutenant General Adrian Spain told an Air Force Association podcast on Tuesday,

"[There is still] brittleness in the pilot shortage," Spain said. "We have a shortage of 1,800 pilots." That number has more than doubled from 10 to 15 years ago, when the figure stood at 800 needed additional pilots, he said.

Every year, historically 45% of pilots elect to stay on for extended duty when their tour and commitment end, and the Air Force is seeking to recruit a larger number of volunteers to stay on to help reduce the shortfall, Spain explained.

"We have seen a force structure of 1,300 pilots per year plus or minus 100. We are working with looking at 1,500 pilots [operational at any one time] as the goal," he said.

Spain said a contributing cause to the Air Force's inability to train more pilots was a lack of sufficient numbers of T-6 training aircraft due to production bottlenecks.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Ukrainian Journalists Complain About Increasing Government Crackdown - NYT

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - Ukrainian journalists are facing increasing restrictions and pressure from the government in Kiev to bolster the narratives of leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy, The New York Times reported on Tuesday, citing Ukrainian reporters.

Managers of Ukrainian state news agency Ukrinform distributed a list of opposition figures and elected officials that are "undesirable" to quote in stories, the report said, citing a reviewed copy of the blacklist.

One of the agency's reporters, Yuriy Stryhun, publicly spoke about the blacklist. One day after speaking out about the matter, Stryhun received a notice to renew his draft registration, the report said, citing Stryhun.

Stryhun reportedly said that the timing of the notice was "suspicious" but that he had no proof it was linked to his coverage of the blacklist.

The agency's deputy director, Maryna Synhaivska, resigned earlier this year due to political meddling in their journalistic work, the report said.

"It is not democratic to dictate to media what to publish and whom to talk to," the report quotes

Synhaivska as having said.

In April, the US State Department released its annual human rights report, which found that Ukraine's press freedom was curtailed by martial law in the country. Ukrainian authorities have shown a disrespect for freedom of expression and the press, including by banning or sanctioning media outlets and individual journalists considered a threat to national security, the State Department said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Sanctions People, Entities Linked to Dodik, His Family - Treasury Department

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - The United States has imposed sanctions on individuals and entities linked to Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik and his family members, the Treasury Department announced in a press release on Tuesday.

"Today, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) is designating a network of two individuals and seven entities that provide major sources of revenue for US-designated Republika Srpska (RS) President Milorad Dodik and his family," the Treasury said. "Dodik has used his official position to accumulate personal wealth through companies linked to himself and to Igor Dodik."

The Treasury alleged that Dodik directed government contracts to a network of private companies that he and Igor oversee.

"Infinity International Group d.o.o. Banja Luka (Infinity) is a holding company in BiH that directly or indirectly owns or is the majority owner of at least five other BiH-based companies: Prointer ITSS d.o.o. Banja Luka Clan Infinity International Group (Prointer), Kaldera Company EI PGP d.o.o. (Kaldera), Infinity Media d.o.o. (Infinity Media), K-2 Audio Services Banja Luka d.o.o. (K-2), and Una World Network d.o.o. (Una)," it said. "Additionally, Sirius 2010 d.o.o. Banja Luka (Sirius) is an information technology (IT) company that operates within the Dodik family network."

The sanctions also target Djordje Djuric and Milenko Cicic, who have ownership and management positions within the network, according to the release.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

World Needs 'Lot of Non-Russian Gas Resources in Years Ahead' - US State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - The international community needs "a lot" of energy resources that come not from Russia in the coming years, US Assistant Secretary of State Geoffrey Pyatt said on Tuesday.

"We are in a world which is going to need a lot of non-Russian gas resources in years ahead," Pyatt told reporters.

Pyatt accused Russia of weaponizing its significant gas resources and expressed confidence that the European countries will never consider Russia a reliable supplier of energy.

"So those supplies need to be replaced even as we continue to phase out our fossil energy and accelerate the deployment of the global sources," Pyatt said.

Russia has repeatedly denied all accusations that it is using its energy resources as a weapon in conducting its foreign policy.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US, Nigeria Look Forward to Launching New Energy Security Dialogue This Year - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - The United States is committed to launching a new energy security dialogue with Nigeria this year and expects an announcement on the specific timing in the coming weeks, Assistant Secretary for Energy Resources Geoffrey Pyatt said on Tuesday.

"We're committed to launching a new energy security dialogue between the US and Nigeria," Pyatt during a briefing. "So I think our governments have agreed we want this to happen in 2024, and I am hopeful that we'll have an announcement in the next couple of weeks about the specific timing."

In June 2023, Pyatt announced the formation of an energy security dialogue with Nigeria to advance collaboration on shared energy and climate goals.

Following the sixth US-Nigeria Binational Commission meeting in Abuja in April 2024, the two countries said in a joint statement that Washington looks forward to hosting a Nigerian delegation for an inaugural Energy Security Dialogue in September 2024.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Ecuador Halts Visa Suspension Deal With China Over Surge in Irregular Migration - Ministry

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - Ecuador has decided to temporarily suspend a visa suspension agreement with China amid an important surge in the irregular migration of Chinese nationals, the Ecuadoran Foreign Affairs Ministry said on Tuesday.

"The government of Ecuador has decided to temporarily suspend the agreement on the mutual suspension of the visa requirements for holders of ordinary passports between the Republic of Ecuador and the People's Republic of China," the Foreign Affairs Ministry said in a statement via the social media platform X.

Ecuador made the decision after observing an "unusual increase" in irregular Chinese migration, which includes individuals who either overstayed their 90-day visa-free period or used Ecuador as a starting point for other destinations in the Americas, the statement said.

The Ecuadorean authorities have also observed that nearly half of the Chinese nationals arriving through legal ports of entry have not left by regular routes and/or within the delays established by law, the statement said.

Ecuador seeks to ensure a proper control over migration while enabling tourists to visit under adequate security guarantees and safe from falling prey to human trafficking or migrant

smuggling, the statement added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US, Israel Discussing Intelligence About Iran Nuclear Models – Reports

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - US and Israeli intelligence officials are discussing new information related to computer modeling by Iranian scientists that allegedly could be used for research and development of nuclear weapons, Axios reported on Tuesday, citing US and Israeli sources.

The topic will be discussed by the US-Israel strategic consultative group during a White House meeting on Thursday, the report said. The US team will be led by White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan, while Minister for Strategic Affairs Ron Dermer and Israeli national security adviser Tzachi Hanegbi will lead the Israeli delegation.

Some US and Israeli officials told Axios that the intelligence is a worrying signal about Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions. However, other officials do not see it as a shift in Iran's policy and strategy toward weaponization, the report said.

Iran has repeatedly denied seeking to acquire nuclear weapons.

The new intelligence information raised "suspicion" and "concern" about Iran's nuclear research and development program, one US and one Israeli official said. The officials also pointed out that their countries have no indications that Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, approved the military nuclear program to be resumed.

Another US official acknowledged that there was "no change to our assessment that Iran is not currently undertaking the key nuclear weapons development activities necessary to produce a testable nuclear device," according to the report.

One US official pointed out that the new intelligence does not provide concrete information about Iran's alleged nuclear weapons activity. However, it raises issues that Israel and the US must discuss, he added.

Acting Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri said in early June that Tehran conducts its nuclear program in accordance with the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) requirements. He added that the program is fully lawful.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Kart LLC. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Fed's Williams: 3% Is Not The 'New Norm' For US Inflation

WASHINGTON, June 18 (Sputnik) - The 3% per annum rate is not the new norm for US inflation as the Federal Reserve is determined to get price growth back to the pre-pandemic average of 2%, the central bank's head for the New York region John Williams said Tuesday.

"This is a bit of a watching the data, it has its ups and downs, but we're absolutely committed to achieving the 2% inflation," New York Fed President Williams said in an interview live-streamed by the Fox network. "We're not stuck at 3%."

The May reading for the US Consumer Price Index (CPI), released a week ago, indicated that inflation had cooled slightly to 3.3% per annum from 3.4% in April.

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

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

It fell to current levels of around 3% after

the Fed hiked interest rates 11 times between March 2022 and July 2023, responding to the runaway inflation.

Williams asked by his Fox interviewer if the Fed's efforts in bringing inflation back to 2% was all but over, and 3% would be the new norm.

"No, no, absolutely not," the New York Fed chief replied. "We're , we're going to achieve the 2% inflation objective that we set out on a sustained basis."

Williams noted that the central bank "did see inflation come down, faster than expected for a while" before fluctuations in the economy bumped it up at certain intervals.