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Strategic Dogma

After US President Joe Biden's humiliating debate performance against presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump, many are calling on the President to drop out of the race. However, nominal progressives like Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) are telling voters to stick with Biden.

"How many more of these stinking double-downer sideshows will we have to go through before we can get ourselves straight enough to put together some kind of national election that will give me and the at least 20 million people I tend to agree with a chance to vote for something, instead of always being faced with the that old familiar choice between the lesser of two evils?" - Hunter S. Thompson, Fear and Loathing: on the Campaign Trail '72

It is an argument as old as modern American politics and perhaps older. Every election, the Democrats put forward someone a large portion of voters dislike and then tell the American people they have to vote for them anyway because the other guy is worse.

The proponents of so-called "strategic voting" have become so dogmatic in their devotion to the lesser-of-two-evils strategy that they have found themselves arguing for a visibly diminished candidate who is funding what more than half of his party describes as genocide.

According to the polls, it does not appear to be working. Biden is trailing Trump in virtually every national poll and battleground state. Some states that were solid blue just a few years ago, including Virginia, New Jersey and New Hampshire, are now toss-ups. Even Democratic stronghold New York is narrowing, with Biden's lead under nine points. In 2020, Biden won New York by nearly 27 points.

The idea behind the lesser-of-two-evils argument is that voters should pick the candidate most likely to defeat the candidate from the other main party. But with Biden on track for a historic loss, perhaps leftists should vote for who they would actually like to see in the White House.

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Over Two-Thirds of Americans Say Biden Should Drop Out of Race – Poll

WASHINGTON, July 11 (Sputnik) - Over two-thirds of Americans think that President Joe Biden should step aside in the 2024 race, a new ABC News/Washington Post/Ipsos poll revealed on Thursday.

A majority of Democrats and Democratic-leaning Independents, 62%, share this view.

"Sixty-seven percent overall say Biden should withdraw from the race. More, 85 percent, now say he is too old for a second term, a new high, up from an already-broad 81 percent in April and 68 percent a little more than a year ago," the poll report said.

Americans, however, remain divided 46-47% between Biden and Trump. Among registered

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voters, the candidates are tied, 46-46%, according to the poll.

"Should Biden withdraw – and he maintains he won't – just 44 percent of Americans overall say they'd be satisfied with Vice President Kamala Harris as the Democratic nominee, with 53 percent dissatisfied. Among Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents, however, satisfaction with Harris reaches 70 percent, and it's 76 percent among current Biden supporters," the survey said.

However, if Harris were to replace Biden, she beats Trump 49-46% in terms of vote preference among all adults and 49-47% among registered voters.

The poll was conducted online from July 5-9, 2024, in English and Spanish, among a random national sample of 2,431 adults.

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RPT - US House Democrats Look to Pelosi to Convince Biden to Withdraw - Reports

(Repeats to fix headline)

WASHINGTON, July 11 (Sputnik) – US Democratic House representatives are hoping that former Speaker Nancy Pelosi will convince US President Joe Biden to withdraw as the Democratic presidential nominee, Axios reported on Thursday.

Pelosi is seen as having the toughness and influence to get through to Biden, who has remained defiant against growing calls for him to step aside after his disastrous performance at a recent presidential debate reinforced concerns about his mental fitness at age 81.

As of Wednesday, nine Democratic House representatives and one Democratic senator had publicly called on Biden to withdraw from the presidential race.

Pelosi has remained somewhat neutral in her public remarks on the matter thus far. On Wednesday, she said that "I want him to do whatever he decides to do" and that Biden should be given a chance to demonstrate his ability to host the current NATO summit.

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US Consumer Prices Grow 3% in Year to June, Below Forecast in Boost to Rate Cut Hopes

WASHINGTON, July 11 (Sputnik) - US consumer prices posted an annual growth of 3% in June, down from a previously-published 3.3% in May, according to data on Wednesday from the Labor Department that raised expectations of an interest rate cut by the Federal Reserve by September.

"The all items index rose 3.0 percent for the 12 months ending June, a smaller increase than the 3.3-percent increase for the 12 months ending May," the Labor Department said.

Economists on Wall Street had expected the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to show a 3.1% year-on-year growth in June. It was the first time the CPI had reached a 3% annual growth since April 2021, when it went from 2.6% the month prior to 4.2% by May 2021, from the combined effects of the trillions of dollars in government spending and other inflationary effects brought on

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by the coronavirus pandemic. The CPI hit a four-decade high of 9.1% by July 2022 before it began its retreat to current levels.

The Fed's target for inflation is a mere 2% per annum and the central bank has said it will cut rates when the CPI and other key price gauges come nearer to that threshold. US interest rates are currently in a range of 5.25% to 5.5%, their highest in two decades. With the latest moderation of the CPI, expectations are high that the Fed will revise rates at its September 17-18 policy meeting.

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US House of Representatives Look to Pelosi to Convince Biden to Withdraw - Reports

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US Consumer Prices Grow 3.0% in Year to June, Below-Forecast In Boost to Rate Cut Hopes

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NATO Has No Interest to Find Negotiated Solution in Ukraine, Only Dragging Crisis - Sachs

WASHINGTON, July 11 (Sputnik) - NATO has shown no interest at the Washington summit this week to find a negotiated settlement to the conflict in Ukraine but has instead outlined an agenda that will only prolong the conflict, Jeffrey Sachs, a world-renowned economist and President of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, told Sputnik.

On Wednesday, NATO released a joint Washington Summit Declaration, which outlines the alliance's efforts to further isolate Russia, bolster the alliance's security on its eastern flank, increase security assistance for Ukraine, and claim Ukraine is on an "irreversible path" into NATO, among other initiatives.

"It expresses zero interest or intention on finding a negotiated solution for Ukraine," Sachs said.

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"Instead, it doubles-down on Ukraine's irreversible course to NATO membership, which will never happen because of Russia's opposition, but which will needlessly and recklessly prolong the current war."

Sachs added that NATO erroneously puts all the blame for the conflict in Ukraine on Russia, ignoring completely the 2014 coup, the failure of the Minsk Agreement, and the push for NATO enlargement.

Russia has repeatedly said it stands against Ukraine's membership in NATO due to national security concerns, but never opposed Kiev's aspirations to join the European Union.

NATO plans to allocate at least $40 billion in security aid to Ukraine within the next year, aiming to meet Ukraine's needs and uphold bilateral agreements, with contributions to be reassessed at the 2025 summit, according to the summit declaration.

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NATO Declaration Is Stark Neoconservative Recommitment to US Hegemony - Sachs

WASHINGTON, July 11 (Sputnik) - NATO's latest joint declaration serves as a stark neoconservative recommitment to US hegemony, Jeffrey Sachs, a world-renowned economist and President of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, told Sputnik.

"The NATO Declaration is a stark neoconservative recommitment to US hegemony. It calls for NATO to back the 'rules-based order,' which is actually the US-based order that is often directly contrary to the UN Charter," Sachs said.

On Wednesday, NATO released a joint Washington Summit Declaration, which outlines the alliance's efforts to further isolate Russia, bolster the alliance's security on its eastern flank, increase security assistance for Ukraine, and claim Ukraine is on an "irreversible path" into NATO, among other initiatives.

"It describes NATO as a defensive force despite the fact that NATO is repeatedly engaged in offensive regime-change operations, including Afghanistan, Iraq, Serbia, Libya, Ukraine, and others," Sachs said.

Sachs explains that NATO's declaration also restates Article 10 of the Washington Treaty, which claims that Russia has no input if NATO expands to surround Russia.

Moreover, Sachs said NATO's joint statement describes its commitment to advanced biotechnologies, which raises concerns of biowarfare.

Sachs also pointed out that the declaration shows NATO's intention to continue to deploy anti-ballistic missiles throughout Europe as it's previously done in Poland, Romania, and Turkey, which has directly destabilized the nuclear arms control architecture ever since the United States unilaterally withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002.

The White House announced earlier that the United States will begin episodic deployments of the long-range fires capabilities of its Multi-Domain Task Force in Germany in 2026.

Russian Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov said US plans to deploy intermediate- and shorter-range missiles to Germany pose a direct threat to international security and increase the risks of a missile arms race.

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Senator Welch Calls on Biden to Withdraw From Presidential Race For 'Good of the Country'

WASHINGTON, July 11 (Sputnik) - US Democratic Senator Peter Welch, in an opinion piece for the Washington Post, has called on President Joe Biden to withdraw from the presidential race.

"For the good of the country, I am calling on President Biden to withdraw from the race," Welch wrote on Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, Axios reported that Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer is open to the idea of abandoning support for Biden's reelection bid and instead backing a new candidate.

Moreover, Welch's call seems to be a reflection of a growing sentiment among some Democrats regarding Biden's age and recent performances.

Another report, citing people familiar with the matter, said that US House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries will relay the concerns of his Democratic colleagues to Biden after holding listening sessions with members in recent days.

On Monday, Biden sent a letter to Democratic lawmakers to reassure them that he is "firmly committed" to staying in the presidential race despite his poor showing in the first presidential debate last month.

Biden appeared confused and incoherent throughout his first debate with Trump on June 27, reinforcing rather than refuting ongoing concerns about his cognitive abilities at age 81. His poor performance has led some Democratic politicians and donors to call for his removal as a candidate.

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Starliner Helium Leaks to be Finally Resolved This Week - Boeing, NASA Officials

WASHINGTON, July 11 (Sputnik) - NASA and Boeing officials hope to finally resolve all remaining issues with the helium leaks at the flanges of the CST-1000 Starliner by the end of this weekend, they told an audio press conference with reporters.

"We hope to bring the helium leaks for a final resolution this week," NASA Commercial Crew Program Director Steve Stich said on Wednesday. "We hope to get through all that testing this week. ...What we found was there was a leak at the flange area and helium was getting out from that flange area."

Boeing Vice President and Commercial Crew Program Manager Mark Nappi said his corporation and NASA had already resolved more than half of the 30 issues with the Starliner's thrusters.

"We identified 30 specific issues," he said. "Over half of them are closed. All are scheduled to be completed by the end of next week. ...We may have to take those thrusters off and replace some seals we suspect were undersized. We are inspecting those flange areas on future Starliners. There is obviously something going on in that flange area that we do not understand."

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Before the flanges were reinstalled to the doghouse setting on the Starliner, a new seal would have to be reinstalled, Stich agreed.

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Senate Dem Leader Schumer Open to Abandoning Support for Biden Reelection - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 11 (Sputnik) - Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer is open to the idea of abandoning support for President Joe Biden's reelection bid and instead backing a new candidate, Axios reported, citing three sources familiar with the matter.

The report said on Wednesday that Schumer over the last two weeks has been having conversations with Democratic donors about their suggestions for the best way forward for the Democratic party.

Schumer is also having similar conversations with his Democrat colleagues in the Senate about concerns over Biden's reelection odds.

Schumer's focus amid all these talks is on defeating former President Donald Trump and maintaining the Democratic majority in the Senate, according to the report.

On Monday, Biden sent a letter to Democratic lawmakers to reassure them that he is "firmly committed" to staying in the presidential race despite his poor showing in the first presidential debate last month.

Biden appeared confused and incoherent throughout his first debate with Trump on June 27, reinforcing rather than refuting ongoing concerns about his cognitive abilities at age 81. His poor performance has led some Democratic politicians and donors to call for his removal as a candidate.

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NATO Allies to Open BMD Base in Poland to Strengthen Air and Missile Defense - Declaration

(Updates with more details in paras 3, 4)

WASHINGTON, July 11 (Sputnik) - NATO allies have agreed to open a ballistic missile defense (BMD) base in Poland to strengthen air and missile defenses, the alliance said in its Washington Summit Declaration.

"Allies also agreed to strengthen our air and missile defenses including with a new ballistic missile defense base in Poland," NATO leaders said in their summit declaration on Wednesday.

Outgoing NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said that the allies also agreed to strengthen air and missile defenses, including with a new ballistic missile defense base in Poland.

NATO's 75th anniversary summit is currently being held in Washington at the Walter E. Washington Center from July 9-11.

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Russia's Unity Foundation to Hold Humanitarian Events in Bolivia to Boost Cooperation

WASHINGTON, July 11 (Sputnik) - Russia's Unity Foundation will hold a series of humanitarian events to support cancer patients in Bolivia and hopes the mission will form the basis for future cooperation between the two countries in art and medicine, space and humanitarian matters, the foundation's President Alena Kuzmenko told Sputnik.

"From the very beginning of communicating with our Bolivian partners, they showed a profound interest for the Unity Foundation projects and were open to collaboration," Kuzmenko said. "Art, space and medicine are topics that unite all human beings and I believe that the Unity Foundation's humanitarian mission in Bolivia will lay the ground for cooperation [in these areas] for the benefit of the people living in our countries."

The Unity Foundation mission in Bolivia from July 13-21, will be led by Russian cosmonaut and Unity Foundation Ambassador Sergey Kud-Sverchkov.

The Russian delegation will hold meetings and art therapy classes with oncology patients and cancer survivors in the cities of Santa Cruz, La Paz, Oruro and Potosi, Kuzmenko said.

"Kids with cancer will participate in the Dream Satellite art project and will be able to send their dreams to space on two Marathon satellites (Sfera satellite constellation) scheduled to be launched in orbit later this year from the Vostochny cosmodrome," Kuzmenko said.

Children will paint their dreams on metallic pieces of paper that look like the surface of a satellite, together with Kud-Sverchkov and space researcher Anastasia Stepanova.

"After this, the Bolivian kids' painted dreams, together with those of other kids, will be put together and placed on the plates installed on the surface of 2 Marathon satellites, as part of the the Dream Satellite art project," she said.

Kuzmenko explained that the Marathon satellites decorated by children's paintings are part of the global space art therapy mission initiated by the Unity Foundation with the support of the Russian space agency Roscosmos and other space agencies in different countries.

Since 2017, two art covered spacesuits - Victory and Dreamer as well as the Skif-D satellite - have delivered childrens' dreams to the stars, she said.

"Next year, in collaboration with Roscosmos, the manned Soyuz rocket, covered with kids dreams, and cosmonaut Kud-Sverchkov on board will go to the International Space Station," Kuzmenko said.

The Unity Foundation team has visited 35 cities in ten countries, including the United States, Russia, France, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Serbia, Zambia, Armenia and the United Kingdom. Bolivia is the eleventh country included in the space art therapy mission.

Kuzmenko said the Unity Foundation team will also organize in Bolivia art therapy classes for adults suffering from cancer, meet cancer survivors and exchange experience with local non-government organizations involved in the support of oncology patients such as the foundations Leonardito, Victoriya y yo, Roca Gravato and Nuestra Esperanza.

In addition, the team will give lectures at local universities on global charity initiatives, the importance of psychological support for cancer patients, human space flights and space research, she said.

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"The team also plans official meetings with the Bolivian Space Agency, the Russian Embassy in Bolivia, local authorities, the Governor of Potosi and Oruro," Kuzmenko added.

The Unity Foundation humanitarian mission in Bolivia is held with the support of the Russian Gorchakov Fund, Roscosmos and other space companies such as Agat, Gonets, Tsniimash as well as the Governor of Potosi and the Governor of Oruro.

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Western-Supplied Arms to Ukraine Won't Help Resolve Conflict - Hungary's Foreign Minister

WASHINGTON, July 11 (Sputnik) - The conflict in Ukraine will not be resolved on the battlefield and Western-supplied weapons will not improve the situation, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto said in an interview with CNN.

"What we have seen is that this conflict does not have a solution on the battlefield," Szijjarto said on Wednesday. "[The weapons] didn't improve the situation. Russia is still there, the Russian armies are moving forward. Ukraine could not gain success on the battlefield. It shows us that instead of the battlefield we should look at the negotiation table."

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Trump Threat to Leave NATO 'Not Real,' Political Device to Create Fear, Doubt - US Senator

WASHINGTON, July 11 (Sputnik) - Threats made by former President Donald Trump about potentially making significant changes to NATO's policy and scaling back the United States' role are unrealistic and pure political theater, US Senate NATO Observer Group Co-Chair Thom Tillis said during the NATO summit in Washington.

"This is not a real threat. This is something that is used as a political device to create the fear and uncertainty and doubt," the Republican senator said on Wednesday.

Tillis suggested that Congress would never support a US withdrawal from NATO.

In December, President Joe Biden signed a US defense policy bill that included a measure that would prevent a US president from unilaterally withdrawing the United States from NATO without congressional approval.

US lawmakers took action to protect the United States' involvement in NATO after Trump threatened to pull the country out of the alliance.

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ukraine conflict does not have solution on battlefield, weapons supplied by west do not improve situation - hungary's foreign minister

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Key Global Challenge This Century to Avert New Wars Amid Great Competition - US Senator

WASHINGTON, July 11 (Sputnik) - The biggest global challenge this century will be to prevent armed conflicts between blocs of nations as they grow stronger and compete against each other, the top Republican on the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee Jim Risch said during the NATO summit in Washington.

"I think the challenge for this century is going to be how we all occupy this planet without killing each other and compete with each other," Risch said on Wednesday. "We should be able to compete with each other without killing each other. We need to figure that out because this is not going to get better as we move forward."

Risch said the Ukraine crisis has brought the relationship between China, Russia, North Korea, Iran and Venezuela closer together, and this bloc is expected to get stronger in the years ahead.

The conflict in Ukraine is just a "warm up" in light of the challenges that lie ahead this century, which he points out may mostly come from China's growing influence, he said.

The United States and Europe must join together to compete and push back against China, Risch said.

The Chinese Embassy in Washington told Sputnik that the hyping up of the so-called "China threat" is completely futile, and China firmly opposes NATO's use of regional hotspot issues to smear China and incite a "new Cold War."

NATO should immediately stop making groundless accusations and provocative remarks against China, the Chinese Embassy added.

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China's Trade With Russia Beyond Reproach, Should Not Be Criticized - Embassy

WASHINGTON, July 11 (Sputnik) - China's trade with Russia is beyond reproach and should not be criticized or used to fuel allegations that Beijing is supporting Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, the Chinese Embassy in Washington told Sputnik.

NATO released earlier a joint declaration that for the first time singled out China as a challenge to Euro-Atlantic security because of its latest modernization efforts across a range of sectors and because of its alleged support of Russia's defense industrial base through dual-use technology.

"China does not provide weapons to the parties to the conflict and strictly controls the export of dual-use articles, which is widely applauded by the international community," Chinese Embassy spokesperson Liu Pengyu said on Wednesday. "Our normal trade with Russia is done aboveboard. It's consistent with WTO rules and market principles, which is beyond reproach and should not be criticized."

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Beijing Opposes NATO's Use of Regional Hotspot Issues to Smear China - Embassy

WASHINGTON, July 11 (Sputnik) - Beijing firmly opposes NATO's use of regional hotspot issues to smear China, the Chinese Embassy in Washington said in a statement to Sputnik.

"China firmly opposes NATO's use of regional hotspot issues to smear China and incite a 'new Cold War,'" Chinese Embassy spokesperson Liu Pengyu said on Wednesday.

The Embassy urged NATO to immediately stop making groundless accusations and provocative remarks against China and instead focus on measures that will improve international security.

Earlier, NATO released a joint declaration that for the first time singled out China as a challenge to Euro-Atlantic security because of its latest modernization efforts across a range of sectors.

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US House Passes Bill to Require Proof of Citizenship to Vote in Federal Elections

WASHINGTON, July 11 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives passed legislation to require individuals to present proof of US citizenship to register to vote in federal elections in the United States.

House lawmakers passed the bill, dubbed the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act, in a vote of 221 in favor and 198 opposed on Wednesday.

US House Majority Leader Steve Scalise said that it is vital to bolster election security to ensure that only US citizens are voting in federal elections, amid an influx of illegal immigration across the southern border under the Biden administration.

The White House said that it strongly opposes the legislation. The bill is based on "easily disproven falsehoods," the White House said, adding that it is rare that non-citizens break the law by voting in federal elections.

Billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk said that lawmakers who oppose the legislation are traitors to the United States and that those who disagree with the bill are seeking to cheat in elections.

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NATO Calls on China to Cease All Material, Political Support to Russia - Declaration

WASHINGTON, July 11 (Sputnik) - NATO is urging China to end all material and political support to Russia, the alliance's Washington Summit Declaration said.

"We call on the PRC [People's Republic of China], as a permanent member of the UN Security Council with a particular responsibility to uphold the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, to cease all material and political support to Russia's war effort," the document

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said on Wednesday. "This includes the transfer of dual-use materials, such as weapons components, equipment, and raw materials that serve as inputs for Russia's defense sector."
The United States has long suspected that Chinese companies have been providing military support to Russia - a claim that both countries have denied.
China has said it is a neutral party in the Ukraine conflict and emphasized that it does not take advantage of the conflict to sell weapons to any party.

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Canada Taking Steps to Procure 12 Conventionally-Powered Submarines - Defense Ministry

WASHINGTON, July 11 (Sputnik) - Canada is taking the first steps to procure up to 12 conventionally-powered submarines, the country's Defense Ministry announced.
"Today, the Honorable Bill Blair, Minister of National Defense, announced that Canada is taking the first step towards the procurement of up to 12 conventionally-powered, under-ice capable submarines - and that Canada is launching the process to formally engage industry on this acquisition," the Defense Ministry said in a press release on Wednesday.
Canada has decided to acquire additional submarines because it must grow its fleet in order to counter Russian and Chinese activity in the Arctic region in the future, the release said.

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China's trade with Russia beyond reproach and should not be criticized - embassy to sputnik on nato declaration

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NATO Allies to Open BMD Base in Poland to Strengthen Air and Missile Defense - Declaration

WASHINGTON, July 11 (Sputnik) - NATO allies have agreed to open a ballistic missiles defense (BMD) base in Poland to strengthen air and missile defenses, NATO said in the Washington Summit Declaration.
"Allies also agreed to strengthen our air and missile defenses including with a new ballistic missile defense base in Poland," NATO leaders said in their summit declaration on Wednesday.

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china urges NATO to stop making groundless accusations against Beijing, focus on measures to improve international stability - embassy to sputnik

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Elon Musk Accuses The New York Times of Spreading 'Misleading Propaganda'

WASHINGTON, July 11 (Sputnik) - The New York Times is deliberately misleading its audience with propaganda, Elon Musk said on X.

"The New York Times specializes in tediously misleading propaganda," Musk posted on Wednesday.

Earlier, Musk's company SpaceX criticized a story published by the NYT claiming there was a 54% decline in the threatened piping plover population through 2021.

"This is false. The frequently cited study conducted by Newstead and Hill (2021) is outdated and unreliable for describing potential piping plover population trends over time," SpaceX said on X.

In addition, the company stated that the findings mentioned in the paper show little to no strong evidence of trends increasing or decreasing.

This is not the first time Musk has publicly criticized the New York Times.

In June, Musk said it was "disrespectful and unkind" of the newspaper to claim that a remote Amazonian tribe became addicted to pornography after getting access to Starlink internet service.

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NATO Allies Remain Committed to Full Development of Ballistic Missile Defense- Declaration

WASHINGTON, July 11 (Sputnik) - NATO allies remain committed to the full development of integrated NATO ballistic missile defense, NATO said in the Washington Summit Declaration.

"Allies remain committed to the full development of NATO BMD, to pursue the Alliance's collective defence and to provide full coverage and protection for all NATO European populations, territory, and forces against the increasing threat posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles," NATO leaders said in their summit declaration on Wednesday.

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NATO Seeks No Confrontation With Russia, Open to Talks to Avoid Escalation - Declaration

WASHINGTON, July 11 (Sputnik) - NATO leaders in their Washington summit declaration said the alliance poses no threat to Russia and remains open to communication to reduce risks.

"NATO does not seek confrontation and poses no threat to Russia. We remain willing to

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maintain channels of communication with Moscow to mitigate risk and prevent escalation," NATO leaders said in their summit declaration on Wednesday.

However, the declaration said Russia's military expansion and activities represent a long-term threat to NATO and accused Moscow of seeking to fundamentally reconfigure the Euro-Atlantic security architecture.

In February, Russian President Vladimir Putin said in an interview with US journalist Tucker Carlson that Moscow had no intention of attacking any NATO countries. Putin added that NATO countries were trying to intimidate their populations with an imaginary Russian threat.

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NATO Allies agreed to open ballistic missiles defense base in Poland to strengthen air and missile defense - Stoltenberg

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US Says Seeks Another 4.5Mln Barrels For Oil Reserve at Below-Market Prices

NEW YORK, July 9 (Sputnik) - For the second time in just over a month, the US Department of Energy (DoE) said it was working to procure millions of barrels of crude at below market prices to refill the country's hugely-drawn oil reserve.

In a news release Wednesday, the DoE said it was looking to buy "approximately four million and five hundred thousand barrels of United States produced sour crude oil for October, November and December 2024 delivery to Bayou Choctaw" — one of the sites of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR).

The SPR had seen an outflow of around 200 million barrels over a two-year period as the Biden administration relied heavily on the reserve to offset supply squeezes that led to high fuel prices.

On June 3, the DoE said it had bought 3 million barrels for the SPR at an average of $77.69 per barrel, well below the $95 average that crude from the reserve was sold for in 2022. At that time, market prices for US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) oil hovered at just below $75 per barrel.

In Wednesday's announcement, the DoE said it was seeking "a price no higher than $79.99 per barrel."

That would be almost 3% below prevailing WTI prices, which settled on Wednesday at $82.10 per barrel for August delivery.

President Joe Biden's use of the SPR has been criticized by his rivals, who have accused him of turning the reserve into a political tool to subdue fuel prices whenever they rose to boost his standing with American voters. They contend that the reserve is only meant for emergency use — i.e. making oil available in times of critically-short supply.

Biden, in his defense, had said he was only acting to reduce record high pump prices of gasoline, which stood at above $5 per gallon in June 2022 and had stabilized since at between $3 and $3.50. The president has also blamed high crude prices for US inflation getting to

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four-decade highs of above 9% in June 2022.
To Biden's credit, the sale of some 200 million barrels from the SPR succeeded in tamping the market price of crude down from mid-2022 highs of around $100 per barrel to between $70 and $80 since.

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NATO Urges China to Engage in Constructive Strategic Risk Reduction Talks - Statement

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - NATO calls on China to engage in constructive strategic security talks with the alliance, the group said in a joint statement on Wednesday.
"We urge the PRC to engage in strategic risk reduction discussions and promote stability through transparency," NATO said in the Washington Summit Declaration. "We remain open to constructive engagement with the PRC, including to build reciprocal transparency with the view of safeguarding the Alliance's security interests."

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NATO to Boost Cooperation With Indo-Pacific Including on Ukraine Projects - Declaration

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - NATO will enhance its cooperation with the Indo-Pacific region including through projects in support of Ukraine, the alliance's leaders said in their Washington summit declaration on Wednesday.
"We are strengthening dialogue with Indo Pacific to tackle cross-regional challenges and are enhancing our practical cooperation, including through flagship projects in the areas of supporting Ukraine," the document said.
The declaration also said that NATO members would meet with the leaders of Australia, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, and the European Union to discuss common security matters and areas of cooperation.
"The Indo-Pacific is important for NATO, given that developments in that region directly affect Euro-Atlantic security," the declaration said. "We are strengthening dialogue to tackle cross-regional challenges and are enhancing our practical cooperation, including through flagship projects in the areas of supporting Ukraine, cyber defence, countering disinformation, and technology."

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NATO to Designate Envoy for Middle East and Africa Region - Summit Declaration

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) -NATO will establish a special representative for the Middle East and Africa to help promote stability in the region, the alliance said in a joint declaration on

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Wednesday.
"We have invited the Secretary-General to designate a Special Representative for the southern neighborhood who will serve as NATO's focal point for the region and will coordinate NATO's efforts," NATO said in its Washington Summit declaration.
NATO's southern neighborhood provides opportunities for cooperation on issues of mutual interest, and through its partnerships, the alliance aims to foster greater security and stability in the Middle East and Africa, the statement added.
As a result of this effort, NATO members have agreed to open a NATO Liaison Office in Amman, Jordan, according to the statement.

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NATO Pledges At least $40 Bn In Security Aid for Ukraine Over Next Year-Summit Declaration

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - NATO plans to allocate at least $40 billion in security aid to Ukraine within the next year, aiming to meet Ukraine's needs and uphold bilateral agreements, with contributions to be reassessed at the 2025 summit, the NATO Summit Declaration said on Wednesday.
"We intend to provide a minimum baseline funding of €40 billion within the next year, and to provide sustainable levels of security assistance for Ukraine to prevail, taking into account Ukraine's needs, our respective national budget procedures, and the bilateral security agreements which Allies have concluded with Ukraine. Heads of State and Government will re-evaluate Allied contributions at future NATO Summits, starting at the 2025 NATO Summit in The Hague," the declaration said.

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NATO Urges All Countries to Not Provide Any Assistance to Russia- Summit Declaration

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - NATO has urged all countries to not provide any assistance to Russia, NATO said in its Washington Summit Declaration published on Wednesday.
"We urge all countries not to provide any kind of assistance to Russia's aggression. We condemn all those who are facilitating, and thereby prolonging Russia's war in Ukraine," the document said.

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NATO to Develop Recommendations on Strategic Approach to Russia - Summit Declaration

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - NATO will develop recommendations on the alliance's approach to Russia, NATO said in a declaration released Wednesday as part of its Washington

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summit.
"For our next Summit, we will develop recommendations on NATO's strategic approach to Russia, taking into account the changing security environment," the summit declaration said.
NATO is determined to constrain and contest Russia's actions and counter its ability to conduct destabilizing activities towards allies, the declaration said.

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NATO Backs Ukraine's 'Irreversible' Path to Full Euro-Atlantic, NATO Membership -Statement

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - NATO fully supports Ukraine's "irreversible" path to full Euro-Atlantic integration and NATO membership, the alliance said in a joint declaration on Wednesday.
"We welcome the concrete progress Ukraine has made since the Vilnius Summit on its required democratic, economic, and security reforms. As Ukraine continues this vital work, we will continue to support it on its irreversible path to full Euro-Atlantic integration, including NATO membership," NATO said in the Washington summit declaration.
NATO added that it will be in a position to extend an invitation to Ukraine to join the alliance only when all members agree and Kiev has met all required conditions.
Media reported earlier that the use of "irreversible" in NATO's joint declaration is only symbolic after the United States raised concerns that Ukraine must address corruption issues before it's given any guarantees about joining the alliance.

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NATO To Set Up Office To Coordinate Military Equipment, Training For Ukraine - Declaration

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) -NATO announced the creation of the NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (NSATU) to coordinate military equipment and training for Ukraine, the NATO Summit Declaration said on Wednesday.
"[NATO] Decided to establish the NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (NSATU) to coordinate the provision of military equipment and training for Ukraine by Allies and partners," the summit declaration said.

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NATO To Continue Political, Economic, Financial, Humanitarian Aid To Ukraine - Declaration

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - NATO intends to continue providing political, economic, financial, and humanitarian aid to Ukraine, in addition to military support, the NATO Summit Declaration said on Wednesday.

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"In addition to military support covered by this pledge, Allies intend to continue providing political, economic, financial, and humanitarian support to Ukraine," the summit declaration said.

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nato to develop recommendations on strategic approach to russia - summit declaration

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"We intend to provide a minimum baseline funding of €40 billion within the next year, and to provide sustainable levels of security assistance for Ukraine to prevail, taking into account Ukraine's needs, our respective national budget procedures, and the bilateral security agreements which Allies have concluded with Ukraine. Heads of State and Government will re-evaluate Allied contributions at future NATO Summits, starting at the 2025 NATO Summit in The Hague," the declaration said.

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nato to designate representative for southern neigborhood who will serve as focal point for middle east and africa region - summit declaration

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nato allies intend to continue providing political, economic, financial, humanitarian support to ukraine - summit declaration

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RPT - NASA, Boeing Looking at Mid-August for Latest Return Flight of Starliner - Officials

(Repeats to correct spelling of astronaut's name)
WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - NASA and Boeing officials announced on Wednesday that they are looking at a mid-August date as the latest time to fly the CST-100 Starliner back from

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the International Space Station (ISS) to clear the way for the still scheduled handover between SpaceX crews eight and nine.

"The mid-August handover between crew eight and nine is at the kind of the back end for when we can bring [astronauts] Butch [Wilmore] and Suni [Williams] back," NASA Commercial Crew Program Manager Steve Stich said. "The teams are checking but they are confident they have the margin of time on the batteries they need for a mid-August return."

Boeing Vice President and Commercial Crew Program Manager Mark Nappi agreed that his corporation still planned to bring Wilmore and Williams back to Earth on the troubled Starliner, which has reported problems with five of its 28 maneuvering thrusters and five helium leaks so far.

"Plans are to bring the crew home on Starliner. We see no reason why that should be changed. ...We know the big OMAC thrusters on Starliner are working just fine. The thrusters should perform nominally on the reentry flight. There has been no discussion with SpaceX about sending another Dragon [spacecraft] to rescue the Starliner crew," Nappi said.

The SpaceX Crew-9 is planned to be the ninth crewed operational flight of a Crew Dragon spacecraft and is expected to launch no earlier than August with its four crew members to the International Space Station.

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RPT - Starliner Crew Upbeat as NASA, Boeing Engineers Work on Thrusters Problem - Astronauts

(Repeats to correct spelling of astronaut's name)

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - The crew of the Boeing Starliner now on board the International Space Station (ISS) acknowledged there was significant degradation in their maneuvering thrusts during their flight up but remain confident the spacecraft will safely return them to earth, astronauts Barry "Butch" Wilmore and Sunita "Suni" Williams told a NASA press conference on Wednesday.

"I feel confident we can unlock and figure out the best way to come home," Williams said. "I have a really good feeling in my heart that the spacecraft can take us home."

Wilmore said NASA and Boeing engineers at White Sands, New Mexico were busy test firing similar thrusters to work out the problems and anticipate any further issues on the still unscheduled return flight to earth.

"We are doing thruster testing as we speak in White Sands, New Mexico. ... Based on what we know, we are absolutely ready [to make the flight]," he said.

The Boeing Starliner missed its first crewed docking rendezvous with the ISS on June 7 because five of its 28 thrusters failed. The return flight to earth has been indefinitely delayed while NASA and Boeing engineers study the problem.

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Oil Prices Up First Time in Four Days Amid US Crude, Gasoline Draws

NEW YORK, July 10 (Sputnik) - Oil prices rose Wednesday for the first time in four days as traders reacted to another weekly draw in US crude and gasoline inventories, although a large build in diesel-making distillates sapped some of the market's enthusiasm.

US West Texas Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude settled at $82.10 per barrel, up 69 cents, or 0.9%, on the day. WTI lost a combined 3.4% in three previous sessions, though it remains up around 15% for the year.

UK-origin Brent crude, meanwhile, settled at $85.08, up 42 cents, or 0.5% on the day. Brent has lost 3.2% over the past three sessions to shave its year-to-date gain to just around 10%.

Oil's 2024 rally began with threats to supply caused by geopolitical developments and output cuts by producers in the 23-nation OPEC+ alliance led by Saudi Arabia and Russia.

Lately though, the run-up in crude prices has been powered by bets that the summer season, the busiest for travel in the United States, will result in huge drawdowns in crude stockpiles as refiners race to make enough fuels to feed everything from cars to trucks, airplanes and ships.

Even so, the market was under continuous pressure the past three sessions, partly on the assumption that the oil rally had been overdone by bets of damage to US energy installations from Hurricane Beryl — something which never materialized.

Wednesday's price rebound arrived after the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) reported a crude draw of 3.443 million barrels for the week ended July 5, adding to the huge inventory slump of 12.157 million barrels in the prior week to June 28.

Energy analysts on Wall Street had predicted a crude build of one million barrels instead for last week.

Aside from the crude draw, the EIA reported a drop of 2.006 million barrels in gasoline for last week after the prior decline of 2.214 million barrels.

Analysts had forecast a gasoline decline of 1.0 million barrels for the week ended July 5. Gasoline is the primary motor fuel in the United States and makes up the largest component of the country's energy mix.

Defying the crude and gasoline draw was the surge of 4.884 million barrels of distillates reported by the EIA, after the prior week's drop of 1.535 million.

Analysts had predicted a build of just around 500,000 barrels last week for distillates, which are primarily processed into the diesel required by trucks, buses and ships, and also go into making airline fuel.

Adding somewhat to Wednesday's market optimism was OPEC's latest demand outlook for oil. The oil cartel maintained its oil demand growth forecast of 2.2 million barrels per day for 2024 while revising global economic growth slightly higher for this year to 2.9%.

OPEC said its outlook was buoyed by a better-than-expected first-half performance in Brazil, Russia, India and China, plus a rebound in eurozone economic growth.

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US Air Combat Command Says Neither Side Has Air Superiority in Ukraine Conflict

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WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) – Commander of the US Air Combat Command Gen. Kenneth Wilsbach said on Wednesday that neither Russia nor Ukraine has achieved air superiority during the ongoing conflict.

"Whoever says that air superiority isn't important, I would go back to him, and I would ask, well, who achieved air superiority in the Ukraine fight? And the answer is neither side did or has," Wilsbach said during a Mitchell Aerospace "Aerospace Nation" webinar.

When neither side has air superiority, it leads to attrition warfare. If either side holds control over the skies, their air force would be able to fly over the battlespace with total impunity, Wilsbach said. Full airspace control would mean a shift to a situation where victory would be imminent, he stated.

In late February, Volodymyr Zelenskyy admitted that Russia had superiority in Ukraine's skies. To counter Russia's sky supremacy, NATO member states have supplied a range of different air defense systems, from US-made Patriot to German IRIS-T. They further pledged to transfer several combat aircraft to Kiev.

Earlier on Wednesday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that NATO allies have started the transfer of F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine.

Russia has consistently warned against the West's continued arms deliveries to Ukraine, saying that they only prolong the conflict. New supplies of weapons by the West to Kiev, including F-16s, cannot fundamentally change the situation on the ground, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov previously said.

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US House Democratic Leader Will Relay Electability Concerns to Biden - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - US House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries will tell President Joe Biden about concerns among Democratic lawmakers about his electability, Politico reported on Wednesday.

Jeffries will relay the concerns of his Democratic colleagues to Biden after holding listening sessions with members in recent days, the report said, citing two people familiar with the situation.

Some Democrats have expressed concerns about Biden's viability as a candidate, following a lackluster debate performance against Republican challenger Donald Trump. Several Democratic lawmakers have even called on Biden to drop out of the race.

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Russian Cosmonaut Heads to Bolivia for Charity Project to Support Cancer Patients

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - Russian cosmonaut Sergey Kud-Sverchkov told Sputnik that he is traveling to Bolivia as part of a humanitarian mission led by a Russian charity and hopes that a space art project will help oncology patients believe in their recovery.

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From July 13-21, Russian charity Unity Foundation will hold a series of humanitarian events to support cancer patients in Bolivia. As part of the Bolivia mission, the Unity team will have meetings and art therapy classes with oncology patients and survivors in the hospitals in Santa Cruz, La Paz, Oruro and Potosi.

"I am certainly glad that I can visit this country as part of the UNITY Foundation team, see this beauty with my own eyes, share the beauty of their land with the citizens of Bolivia in hospitals, universities," Kud-Sverchkov said. "I believe that the opportunity to send a dream into space will give hope for recovery for the kids and they will enjoy to join the Dream Satellite project together with kids from around the world."

The cosmonaut said that while flying over South America he was "totally impressed" by the giant salt flats of Uyuni and Coipasa.

"The reflection of clouds in their water-covered mirror surface can be seen even from the height of the International Space Station," Kud-Sverchkov said. "Also Bolivia from space - these are the high snow-capped peaks of the Andes, these are green jungles, these are the cones of the highest woodlands on the deserted Altiplano plateau and the huge alpine Lake Titicaca."

As part of the Dream Satellite art project, children with cancer will paint their dreams on the metallic pieces of paper that look like the surface of satellite. They will also meet with Kud-Sverchkov and space researcher and scientist Anastasia Stepanova.

The paintings created by Bolivian children together with other kids' paintings will be put together and placed on plates installed on the surface of two Marathon satellites (Sfera satellite constellation).

Next year, in collaboration with Roscosmos, a manned Soyuz rocket covered with the children's painted dreams will go to the ISS with cosmonaut Kud-Sverchkov on board.

The Unity team will also hold art therapy classes for adults suffering from cancer, meet cancer survivors and exchange experiences with local NGOs involved in the support of oncology patients such as foundations "Leonardito," "Victoriya y yo," "Roca Gravato," and "Nuestra Esperanza."

The Unity team will also give lectures at local universities on topics such as global charity initiatives, the importance of psychological support of cancer patients, human space flights, and space research.

The humanitarian mission is being conducted with support from the Russian Gorchakov Fund, Russian space agency Roscosmos, other space companies such as Agat, Gonets, TsNIIMash, as well as the governors of Potosi and Oruro provinces in Bolivia.

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General Wilsbach Says Air Combat Command Would Like to Challenge Xi Jinping Daily

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - The Air Combat Command aims to create strategic challenges to ensure Chinese President Xi Jinping faces daily dilemmas, US Pacific Air Forces commander General Kenneth Wilsbach said on Wednesday.

"We in the Air Combat Command would like to develop some dilemmas so that every day Xi Jinping wakes up and he says not today, not today," US Pacific Air Forces commander General

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Kenneth Wilsbach said on Wednesday during a Mitchell Aerospace "Aerospace Nation" webinar.

According to Wilsbach, the US needs to create strategic dilemmas for China to deter its goal of controlling Taiwan by force, given China's military build-up aimed at overpowering Taiwan.

Furthermore, Wilsbach said that one of the things that can be done to create those dilemmas for Xi is to focus on coaching and supporting Air Combat Command personnel like a sports team, ensuring they are well-prepared to face any challenge.

"What I'm talking about is taking care of Airmen, making them strong, making them resilient," Wilsbach said.

Wilsbach added that another dilemma for Xi Jinping is the Air Force's focus on readiness, emphasizing that frequent flying is essential for the mission to "fly, fight and win anytime, anywhere."

Taiwan has been governed independently from mainland China since 1949. Beijing views the island as its province, while Taiwan — a territory with its own elected government — maintains that it is an autonomous country. Beijing opposes any official contact of foreign states with Taipei and considers Chinese sovereignty over the island indisputable.

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NASA, Boeing Looking at Mid-August for Latest Return Flight of Starliner - Officials

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - NASA and Boeing officials announced on Wednesday that they are looking at a mid-August date as the latest time to fly the CST-100 Starliner back from the International Space Station (ISS) to clear the way for the still scheduled handover between SpaceX crews eight and nine.

"The mid-August handover between crew eight and nine is at the kind of the back end for when we can bring [astronauts] Butch [Gilmore] and Suni [Williams] back," NASA Commercial Crew Program Manager Steve Stich said. "The teams are checking but they are confident they have the margin of time on the batteries they need for a mid-August return."

Boeing Vice President and Commercial Crew Program Manager Mark Nappi agreed that his corporation still planned to bring Gilmore and Williams back to Earth on the troubled Starliner, which has reported problems with five of its 28 maneuvering thrusters and five helium leaks so far.

"Plans are to bring the crew home on Starliner. We see no reason why that should be changed. ...We know the big OMAC thrusters on Starliner are working just fine. The thrusters should perform nominally on the reentry flight. There has been no discussion with SpaceX about sending another Dragon [spacecraft] to rescue the Starliner crew," Nappi said.

The SpaceX Crew-9 is planned to be the ninth crewed operational flight of a Crew Dragon spacecraft and is expected to launch no earlier than August with its four crew members to the International Space Station.

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Powell Says Hasn't Briefed Biden for 2 Years, Insists Fed's Actions Apolitical

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell told the US Congress on Wednesday that he hadn't briefed President Joe Biden on the economy for more than two years and there was nothing unusual about it as the central bank was apolitical in its decision-making.

"I haven't had a meeting with him; He hasn't sought a meeting and, of course, I don't seek meetings with him either," Powell said, adding that he last spoke to Biden about the economy on May 31, 2022.

Under questioning by Mike Lawler, a Congressman with the Republican party, Powell said the Fed was above politics with all it did.

"To your knowledge, in the last few years, you've not spoken with or met with the president at all?" Lawler asked Powell on the second day of his annual testimony before elected US representatives. "No," replied the Fed chief. "I shook his hand in a line once but it wasn't a conversation, that was at a state dinner I attended. I shook his hand and said 'Good evening, Mr President' … that was that."

Powell rejected Lawler's suggestion that it was unusual for him not to have briefed Biden in such a long time, given the challenges faced by the US economy over the past two years amid debates on whether it would slip into another post-pandemic recession or manage a "soft landing" with moderate growth.

He also dismissed insinuations that the Fed's actions were in compliance with the administration's wishes.

"We're an independent agency," Powell said. "This is my 13th year at the Fed and I think there can be long periods of time when the Fed chair doesn't meet with the president, and that's totally fine."

Lawler then asked if an interest rate cut by the Fed in September could be perceived as a political gift for Biden, who will be seeking a new term of office in the November election. Powell has repeatedly stated in his two-day testimony to Congress that any Fed decision on rates will be data-dependent.

"It will be based on the evolving [economic] outlook and the balance of risks and not in consideration of other factors that would include political factors," Powell told Lawler. "We have a long history of doing that, including during election years. It's just not appropriate for us to get into the business of thinking about election cycles at all, one way or the other."

US interest rates, as set by the Fed, are currently in a range of 5.25% to 5.5% — the highest level since 2002.

Powell told Congress on Tuesday that the Fed needs more convincing data on inflation before tinkering with rates.

Inflation, according to the Consumer Price Index (CPI), grew at 3.3% year-on-year in May, moderating from April's 3.4% growth. The June CPI reading is due on Thursday.

Another inflation marker closely watched by the Fed — the US Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) Index — grew 2.6% year-on-year in May, from 2.7% in April.

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Both the CPI and PCE remain well above the central bank's 2%-per-annum target for inflation.

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Biden Says NATO Must Not Be Allowed to Fall Behind Russia in Defense Production

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Wednesday that the NATO alliance cannot be allowed to fall behind Russia with respect to defense production.
"Russia is on a wartime footing with regard to defense production. They're significantly ramping up their production of weapons, munitions and vehicles, and they're doing it with the help of China, North Korea and Iran. We cannot, in my view, we cannot allow the alliance to fall behind," Biden said during his welcoming remarks at the NATO summit in Washington.

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US Wants to Avoid China's Support of Russia Becoming Major Bilateral Issue - Treasury

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - The United States wants to avoid its concerns about China's alleged support of Russia's defense industrial base becoming a major bilateral issue, US Treasury Under Secretary for International Affairs Jay Shambaugh said on Wednesday.
"We really don't want this to become a bilateral issue between US and China because we don't see it as one that should be," Shambaugh said during a discussion hosted by the Council on Foreign Relations think tank in Washington.
The United States' latest actions to prevent China from providing Russia with certain dual-use technology is already beginning to have an impact, Shambaugh said.
Treasury Department officials have spent a "huge amount of time" working on addressing this matter, Shambaugh added.
The Chinese Embassy in Washington has repeatedly stated that China has not provided weapons to either Russia or Ukraine and has urged Washington to refrain from disparaging the relationship between Beijing and Moscow.
China has been playing a constructive role in facilitating a political settlement of the conflict in Ukraine, the Chinese Embassy said, adding that trade between China and Russia should not be interfered with or restricted.

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Ocasio-Cortez Says Filed Impeachment Articles Against 2 Supreme Court Justices

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - Democratic US Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez said on Wednesday that she filed articles of impeachment against conservative US Supreme Court Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito.

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"The unchecked corruption crisis on the Supreme Court has now spiraled into a Constitutional crisis threatening American democracy writ large. Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito's pattern of refusal to recuse from consequential matters before the court in which they hold widely documented financial and personal entanglements constitutes a grave threat to American rule of law, the integrity of our democracy, and one of the clearest cases for which the tool of impeachment was designed," Ocasio-Cortez said in a statement.

The resolution against Thomas accuses him of failure to disclose financial income, gifts, property interests, liabilities and transactions, refusal to recuse from matters related to his spouse's legal interests.

The resolution against Alito likewise accuses him of failure to disclose income and other information, as well as refusal to recuse himself from cases in which has a personal bias or prejudice.

The resolutions are cosponsored by eight other House Democrats, including Congresswoman Barbara Lee and Congressman Jamaal Bowman.

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Tough Fines Needed To Keep Elected Members, Families From Stock Market - Congress Group

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - Members of the US Congress and their families could face stiff penalties in the next three years if they are caught playing the stock market with non-public information, a bipartisan group of senators said Wednesday as they proposed new laws of financial propriety for elected representatives.

"We … overwhelmingly agree that members of Congress should not be playing the stock market … while we have access to confidential and privileged information," Jon Ossoff, a Senate lawmaker from President Joe Biden's Democratic Party, said in a clip posted on the X platform. "This is long overdue. This is necessary."

Ossoff earlier issued a draft on the proposed regulation signed jointly by his Democratic colleagues Gary Peters and Jeff Merkley, along with Josh Hawley — a senator from the rival Republican Party. The bill aspires to bar 2027 members of Congress from buying and selling stocks and certain other investments and impose similar restrictions on lawmakers' spouses and dependent children.

If passed, it would also compel the US president and vice president to divest from certain investments.

For offending lawmakers, the penalty would be a fine worth a month's salary, or 10 percent of the value of each improper investment.

There are already rules against elected politicians using privileged information — such as that gained from confidential briefings — to trade equities.

But the existing fine is a mere $200, hardly a slap on the wrist for the average Congressman who earns $174,000 a year, or $14,500 a month.

The effort to effectively thwart elected representatives from the stock market comes after a string of past failures.

Proponents of tougher rules point to the record of Pat Fallon, a Republican representative from

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Texas, who failed to disclose 122 transactions valued between $9 million and $21 million in 2021 in a timely manner and paid just $600 in late-filing fees in response.

Separately, Republican representatives Richard Burr, James M. Inhofe and Kelly Loeffler and Democrat Dianne Feinstein came under scrutiny at the start of 2020 after they dumped vast stock holdings ahead of the coronavirus-induced market plunge. None of the four faced charges from the Senate Ethics Committee or the Justice Department, whose investigators typically launch probes into such stock dumping.

The previous Speaker of Congress, Democrat Nancy Pelosi, herself said in 2022 that “we’re a free-market economy” and members of Congress “should be able to participate in that.” Critics pointed out that her husband, Paul Pelosi, was a very successful stock market investor.

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Blumenthal Joins Democratic Party Members Calling on Biden to End Reelection Campaign

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - Senator Richard Blumenthal joined the ranks of worried Democrats on Wednesday when he told reporters that he was concerned about President Joe Biden's reelection bid.

"I am deeply concerned about Joe Biden winning this November because it is an existential threat to the country if Donald Trump wins," Blumenthal told reporters.

Blumenthal added that he feels the Democratic party needs to reach a consensus on the issue and that Joe Biden has his "full" support as the party's nominee.

Blumenthal joins the ranks of eight other members of Congress who have publicly called on Biden to end his reelection campaign following the president's lackluster debate performance against Republican challenger Donald Trump.

New York Representative Pat Ryan told the New York Times earlier on Wednesday that he no longer believed Biden capable of wooing enough American voters to secure the election.

"I'd be doing a grave disservice if I said he was the best candidate to serve this fall. For the good of the country, for the good of my two young kids, I'm asking Joe Biden to step aside in the upcoming election and deliver on the promise to be a bridge to a new generation of leaders," Ryan is quoted as saying in the Times.

Biden’s health has also been under scrutiny in the wake of the debate. Biden, 81, is the oldest US president in history and would be 86 at the end of a second term.

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Biden Says NATO Must Not Be Allowed to Fall Behind Russia in Defense Production

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Wednesday that the NATO alliance cannot be allowed to fall behind Russia with respect to defense production.

"Russia is on a wartime footing with regard to defense production. They're significantly ramping

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up their production of weapons, munitions and vehicles, and they're doing it with the help of China, North Korea and Iran. We cannot, in my view, we cannot allow the alliance to fall behind," Biden said during his welcoming remarks at the NATO summit in Washington.

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Ex-Biden Comms Director Says Campaign Must Be More Transparent of Strategy to Beat Trump

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - The Biden campaign needs to be more transparent with its supporters about their strategy to attempt to beat presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump, President Joe Biden's former White House Communications Director Kate Bedingfield said on Wednesday.

"When the battle over the public data is so overwhelmingly negative, it's a good moment to put forward your theory of the case," Bedingfield said via X. "If they have data that supports the path to victory that they see, they should put it out there now and help people who badly want to beat Trump rally around it. People want to see the path."

Bedingfield said the Biden team should be smart enough to focus on convincing voters, not political pundits who are asking Biden to drop out of the presidential race.

Several Democratic lawmakers and political figures have also called on Biden to drop out of the race, following a lackluster debate performance last month against Trump.

Biden's health has been under major scrutiny in the wake of the debate. Biden, 81, is the oldest US president in history and would be 86 at the end of a potential second term.

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Five People Die in Washington Metropolitan Area Due to Extreme Heat - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - The heat wave that has hit the Washington metropolitan area has so far caused five deaths, the Washington Post reported on Wednesday.

Four victims were identified in the state of Maryland and one in Virginia, the report said, citing local officials.

The territory of the US capital, officially referred to as the District of Columbia, is surrounded by the US states of Maryland and Virginia.

All casualties in Maryland have been registered in Prince George's County, according to the state's Health Department data.

On Wednesday, the National Weather Service issued an excessive heat warning for Washington and parts of Maryland and Virginia, with expected heat index values of up to 112 degrees Fahrenheit (44 degrees Celsius)

The authorities have urged residents to drink plenty of fluids, stay in air-conditioned rooms, and check up on relatives and neighbors.

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US Prepared to Take 'Defensive Action' to Address Chinese Economic Practices - Treasury

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - The United States is prepared to take defensive actions to address certain economic activities by China, US Treasury Under Secretary for International Affairs Jay Shambaugh said on Wednesday.

"We will take defensive action if needed, but we would prefer for China to take action itself to address the macroeconomic and structural forces that are generating the potential for a second 'China shock' for its major trading partners," Shambaugh said in remarks at the Council on Foreign Relations.

The United States is concerned that China's enduring macroeconomic imbalances and non-market policies and practices pose a significant risk to US workers and businesses, as well as the rest of the world, Shambaugh said.

Features of the Chinese economy could lead to industrial overcapacity that could compromise collective supply chain resilience, Shambaugh said.

The United States has shared its concerns through regular engagements with Chinese counterparts, Shambaugh added.

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NATO's Existence Poses Threat to Global Peace, Dissolution Will Reduce Tensions - Activist

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - NATO's existence presents a threat to global peace and dissolving the alliance would help reduce geopolitical tensions across the world, US anti-war activist Phil Wilayto told Sputnik on Wednesday.

"Today, NATO's very existence is a threat to global peace and its dissolution would go a long way toward reducing geopolitical tensions throughout the world. Unfortunately, its leaders, especially the US government, seem hell-bent on expanding NATO and its provocative role, not only in Europe but in Asia, Africa and Latin America as well," Wilayto said.

NATO violated its multiple assurances not to expand eastward after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and even declared its intention to incorporate Russia's strategically important neighbors, Ukraine and Georgia, into the alliance, he said.

Wilayto, a coordinator of the Odessa Solidarity Campaign of the Virginia Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality, said the ongoing 75th NATO summit in Washington represents another step in the development of the post-World War II anti-Soviet alliance into a global military alliance led by the US government.

"In addition to expanding ever eastward toward Russia, NATO is extending its influence into Asia, Africa and Latin America," Wilayto said.

This process carries the risk of involving ever larger areas of the globe in conflicts in the interests of US corporations, he said.

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Wilayto noted that NATO, led by the United States, in fact, provoked the conflict in Ukraine and is now prolonging it by supplying massive amounts of arms, munitions and military intelligence.

"It must be clear to all but the most ideologically fanatical that the war is not between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, but between Russia on the one hand and the US-led 32-member NATO alliance on the other, which have made it clear that they are willing to fight to the last Ukrainian," Wilayto added.

The US government is hosting NATO's 75th summit in Washington from July 9-11.

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South Korea Pays BAE Systems $11mln for NATO-Level SATURN Anti-Jam Radios - Release

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - BAE Systems has received a series of contracts worth $111 million to provide NATO-equivalent second-generation, anti-jam tactical ultra-high frequency radio (SATURN) waveform to South Korea, the company announced in a press release on Wednesday.

"BAE Systems received multiple contracts totaling $111 million to provide the Second-generation, Anti-jam, Tactical, Ultra-high Frequency Radio for NATO, or SATURN waveform, to the Republic of Korea," the release said.

As part of South Korea's national communications modernization strategy, SATURN will bring secure and interoperable command and control capabilities to the country's military for fixed-wing and rotary aircraft, the release said.

"BAE Systems' next-generation software defined radios will leverage SATURN's fast frequency hopping waveform. SATURN will deliver new advantages to operators who rely on timely and accurate communications to inform key decisions in the field," the release said.

The ARC-232A is a SATURN-capable software-defined radio, which is upgradeable, small, and lightweight, making jamming more difficult in the increasingly complex threat environment, the release added.

The radios offer optimal receiver sensitivity in severe operating conditions and a broad range of configurations for potential countermeasures, according to the release.

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US Tests Collins Aerospace Command, Control Fires System at INDOPAC Exercise - Release

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - Collins Aerospace has successfully demonstrated mobile, distributed command and control during a series of fires, networking, and mission command experiments at INDOPACOM (US Indo-Pacific Command)'s Valiant Shield exercise, Collins' parent corporation RTX announced in a press release on Wednesday.

"Collins Aerospace successfully demonstrated mobile, distributed command and control during a series of fires, networking, and mission command experiments at INDOPACOM's Valiant Shield exercise," the release said. "Collins partnered with the US Army's First Multi-Domain

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Task Force to conduct the experiments inside a ground vehicle to rapidly reconfigure and deploy capabilities based on evolving mission needs."

The mission command 'on-the-move' concept uses commercial and military communications networks to provide access to multiple intelligence sources, the release explained

"Mobile command and control capabilities give battle management operators and commanders the ability to replicate fixed site capabilities at the very edge of the fight. Our agile, distributed demonstration concept provides the Army with the ability to maintain Mission Command On-the-Move," Collins Aerospace Vice President and General Manager for Connected Battlespace & Emerging Capabilities Elaine Bitonti said in the release.

Valiant Shield is a biennial field training that builds real-world proficiency in sustaining US forces through detecting, locating, tracking, and engaging units at sea, in the air, on land, and in cyberspace in response to a range of mission areas, the release noted.

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UPDATE - US Says Raising Duty on China Steel Rerouted Via Mexico, Russian Aluminum Hit Too

(Modifies headline and lede; adds details, comments and context in paragraphs 3-11)

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration announced on Wednesday there will be a new 10% US tariff on imported aluminum cast or smelt in China, Russia, Belarus and Iran and an additional 25% duty on imported steel poured or melted in countries other than Mexico and Canada.

In two proclamations — one on aluminum and the other steel — made public on the White House website, the administration said it wanted to prevent countries such as China from circumventing existing US import levies by rerouting shipments through Mexico and other sources.

The proclamation on aluminum said the administration will “adjust the imports of aluminum articles by imposing a 10 percent ad valorem tariff on such articles imported from all countries except Canada and Mexico.” Elaborating, it described that as aluminum “for which the reported primary country of smelt, secondary country of smelt, or country of most recent cast is China, Russia … Belarus, or Iran.”

The proclamation on steel read that the administration will “adjust the imports of steel articles by imposing a 25 percent ad valorem tariff on such articles imported from all countries except Canada and Mexico."

The two executive decisions, made with the tacit blessings of Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador — whose country has a free trade agreement with the United States and Canada — come amid Biden administration fears that Chinese steel and aluminum products could flood North American markets.

The Biden administration had floated the idea of enhancing anti-dumping tariffs against China for some time, while looking for ways to provide targeted stimulus to its own industries via the so-called Inflation Reduction Act. Biden had, at one point, called for a tripling of tariffs on Chinese steel and aluminum.

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Trade Representative Katherine Tai said earlier in the year that the United States was embarking on “early decisive action” to shield its electric vehicle industry from China’s price discounting and other harmful subsidies.

Tai said the threat to the American electric vehicle (EV) industry was evolving in the same pattern seen earlier with the US steel, aluminum and solar panel businesses.

She noted that the United States had a growing steel and aluminum industry In the early 2000s “that got washed out by exactly these same anti-competitive practices, enormous amounts of [Chinese] state support fostering an overproduction and over-capacity that brought world prices down so far that no one could compete or survive.”

With EVs, she said the Biden administration could see “we are facing this again … so we have to take early action, decisive action.”

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George Clooney Calls for Biden to Step Aside, Says President Cannot Win Fight Against Time

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - The only battle US President Joe Biden cannot win is the fight against time, US actor George Clooney said in a New York Times opinion piece.

"I love Joe Biden as a senator, as a vice president and as president. I consider him a friend, and I believe in him," Clooney said. "In the last four years, he’s won many of the battles he’s faced. But the one battle he cannot win is the fight against time."

Biden is not the same person he was three weeks ago at his fundraiser and was not the same Joe Biden of 2010 or even 2020, Clooney added.

"It’s devastating to say it, but the Joe Biden I was with three weeks ago at the fundraiser was not the Joe ‘big F-ing deal’ Biden of 2010. He wasn’t even the Joe Biden of 2020. He was the same man we all witnessed at the debate," he said.

The opinion piece added that top Democrats, including Chuck Schumer and Nancy Pelosi, along with senators and representatives, should request Biden to voluntarily step aside.

The US presidential election is slated for November 5. The main contenders expected on the ballot are Biden and ex-US President Donald Trump, who have both won enough delegates' votes to be their respective Democratic and Republican parties' presumptive nominees. Trump and Biden are set to have another presidential debate on September 10.

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Northrop, DARPA Designing New Uncrewed Hybrid Electric-Powered Aircraft - Statement

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - Northrop Grumman is designing and building a new uncrewed hybrid-electric powered aircraft with the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), the US defense contractor announced in a release on Wednesday.

"Northrop Grumman Corporation has announced the design and construction of the Series Hybrid Electric Propulsion AiRcraft Demonstration (SHEPARD) vehicle," the release said.

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The uncrewed air system which is being developed for DARPA recently received its official X-plane designation of XRQ-73, the release said.

Built in collaboration with Scaled Composites, a Northrop Grumman subsidiary, "(T)he XRQ-73 SHEPARD is a DARPA "X-prime" program leveraging hybrid electric architecture and component technologies to quickly mature a new mission-focused aircraft design with propulsion architecture and power class for the Department of Defense," the release added.

The XRQ-73 is being built in collaboration with Scaled Composites, which is a Northrop Grumman subsidiary, according to the release.

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West 'Stunned' by Weaknesses Found in Defense Industrial Base - US Senator

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - The United States and its European partners have been stunned by the weaknesses found in the collective West's defense industrial base as it worked to aid Ukraine amid Russia's special military operation, the top Republican on the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee Jim Risch said on Wednesday.

"We have been stunned. I think all of us have been stunned by the weakness and the holes in our industrial production when it comes to defense," Risch said alongside several European leaders during the NATO summit in Washington.

Earlier this week, Polish First Deputy Prime Minister of National Defense Wladyslaw Kosiniak also echoed the senator's statement, underscoring that a great need exists for European Union member states to finance efforts to bolster the region’s defense industry.

A high global demand for military equipment is becoming increasingly difficult to provide in a timely manner, making it necessary to enhance collaboration within the defense industry, Kosniak said.

However, the Polish minister pointed out that collaboration among defense firms in different countries may face temporary roadblocks emerging from differing national regulations, varying defense budgets, technological gaps and insufficient production capacity.

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Starliner Crew Upbeat as NASA, Boeing Engineers Work on Thrusters Problem - Astronauts

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - The crew of the Boeing Starliner now on board the International Space Station (ISS) acknowledged there was significant degradation in their maneuvering thrusts during their flight up but remain confident the spacecraft will safely return them to earth, astronauts Barry "Butch" Gilmore and Sunita "Suni" Williams told a NASA press conference on Wednesday.

"I feel confident we can unlock and figure out the best way to come home," Williams said. "I have a really good feeling in my heart that the spacecraft can take us home."

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Gilmore said NASA and Boeing engineers at White Sands, New Mexico were busy test firing similar thrusters to work out the problems and anticipate any further issues on the still unscheduled return flight to earth.

"We are doing thruster testing as we speak in White Sands, New Mexico. ... Based on what we know, we are absolutely ready [to make the flight]," he said.

The Boeing Starliner missed its first crewed docking rendezvous with the ISS on June 7 because five of its 28 thrusters failed. The return flight to earth has been indefinitely delayed while NASA and Boeing engineers study the problem.

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US Will Deploy Long-Range Fire Assets to Germany to Develop Enduring Presence - Statement

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - The United States will begin episodic deployments of long-range fire capabilities to Germany in an effort to develop an enduring presence of the assets in the region, the US and Germany said on Wednesday in a joint statement released by the White House.

“The United States will begin episodic deployments of the long-range fires capabilities of its Multi-Domain Task Force in Germany in 2026, as part of planning for enduring stationing of these capabilities in the future. When fully developed, these conventional long-range fires units will include SM-6, Tomahawk, and developmental hypersonic weapons, which have significantly longer range than current land-based fires in Europe,” the joint statement said.

Exercising the advanced capabilities will demonstrate the US’ commitment to NATO and its contributions to European integrated deterrence, the statement said.

The announcement comes amid a NATO summit in Washington.

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US House Panel Says Advertisers Coordinated to Demonetize ‘Disfavored’ Online Content

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - The World Federation of Advertisers (WFA) and its Global Alliance for Responsible Media (GARM) initiative coordinated with other entities to demonetize disfavored online content, the US House Judiciary Committee said in a report released Wednesday.

"Through GARM, large corporations, advertising agencies, and industry associations participated in boycotts and other coordinated action to demonetize platforms, podcasts, news outlets, and other content deemed disfavored by GARM and its members. This collusion can have the effect of eliminating a variety of content and viewpoints available to consumers," the report said.

WFA members represent approximately 90% of global advertising spending, totaling nearly one trillion dollars annually, the report said.

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GARM appears to have "anti-democratic" views of fundamental American freedoms, the report said. GARM's leader and co-founder, Rob Rakowitz, has criticized certain interpretations and applications of the US Constitution, the report said.

GARM has undertaken various actions to demonetize entrepreneur Elon Musk and his social media platform, X, the report said. The initiative also sought to demonetize The Joe Rogan Experience podcast, Breitbart News, The Daily Wire and Fox News, the report said.

Musk called the report "extremely concerning" in a statement via the social media platform X.

"The extent to which GARM has organized its trade association and coordinates actions that rob consumers of choices is likely illegal under the antitrust laws and threatens fundamental American freedoms. The information uncovered to date of WFA and GARM's collusive conduct to demonetize disfavored content is alarming," the report said.

The panel will continue to investigate companies that participate in such conduct to inform potential legislative reforms, the report said.

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US Authorizes Certain Transactions With Russian Central Bank, Finance Ministry - Treasury

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - The US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) issued a general license on Wednesday, authorizing certain transactions involving the Russian Central Bank, Ministry of Finance and National Wealth Fund.

The OFAC license authorizes such transactions if they are ordinarily incident and necessary to the day-to-day operations of US persons or entities in Russia.

The license does not authorize transactions prohibited by Russian Harmful Foreign Activities Sanctions Regulations or any debit to an account on the books of a US financial institution of the Russian Central Bank, Finance Ministry or National Wealth Fund.

The license is effective July 10 and expires on October 9.

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us issues license authorizing certain transactions involving russian central bank, national wealth fund, finance ministry through October 9 - treasury

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More Than 2,600 Bridges in US Lack Protection From Collisions by Ships - Senator

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - Two thirds of the 4,000 bridges in the United States that allow ships to pass under them lack functional pier protection against being hit and potentially demolished by collisions, US Senator Tom Carper said in a hearing on Wednesday.

"After the collapse of the Key Bridge it came to light that of the 4,000 bridges in the United

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States that allow ships to pass under them, two thirds lack fundamental pier protection," Carper told the US Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works.

The Key Bridge in the Port of Baltimore collapsed on March 26 after being hit by a cargo ship. Six construction workers on the bridge were killed and the port had to be closed for repairs for the next two months, disrupting the US industrial supply chain.

The 700-feet-wide, 50-feet-deep Fort McHenry Channel spanned by the bridge was reopened on June 10 after being restored by the US Army Corps of Engineers.

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US Diplomat Heads to Georgia to Voice Concerns Over 'Illiberal' Laws, 'Harmful' Rhetoric

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) - US Under Secretary of State Uzra Zeya is traveling to Georgia this week to raise concerns over the country's "illiberal" legislation and "harmful rhetoric," the State Department said on Wednesday.

"In Georgia, Under Secretary Zeya will engage representatives of the government, civil society, media, and parliament to underscore the U.S.'s grave concerns over the 'foreign influence' law and other illiberal legislation and the harmful rhetoric of the Georgian government, which has placed Georgia's Euro-Atlantic trajectory at risk," the statement said.

Zeya will make clear that the Georgian government's "undemocratic behavior and disinformation" about the United States has damaged their long-standing relationship, the statement said.

She will also emphasize US support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

"Additionally, she will reiterate the importance of free and fair elections and a vibrant civil society, raise respect for fundamental freedoms, protections for members of marginalized groups, and the human rights of all Georgians," the statement added.

After Georgia, Zeya will visit Armenia to discuss strengthening the bilateral partnership and advancing the country's democratic gains on the rule of law, anti-corruption, and judicial reform, according to the statement.

In May, the Georgian parliament adopted the bill on foreign agents, despite protests from the West. In response, the US launched a comprehensive review of bilateral cooperation with the country, imposed sanctions on a number of Georgian officials, and indefinitely delayed the Noble Partner military exercise.

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F-16 Jets Transfer En Route From Europe to Ukraine – Blinken

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Wednesday that a transfer of F-16 fighter jets was currently underway from Europe to Ukraine.

"I'm also pleased to announce that as we speak, the transfer of F-16 jets is underway, coming from Denmark, coming from the Netherlands, and those jets will be flying in the skies of Ukraine

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this summer to make sure that Ukraine can continue to effectively defend itself against the Russian aggression," Blinken said at the NATO Public Forum.

The US, Denmark, and Netherlands also committed to "further enhancing Ukraine's air capabilities, which will include squadrons of modern fourth generation F-16 multi-role aircraft," according to a joint statement from US President Joe Biden, Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof, and Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen.

They said that the coalition intends to support the sustainment and armament of the F-16 jets, including additional pilot training.

Russia has consistently warned against the West's continued arms deliveries to Ukraine, saying that they only prolong the conflict. New supplies of weapons by the West to Kiev, including F-16s, cannot fundamentally change the situation on the ground, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov previously said.

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Israeli Defense Firm Takes Ottawa to Court Over Contract Disqualification – Reports

WASHINGTON, July 10 (Sputnik) – Israel's Elbit Security Systems Ltd. is taking the Canadian Government to court over its allegedly unwarranted disqualification from a multimillion-dollar defense contract, CTV News reported on Wednesday.

In late June, Elbit filled an application at the Federal Court of Canada saying that Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) declined to explain its disqualification from a contract for hand-held laser rangefinders for the Canadian Armed Forces, the report said.

The company argues that it is being prevented from having a full and fair opportunity to compete, as the government is withholding the information about its disqualification until after the contract is awarded.

Elbit's Toronto-based legal representatives declined to provide a comment on the court application, the report said. However, PSPC in a statement said that Ottawa follows open, fair and transparent procurement processes. It added that the procurement process in question was ongoing and would be finalized later this summer.

The Israeli firm said the contract should have already been awarded late last month. It also said in its judicial review that the disqualification was unfair, incorrect and unreasonable, the report said.

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