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7/12/24 Friday

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Gunfire Erupts at Trump's Speech in Pennsylvania, Former President Injured

The former president was reportedly injured but is expected to survive, said two senior law enforcement officials. The 78-year-old appeared to have sustained a bloody ear.
Gunfire reportedly erupted at former US President Donald Trump's speech in Pennsylvania on Saturday.
The former president was speaking at his rally in the city of Butler when it was cut short by the sound of gunshots. Trump then put his hand to his ear, sat down behind the podium and was surrounded by bodyguards, a broadcast showed.
A couple of minutes later, the guards were leading the former president off the stage, with his right ear bloodied.
The former president was in the middle of discussing the issue of immigration in the US, and was displaying a chart of border crossing numbers when the incident occurred.
US Secret Service spokesperson Anthony Guglielmi said on Saturday that Trump is safe after an apparent shooting during a campaign rally in the state of Pennsylvania.
"An incident occurred the evening of July 13 at a Trump rally in Pennsylvania. The Secret Service has implemented protective measures and the former president is safe. This is now an active Secret Service investigation and further information will be released when available," Guglielmi said on social media.
US President Joe Biden Made Aware of Reported Shooting
President Joe Biden has been briefed on the apparent shooting at Trump's organized rally in the state of Pennsylvania, the White House said in a statement.
"The President has received an initial briefing on the incident at Former President Trump’s rally," the White House said on Saturday.
Trump Campaign Confirms the Former President is Fine
The Trump campaign said former president is fine following an apparent shooting at a campaign rally in the state of Pennsylvania.
"President Trump thanks law enforcement and first responders for their quick action during this heinous act. He is fine and is being checked out at a local medical facility. More details will follow," a the Trump campaign said in a statement on Saturday.
Near-Death Experience Becomes an Opportunistic Moment for Trump
The former president appeared to tell his Secret Service staff to "wait" as Secret Service rushed him off stage. Trump then fist pumped the air repeating the word “fight.”
Alleged Shooter is Reportedly Dead
Richard A. Goldinger, Butler County District Attorney, confirmed to a reporter from the Washington Post that the suspected shooter at Trump's rally is dead, as well as an attendee to the event.

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Citing law enforcement officials, the Associated Press reported that the alleged shooter was not an attendee at the rally, and was killed by Secret Service. The shooting will also be investigated as an assassination attempt, the report said.

US Politicians on 'Both Sides' Responded to the Incident

US President Joe Biden, who is running for a second presidential term against Trump, released a statement addressing the shooting on Saturday.

"I have been briefed on the shooting at Donald Trump's rally in Pennsylvania," Biden said. "I'm grateful to hear that he's safe and doing well. I'm praying for him and his family and for all those who were at the rally, as we await further information," he added. "[The First Lady] Jill and I are grateful to the Secret Service for getting him to safety. There's no place for this kind of violence in America. We must unite as one nation to condemn it."

Former President Barack Obama, who was Trump's Democratic predecessor, took a moment to condemn political violence after the incident.

"There is absolutely no place for political violence in our democracy," said Obama on X. "Although we don't yet know exactly what happened, we should all be relieved that former President Trump wasn't seriously hurt, and use this moment to recommit ourselves to civility and respect in our politics. Michelle and I are wishing him a quick recovery," the former president added.

Democratic former House speaker Nancy Pelosi, whose own husband suffered a home invasion and subsequent attack, said that she was thankful Trump is safe.

"Kelly and I are praying for President Trump and all the attendees of the campaign rally today in Pennsylvania, and we send our gratitude to the law enforcement who responded at the scene," said House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) in reference to his wife, Kelly Johnson.

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Alien 'Hunting' Group Announces New Technologies to Aid Their Quest - Report

Previously, the researchers had been confined to searching for signals deliberately sent out by aliens, says one project astronomer, but now they will be able to detect transmissions that are "unintentionally" as well as deliberately sent.

Researchers from Breakthrough Listen have announced new technology they say will transform their search for intelligent life in space. The group, which is the world's largest scientific research program whose mission is to find alien civilizations, will debut their findings at the group's annual conference which will be held in Oxford this week, The Guardianreported on Saturday.

Steve Croft, an astronomer and project scientist with Breakthrough Listen said that technologies are currently being developed across the globe which will help "transform" how the group looks for alien civilizations. These include the Square Kilometer Array which is made up of radio telescopes being built in South Africa and Australia as well as the Vera Rubin Observatory - the world's largest camera - being constructed in Chile.

Both facilities may begin their observations in the next few years and will provide the group with their collected data, and artificial intelligence will then analyze the collected information, possibly helping the group to find evidence of intelligent life forms in space.

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“Until now, we have been restricted to looking for signals deliberately sent out by aliens to advertise their existence,” said Croft. “The new techniques are going to be so sensitive that, for the first time, we will be able to detect unintentional transmissions as opposed to deliberate ones and will be able to spot alien airport radar, or powerful TV transmitters – things like that.”
Breakthrough Listen is a program that includes a survey of 1,000,000 closest stars to Earth and scans the center of Earth’s galaxy - as well as the entire “galactic plane” - to listen for messages from the 100 closest galaxies to Earth, the group said on their website prior to the news report. They add that the instruments they use are among the “world’s most powerful” and are “50 times more sensitive than existing telescopes”.
The program, which said they would commit a total of $100,000,000 for their initiative over the course of a decade, added that their radio surveys “cover 10 times more of the sky than previous programs” and cover at least “5 times more of the radio spectrum - and do it 100 times faster”.
Breakthrough Listen also said they are carrying out their broadest search yet for optical laser transmissions, and that these spectroscopic searches are 1,000 times more effective at finding laser signals than ordinary visible light surveys.
In 2023, it was announced that University of Oxford would be the new international headquarters for Breakthrough Listen after previously being headquartered at the University of California, Berkeley. The switch will better allow the group to utilize the Square Kilometer Array whose large array of radio dishes and antennas spans two continents.

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Fast Fashion Continues to Barrel Down Its Path of Destruction With Little to No Remedies, Report

The overproduction of clothing in the fast fashion industry has fueled climate change and plastic pollution, said the international network Greenpeace. The industry is also known for its humanitarian misdeeds and is estimated to employ some 75 million people who are paid meager wages for their labor and are forced to work in dangerous conditions.
Families in the Italian provinces of Vicenza, Verona and Padua are suffering from long-term health problems due to water contamination as the result of the global fashion industry, the Financial Times reported on Friday. It was in the 1960s that a textile group installed a research center in the town of Trissino in order to produce chemicals known colloquially as PFAS to make waterproof garments.
But the negative side effects to peoples' health and the environment caused by the fashion industry are not contained to Italy alone.
Fast fashion can be described as cheap, trendy clothing that takes ideas from high fashion brands or designers and gets those styles into the hands of consumers as quickly as possible. Fast fashion brands usually have hundreds to thousands of styles that are “trendy”, produce their clothes cheaply in manufacturing facilities where workers are paid severely low wages without labor rights to protect them, and create clothing that is made from cheap, low quality materials.

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“Today a Shein item costs even less than a sandwich... businesses can produce this fast and this cheap only because they use exploited labor and use cheap fossil fuel-based fibers,” says Eco-Age co-founder Livia Giuggioli Firth.

The Financial Times report found that about 20% of global water pollution can be attributed to the dyeing and finishing processes of clothing garments in the fashion industry. Meanwhile, simply washing one’s own clothes made from polyester can discharge hundreds of thousands of microplastic fibers into our water systems, the report said, citing a European parliament study.

And if water pollution isn’t bad enough, the global fashion industry is also reported to make up about 10% of all global carbon emissions which is more than international flights and shipping combined.

Thanks to “fast fashion” global textile fiber production has nearly doubled between 2000 and 2020 - with clothes tossed in the bin after only being worn 7 to 10 times before the garment weakens and falls apart, or goes out of style. According to government statistics, China is the world’s largest textile producer and consumer, where more than 26 million tons of clothes are thrown away each year, with most of it ending up in landfills.

But even as the European Union (EU) and the US attempt to put up roadblocks to stop the negative impacts of the fashion industry, it appears fast fashion that is produced outside of their jurisdiction is on an unstoppable route. By 2030, nearly 70% of global textile production will be based on polyester, nylon and other synthetic fibers, The Financial Times reported.

“We aren’t doing enough to fix the problem,” says Veneto-based Matteo Ward, co-founder and chief executive of consulting studio WRÅD, and the co-author of the fast fashion documentary series Junk. “Social justice, which is a prerequisite for environmental transition, isn’t a real priority… there are ways to evolve but the fashion industry is yet to find the courage.”

According to a 2024 report by the private equity firm Ambienta, fast fashion’s biggest setback is the quality of the clothes - which induces a short life span for the garment - as well the pervasiveness of synthetic fibers which cannot easily be recycled. The firm explains that most available recycling processes require ‘high purity’ textile waste, which is not possible for a majority of the fibers and clothes being produced today.

And mechanical recycling - which is the process of sorting, washing, grinding, re-granulating and compounding - is economically effective, but it only works well with wool items.

Last year, the EU introduced a mechanism which makes brands responsible for the disposal of every item they introduce to the market. But the European Fashion Alliance (EFA), who have overall been supportive of the legislation, have highlighted some issues with these proposals.

The group pointed out that in a position paper last year, the requirement to include recycled fibers in new garments could actually promote the production of more blended material which is actually harder to recycle. Frustration with consumers is also apparent in the industry, Friday’s report said. Those who buy cheap clothes need to do more to care for their garments rather then tossing them in a landfill, even if the clothes were affordable, fashion industry employees suggest.

In a 2024 report, the fashion watchdog group Remake assessed major clothing companies and scored those brands on their environmental, human rights and equitability practices. The group gave Shein, which has about 6,000 Chinese factories under its label, 6 out of a possible 150 points. The US label Skims, co-founded by Kim Kardashian, Temu, and Fashion Nova scored 0. And the highest-scoring retailer was Everlane with a meager 40 points out of 150.

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At Least 90 Palestinians Killed by Israeli Airstrike as IDF Targets Hamas' Top Commander

Ceasefire talks, which seemed possible in recent weeks, have come to a halt after three days of intense negotiations failed to produce a viable outcome, said two Egyptian security sources on Saturday.

After at least 90 Palestinians were killed in an airstrike, Israel is still struggling to assess whether or not their military successfully eliminated Hamas' top commander, Mohammed Deif, The Wall Street Journalreported on Sunday, citing military officials.

Meanwhile, Hamas officials have denied the Israeli military's claim and said Deif was in good enough health to actually listen to Netanyahu's press conference about Saturday's attack.

Yossi Kuperwasser, a former head of research for Israeli military intelligence, said the IDF will likely seek proof that the Hamas leader was killed.

At least 90 Palestinians were killed in the al-Mawasi area - in what was supposed to be a designated humanitarian zone in Gaza. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said it remained unclear whether Deif was killed in the strike, and vowed further military pressure against Hamas.

More than half of those killed in Saturday's attack were women and children, Gaza officials added. It was reported that the attack sent large plumes of smoke into the air and a crater was left where it struck.

After three days of intense ceasefire talks, communication between the two parties has ceased. Two Egyptian security sources told Reuters on Saturday that Israel lacked a genuine intent to reach an agreement. They also accused Israeli mediators of behavior that revealed "internal discord".

The death toll in the Gaza Strip has reached 38,584 since last October, while over 88,800 have been injured, according to the Palestinian enclave's health ministry's estimates.

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'You Need a Psychiatrist': Democratic Party Insiders Struggle to Force Biden Out

As concern mounts over the president's political viability Biden is reportedly intent on proving his critics wrong.

A loose alliance of donors, campaign advisors and other party leaders are working to convince Joe Biden to abandon his campaign for reelection without bruising the US president's ego, according to reports in US media.

But the "unofficial Committee to Unelect the President" is struggling to convince the famously stubborn head of state, according to insiders familiar with the matter, with Biden only becoming more determined as Democratic Party figures intensify their efforts.

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"It's hard to deny that in the two weeks since the debate, it's the arrogant and small Joe Biden we've seen most – hanging on, bragging, defensive, angry, weak," wrote former Obama speechwriter Jon Lovett on X. "Who else but him? he wonders aloud. Only God could change his mind, he tells us."

Lovett, who has disparaged the octogenarian president's refusal to bow out on his Pod Save America podcast, has been among Biden's most prominent liberal critics in recent days. But he is joined by several others.

The editorial boards of The New York Times and the Washington Posthave been unsparing in their admonishment since the president's performance during a debate against former President Donald Trump last month sparked public concern over his mental acuity. Many media personalities have joined the chorus.

"I think that Biden debated as well as Abraham Lincoln," said late-night television host Stephen Colbert Monday. "If you dug him up right now."

Former Clinton and Obama operatives have also chimed in. "President Biden is a historic figure, and a lot of that is gonna be tainted if he persists and loses this race," said Obama chief strategist David Axelrod.

Clinton strategist James Carville said keeping Biden on as the Democratic Party's nominee would be an "idiotic choice" that would lead to "disaster."

"Silence is a very loud form of speech," the political advisor added, noting that party leaders who voiced continued support for Biden immediately after last month's debate have grown quiet in recent days.

Beyond the relative few Democratic Party figures who have publicly called for Biden to drop out are dozens more who have privately voiced concerns and are working behind the scenes to convince the president, according to insiders.

But Biden remains convinced he is the best candidate to defeat Trump, pointing to his victory in 2020 and the Democrats' better-than-expected performance in the 2022 midterm elections. The president is reportedly motivated by an intense desire to prove his detractors wrong, something that has driven him since his early days in politics.

"You need a psychiatrist more than a spin doctor," one longtime campaign operative told the online outlet Axios.

Biden is one of the longest-tenured figures in national US politics, first being elected to the Senate in 1972. He is considered a conservative politician, historically taking right-wing positions on issues from segregation to drug policy and criminal justice.

His previous attempts to seek the presidency flamed out after a plagiarism scandal and comments in 2007 that many people deemed racially offensive. "You got the first mainstream African-American who is articulate and bright and clean and a nice-looking guy," Biden said of then-candidate Barack Obama.

He apologized for the remark and Obama later chose him as his running mate the following year, elevating him to the vice presidency when the ticket won the 2008 election.

Democratic Party leaders intervened heavily in 2020's primary to ensure Biden won the presidential nomination after Senator Bernie Sanders' insurgent candidacy seemed inevitable. Now those same insiders appear powerless to remove him from the pedestal they placed him on.

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One strategist claimed a “donor strike” is underway, with powerful financial backers of the party moving funds to congressional races and away from Biden’s presidential campaign. George Clooney, Netflix founder Reed Hastings and businessman Ari Emanuel are reportedly among the wealthy figures seeking a candidate to replace Biden.
With last month’s House primary between George Latimer and Jamaal Bowman shaping up to be the most expensive in history, money is more important than ever in competitive US politics. If contributions to his campaign effort dry up, insiders say Biden’s hand could finally be forced, with billionaire donors casting the most powerful vote in America’s pay-to-play system.

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Ukraine Faces Epidemic of Drowning Deaths as Desperate Men Attempt to Flee Conflict

“They’re destroying our kids,” said one young man’s mother to reporters, blaming Ukrainian authorities for her son’s demise.
Deaths from drowning are on the rise as desperate men attempt to flee Ukraine by swimming across the river separating the country from neighboring Romania and Hungary.
“It was seven weeks after Pvt. Ivan Pidmalivskiy had been due back on the front line with Russia when rescuers pulled his lifeless body from a river on Ukraine’s western edge. His death added to a toll of more than two dozen other men who have drowned in the River Tysa” reported the Wall Street Journal Saturday, “many of them fugitives from a military draft aimed at sustaining Ukraine’s war effort.”
Pidmalivskiy’s circumstances were unique, the newspaper reported, because the private had previously fought for two years after returning from Slovakia to volunteer for the war effort. His change of heart as the intractable conflict drags on illustrates the strain experienced by Kiev’s diminished military as a controversial plan to draft younger men stalls amid public opposition.
One poll earlier this year found that 63% of fighting-age men in Ukraine are unwilling to be drafted, while half oppose attempts to conscript new soldiers. Another found that only 10% of respondents were prepared to join the country’s armed forces.
“At least 44,000 Ukrainians have left the country illegally,” according to the Wall Street Journal report, citing authorities in Moldova, Romania and Slovakia. “That doesn’t include men who crossed the border officially using documents exempting them from military service issued in exchange for bribes.”
A report in February noted that most Ukrainian men between the ages of 18 and 60 are forbidden from leaving the country, but thousands “have crossed out illegally by traversing fields, forests and rivers, often in the middle of the night and sometimes with the help of a smuggler.”
“More than 18,000 others have been stopped by Ukraine while trying to flee over the border, while thousands more were caught at border checkpoints with documents the Ukrainian authorities deemed fake. Moldova, a former republic of the Soviet Union, has seen the greatest number of the new arrivals among the four countries the men are primarily escaping to.”
Videos of draft officers publicly assaulting and kidnapping unwilling men have flooded social media, stoking resentment among many Ukrainians. Many soldiers complain they are underpaid and exhausted as a shortage of personnel prevents them from receiving regular rotation.

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Human smugglers are reportedly charging as much as $15,000 to help men leave the country as the practice displaces the trade in cigarettes and counterfeit goods as a highly profitable industry. Those who try to swim to freedom across the River Tysa, such as 25-year-old Valeriy Minikhinov, risk death from exhaustion.

“They’re destroying our kids,” said the young man’s mother to reporters, blaming Ukrainian authorities for her son’s passing.

Reporting has demonstrated the key role of the United States in prolonging the conflict after it was revealed the country worked to scuttle multiple attempts at reconciliation between Russia and Ukraine during the early days of the conflict. In late 2022 former German Chancellor Angela Merkel admitted that the proposed Minsk accords, negotiated with the help of several European leaders, were merely a stalling tactic to allow Kiev to build up its military for an anticipated war.

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Musk Endorses Trump, Slams Lack of Secret Service Protection at Rally

The controversial tech magnate has increasingly used the X social media platform to promote conservative views.

Tesla and X social media platform CEO Elon Musk endorsed Donald Trump’s bid for reelection, taking the opportunity to also criticize the former president’s Secret Service detail after an apparent assassination attempt at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania.

“I fully endorse President Trump and hope for his rapid recovery,” the tech magnate said Saturday, posting a video of the politician defiantly pumping his fist into the air before being helped off stage by security. Trump suffered a minor injury after a bullet appeared to graze the right side of his face and hit his ear.

The billionaire reposted messages from conservative personalities alleging incompetence or a conspiracy to allow the former president to be killed on the part of the US Secret Service.

“Exactly,” Musk responded to one user who asked “How the hell was such an obvious line of sight not secured?” He also reposted a video of an eyewitness to the event alleging he and others had attempted to warn security officials as the shooter appeared on a nearby roof.

“The head of the Secret Service and the leader of this security detail should resign,” Musk posted.

The controversial businessman has increasingly used the X social media platform to promote conservative views after purchasing the website in 2022, helping Florida Governor Ron DeSantis launch his failed presidential bid last year in an online event plagued by technical difficulties.

Musk has voiced approval of Trump's promises to increase tariffs on China, once warning that Chinese electric vehicle manufacturers would "demolish" US automakers like Tesla without increased trade barriers.

The self-avowed champion of free speech has claimed he intends to promote more open discussion on the X social media platform (previously known as Twitter), but self-reported data indicates the website is now complying with more FBI requests to disclose user information than it did under its previous owner.

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Colombia Professor Faces Firing After Pro-Israel Social Media Pile-On

Pro-Israel lawmakers and Zionist accounts on social media caused a firestorm after law professor Katherine Franke questioned the conduct of ex-IDF members on Columbia's New York City campus.

A tenured professor at New York's Columbia University faces firing after a pro-Israel online campaign criticizing comments the academic made on behalf of pro-Palestine demonstrators at the Ivy League school.

"There's a very good chance that they will fire me," said law professor Katherine Franke after being subjected to questioning she characterized as hostile as a part of Columbia's investigation into the incident.

The controversy stems from an interview Franke granted to Democracy Now! on January 25. The professor sharply criticized Columbia's response to an incident in which pro-Palestine protesters were sprayed with an unknown chemical substance by two alleged veterans of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

University administrators initially blamed the students for conducting an "unsanctioned" protest before finally banning the perpetrators from campus while police conducted an investigation of the incident.

"Columbia has a program, It's a graduate relationship with older students from other countries, including Israel," Franke noted on the radio program. "It's something that many of us were concerned about because so many of those Israeli students who then come to the Columbia campus are coming right out of their military service. And they've been known to harass Palestinian and other students on our campus, and it's something the university has not taken seriously in the past."

"The university waited three or four days to actually even say anything about it," she added. "They have not reached out to the students who were sick… some of whom are still in the hospital."

The comment was subsequently mischaracterized by pro-Israel accounts on social media, who alleged that Franke advocated banning Israeli citizens from the Columbia campus.

"This @Columbia professor has a problem with former IDF soldiers being on campus," read one post typical of the outrage, shared by Columbia Business School professor Shai Davidai, who identifies on the X platform as "Jewish Israeli" and "Zionist."

"She doesn't have a problem with ex-soldiers from any other place," he complained. "Her only problem is with Israelis. @ProfKFranke – I served in the IDF. Do you think I also shouldn't be allowed on campus?"

Davidai publicly criticized a wave of pro-Palestine protest on US college campuses earlier this year, calling the students "Nazis" and "terrorists" and calling for the National Guard to be deployed to break up the demonstrations. The demand implies a deadly threat against protesters in the United States, where National Guard troops shot and killed several antiwar demonstrators at Ohio's Kent State University in 1970.

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The business professor's comments have been shared by official Israeli government accounts online as the country has invested significant effort in defending its cause on social media. It emerged last month that Israel has set up fake accounts online to lobby US lawmakers to continue supporting its military operation in the besieged Gaza Strip, which a study recently claimed could kill as many as 186,000. In 2013 it was revealedthe country pays students to defend it on Facebook and Twitter.

Columbia administration released a statement defending Israeli students in response to the firestorm, which was championed by the Israeli newspaper Haaretz. The following month Franke was informed a complaint had been lodged against her by two Columbia law professors for "discrimination," and in April Republican Congresswoman Elise Stefanik called for disciplinary action against her during a House hearing with controversial Columbia University President Minouche Shafik.

A number of college professors and other faculty have been fired or faced disciplinary action in the United States for expressing pro-Palestine sentiments. Dr. Ameer Loggins is filing a defamation suit against California's Stanford University after being fired for giving a lecture that discussed Israel in the context of historical acts of settler colonialism.

"What's of greatest concern is not really my 20-year-plus career at Columbia, but what this says about peaceful protest on our campuses around the lives and dignity of Palestinians," Franke said about the investigation into her comments, which remains ongoing. "What's happening to me is happening to our students, it's happened to people on many other campuses. And it's, to me, shocking at a place like Columbia — which prides itself on being a home for, if not only tolerating, maybe welcoming student engagement with public events or public affairs like the crisis in the Middle East."

"They're punishing me and others for standing up for our students who I think are engaging in appropriate protest," she continued. "Today, it's Palestine. Tomorrow could be abortion. It could be, you know, criticizing the Trump administration. It could be climate change. I feel like it's Palestine today, but what's at stake here is something much larger, of the imposition of a kind of orthodoxy around a very contested political concept or context."

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Trump Shooting Complicates Matters for Struggling Biden Campaign

President Biden's reelection campaign is reconsidering the tone of its messaging after yesterday's incident.

Two weeks after his shaky performance during a televised debate raised serious questions about his age and mental acuity, yesterday's assassination attempt on Donald Trump has complicated President Joe Biden's plans to relaunch his campaign taking a harder line against his Republican opponent.

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Reporting from CNN described his campaign's efforts to "calibrate" its political messaging amid the "delicate national moment."

"The big issue is how to campaign against him or attack him," said one Democratic Party strategist. "Can we even do that this week?"

Complicating matters further, the Republican National Convention is set to start Monday in Wisconsin, where Trump will likely be greeted to a hero's welcome by throngs of adoring supporters. Advisors have reportedly been formulating Democratic messaging in response to the event for "some time." Those talking points and attack lines are now under reconsideration as renewed focus is brought to the level of political polarization in the United States.

"There is absolutely no place for political violence in our democracy,"posted former President Barack Obama on the X social media platform Saturday. "Although we don't yet know exactly what happened, we should all be relieved that former President Trump wasn't seriously hurt, and use this moment to recommit ourselves to civility and respect in our politics. Michelle and I are wishing him a quick recovery."

Biden made similar comments in the hours after the attack.

"We cannot allow for this to be happening. We cannot be like this," the president said after attending a mass service in his home state of Delaware. Biden returned to the White House shortly after and reportedly plans to make an address from the Oval Office Sunday evening.

The president also rejected claims online suggesting the Secret Service had denied Trump additional protection, claiming the former president had '"already received a heightened level of security." The federal agency has faced criticism over its perceived shortcomings amid the first attack on the life of a presidential candidate in the United States in several decades.

The incident has brought renewed attention to political divisions in the country during an election year like no other. Biden has cast the former president as a unique threat to US democracy, a framing that has drawn criticism from some observers after yesterday's shooting. Trump and several of his advisors have faced indictment on charges they conspired to overturn the results of the 2020 election over allegations of a "fake electors" plot to certify the former president's victory in several states won by Biden.

Much of the Trump campaign's messaging has taken a similar tone, in turn claiming the former president faces political persecution by Democratic Party officials.

Recent polling suggests a broad lack of trust in the United States' electoral system amid a wider institutional crisis in the country. One poll conducted last year showed about a third of Trump supporters agree with the statement that "democracy is no longer a viable system" and "America should explore alternative forms of government to ensure stability and progress." Almost a quarter of President Biden's supporters endorsed the statement.

Another survey showed only half of Americans "have faith in democracy" while a poll in 2022 revealed 44 percent believe the country is headed toward a second civil war.

Journalist Dan Lazare claims the United States' lockstep support for Israel in its campaign in the Gaza Strip has eroded Americans' confidence in the US government as polling reveals voters increasingly sympathize with the Palestinian cause. Antiwar activists are reportedly planning to stage large demonstrations outside of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago next month.

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"Democrats are about to post more sympathetic messages about Donald Trump than 40,000 massacred Palestinians," said one user on the X social media platform yesterday. The comment has received some 105,000 likes.
'You need a psychiatrist': Democratic Party insiders struggle to force Biden out

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A loose alliance of donors, campaign advisors and other party leaders are working to convince Joe Biden to abandon his campaign for reelection without bruising the US president's ego, according to reports in US media.

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But Biden remains convinced he is the best candidate to defeat Trump, pointing to his victory in 2020 and the Democrats' better-than-expected performance in the 2022 midterm elections. The president is reportedly motivated by an intense desire to prove his detractors wrong, something that has driven him since his early days in politics.

Democratic Party leaders intervened heavily in 2020's primary to ensure Biden won the presidential nomination after Senator Bernie Sanders' insurgent candidacy seemed inevitable. Now those same insiders appear powerless to remove him from the pedestal they placed him on.

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Ukraine faces epidemic of drowning deaths as desperate men attempt to flee conflict

Deaths from drowning are on the rise as desperate men attempt to flee Ukraine by swimming across the river separating the country from neighboring Romania and Hungary.

"It was seven weeks after Pvt. Ivan Pidmalivskiy had been due back on the front line with Russia when rescuers pulled his lifeless body from a river on Ukraine's western edge. His death

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added to a toll of more than two dozen other men who have drowned in the River Tysa" reported the Wall Street Journal Saturday.

One poll earlier this year found that 63% of fighting-age men in Ukraine are unwilling to be drafted, while half oppose attempts to conscript new soldiers. Another found that only 10% of respondents were prepared to join the country's armed forces.

"At least 44,000 Ukrainians have left the country illegally," according to the Wall Street Journal report, citing authorities in Moldova, Romania and Slovakia. "That doesn't include men who crossed the border officially using documents exempting them from military service issued in exchange for bribes."

Videos of draft officers publicly assaulting and kidnapping unwilling men have flooded social media, stoking resentment among many Ukrainians. Many soldiers complain they are underpaid and exhausted as a shortage of personnel prevents them from receiving regular rotation.

Those who try to swim to freedom across the River Tysa, such as 25-year-old Valeriy Minikhinov, risk death from exhaustion.

"They're destroying our kids," said the young man's mother to reporters, blaming Ukrainian authorities for her son's passing.

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Musk endorses Trump, slams lack of Secret Service protection at rally

Tesla and X social media platform CEO Elon Musk endorsed Donald Trump's bid for reelection, taking the opportunity to also criticize the former president's Secret Service detail after an apparent assassination attempt at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania.

"I fully endorse President Trump and hope for his rapid recovery," the tech magnate said Saturday, posting a video of the politician defiantly pumping his fist into the air before being helped off stage by security. Trump suffered a minor injury after a bullet appeared to graze the right side of his face and hit his ear.

The billionaire reposted messages from conservative personalities alleging incompetence or a conspiracy to allow the former president to be killed on the part of the US Secret Service.

"Exactly," Musk responded to one user who asked "How the hell was such an obvious line of sight not secured?" He also reposted a video of an eyewitness to the event alleging he and others had attempted to warn security officials as the shooter appeared on a nearby roof.

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"The head of the Secret Service and the leader of this security detail should resign," Musk posted.

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Colombia professor faces firing after pro-Israel social media pile-on

A tenured professor at New York's Columbia University faces firing after a pro-Israel online campaign criticizing comments the academic made on behalf of pro-Palestine demonstrators at the Ivy League school.

"There's a very good chance that they will fire me," said law professor Katherine Franke after being subjected to questioning she characterized as hostile as a part of Columbia's investigation into the incident.

The controversy stems from an interview Franke granted to Democracy Now! on January 25. The professor sharply criticized Columbia's response to an incident in which pro-Palestine protesters were sprayed with an unknown chemical substance by two alleged veterans of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

"It's something that many of us were concerned about because so many of those Israeli students who then come to the Columbia campus are coming right out of their military service. And they've been known to harass Palestinian and other students on our campus, and it's something the university has not taken seriously in the past."

The comment was subsequently mischaracterized by pro-Israel accounts on social media, who alleged that Franke advocated banning Israeli citizens from the Columbia campus. The following month Franke was informed a complaint had been lodged against her by two Columbia law professors for "discrimination."

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Trump shooting complicates matters for struggling Biden campaign

Two weeks after his shaky performance during a televised debate raised serious questions about his age and mental acuity, yesterday's assassination attempt on Donald Trump has complicated President Joe Biden's plans to relaunch his campaign taking a harder line against his Republican opponent.

"The big issue is how to campaign against him or attack him," said one Democratic Party strategist. "Can we even do that this week?"

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Complicating matters further, the Republican National Convention is set to start Monday in Wisconsin, where Trump will likely be greeted to a hero's welcome by throngs of adoring supporters. Advisors have reportedly been formulating Democratic messaging in response to the event for "some time." Those talking points and attack lines are now under reconsideration as renewed focus is brought to the level of political polarization in the United States.

Recent polling suggests a broad lack of trust in the United States' electoral system amid a wider institutional crisis in the country. One poll conducted last year showed about a third of Trump supporters agree with the statement that "democracy is no longer a viable system" and "America should explore alternative forms of government to ensure stability and progress." Almost a quarter of President Biden's supporters endorsed the statement.

Another survey showed only half of Americans "have faith in democracy" while a poll in 2022 revealed 44 percent believe the country is headed toward a second civil war.

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Mayorkas Calls Trump's Assassination Attempt Law Enforcement 'Failure'

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) – The attempt to assassinate former US President Donald Trump stemmed from a "failure" on the part of law enforcement, US Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas said on Monday.

"When I say that something like this cannot happen, we are speaking of a failure," Mayorkas told CNN.

The secretary underscored that the authorities will conduct an independent review to analyze how and why the shooting occurred. They will provide recommendations and findings to ensure that such an incident does not happen again, he added.

"We will deliver answers to the American people to the fullest extent possible," Mayorkas promised.

On Saturday, shots were fired during Trump's campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. The former president sustained a gun wound to his right ear and was briefly hospitalized. The gunman killed an audience member and wounded two others in the crowd before being neutralized by the Secret Service.

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US in Heightened Threat Environment, Protective Services Adapting – Homeland Security Head

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) –The United States faces a "heightened threat environment," US Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas said on Monday after Saturday's assassination attempt of former President Donald Trump.

"We are in a heightened threat environment. Our incredible protective services adapt to that dynamic threat environment and make the changes that are necessary," Mayorkas told CNN.

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Mayorkas also urged Americans to “tone down the rhetoric” in the US election.
On Saturday, shots were fired during Trump's campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. The former president sustained a gun wound to his right ear and was briefly hospitalized. The gunman killed an audience member and wounded two others in the crowd before being neutralized by the Secret Service.

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Mayorkas Says Direct Line of Sight to Trump at Saturday’s Rally Should Not Have Occurred

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas said on Monday that the gunman who opened fire on former President Donald Trump during Saturday's rally should never have been able to get a direct line of sight.
"A direct line of sight like that to the former president should not occur," Mayorkas said in an interview for ABC.
Mayorkas promised to make public the results of an independent investigation into the actions of the US Secret Service, which came under criticism in the wake of the assassination attempt on Trump.
On Saturday evening, shots were fired during Trump's campaign event in Butler, Pennsylvania. The ex-president sustained a gun wound to his right ear and was briefly hospitalized. The shooter killed an audience member and critically injured two others in the crowd before the US Secret Service neutralized him. The FBI is investigating the incident as an assassination attempt.
The US Secret Service had identified the rooftop, from which the gunman targeted Trump at rally, as a potential security risk days before the event, the NBC News broadcaster reported on Monday, citing two sources familiar with the agency's operations.

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US Secret Service Says RNC Security Plan Strengthened After Trump Assassination Attempt

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) – The US Secret Service has strengthened the security plan for the Republican Nation Convention (RNC) this week following an assassination attempt on former US President Donald Trump over the weekend, director Kimberly Cheatle said on Monday.
"I am confident in the security plan our Secret Service RNC coordinator and our partners have put in place, which we have reviewed and strengthened in the wake of Saturday’s shooting," Cheatle said in a statement.
In the wake of the assassination attempt on Saturday, the US Secret Service has also implemented changes to Trump’s security detail to ensure his continued protection for the convention and the remainder of the campaign, Cheatle added.
On Saturday afternoon, shots were fired during Trump's campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania.

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Mayorkas Denies DHS Rebuffed Trump's Requests for More Security

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of Homeland Security (DHS) Alejandro Mayorkas on Monday called false claims that his department denied former President Donald Trump's requests to increase his protection despite repeated requests.

"That is unequivocally false assertion," Mayorkas said in an interview for ABC when asked to comment on a letter from the chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee suggesting the DHS rebuffed multiple requests from Trump to increase protective resources.

According to Mayorkas, the DHS had enhanced security for Trump beginning in June and since then has not received any requests for additional security measures.

On Saturday evening, shots were fired during Trump's campaign event in Butler, Pennsylvania. The ex-president sustained a gun wound to his right ear and was briefly hospitalized. The shooter killed an audience member and critically injured two others in the crowd before the US Secret Service neutralized him. The FBI is investigating the incident as an assassination attempt.

The assassination attempt caused a flurry of criticism against the DHS and the Secret Service, whose obvious blunders were noticed by ordinary people from among the event spectators.

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US Secret Service Adjusts Trump Detail to Ensure Protection During Campaign – Director

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) – The US Secret Service has adjusted Donald Trump's security detail since Saturday's assassination attempt on the Republican presidential frontrunner in order to ensure his protection for the remainder of his campaign, according to a release.

"In addition to the additional security enhancements we provided former President Trump's detail in June, we have also implemented changes to his security detail since Saturday to ensure his continued protection for the convention and the remainder of the campaign," US Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle stated in the release on Monday.

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US Secret Service to Participate Fully in Review of Trump Assassination Attempt - Chief

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) – The US Secret Service (USSS) will fully participate in an independent review of the assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump, USSS Director Kimberly Cheatle said on Monday.

"We understand the importance of the independent review announced by President Biden yesterday and will participate fully," Cheatle said in a statement.

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us secret service after trump assassination attempt confident in plan for republican national convention - director

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us secret service after trump assassination has reviewed and strengthened security plan for republican national convention - director

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RPT: PREVIEW - Republicans Hold National Convention in Milwaukee to Officialize Trump's Nomination

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WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The Republican National Committee will hold a four-day convention in Milwaukee on July 15-18, where party delegates are set to officialize Donald Trump's status as the Republican presidential nominee for the 2024 race.

The event has drawn additional attention after the shooting at Trump's rally in Pennsylvania, which took place on Saturday evening. The ex-president sustained a gun wound to his ear and was hospitalized. The shooter killed an audience member and critically injured two others in the crowd before the US Secret Service neutralized him. The FBI is investigating the incident as an assassination attempt. The gunman was identified as 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, according to the FBI.

Trump, who has already left hospital, will attend the convention, his campaign said. The organizers of the event told Sputnik that there had been no changes to the schedule or security measures following the shooting.

Thousands of party delegates from 56 US states and territories will gather in Milwaukee to hear from a number of speakers, approve the Republican Party platform and select a presidential ticket.

Although Trump faced some competition in the primary and caucus elections, all other Republican candidates have dropped out of the race, leaving Trump as the presumptive nominee.

Trump has yet to announce his running mate, but said on Friday that he may reveal his vice presidential pick at some point slightly before or during the convention. Potential running mates include US Senators JD Vance, Marco Rubio and Tim Scott, US Congresswoman Elise Stefanik, and North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum.

Each day of the convention will have a different theme, based on Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan. Monday's theme is dubbed Make America Wealthy Once Again, Tuesday's is Make America Safe Once Again, Wednesday's is Make America Strong Once Again and Thursday's is Make America Great Once Again.

Trump is set to accept the nomination on the final day of the convention, on which he will also deliver a speech.

Other expected speakers include Donald Trump Jr., model Amber Rose, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and Ultimate Fighting Championship chief Dana White.

Trump's chances of winning the upcoming election have increased after the assassination attempt, Politico reported, citing members of the Republican Party.

After Saturday, Trump has joined the short list of US presidents, who were assassinated, but survived. Theodore Roosevelt was shot in 1912 while campaigning, but made it out alive, as well as Ronald Reagan, who was shot in 1981 while in office and survived. Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy are among those who did not survive assassination attempts.

The Democratic Party will hold its national convention on August 19-22 in Chicago, where President Joe Biden could secure the nomination. However, some Democrats have expressed concerns about Biden's viability as a candidate and called on him to end his campaign, following a lackluster debate performance against Trump.

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Трамп заявил, что переписал речь для съезда республиканцев после покушения

ВАШИНГТОН, 15 июл - РИА Новости. Бывший президент США Дональд Трамп заявил, что полностью переписал свою речь для съезда республиканцев в Милуоки после покушения, сместив акцент на призыв к единству.

"Речь, с которой я планировал выступать в четверг, должна была стать просто невероятной", - сказал Трамп в интервью изданию Washington Examiner.

"Если бы этого (покушения) не случилось, эта речь стала бы одной из самых великолепных речей, посвященная главным образом политике президента Джо Байдена. Если честно, теперь это будет совершенно другая речь", - сказал Трамп.

Он добавил, что в своей новой речи он планирует продемонстрировать, что атака на него полностью изменила предвыборную кампанию.

"Это шанс объединить страну. Мне был дан этот шанс", - отметил Трамп.

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Biden After Attempted Trump Assassination Says Time to Cool Down Rhetoric in US Politics

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - It is time to cool down political rhetoric in the United States, US President Joe Biden said during remarks on an attempted assassination of former US President Donald Trump.

"The political rhetoric in this country has gotten very heated. It's time to cool it down," Biden said on Sunday.

Political differences ought to be resolved at the ballot box instead of with bullets, Biden said.

On Saturday, a gunman shot Trump in the right ear, killed one bystander and injured two others during a campaign event in Pennsylvania. The FBI is investigating the incident as an assassination attempt.

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Biden Says Shooter's Motives, Affiliations Not Yet Known

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said following a shooting at a campaign rally of former US President Donald Trump in Pennsylvania that a motive of the shooter is still unknown as well as his affiliations.

"Earlier today, I spoke about an ongoing investigation. We do not know the motive of the shooter yet," Biden said in a Sunday address to the nation. "We don't know his opinions or affiliations. We don't know whether he had help or support, or if he communicated with anyone else."

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Ex-DOJ Prosecutor Says He Believes Trump Shooter May Have Had Mental Troubles

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The gunman who attempted to assassinate former President Donald Trump may have likely had mental health issues, former US Justice Department prosecutor Ronald Sievert told Sputnik.

"Although I have no information on the exact background of this shooter, the little I know suggests he was a troubled individual," Sievert said on Sunday. "This was not an organizational act."

On Saturday afternoon, shots were fired during Trump's campaign event in Butler, Pennsylvania. The ex-president sustained a gun wound to his right ear and was briefly hospitalized. The gunman killed an audience member and critically injured two others in the crowd before the US Secret Service neutralized him.

Sievert explained that many of these types of mass shootings and assassination attempts in the United States are not facilitated by US groups but mostly carried out by individuals who have major psychological problems.

Earlier on Sunday, a senior FBI official told reporters that there is no indication that the 20-year-old gunman, Thomas Matthew Crooks, had any mental health issues, but his motive remains unclear, and it's still too early to rule anything out as the investigation continues.

The US public has noticeably suspected that the political rhetoric coming from US President Joe Biden and the Democratic Party against Trump, describing him as a threat to the United States, may have contributed to the assassination attempt.

"Background noise in political campaigns can help trigger these 'crazies' but they are somehow mentally off to begin with," Sievert said. "I think all the politicians complaining about the tone of the race and politics are missing the mark and some want to get on TV as happening today. It is individuals who need mental help."

Sievert further said he finds Democratic calls for the lowering of political tensions to be hypocritical after they have accused Trump of being a threat to democracy and evil, but he is just presenting a different vision for the United States.

The Democratic Party along with the main stream media and their politicization of the US courts casts a bad light on the entire Democratic Party and people "who used to be above dirty politics," Sievert added.

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US Secret Service Says 'Confident' in Current Security Plans for RNC, No Changes Made

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The US Secret Service is confident in the current plans in place for the Republican National Convention (RNC) being held in Milwaukee this week and no changes are needed in light of the assassination attempt against the presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump, US Secret Service coordinator for the RNC convention Audrey

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Gibson-Cicchino said during a press conference.

"We are confident in these security plans that are in place for this event, and we're ready to go," Gibson said on Sunday. "We're not getting any changes to our operational security plans for this event."

Gibson said the US Secret Service has been planning the security detail for the RNC event over the last 18 months.

The RNC event is designated as a national special security event, which is the highest level of security for an event that can be designated by the government, so it has all available federal resources, according to Gibson.

Trump said he will attend the Republican National Convention (RNC) in Milwaukee this week where he is expected to be officially named the Republican nominee for the 2024 presidential election. According to his campaign, he should be in Milwaukee by Sunday evening.

Trump noted that he considered delaying his trip to Milwaukee for the RNC by about two days but decided he could not let the "shooter" force him to reschedule.

President Joe Biden told reporters earlier that he will ensure Trump has all available federal resources for his security detail, and he has directed the US Secret Service to review all security measures for the RNC event.

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CORRECTION - Trump Merchandise Sales Soar in Pennsylvania After Assassination Attempt on Politician

(Fixes lead, para 3)

ROSTRAVER TOWNSHIP, Pennsylvania, July 15 (Sputnik) - Rostraver Township in Pennsylvania is experiencing a boom in sales of merchandise with the symbols of former US President Donald Trump after the assassination attempt on the politician during his campaign rally in the state on Saturday, a local salesman told Sputnik.

"It's unbelievable what has happened since the shooting," the salesman said on Sunday.

In the township, which is not far from where the rally was held, there are stalls where anyone can buy goods with the logos of the Republican politician. There are flags, caps, T-shirts, including one with Trump's famous mugshot taken during his arrest in Georgia last year.

"You have to be a Trump supporter to be able to stay in 93 degree heat for hours to buy a hat," he added.

On Saturday afternoon, shots were fired during Trump's campaign event in Butler, Pennsylvania. The ex-president sustained a gun wound to his right ear and was briefly hospitalized. The gunman killed an audience member and critically injured two others in the crowd before the US Secret Service neutralized him.

The FBI is investigating the incident as an assassination attempt and has identified the suspected gunman as 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania.

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"Никогда не видел такого спроса": мерч с Трампом распродают в Пенсильвании после покушения

РОСТРАВЕР (США), 15 июл - РИА Новости. Небольшой городок Ростравер в Пенсильвании переживает бум продаж товаров с символикой экс-президента США Дональда Трампа после субботнего покушения на политика, рассказал РИА Новости местный продавец.

В Ростравере, который находится неподалеку от места покушения на Трампа, расположены торговые палатки, где каждый желающий может приобрести товары с символикой и фото политика-республиканца. В наличии флаги, кепки, футболки, в том числе со знаменитым магшотом экс-президента - фотографией, сделанной во время его прошлогоднего ареста в штате Джорджия.

"Поверить невозможно в то, что произошло после стрельбы", - рассказал торговец, отметив, что "никогда прежде не видел такого большого спроса" у покупателей.

По его словам, нужно быть "истинным сторонником Трампа", чтобы в такую жару "стоять в очереди за кепкой".

Трамп в субботу прервал публичное выступление в Пенсильвании из-за стрельбы. На видеозаписи видно, как политика под руки уводит охрана, у него окровавлено ухо. Позже Трамп заявил, что был ранен в ухо и потерял много крови. Секретная служба США сообщила, что ликвидировала подозреваемого, который несколько раз выстрелил в сторону сцены. При стрельбе погиб один из зрителей, 50-летний бывший пожарный, еще двое получили критические ранения.

Подозреваемый - 20-летний Томас Мэтью Крукс из Пенсильвании, штата, где проходил митинг. Сообщается, что он прятался на крыше производственного здания примерно в 100 метрах от сцены - вне территории, где проводилось мероприятие.

ФБР назвало случившееся покушением на жизнь Трампа.

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Trump Merchandise Sales Soar in Pennsylvania After Assassination Attempt on Politician

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PREVIEW - Republicans Hold National Convention in Milwaukee to Officialize Trump's Nomination

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The Republican National Committee will hold a four-day convention in Milwaukee on July 15-18, where party delegates are set to officialize Donald Trump's status as the Republican presidential nominee for the 2024 race.
The event has drawn additional attention after the shooting at Trump's rally in Pennsylvania, which took place on Saturday evening. The ex-president sustained a gun wound to his ear and was hospitalized. The shooter killed an audience member and critically injured two others in the crowd before the US Secret Service neutralized him. The FBI is investigating the incident as an assassination attempt. The gunman was identified as 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, according to the FBI.
Trump, who has already left hospital, will attend the convention, his campaign said. The organizers of the event told Sputnik that there had been no changes to the schedule or security measures following the shooting.
Thousands of party delegates from 56 US states and territories will gather in Milwaukee to hear from a number of speakers, approve the Republican Party platform and select a presidential ticket.
Although Trump faced some competition in the primary and caucus elections, all other Republican candidates have dropped out of the race, leaving Trump as the presumptive nominee.
Trump has yet to announce his running mate, but said on Friday that he may reveal his vice presidential pick at some point slightly before or during the convention. Potential running mates include US Senators JD Vance, Marco Rubio and Tim Scott, US Congresswoman Elise Stefanik, and North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum.
Each day of the convention will have a different theme, based on Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan. Monday's theme is dubbed Make America Wealthy Once Again, Tuesday's is Make America Safe Once Again, Wednesday's is Make America Strong Once Again and Thursday's is Make America Great Once Again.
Trump is set to accept the nomination on the final day of the convention, on which he will also deliver a speech.
Other expected speakers include Donald Trump Jr., model Amber Rose, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and Ultimate Fighting Championship chief Dana White.

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Trump's chances of winning the upcoming election have increased after the assassination attempt, Politico reported, citing members of the Republican Party.

After Saturday, Trump has joined the short list of US presidents, who were assassinated, but survived. Theodore Roosevelt was shot in 1912 while campaigning, but made it out alive, as well as Ronald Reagan, who was shot in 1981 while in office and survived. Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy are among those who did not survive assassination attempts.

The Democratic Party will hold its national convention on August 19-22 in Chicago, where President Joe Biden could secure the nomination. However, some Democrats have expressed concerns about Biden's viability as a candidate and called on him to end his campaign, following a lackluster debate performance against Trump.

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Trump Rally Spectator Says Thought Gunshots Were Fireworks, Saw Puffs of Smoke

BETHEL PARK, Pennsylvania, July 14 (Sputnik) - Dan Savage, 52, was standing about ten yards in front of former President Donald Trump during his campaign rally in Pennsylvania on Saturday when he heard what he initially thought were fireworks.

"Donald Trump was no more than ten yards away from me," Savage told Sputnik. "I saw the puffs of smoke four feet in front of me, just go 'poof.' We heard the firecrackers and I saw the puffs of smoke. Secret Service told us to go ahead and get down. 'Get down. Get down.' We all got down."

Savage witnessed the first assassination attempt on a presidential candidate or president in more than four decades, since President Ronald Reagan was shot in 1981.

On Saturday afternoon, shots were fired during Trump's campaign event in Butler, Pennsylvania. The ex-president sustained a gun wound to his right ear and was briefly hospitalized. The gunman killed an audience member and critically injured two others in the crowd before the US Secret Service neutralized him.

The FBI is investigating the incident as an assassination attempt and has identified the suspected gunman as 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania.

"It was a surreal moment," Savage said.

Savage said he did not see the shooter, but can only recall hearing the gunshots that rang out through the rally that sounded like fireworks.

"When I say smoke, I'm talking about the dirt, so as it [the bullet] hits the ground, the puff of smoke," Savage said.

The avid Trump supporter, who stood on a highway overpass waving a giant Trump flag, said they are never going to surrender, regardless of the political violence initiated against the presumptive Republican nominee.

"We're still going strong. Trump is strong. America is strong," Savage said. "We can't have this in America. We're going to stand strong together, united. We're going to take back our country."

Trump said he will attend the Republican National Convention (RNC) in Milwaukee this week where he is expected to be officially named the Republican nominee for the 2024 presidential election.

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President Joe Biden told reporters earlier that he will ensure Trump has all available federal resources for his security detail, and he has directed the US Secret Service to review all security measures at the venue where the RNC will be hosted in the coming days.

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Trump Rally Attendee Says Event Was Poorly Organized, Security Failed to Respond to Threat

BETHEL PARK, July 14 (Sputnik) - An attendee of ex-US President Donald Trump' rally where the shooting took place told Sputnik on Sunday that the event had been poorly organized and security forces had failed to respond to reports of an armed man.

"It was a horrific day. My question is why was that building not secured and why did nobody do anything when it was brought to their attention that there was somebody crawling on the roof with a gun, with a weapon. Nobody addressed it, nobody did anything. It was unbelievable. I have attended a lot of rallies. This was the most mismanaged and confused situation," she said.

When the event attendees heard the shots they initially thought they were fireworks, she said. The woman added that she had been standing close to the podium at the moment of the attack and saw Trump being led away.

"He almost gave his life for us. If this goes wrong, and if the evil wins, we are done," she said.

On Saturday evening, shots were fired during Trump's campaign event in Pennsylvania. The ex-president sustained a gun wound to his ear and was hospitalized. The shooter killed an audience member and injured two others in the crowd before the US Secret Service neutralized him. The FBI is investigating the incident as an assassination attempt. The gunman was identified as 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, according to the FBI.

Trump, who has already left hospital, said he would attend the Republican National Convention, which will be held from July 15-18 and which is expected to officialize Trump's status as the Republican presidential nominee for the 2024 race.

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Trump Murder Bid Was Attack on Democracy, Won't Be Tolerated - Attorney General, FBI Chief

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - The unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Republican presumptive presidential candidate Donald Trump at a Pennsylvania rally on Saturday was an attack on the principle of democracy itself and will not be tolerated, the top two law enforcement officials of the Biden administration, US Attorney General Merrick Garland and FBI Director Christopher Wray, told a press conference on Sunday.

"I want to reiterate that the violence we saw yesterday is an attack on our democracy itself," Garland said.

Wray also described the shooting as an attack on democracy.

"An attempt to assassinate a presidential candidate can only be described as absolutely

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despicable and will not be tolerated in this country," he said.
Trump was slightly injured on his ear, a member of the crowd was killed and two others critically injured when the shooter, later identified as Thomas Matthew Crooks, 20, of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, fired an estimated five shots at the candidate from a distance of about 150 yards. Crooks was described as a registered Republican who had also contributed to Democratic causes. President Joe Biden said in a nationally televised message earlier in the day that Crooks' motivation had yet to be discovered.

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FBI Confirms Trump's Shooter Used AR Style Assault Rifle Purchased Legally

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - The gunman who attempted to assassinate former President Donald Trump used an AR style assault rifle that was purchased legally, a senior FBI official said on Sunday.
"I can confirm that the gun used in the shooting was an AR style rifle, which was purchased legally," the FBI official said during a conference call. "We located the weapon at the scene, located immediately adjacent to the shooter at the scene."
The FBI official said they believe the weapon was purchased by the gunman's father, but they do not know specifically how he accessed the weapon and whether he took it without his father's knowledge.
Moreover, the FBI official added that investigators searched the shooter's car and are also in the process of searching his mobile phone. The FBI's bomb technicians also located a suspicious device in the suspect's car that was seized and rendered safe and will be processed for further analysis.

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FBI Investigating Shooting as Assassination Attempt, Also Possible Domestic Terror Attack

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - The FBI is investigating the shooting at former President Donald Trump's rally as an assassination attempt, but also looking into possibly labeling it a domestic terrorist attack, a senior FBI official said on Sunday.
"We are investigating this as an assassination attempt, but also looking at the potential domestic terrorism act," the FBI official said.

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FBI Says Early Findings Indicate Trump's Shooter Acted Alone, Motive Still Unknown

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WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - The gunman who attempted to assassinate former President Donald Trump acted alone but his motives are still unknown, a senior FBI official said on Sunday.

"At this time, the information that we have indicates that the shooter acted alone and that there are currently no public safety concerns," the FBI official said during a conference call. "At present, we have not identified an ideology associated with the subject. But I want to remind everyone that we're still very early in this investigation."

The FBI also said there is no indication that the gunman had any mental health issues.

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More Attempted Political Killings Inevitable in Gun, Violence-Filled US - Ex FBI Agent

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - No amount of official "security" can prevent or even reduce the dangers of more attempted political assassinations in the United States without addressing the root causes which are an "epidemic of suicidal/homicidal daily mass shootings" and all kinds of unprecedented gun violence, former FBI Special Agent and whistlebelower Coleen Rowley told Sputnik on Sunday.

The veteran agent, who also served as an FBI legal counsel, was commenting on the unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Republican presumptive presidential candidate Donald Trump at a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania on Saturday.

"What is amazing to me is that in a country experiencing an epidemic of suicidal/homicidal daily mass shootings and all kinds of unprecedented gun violence, that nearly all American politicians and mainstream media coverage uniformly announce their tremendous surprise and shock that something like this can happen in the United States of America," Rowley said.

The patterns of assassinations and unsuccessful attempts on the lives of major US leaders now had been established for almost 160 years, she pointed out.

The US media is "carefully ignoring [that] we live in a country that has experienced nearly constant presidential assassination attempts, numerous of them successful, killing the greatest 'war presidents' like [Abraham] Lincoln and JFK [John F. Kennedy]," Rowley said.

These crimes were mostly perpetrated by mentally ill and/or destabilized persons like Lynette 'Squeaky' Fromme who unsuccessfully shot at President Gerald Ford in 1975 and John Hinckley who shot and seriously wounded President Ronald Reagan in 1981, Rowley added.

"American news reporters and pundits carefully ignore this reality, the facts and violent context (and even our most recent history) that can be found with one click to Wikipedia," Rowley observed.

Political and mass violence in the United States always escalated during times of war and the hate speech demonization that normalizes the killing of millions of 'others' and that was inherent in the barrage of warmongering rhetoric, she said.

Rowley recalled that these themes had been evidenced in the high level political assassinations of President Kennedy in 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King in 1968 and Senator Robert Kennedy, also in 1968.

"I personally warned about the likelihood of this mass violence (or what can be termed

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domestic 'terrorism') escalating and blowing back on the United States before the US launched its ill-begotten war of choice on Iraq in a February 2003 memo to then-FBI Director Robert Mueller," she said.

That memorandum was later republished on the front page of the New York Times, Rowley remembered.

"The search for 'motive' in this context is nothing but a distraction which the media always falls back on to fill their air time," she said.

However, in reality, seeking motives in such individual cases was as senseless as the hundreds if not thousands of cases of horrible violence erupting not only on presidential speech platforms but also in schools, restaurants, shopping malls, concerts, places of worship and all public gathering places across the United States, Rowley advised.

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Trump Says Planned to Delay Trip to Republican Convention in Milwaukee, But Leaving Sunday

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump said on Sunday that he had planned to delay his trip to Milwaukee to attend the upcoming Republican National Convention following the failed assassination attempt but decided he cannot let these events force him to change his scheduling.

"Based on yesterday's terrible events, I was going to delay my trip to Wisconsin, and The Republican National Convention, by two days, but have just decided that I cannot allow a 'shooter,' or potential assassin, to force change to scheduling, or anything else," Trump said via TruthSocial. "Therefore, I will be leaving for Milwaukee, as scheduled, at 3:30 P.M. TODAY."

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Biden Says Directed Authorities to Review Security at Republican Convention This Week

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden said during a press conference on Sunday that he had directed the US Secret Service to review all security measures in place for the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee this week following the failed assassination attempt against the presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump.

"I've directed the head of the Secret Service to review all security measures for all security measures for the Republican National Convention, which is scheduled to start tomorrow," Biden told reporters. "I've directed an independent review of the national security at yesterday's rally to assess exactly what happened, and we'll share the results of that independent review with the American people as well."

Biden added that Trump as a former US president and nominee of the Republican Party already receives a heightened level of security and he has consistently ensured that the US Secret Service provides him with every resource, capability and protective measure necessary to ensure his continued safety.

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Biden Says Talked to Trump After Shooting, Glad He's Recovering

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Sunday that he had spoken with Republican presumptive candidate Donald Trump after the unsuccessful attempt on his life on Saturday night and that the two men had a good conversation.
"Last night I spoke with Donald Trump: I'm glad he is recovering," Biden said in a nationally transmitted broadcast. "We had a short but good conversation."

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Biden Urges Public to Not Make Early Assumptions of Motives of Trump Assassination Attempt

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden during a press conference on Sunday urged the US public to not make early assumptions about the motives of the gunman who attempted to assassinate former President Donald Trump.
"FBI is leading this investigation, which is still in its early stages," Biden said. "We don't yet have any information about the motive of the shooter. We know who he is. I urge everyone, everyone, please don't make assumptions about his motives or his affiliations."
On Saturday evening, shots were fired during Trump's campaign event in Pennsylvania. The ex-president sustained a gun wound to his right ear and was briefly hospitalized. The shooter killed an audience member and critically injured two others in the crowd before the US Secret Service neutralized him. The FBI is investigating the incident as an assassination attempt.
The gunman was identified as 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, according to the FBI.

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Trump to Get Boost After Attack, US Intel Should Have Seen Threat - Ex Marine Officer

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - Republican presumptive presidential candidate and former president Donald Trump is likely to see a boost in his public support following the unsuccessful attempt on his life, retired US Marine Corps Colonel and political commentator G I Wilson told Sputnik on Sunday.
"I imagine this will give Trump a boost," Wilson said.
Trump was slightly injured on his ear when at least one gunman with a telescopic-sights rifle opened fire on him as he was addressing a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania on Saturday afternoon. The alleged gunman, later identified as Thomas Matthew Crooks, was then shot dead by Secret Service agents protecting Trump.

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"People were hoping for violence. Well, they got it. The political opportunists will have a field day," Wilson predicted.

Although unsuccessful, the assassination attempt served notice that a new era of political violence had already started in the United States, Wilson warned.

"This means targeted violence is still a political option and in a polarized country just before the election. This is not good," he said.

The US mainstream media carried a great deal of responsibility for emphasizing hostile, hate-filled rhetoric from both extremes of the political spectrum and for demonizing mainstream political candidates like Trump, Wilson stated.

"Our media is predisposed to [encouraging] this kind of polarization leading to violence. Our media and the politicians set the table. They prepare the climate for this kind of activity," he said.

The assassination attempt would also likely launch a new round of paranoia in the US media and social platforms scapegoating targeted causes that had nothing to do with the attack, Wilson predicted.

"Watch for a deluge of conspiracy theories feeding frenzy and of course the worst kind of political opportunists and our foes will try to leverage this to further polarize and divide the Nation," he said.

The US intelligence community may have been at fault for failing to take the threat to Trump from unpredictable directions seriously enough, Wilson suggested.

"Our intelligence community kept hyping the ring wing threat so did they miss this because of their love for ring wing political labels? [However,] labels have no place in intelligence. The US Intelligence Community needs to have a look in the mirror reckoning to increase the chances of missing things with their politicization," he said.

The alleged shooter, Crooks, was aged 20 and came from Bethel Park, a prosperous community outside Pittsburgh.

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Pennsylvania Governor Says US Political Temperature Must Calm After Trump Killing Attempt

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - The heightened political temperature in the United States needs to be brought down following the assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump during a campaign rally in the state of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro said on Sunday.

"This is a moment where all leaders have a responsibility to speak and act with moral clarity, where all leaders need to take down the temperature and rise above the hateful rhetoric that exists," Shapiro said during a press conference.

Political disagreements can never be addressed through violence but must be sorted out through a peaceful political process, the governor added.

On Saturday evening, shots were fired during Trump's campaign event in Pennsylvania. The ex-president sustained a gun wound to his right ear and was briefly hospitalized. The shooter killed an audience member and critically injured two others in the crowd before the US Secret Service neutralized him. The FBI is investigating the incident as an assassination attempt.

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The gunman was identified as 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, according to the FBI.

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Biden Getting Updated Brief From Officials After Trump Assassination Attempt - White House

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden is receiving an updated briefing from his national security team following the assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump, the White House said on Sunday.

"The President and the Vice President are receiving an updated briefing in the White House Situation Room," the White House said in a press release.

US homeland security and law enforcement officials participating in the meeting include US Attorney General Merrick Garland, US Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, FBI Director Christopher Wray, White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan, US Secret Service Director Kim Cheatle, among others.

On Saturday evening, shots were fired during Trump's campaign event in Pennsylvania. The ex-president sustained a gun wound to his right ear and was briefly hospitalized. The shooter killed an audience member and critically injured two others in the crowd before the US Secret Service neutralized him. The FBI is investigating the incident as an assassination attempt.

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Biden Will Deliver Remarks Later on Sunday After Trump Assassination Attempt - White House

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - The White House announced that President Joe Biden is scheduled to address the nation on Sunday afternoon following the assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump,

"In the afternoon, the President will deliver remarks. These remarks in the Roosevelt Room will be covered by the in-house pool," the White House said in a statement.

Biden is scheduled to deliver his remarks at 1:30 p.m. Eastern Time (17:30 GMT), according to the White House.

On Saturday evening, shots were fired during Trump's campaign event in Pennsylvania. The ex-president sustained a gun wound to his right ear and was briefly hospitalized. The shooter killed an audience member and critically injured two others in the crowd before the US Secret Service neutralized him. The FBI is investigating the incident as an assassination attempt.

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Противоречия в американском обществе зрели вплоть до покушения на Трампа - эксперт

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ВАШИНГТОН, 14 июл - РИА Новости. В Соединенных Штатах уже многие годы происходит рост общественной поляризации, которую можно было наблюдать незадолго до покушения на бывшего президента США Дональда Трампа, заявил РИА Новости подполковник армии США в отставке и политический консультант Эрл Расмуссен.

Дональд Трамп в субботу прервал публичное выступление в Пенсильвании из-за стрельбы. На видеозаписи было видно, как политика под руки уводит охрана, у него было окровавлено ухо. Позже Трамп заявил, что был ранен в ухо и потерял много крови. Секретная служба США сообщила, что ликвидировала подозреваемого, который несколько раз выстрелил в сторону сцены. При стрельбе погиб один из зрителей, еще двое получили критические ранения.

"За прошедшие годы мы лицезрели растущий раскол внутри страны. Буквально на прошлой неделе я видел яростные высказывания, которые, скорее всего, вызвали еще больше разногласий", - сказал Расмуссен, добавив, что обе политические партии должны смягчить свою риторику и контролировать своих сторонников.

Местные СМИ пишут, что подозреваемый – 20-летний Томас Мэтью Крукс из Пенсильвании, штата, где проходил митинг. Сообщается, что он прятался на крыше производственного здания в примерно 100 метрах от сцены – вне территории, где проводилось мероприятие.

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FBI Identifies Trump Rally Gunman as 20-Year-Old Thomas Matthew Crooks

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - Thomas Matthew Crooks, 20, has been identified as the gunman who tried to assassinate former President Donald Trump during a campaign rally in the state of Pennsylvania, the FBI said in a statement.

"The FBI has identified Thomas Matthew Crooks, 20, of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, as the subject involved in the assassination attempt of former President Donald Trump on July 13, in Butler, Pennsylvania. This remains an active and ongoing investigation," the FBI said Sunday.

Earlier, the FBI said they are still working to find the motive behind the assassination attempt.

Trump said a bullet fired by the gunman pierced the upper part of his right ear but he is safe.

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US Saw Growing Divisiveness Over the Years Prior to Trump Shooting - ex-US Army Col.

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - The United States has experienced an increasing polarization over the years right up to the assassination attempt against former US President Donald Trump, retired US Army Lieutenant Colonel and political consultant Earl Rasmussen told Sputnik.

"We have seen over the years the growing divisiveness within the country. Just this past week, I saw visceral comments that most likely stoke even more divisiveness," Rasmussen said, adding

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that such behavior and targeted actions have no place in the US and that " both political parties need to tone down the rhetoric and manage their base."

The expert also suggested that there was a security failure that allowed the gunman to get so close.

"I understand he was on a building which was outside the security zone. However, it was only maybe 150 yards away. Those buildings should have been thoroughly scrubbed and if not guarded by security/secret service they should have had continual observation on them. Moreover, the counter snipers appeared slow to react. In general while the personal security around Trump was good, there was an obvious lap in the supporting security," Rasmussen said.

On Saturday, a gunman opened fire on Trump during a campaign event in Pennsylvania, wounding his right ear, killing one audience member and critically injuring two others. The US Secret Service killed the shooter. Pennsylvania state police during a press conference described the assassination attempt against former President Donald Trump as a lone wolf attack but they are looking for other potential suspects.

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FBI Says ‘Surprising’ Shooter Able to Attempt Assassination of Trump

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - It is surprising that a shooter was able to get in position to attempt an assassination of former US President Donald Trump, FBI Special Agent in Charge of the Pittsburgh field office Kevin Rojek said during a press conference.

“It is surprising, but again, to get all the details of that will come out later in the investigation,” Rojek said on Saturday, when asked how the shooter was able to fire shots toward Trump.

Earlier on Saturday, a man shot Trump in his right ear during a campaign event in Pennsylvania. The shooter also killed an audience member and critically injured two others in the crowd before the US Secret Service neutralized him.

The Secret Service needs to answer questions about how the shooter managed to get into a position to fire on Trump during the event, Rojek said.

The Secret Service was not available to attend the press conference on the shooting, Rojek added.

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Police Describe Trump Shooter as 'Lone Wolf,' Looking for Other Possible Suspects

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - Pennsylvania state police during a press conference described the assassination attempt against former President Donald Trump as a lone wolf attack but they are looking for other potential suspects.

"We are absolutely not taking for granted that this was a lone wolf attack, and so we would be looking for any additional information that might point us toward anybody else that may have had a hand in this," state police said Saturday night.

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Authorities noted that the suspected gunman is a male but they will release his full identification when they are 100% confident they have his identify accurate.
Earlier, Trump said a bullet from the suspected shooter pierced the upper part of his right ear but he is safe.

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FBI Says Had No Any Threat Info Ahead of Trump Rally Shooting

(Adds details in paras 3,4)
WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - The FBI did not have any information about a potential threat ahead of the assassination attempt against former President Donald Trump, FBI Special in Charge of the Pittsburgh field office Kevin Rojek said during a press conference.
"From the FBI perspective. No, we did not have any specific threat information related to this event," Rojek said Saturday night.
The Pennsylvania State Police said that they were aware of reports of suspicious activity minutes ahead of the shooting and are following up on the matter.
Rojek said they are treating the incident as an assassination attempt against Trump at his campaign rally and are still working to identify the gunman's motive.

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Johnson Says US House Will Investigate Assassination Attempt Against Trump

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives will investigate an assassination attempt against former US President Donald Trump, House Speaker Mike Johnson said in a statement.
"The House will conduct a full investigation of the tragic events today. The American people deserve to know the truth," Johnson said on Saturday via social media platform X.
Earlier on Saturday, a gunman opened fire on Trump during a campaign event in Pennsylvania, wounding his right ear, killing one audience member and critically injuring two others. The US Secret Service killed the shooter.
Lawmakers will hold committee hearings with Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle and other officials from the FBI and US Department of Homeland Security, Johnson said.

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Biden Spoke With Trump in Wake of Shooting at Campaign Rally - White House

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - US president Joe Biden spoke with former US President Donald Trump in the wake of a shooting that occurred at his campaign rally in the state of

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Pennsylvania, the White House said in a statement.

"This evening, President Biden spoke to former President Trump," the White House said Saturday night.

Earlier in the day, Trump said a bullet from the suspected shooter pierced the upper part of his right ear.

The US Secret Service said the suspected shooter was killed by its agents, but one spectator was killed and two others were critically injured during the incident. According to media reports, this incident is being investigated as an assassination attempt.

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Biden Must Stop Using Angry Political Language After Trump Rally Shooting - Ex-RNC Chair

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden needs to stop directing angry political language towards former President Donald Trump following the failed assassination attempt against him during a campaign rally, former Republican National Committee (RNC) chairman James Gilmore told Sputnik.

"I think that there's too high a pitch of the political language right now in the United States," Gilmore said Saturday night. "I think that President Biden is very high pitched and angry in his comments. He calls President Trump a liar all the time. He is using very high pitched language and I think it really needs to stop."

It's important US authorities find the motive for the shooting, Gilmore said, adding that a political assassination is a threat to US democracy.

Biden said during a press conference that he is grateful Trump is safe and hopes he will be able to talk to him later tonight.

Earlier in the day, Trump said a bullet from the suspected shooter pierced the upper part of his right ear.

The US Secret Service said the suspected shooter was killed by US Secret Service agents, but one spectator was killed and two others were critically injured during the incident . According to media reports, this incident is being investigated as an assassination attempt.

The Trump campaign said Trump is still expected to attend the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee this coming week where he will officially be nominated to be the Republican nominee for the US presidential election.

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Trump Murder Bid 'Wakeup Call' on Deep State Fear of His Return - Ex-Pentagon Analyst

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - The unsuccessful assassination attempt against former president and current presumptive Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump in Butler, Pennsylvania, on Saturday is a warning sign or "wakeup call" about how seriously the US Deep State fears the return of the former leader to the White House, veteran Pentagon analyst and

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retired US Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Karen Kwiatkowski told Sputnik on Sunday.

"This shooting is a wakeup call about how seriously the Democratic neocons and the existent Deep State is concerned about the upcoming presidential election," Kwiatkowski said.

At least two shots were fired at Trump during the rally, one of them slightly nicking his ear. The shots were apparently fired from at least one and possibly more rifles.

Trump, now aged 78, immediately dived to the ground, an action which some commentators have already said may have saved his life.

Kwaitkowski advised that the attack did not come in a political vacuum but followed hysterical language repeatedly and falsely asserting that Trump would become some kind of dictator if elected.

It also followed repeated warnings that the same Deep State official establishment who tried to block Trump's foreign and national security policies during his first term in office from 2017 to 2021 appeared determined to prevent him from taking power again.

"The language of the left is hysterically existential regarding Trump, and actions from panicked leftists or coordinated deep state action against him can happen, and seems to have happened today," Kwiatkowski said.

Kwiatkowski also observed that the Secret Service, charged with the protection of the president of the United States and major presidential candidates had appeared to have acted decisively and successfully in defense of him, killing the alleged gunman.

"The Secret Service apparently acted swiftly and violently in defense of Mr. Trump," she said.

However, Kwiatkowski also pointed out that the current administration of US President Joe Biden had refused to provide Secret Service protection to independent candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

"It is also a reminder that the Biden Administration has repeatedly denied RFK, Jr's requests for Secret Service protection," she said.

Kennedy's own father, Senator Robert Kennedy, was assassinated during his presidential campaign 56 years ago. His uncle, President John F. Kennedy, was assassinated in Dallas, Texas on November 22, 1963.

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FBI Says Assuming Role of Lead Agency to Investigate Shooting Incident at Trump Rally

MOSCOW, July 14 (Sputnik) - The FBI is taking over the lead role in the investigation into the shooting incident that occurred earlier at former President Donald Trump's campaign rally in the state of Pennsylvania, the FBI said in a statement to Sputnik.

"The FBI has assumed the role of the lead federal law enforcement agency in the investigation of the incident involving former President Donald Trump that occurred earlier today in Butler, Pennsylvania," the FBI said on Saturday night.

Special agents of the FBI Pittsburgh Field Office responded immediately to the incident and will continue to support this investigation with the full resources of the FBI alongside its partners at the US Secret Service and state and local law enforcement, the agency said.

Earlier, Trump said a bullet from the suspected shooter pierced the upper part of his right ear.

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The US Secret Service said the suspected shooter was killed by US Secret Service agents, but one spectator was killed and two others were critically injured during the incident . According to media reports, this incident is being investigated as an assassination attempt.

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Trump Team Says Ex-President to Still Plans to Attend Republican Convention Milwaukee

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump still plans on attending the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee this coming week, his campaign said.

"President Trump looks forward to joining you all in Milwaukee as we proceed with our convention to nominate him to serve as the 47th President of the United States. As our party's nominee, President Trump will continue to share his vision to Make America Great Again," the Trump campaign said in a press release on Saturday evening.

Earlier in the day, Trump said a bullet from a suspected shooter pierced the upper part of his right ear during a shooting at his campaign rally in the state of Pennsylvania.

The US Secret Service said the suspected shooter was killed by US Secret Service agents, but one spectator was killed and two others were critically injured during the incident . According to media reports, this incident is being investigated as an assassination attempt.

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Trudeau Says Sickened by Attempted Assassination of Trump, Political Violence Unacceptable

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said that he is sickened by an assassination attempt against former US President Donald Trump, which wounded the Republican candidate during a speech and killed an audience member.

"I'm sickened by the shooting at former President Trump. It cannot be overstated – political violence is never acceptable," Trudeau said on Saturday in a statement on X.

The shooter was killed by US Secret Service agents after firing multiple shots towards Trump while he was delivering remarks at a campaign event in Pennsylvania.

Trump was shot in his right ear, one spectator was killed and two others critically injured during the shooting.

US President Joe Biden condemned the violence and said that he may speak with Trump later on Saturday.

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Blinken Says Shocked, Saddened By Shooting at Trump's Rally, Grateful He's Safe

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MOSCOW, July 14 (Sputnik) - US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that he is shocked and saddened by the shooting at former President Donald Trump's rally but grateful he is safe.
"I'm shocked and saddened by the shooting at former President Trump's rally and grateful that he is safe. As [Biden] said, there is no place for political violence in America and we must all condemn it," Blinken said in a statement on Saturday evening.
Earlier in the day, Trump said a bullet from the suspected shooter pierced the upper part of his right ear.
The US Secret Service said the suspected shooter was killed by US Secret Service agents, but one spectator was killed and two others were critically injured during the incident . According to media reports, this incident is being investigated as an assassination attempt.

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Trump Says Shooter Dead But Nothing Known About Him at This Time - Statement

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump posted hours after an assassination against him that no information is known about the shooter who is now dead.
"Nothing is known at this time about the shooter, who is now dead," Trump posted on his social media platform Truth Social.
Trump further added that a bullet hit him in the upper part of his right ear.

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FBI Says on Scene Where Trump Was Shot at Rally, Working Jointly With US Secret Service

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - The FBI told Sputnik it has personnel on scene in the state of Pennsylvania where former President Donald Trump was shot during a campaign rally and is working jointly with the US Secret Service to investigate the incident.
"FBI personnel are on the scene in Butler, Pennsylvania and the FBI will continue to work jointly with the US Secret Service as the investigation moves forward," the FBI said on Saturday.

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Senator Vance Says Biden's Campaign Rhetoric to Blame For Trump's Assassination Attempt

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - US Senator J.D. Vance said on Saturday evening that President Biden's rhetoric about Trump and his campaign is the cause of an assassination attempt at Trump's rally in Pennsylvania.
"The central premise of the Biden campaign is that President Donald Trump is an authoritarian fascist who must be stopped at all costs. That rhetoric laws directly to President Trump's

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attempted assassination," Vance said on X.
Vance further emphasized that today's attempt is not 'some isolated incident'.
Media reported earlier that the shooting is being investigated as an assassination attempt and that the shooter was killed by US Secret Service agents.
Former President Donald Trump is safe and doing fine after he was grazed by gunfire and appeared to have blood on the right side of his head, media reported.

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US Biden Says He Hopes to Speak to Trump Tonight Following Assassination Attempt at Rally

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Sunday he hopes to get to talk to Former President Trump this evening following a shooting at Trump's rally in Pennsylvania.
"I hope I get to speak to him tonight," Biden said.
Earlier in the day, media footage showed that gunfire erupted at Trump's speech, after which he had blood on the right side of his head as US Secret Service agents escorted him off the stage

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Biden After Shooting at Trump Rally Says No Place For This Kind of Violence in US

MOSCOW, July 14 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said that he is grateful to hear that former President Donald Trump is safe after an apparent shooting at his rally and emphasized that there is no place for this kind of violence in the United States.
"I have been briefed on the shooting at Donald Trump's rally in Pennsylvania," Biden said in a statement on Saturday. "I'm grateful to hear that he's safe and doing well. I'm praying for him and his family and for all those who were at the rally, as we await further information. Jill and I are grateful to the Secret Service for getting him to safety. There's no place for this kind of violence in America. We must unite as one nation to condemn it."

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US Lawmaker Says Biden to Address Nation Saturday Night About Incident at Trump Rally

MOSCOW, July 14 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden is purportedly going to address the nation on Saturday night about the apparent shooting at the Trump campaign rally in the state of Pennsylvania, Congressman Chip Roy said in a statement on Sunday.
"I am told Biden will address nation tonight. For the good of the nation, please pray he will find the right words of respect for President Trump, who was targeted for assassination," Roy said on X.

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The Trump campaign and US Secret Service said former President Donald Trump is safe and doing fine after the incident.

Media footage showed Trump had blood on the right side of head as US Secret Service agents escorted him off the stage. According to a local official, Trump was "grazed" by gunfire.

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US House Speaker Briefed on Trump Shooting, Calls For Condemnation - Statement

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - The US House Speaker Mike Johnson said on Saturday that he had been updated by the law enforcement and that the shooting at President Trump has to be condemned.

“I have been briefed by law enforcement and am continuing to monitor the developments. This horrific act of political violence at a peaceful campaign rally has no place in this country and should be unanimously and forcefully condemned," Johnson said on X.

Johnson added that he and his wife are praying for Trump and all the attendees of the rally.

Earlier in the day, media footage showed that gunfire erupted at Trump's speech, after which he had blood on the right side of his head as US Secret Service agents escorted him off the stage.

One person is presumed dead in a shooting at a rally for former US President Donald Trump in Pennsylvania, local broadcaster WTAE reported on Sunday, citing the Butler County prosecutor.

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Local Official Says Trump 'Grazed' By Gunfire During Rally, Shooter Dead - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump was grazed by gunfire but is safe, and the alleged shooter is dead, the Washington Post reported, citing a local law enforcement official.

The report said on Saturday, citing Butler County District Attorney Richard Goldinger, that Trump was grazed by gunfire but is safe. Moreover, according to Goldinger, the shooter is dead, and an audience member was killed, and another person is in serious condition.

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FBI Declines Comment on Trump Rally Shooting, Refers to US Secret Service

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - The FBI on Saturday declined to comment on the apparent shooting that occurred at former President Donald Trump's rally in Pennsylvania and referred to the US Secret Service for further information.

"Refer you to USSS [US Secret Service]," the FBI told Sputnik.

Media footage showed Trump had blood on the right side of head as US Secret Service agents

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escorted him off the stage.
The Trump campaign, the White House and US Secret Service have not responded to Sputnik's request for comment on the matter.

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Trump Campaign says Trump 'Fine' After Apparent Shooting at Rally on Saturday

MOSCOW, July 14 (Sputnik) - The Trump campaign said former President Donald Trump is fine following an apparent shooting at a campaign rally in the state of Pennsylvania.
"President Trump thanks law enforcement and first responders for their quick action during this heinous act. He is fine and is being checked out at a local medical facility. More details will follow," a the Trump campaign said in a statement on Saturday.
Media footage showed Trump had blood on the right side of head as US Secret Service agents escorted him off the stage.

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White House Says Biden Received Initial Briefing on Incident at Trump's Rally

MOSCOW, July 14 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden has been briefed on the apparent shooting at former President Donald Trump's campaign rally in the state of Pennsylvania, the White House said in a statement.
"The President has received an initial briefing on the incident at Former President Trump's rally," the White House said on Saturday.
Media footage showed Trump had blood on the right side of head as US Secret Service agents escorted him off the stage.

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US Secret Service Says Trump 'Safe' After Apparent Shooting at Campaign Rally

WASHINGTON, July 14 (Sputnik) - US Secret Service spokesperson Anthony Guglielmi said on Saturday that former President Donald Trump is safe after an apparent shooting during a campaign rally in the state of Pennsylvania.
"An incident occurred the evening of July 13 at a Trump rally in Pennsylvania. The Secret Service has implemented protective measures and the former President is safe. This is now an active Secret Service investigation and further information will be released when available," Guglielmi said on his social media.
Media footage showed Trump had blood on the right side of head as US Secret Service agents

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escorted him off the stage.

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Ex-Pentagon Analyst Calls NATO Declaration Document of 'Contemptuous Global War'

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) – The NATO declaration following the summit in Washington is nothing more than a document of "covetous and contemptuous global war" that Russia and China should pay close attention to, veteran Defense Department analyst and retired US Air Force Lt. Col. Karen Kwiatkowski told Sputnik.

"They [Russia and China] should read it carefully, and expose some of its hypocrisy. It is fundamentally a document of covetous and contemptuous global war, made by a shallow alliance that hasn't won any war it has engaged in, and several of which it directly started, since its inception," Kwiatkowski said in an interview.

On Wednesday, NATO members 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.

The declaration called on China "to cease all material and political support to Russia's war effort," which allegedly 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 Chinese Mission to the European Union reacted sharply, saying the declaration was "filled with Cold War mentality and belligerent rhetoric."

Unlike the US, China has not provided lethal weapons to any party to the conflict, Chinese officials said.

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Latest NATO Declaration Suited to Benefit US Arms Manufacturers - Ex-Pentagon Analyst

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - The NATO declaration following this week's summit in Washington is a tool for enriching American military corporations, and not a map for the development of the military bloc for the future, veteran Defense Department analyst and retired US Air Force Lt. Col. Karen Kwiatkowski told Sputnik.

"It is a bureaucratic document more suited to solicitations for a US arms manufacturers pyramid scheme than a functional guide to the future of NATO," Kwiatkowski said in an interview.

At the same time, the document serves as a warning to the rest of the world that the military alliance sees no limit to its territorial ambitions and with the current level of funding will pose a threat to peace and security, and trade in the Black Sea and the Pacific regions, Kwiatkowski added.

According to Kwiatkowski, the major part of the declaration contradicts any defensive intent of the military bloc as NATO now seeks specific war and prewar efforts against Russia and China

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across multiple regions.
On Wednesday, NATO members 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.
NATO also agreed to enhance its cooperation with the Indo-Pacific region including through projects in support of Ukraine.

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NATO Unable, Unprepared to Defend European Countries - Ex-Pentagon Analyst

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) – NATO is unable and unprepared to defend European countries because most of its defensive capability has already been destroyed in Ukraine, veteran Defense Department analyst and retired US Air Force Lt. Col. Karen Kwiatkowski told Sputnik.
"NATO is unable and unprepared to defend European countries – in fact most of that defensive capability has been sent to Ukraine and destroyed already," Kwiatkowski said in an interview.
European NATO members have had no reason to develop their own defense capabilities, diplomacy or trade due to the dominant role of the United States in the military bloc, including its key position in nuclear defense, Kwiatkowski noted.
On Wednesday, NATO members 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.
EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said on Thursday that NATO's new development plan includes readiness to mobilize around 300,000 troops in the European Union, while the EU currently has 150,000 operational military personnel.

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ANALYSIS - NATO in State of Hysteria as Alliance Faces Russia, China, Trump Reelection - Experts

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - NATO leaders at the Washington summit this week were in an almost hysterical state as they contemplated not just the serious, sustained challenge of a rising Russia and China, but also the growing likelihood that Donald Trump will be reelected in November for a second term as president of the United States, European and US foreign policy and national security experts told Sputnik.
"NATO is almost hysterical as it confronts the failure of its backfiring attempts to 'contain' Russia, China, Iran and the DPRK [North Korea] and the imminent likely election of a NATO-sceptic Trump as US president," former United Kingdom ambassador to Syria and

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political commentator Peter Ford said on Thursday.

The 32-nation alliance unveiled its new declaration earlier in the day emphasizing its determination to confront Russia and China in defense of what it called international law and to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. However, the declaration made no reference as to other nations' and alliances' rights to interpret those concepts differently from NATO.

Ford said the declaration did not appear to be rational and rather than presenting the alliance's principles and priorities in a way that could provide the basis for negotiated agreements with other nations, it indulged wildly in abuse.

"A psychiatrist reading the inordinately verbose, repetitive, breast beating, self-justifying NATO declaration would immediately diagnose a person having a nervous breakdown," Ford said.

The former UK diplomat also said NATO leaders were now so limited in their understanding of the world that they could not recognize other nations' aspirations while clinging to old intellectual constructs such as their alleged "rules-based order."

"That the declaration repeatedly uses NATO's favorite but post-Gaza utterly discredited term 'rules-based order' underlines that the organization is in pathological denial, unable to see itself as others see it," Ford said.

This denial extended to the refusal to acknowledge that while NATO may have gained more members, but in reality more liabilities than assets, two key states - Turkey and Hungary - were now increasingly members in name only, he said.

Ford said the declaration principally signals NATO's commitment to continue stoking the Ukraine conflict over a very long period, but this bluster may only last until the November US presidential election.

"We can but pray that Russia and China are sensible enough to see through the bluster and wait to see what happens," Ford added.

NATO'S AVALANCHE OF LIES

American University in Moscow President Edward Lozansky agreed that the declaration was irrational and worse, one that brings the world closer to the edge of the abyss.

"The avalanche of lies is astonishing; the biggest one is that NATO is only a defensive organization and is not involved in this war [in Ukraine] when, in reality, it is not only involved but has provoked it," Lozansky said.

NATO claimed to champion the forces of freedom and progress in the world, but its militaristic and aggressive policies against so many nations undermined its own rhetoric, he said.

Lozansky also said he was unsure why Hungary and Slovakia signed the declaration, which contradicted their previous statements, but speculated that perhaps they had to yield to the enormous pressure - something that has happened in the past to disobedient members.

NATO DECLARATION A TEXTBOOK OF IMPERIAL OVERREACH

US constitutional historian and political commentator Dan Lazare said the declaration read like an archaic document out of the distant past, as it was so unconnected with reality that it read like something King Louis XVI might have issued before the French Revolution.

"The declaration is a textbook example of imperial overreach," Lazare said, adding that while the alliance claims enemies are pressing in from all sides, NATO was extending its reach to ever-farther corners of the globe.

"According to the document, it is opening up a liaison office in Jordan, expanding operations in Kuwait and discussing strategy with the AUKUS [Australia-United Kingdom-United States]

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nations" while also proclaiming the Indo-Pacific region as directly affecting Euro-Atlantic security, Lazare said. "But why stop there? Why not extend operations into the Antarctic or the Strait of Magellan?"

Lazare said a few elements in the declaration were particularly over the top even by NATO standards, such as the proclamation the alliance members will never recognize Russia's new territories, including Crimea.

"But doesn't NATO know that the Crimean population has shown repeatedly that it doesn't want anything to do with Ukraine and that the formula is therefore a recipe for endless war?" Lazare said.

While the declaration accuses Russia of sabotage, acts of violence and provocations at allied borders, among other malicious activities, it is widely known the United States and its NATO allies were responsible for the greatest single act of sabotage by destroying the Nordstream 2 pipelines, he said.

However, Lazare described the NATO Declaration's attack on China as especially ironic, Lazare said.

"What does NATO expect China to do - hold America's coat while it finishes off Moscow and then directs its aggression toward Beijing?" Lazare said.

If Washington truly wanted to put an end to the deepening Russia-China partnership, it should try lowering the temperature and adopting a more cooperative and reasonable approach, he said.

"Neither country is going away soon, so the United States better learn to live with it," Lazare added.

LAST DITCH EFFORT TO PROP UP CRUMBLING ALLIANCE

California State University Emeritus Professor of Political Affairs Beau Grosscup saw the declaration as a desperate last-ditch attempt to prop up the venerable and crumbling alliance before the US elections are held in November.

"I assess the meeting and declaration as an effort to shore up NATO before the 2024 US election, and the possibility of a Trump win," Grosscup said.

The declaration was also crafted to make a strong statement of support for Ukraine in its war against Russia, he said.

"Finally, the declaration is very clear that NATO is expanding its capabilities and commitments into the Pacific and Middle East/African theaters," Grosscup said.

The declaration was meant to try and show both NATO's friends and critics that the alliance was still a powerful force in the world to be reckoned with - a statement of unity and resolve that puts in doubt any notion of its demise among critics, he said.

However, the declaration will do nothing to change inexorable global realities and will not significantly change the dynamic of great power relations, Grosscup said.

For all the bluster and bluff, the declaration will seriously further increase already grave global tensions as China and Russia will see it as an aggressive act, Grosscup added.

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All UN Palestine Agency Funding Supporters Now Back Except US - Official

UNITED NATIONS, July 13 (Sputnik) - UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini said all states that stopped funding UNRWA with the exception of the United States have resumed their financial support for the agency.

"I am happy to say that, with the exception of the United States, which cannot resume before March 2025 because of legislative constraints, all the other countries are back," Lazzarini said on Friday.

Lazzarini expressed hope the United Kingdom will also be back soon and the received communications confirm that.

UNRWA crucially needs funding and can last until September without additional support, Lazzarini added.

Earlier in the day, the United Nations held a pledging conference to support the UNRWA in New York.

The main speakers were the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Philippe Lazzarini.

The conference's main goal was to ensure sufficient funding for UNRWA's mission, especially as the United Nations views it as the only UN agency that effectively addresses critical issues in the Gaza Strip.

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Actor Alec Baldwin's Manslaughter Case Was Dismissed With Prejudice By New Mexico Judge

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - New Mexico judge Mary Marlowe dismissed the involuntary manslaughter case against Alec Baldwin during his trial, ruling that it cannot be refiled.

"Motion to dismiss with prejudice is granted," Marlowe said on Friday during the ruling.

According to reports, one of the special prosecutors in the trial resigned in the middle of the hearing.

Cinematographer Halyna Hutchins was killed on October 21, 2021, when a gun held by US actor Alec Baldwin was fired during a scene rehearsal on the set at the Bonanza Creek Ranch. A wrongful death lawsuit was filed against Baldwin and other important members of the movie production on February 15, 2022.

In February 2023. Baldwin pleaded not guilty to involuntary manslaughter charges.

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US Judge Dismisses Ex-Trump Attorney Giuliani Bankruptcy Case, Allows Lawsuits to Proceed

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WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) - US Bankruptcy Judge Sean Lane dismissed former Donald Trump attorney Rudi Giuliani's bankruptcy case, allowing other lawsuits against him to proceed.

Lane said in a 22-page decision on Friday that Giuliani's obfuscation of his financial affairs and uncooperative behavior justified dismissing the case instead of appointing a trustee to manage his assets.

The judge cited Giuliani's continued defamatory claims against two Georgia election workers, who were nominally awarded $148 million in damages last year after suing Giuliani for defamation.

"Such statements expose the estate to liability that severely threatens the recovery of any unsecured creditors, who can only recover after the Freeman Plaintiffs would receive payment on any such allowed administrative claim," Lane said.

Giuliani has multiple lawsuits pending against him that were paused as a result of the bankruptcy case and dismissing the case will allow those proceedings to move forward, Lane said.

"The plaintiffs in many of these matters have a right to a jury trial, making these cases better resolved outside the bankruptcy forum," Lane added.

In December, a court ordered Giuliani to pay a fine of $148 million for defaming two Georgia election workers - Ruby Freeman and Shaye Moss.

Giuliani had repeatedly accused Freeman and Ross of voter fraud in the 2020 election, but subsequently filed for bankruptcy.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, July 13 (Sputnik) -

US-RUSSIA MILITARY TALKS

* Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov and US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin discussed by telephone issues pertaining to preventing security threats, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Friday.

* Austin spoke by telephone with Belousov for the second time in less than a month, Defense Department deputy spokesperson Sabrina Singh said.

ISRAEL-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

* US President Joe Biden said on Friday that Israel and Hamas have agreed on a framework for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

* Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said reports about the possibility of Israel withdrawing forces from the Gaza-Egypt border as part of the negotiation process are fake news.

* UN General Assembly (UNGA) President Dennis Francis expressed concern that the UNRWA agency faces imminent financial collapse and could halt its operations this year, spokesperson

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Monica Grayley said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* Russia's army group South has repelled six Ukrainian counterattacks in the past week and the Ukrainian military has lost up to 4,380 soldiers, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Friday.
* Moscow does not know anything about former US President Donald Trump's peace plan for Ukraine, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said.
* Russia is ready to consider a proposal on Iran's mediation in resolving the conflict in Ukraine if Tehran expresses readiness to mediate on the issue, Russian Ambassador to Iran Alexey Dedov told Sputnik.
* The Western-supplied long-range missiles to Ukraine are already being used to strike Russian territory, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

NATO SUMMIT

* NATO is not willing to make Ukraine its new member now, but is ready to keep supporting the country for as long as it takes in the conflict against Russia, Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski said on Friday.
* Russia is monitoring very closely the statements made at the NATO summit in Washington, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Friday.
* Turkey has raised the issue about the need to prepare the foundation for negotiations on Ukraine at the NATO summit and is ready to propose the Istanbul process, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said.

US ECONOMY

* The US net international investments position worsened to minus 71% of gross domestic product last year, from 61% in 2022, as its debt grew, the International Monetary Fund said in a report on Friday.

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US Official to Discuss Trans-Caspian Corridor in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) – Acting Special Coordinator for the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGI) Helaina Matza will travel to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan July 14-19 to discuss infrastructure investments in the Trans-Caspian Corridor, the State Department said on Friday.

"Building on [US] President [Joe] Biden's commitment at the September 2023 C5+1 Summit to explore opportunities to support the Trans-Caspian Corridor, PGI is working to expand its global economic corridor approach and identify quality, sustainable infrastructure opportunities in Central Asia," the statement said.

During the trip, Matza will meet with government officials and private sector partners to discuss potential infrastructure projects and financing opportunities, it added.

The Trans-Caspian Corridor, also known as the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route

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(TITR), is a trade route that runs through Kazakhstan, the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey before reaching the European Union.

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Biden, Netanyahu Expected to Have Engagement Later in July - White House

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are expected to have engagement later in July but there is nothing to announce at present, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said during a press briefing on Friday.

"We believe that they will have some engagement but, I just don't have anything to announce at this time," Jean-Pierre said when asked whether Biden intends to meet with Netanyahu later in the month.

Earlier in July, US media reported, citing officials familiar with the matter, that Biden and Netanyahu could meet during the latter's visit to Washington to address Congress on July 24.

The meeting will likely take place at the White House but details are still being worked out by both sides, the official added.

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Richard Branson Calls on Biden to Step Down While Not Too Late – Statement

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) – UK billionaire businessman Richard Branson on Friday became the latest person to call on US President Joe Biden to leave the presidential race while it is not too late.

"[Biden's] desire to carry on has created a dangerous distraction from the issues this presidential race should really focus on. It's not too late to make the right decision now and step aside – for America, and for the free world," Branson said in a public statement.

According to Branson, there are many younger and talented people in the United States who could take Biden's place in the upcoming presidential race.

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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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 07/15/2024 1:02:49 PM

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Biden Has Made Gaffes for Decades, Will Continue to Make Them - Campaign

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden has been making gaffes for decades and will likely make more in the future, Biden campaign communications chief Michael Tyler said on Friday.

"Joe Biden has been making gaffes for 40 years. He made a couple last night. He will probably continue to do so," Tyler said during a White House press briefing.

On Thursday, Biden mistakenly introduced Russian President Vladimir Putin as the leader of Ukraine instead of Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Biden also mistakenly called Republican challenger Donald Trump his vice president instead of Kamala Harris on Thursday.

The gaffes come amid concerns among some Democrats about Biden's viability as a candidate, following a lackluster debate performance against Trump last month. A growing number of Democratic lawmakers have even called on Biden to end his campaign.

However, Biden and his campaign have said that he intends to act as the Democratic Party's nominee for the 2024 race.

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US Imposes Sanctions on Iran's Hakiman Shargh Research Company - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - The United States has imposed sanctions on Hakiman Shargh Research Company from Iran for its alleged involvement in the country's chemical weapons development, US Department of State spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Friday.

"The Department of State is today imposing sanctions on Hakiman Shargh Research Company for its involvement in Iran's chemical weapons research and development," Miller said in a statement.

The United States designated the company for engaging or attempting to engage in activities or transactions that materially contribute to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by Iran, the statement said.

During a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Astana, Kazakhstan earlier this week, Iran's Acting President Mohammad Mokhber said that Iran opposes the use of political tools, especially unilateral sanctions, in the energy sector.

The Hakiman Shargh Research Company, established in 1999, is located in the city of Isfahan and is subject to secondary sanctions.

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Oil Ends Week Down After 4-Week Rally Amid Concerns About China Demand

NEW YORK, July 12 (Sputnik) - Crude prices ended the week lower, snapping a four-week rally, on worries about demand in China, the world's largest oil importer.

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US West Texas Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude settled Friday's trade at $82.21 per barrel, down 41 cents, or 0.5%. For the week, WTI lost 1.1% although the US crude benchmark remained up around 15% for the year.

UK-origin Brent crude finished the US trading session at $85.03 per barrel, down 37 cents, or 0.4% on the day. Brent lost 1.7% for the week, although the global crude benchmark remains up around 10% on the year.

Crude prices fell for the week after a media report on Friday cited data from China's General Administration of Customs showing that the country's crude imports dropped by 2.3% in the first half of this year compared with the January-June period of 2023.

On Thursday, the Paris-based International Energy Agency (IEA) also revised down its expectations about oil demand in China.

"Oil consumption in China, long the engine of global oil demand growth, contracted in both April and May, and is now assessed marginally below earlier levels" in the second quarter of this year, the IEA said.

Oil traders constantly look to China for a guide on demand. The EIA guidance on China came ahead of data due from Beijing on Monday that was likely to show the economy grew just 5.1% in the second quarter compared with the March-June period of 2023 — the slowest growth in three quarters.

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 had been under pressure earlier this week on concerns that the July rally in oil had been expedited by bets of damage that could be done to US energy installations by Hurricane Beryl — a threat that never materialized.

That was before the indications on Chinese demand surfaced.

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Czech Republic 50% Dependent on Russian Oil, Seeking More Energy From US - President

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - The Czech Republic is 50% dependent on Russian oil but it is seeking to import more energy resources from the United States, Czech Republic President Petr Pavel said on Friday.

"As for the oil, we are still dependent by 50% on Russian deliveries, but this situation will end by the end of this year and latest, beginning of next year, when the facility will be ready to increase capacity of the TAL-PLUS pipeline from Italy with the terminal in Trieste," Pavel said during a discussion hosted by the Atlantic Council.

The Czech Republic is also working with partners, including in the United States, on long-term contracts for oil and liquefied natural gas, Pavel said.

With respect to gas, the Czech Republic is now at zero dependence on Russian gas, Pavel said.

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The country has assured deliveries through Germany, through terminals in the Netherlands and Germany from different sources, including the United States, Pavel added.

Reducing energy dependence on Russia became one of the European Union's top priorities after the start of Moscow's special military operation in Ukraine in February 2022, when the bloc decided to phase out its imports of Russian fuel.

The decision led to a sharp increase in gas prices in the European Union. To curb the price hike, the European Commission presented several measures, including joint purchasing, imposing a price cap and increased energy conservation efforts.

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US Restricts Visas for Chinese Officials Over Alleged Rights Abuses - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - The United States on Friday announced visa restrictions for Chinese officials involved in alleged repression of religious and ethnic minorities, the State Department said in a statement on Friday.

"The United States continues to promote accountability in defense of human rights in China. Today, the State Department is taking steps to impose visa restrictions on People's Republic of China (PRC) officials for their involvement in repression of marginalized religious and ethnic communities," the statement said.

The State Department accused China of committing "genocide" in Xinjiang, flouting freedoms in Hong Kong, and engaging in abuses in Tibet and "transnational repression" globally.

China has on multiple occasions rejected US allegations of it mistreating minorities as "unfounded" and as interference in its internal affairs.

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Czech Leader Says Important to Be Open to All Lines of Communication Between Russia, West

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - No single country can alone bridge relations between the collective West and Russia but it is important to pursue any opportunities to open lines of communication between the two sides, Czech Republic President Petr Pavel said on Friday.

"I believe that there are many other ways to facilitate the dialogue between the East and West but not necessarily through one specific country," Pavel said during a discussion hosted by the Atlantic Council. "I don't think that Czechia or any other allied country is in a position to really become a bridge. Not even Hungary will be a bridge."

However, Pavel emphasized that it is important to remain open to any lines of communication that can be established with Russia.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban recently met with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping as part of his diplomatic effort to open up lines of communication to resolve the conflict in Ukraine.

On Thursday, White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan told reporters that Orban's

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peace efforts have not been sanctioned by Ukraine nor are they consistent with US foreign policy.

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Trump Says Harris Easier 2024 Matchup Than Biden in Many Regards

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said on Friday that Vice President Kamala Harris would be an easier opponent in the 2024 race than President Joe Biden in many regards, amid speculation about whether Harris could replace Biden as the Democratic nominee.

"I think in many ways [Harris] may be easier than Biden," Trump said in an interview on the Clay Travis and Buck Sexton Show.

Some Democrats have expressed concerns about Biden's viability as a candidate and called on him to end his campaign, following a lackluster debate performance against Trump last month.

However, Trump said that his campaign is focused on Biden as an opponent until he officially drops out of the race.

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Czech Leader Says West Understands Can't Recover Territory Russia Occupies in Ukraine

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - The West understands that it will not be able to recover lost territories in Ukraine, Czech Republic's President Petr Pavel said on Friday.

"We understand that under current circumstances there is no realistic option on how to get them back," Pavel said during a discussion hosted by the Atlantic Council.

However, he added that the West will never recognize these territories as Russian.

In June, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Russia would enter a ceasefire and start talks with Ukraine as soon as Kiev withdrew troops from Russia-controlled regions and abandoned plans to join NATO.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy rejected the proposal, calling it an ultimatum.

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US Navy Reserve Officer Convicted for Afghan Special Visa Bribery Scheme - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - A US Navy Reserve officer was convicted for perpetrating a bribery scheme related to Special Immigrant Visas (SIV) for Afghan nationals, the Justice Department said on Friday.

"According to court documents and evidence presented at trial, Jeromy Pittmann, 53, of

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Pensacola, Florida, received bribe money from Afghan nationals in exchange for drafting, submitting, and falsely verifying false letters of recommendation for citizens of Afghanistan who applied for SIVs with the US State Department," the Justice Department said in a statement.
Pittmann signed more than 20 false letters claiming that he personally knew and supervised Afghan national visa applicants while they worked to support the US military and NATO as translators, the statement said.
However, Pittmann did not really know the applicants and had no basis for recommending them but received several thousand dollars in bribes that he documented under false invoices, the statement said.
A jury convicted Pittmann of conspiracy to commit bribery and false writing, bribery, false writing and conspiracy to commit concealment money laundering, the statement added.
Pittmann is scheduled to be sentenced on October 21 and faces up to 45 years in prison, according to the statement.

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UN Security Council Approves Extension of United Nations Mission in Haiti for Another Year

UNITED NATIONS, July 12 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council has extended the mandate of the United Nation's Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) until July 15, 2025, a Sputnik correspondent reported from the scene on Friday.
The UN Security Council approved the draft unanimously, expressing concern over the high level of crime in Haiti. BINUH plays a part in assisting the local authorities in tackling the danger posed by gangs in addition to its other duties.
The resolution said it reaffirms support for the effective implementation of BINUH's mandate and encourages the mission while maintaining its focus on supporting a Haitian-led and Haitian-owned political process toward holding free and fair elections.
The resolution also expresses support for the Haitian National Police, including providing training on anti-gang tactics and human rights compliance.
On February 29, gang violence erupted in Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince. The gangs said their goal was to prevent the country's prime minister from returning to Haiti and took control over parts of the city. The gangs also stormed Haiti's largest prison and freed an unspecified number of inmates. Following the events, the Haitian government declared a state of emergency in the capital region.

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Guterres Calls on All Member States to Protect And Fund UN Palestine Agency

UNITED NATIONS, July 12 (Sputnik) - All UN member states should protect the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and make sure it also has sufficient funds, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Friday.

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"My appeal to everyone is this: Protect UNRWA, protect UNRWA staff, and protect UNRWA's mandate - including through funding. Let me be clear: there is no alternative to UNRWA," Guterres said in the General Assembly Hall to the UN members at UNRWA's pledging conference.

Guterres added that the organization was now working on straightening UNRWA but also had to end this 'terrible war'.

The United Nations is holding a pledging conference to support the UN Palestine's agency. The main speakers are the UN Secretary-General and the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Philippe Lazzarini. Its main goal is to ensure sufficient funds for its mission as the UN views it as the only UN agency effectively tackling the issues in Gaza.

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US Envoy to UN Says None of Her Colleagues Expressed Concerns Over Biden's Health

UNITED NATIONS, July 11 (Sputnik) - US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield said on Friday that none of her colleagues have expressed concern about President Joe Biden's cognitive capability to govern.

"None of my colleagues have expressed concerns to me. We just saw the president host an extraordinarily successful NATO Conference in Washington with around 33 countries represented," Thomas-Greenfield said.

Democrats and others, including the US corporate media, criticized Biden after his disastrous performance during the first presidential debate with Republican challenger Donald Trump in Atlanta on June 27. Biden, 81, appeared confused and absent, often having trouble expressing himself.

Following Biden's lackluster press conference on Thursday, concerns about the cognitive decline of the US president grew louder.

Most recently, Biden mistakenly called US Vice President Kamala Harris "Vice President Trump" and introduced Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the NATO summit in Washington by referring to him as "Putin."

However, Thomas-Greenfield reiterated her stance that she is not concerned about Biden's mental health.

"I have absolutely no concern," Thomas-Greenfield added.

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US FAA Says Grounding SpaceX Falcon 9 Rocket Amid Probe into Launch Mishap

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - The US Federal Aviation Administration said on Friday that it is grounding SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket while it investigates a mishap that occurred during a lunch earlier this week.

"The FAA is aware an anomaly occurred during the SpaceX Starlink Group 9-3 mission that

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 07/15/2024 1:02:49 PM

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launched from Vandenberg Space Force Base in California on July 11," the release said. "The incident involved the failure of the upper stage rocket while it was in space. No public injuries or public property damage have been reported. The FAA is requiring an investigation."

The FAA said the Falcon 9 rocket will be grounded until the issues have been resolved and it is determined that there is no threat to public safety.

SpaceX said in a separate statement that a liquid oxygen leak developed on Falcon 9's second stage rocket during Thursday's Starlink mission, which affected the engine's power. As a result of the incident, the Starlink satellites were released into space in a lower than intended orbit.

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Most US Voters Believe Both Biden, Trump 'Embarrassing' - Poll

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - A majority of registered voters in the United States view both US President Joe Biden and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump as embarrassing, according to a Pew Research poll.

Biden and Trump were both described as embarrassing by 63% of respondents, the poll report said on Thursday.

One-third of Trump supporters (33%) described him as embarrassing and 37% of Biden supporters described him as embarrassing, the poll report said.

However, less than one-quarter of respondents, 24%, described Biden as mentally sharp, whereas 58% described Trump as mentally sharp, the poll report said.

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The share of respondents who described Biden as mentally sharp has dropped by six percentage points since January, the poll report added.

Biden's cognitive competence has come under increased scrutiny after a lackluster debate performance against Trump last month.

Trump holds a four-point lead over Biden ahead of Election Day, the poll report said. Forty-four percent (44%) of respondents would vote for Trump if the election were held today, 40% would vote for Biden and 15% would vote for independent candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr., the poll report said.

The poll surveyed 7,729 registered voters from July 1-7.

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Canadian Armed Forces New Commander Assumes Duties - Ministry of National Defense

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - The newly appointed Commander of the Canadian Armed Forces Lt. Gen. Michael Wright has assumed his position, the country's Ministry of National Defense said on Friday.

The ceremony was presided by outgoing Chief of Defense Staff Wayne Eyre at the Salaberry Armory in Gatineau, Quebec, the Ministry of National Defense said in a statement.

"Today, Lieutenant-General Michael Wright assumed his new position as Commander Canadian Army from Lieutenant-General Jocelyn Paul," the statement said.

Wright will replace his outgoing counterpart as he is currently preparing to retire after 36 years of service, the statement also said.

Wright will also serve as the new Defense Team Co-Champion for Indigenous Peoples, position held by Lt. Gen. Paul for ten years, the statement added.

Wright has previously served as commander of the Canadian Forces Intelligence Command and as Chief of Defense Intelligence in Ottawa.

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US Won't Allow Ukraine to Use ATACMS Missiles For 'Deep' Strikes on Russia- Pentagon

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - The United States has not allowed Ukraine to strike deep into Russia with its ATACMs, but that could change, Pentagon deputy press secretary Sabrina Singh said on Friday.

"As the war has changed, our policies have adapted and you've seen that play out in Kharkov and it could expand into other areas. But right now, we have not authorized the use of ATACMS for deep strike capabilities within Russia," Singh said

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Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 07/15/2024 1:02:49 PM

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Biden Says Gaza Ceasefire Framework Now Agreed to by Both Israel, Hamas

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Friday that Israel and Hamas have agreed to the framework on a Gaza ceasefire.

"Six weeks ago I laid out a comprehensive framework for how to achieve a ceasefire and bring the hostages home. There is still work to do and these are complex issues, but that framework is now agreed to by both Israel and Hamas. My team is making progress and I'm determined to get this done," Biden wrote on social media.

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Alarming That UNWRA on Brink of Collapse, May Cease Operations This Year - UNGA President

UNITED NATIONS, July 12 (Sputnik) - United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) President Dennis Francis expressed deep concern that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) faces imminent financial collapse and could halt its operations this year, his Spokesperson Monica Grayley said on Friday.

"The UNGA president said that it should deeply alarm us all that UNWRA is currently standing on the precipice of financial collapse. If nothing changes, UNWRA could be forced to cease operations this year," Grayley said during a UN press briefing.

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Poland Explores Possibility of Downing Russian Missiles Over Ukraine – Foreign Minister

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) – Poland is exploring the idea of shooting down Russian missiles in Ukraine's airspace to prevent them from getting into Polish airspace, Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski said on Friday.

"Our dilemma is the following. If we shoot them [Russian missiles] down only when they cross into our space, the debris is a threat to our citizens and to our property, and the Ukrainians are saying, 'Please, we will not mind, do it over our space when they are in imminent danger of crossing into Polish territory.' To my mind, that's self-defense, but we are exploring the idea," Sikorski said during a discussion hosted by the American Enterprise Institute.

On Monday, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk and Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed a 10-year security cooperation agreement that includes a provision to develop a mechanism to shoot down Russian missiles and drones launched in the direction of Poland within Ukrainian airspace.

White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby has pushed back on the idea, stating that the Biden administration doesn't want to see the conflict escalate as a result of Poland downing Russian missiles over Ukraine.

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan also did not support the idea by noting that it would be

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better to supply Ukraine with enough air defense systems instead.
Russia has consistently warned against the West's continued arms deliveries to Ukraine, saying that they only prolong the conflict without changing its outcome.

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Austin Speaks With Russian Defense Minister for Second Time in Less Than Month – Pentagon

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin spoke by phone with Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov for the second time in less than a month, Pentagon deputy press secretary Sabrina Singh said on Friday.
"This morning, Secretary Austin also spoke by phone with Russian Minister of Defense Andrei Belousov. During the call, the Secretary emphasized the importance of maintaining lines of communication amid Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine," Singh said during a press briefing.
The last time the two ministers spoke was on June 25.
Unlike the previous time, the Russian side initiated today's call, Singh added.

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unga president says deeply alarming that unrwa on precipice of financial collapse, could be forced to cease operations this year - spokesperson

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Biden Says Gaza Ceasefire Framework Now Agreed to by Both Israel, Hamas

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"Six weeks ago I laid out a comprehensive framework for how to achieve a ceasefire and bring the hostages home. There is still work to do and these are complex issues, but that framework is now agreed to by both Israel and Hamas. My team is making progress and I'm determined to get this done," Biden wrote on social media.

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Musk Says X Turned Down 'Illegal Secret Deal' From European Commission to Censor Speech

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - The X social media platform has turned down an "illegal secret deal" from the European Commission to censor speech in exchange for not receiving fines, billionaire entrepreneur and X owner Elon Musk said on Friday.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 07/15/2024 1:02:49 PM

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"The European Commission offered X an illegal secret deal: if we quietly censored speech without telling anyone, they would not fine us. The other platforms accepted that deal. X did not," Musk wrote on X.

Musk's remarks come in direct response to comments made by EU Commission Executive Vice President Margrethe Vestager accusing the social media platform of violating the Digital Services Act.

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NATO Increasingly 'Taken for Ride' by US Military-Industrial Complex - Peace Activist

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - The NATO Washington Summit Declaration demonstrates that the alliance is sleepwalking into pursuing the interests of the American military-industrial complex and drawing closer to a "thermonuclear holocaust," global peace activist Dr. Helen Caldicott told Sputnik.

From July 9-11, Washington hosted NATO's 75th anniversary summit. The summit declaration outlined new steps to counter Russia, expressed support for Ukraine on its "irreversible path" to NATO, committed to the full development of integrated NATO ballistic missile defense and more frequent and large-scale military training and exercises.

"NATO's Washington summit declaration is clearly penned by the Pentagon and the American military industrial complex," Caldicott, who is also a co-founder of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Physicians for Social Responsibility, said.

As part of modernization of its collective defense, NATO will boost artificial intelligence capabilities; modernize and invest in nuclear capabilities; increase chemical, biological and radiological capabilities, as well as missile defense, according to the declaration.

NATO is also extending its reach into the Asia Pacific region, expanding partnerships with the Middle East and Africa, and plans to conduct large-scale training and drills including the "largest military exercise in a generation," Steadfast Defender 24.

While encouraging more members to spend 2% of GDP on defense, the alliance reaffirms that expenditure beyond that figure will be needed amid a "more contested security order."

"Do these poor little countries not understand that they are being taken for a ride by the vastly powerful wicked American military industrial complex, which dominates Congress and its appropriation of vast funds for killing?" Caldicott said.

The world, she warned, is on the way to a "thermonuclear holocaust" as Russia is "extremely irritated by these aggressive moves," including the prospect of NATO expanding to Ukraine.

The Biden administration does not seem to be taking those risks seriously, Caldicott said.

The decisions made at the NATO summit in Washington will force Moscow to take deterrence measures, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Thursday.

NATO's military buildup near Russian borders and its involvement in the Ukraine conflict constitute a very serious threat to Russia's national security, Peskov said.

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Biden Says Gaza Ceasefire Framework Now Agreed to by Both Israel and Hamas, Reaffirms His Determination to Achieve Peace

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Elon Musk Says X Turned Down 'Illegal Secret Deal' From European Commission to Censor Speech And Avoid Fines, Unlike Other Platforms

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Poland Explores Possibility of Downing Russian Missiles Over Ukraine – Foreign Minister

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) – Poland is exploring the idea of shooting down Russian missiles in Ukraine's airspace to prevent them from getting into Polish airspace, Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski said on Friday.

"Our dilemma is the following. If we shoot them [Russian missiles] down only when they cross into our space, the debris is a threat to our citizens and to our property, and the Ukrainians are saying, 'Please, we will not mind, do it over our space when they are in imminent danger of crossing into Polish territory.' To my mind, that's self-defense, but we are exploring the idea," Sikorski said during a discussion hosted by the American Enterprise Institute.

On Monday, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed a ten-year security cooperation agreement that includes a provision to develop a mechanism to shoot down Russian missiles and drones launched in the direction of Poland within Ukrainian airspace.

White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby has pushed back on the idea, stating that the Biden administration doesn't want to see the conflict escalate as a result of Poland downing Russian missiles over Ukraine.

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan also did not support the idea by noting that it would be better to supply Ukraine with enough air defense systems instead.

Russia has consistently warned against the West's continued arms deliveries to Ukraine, saying that they only prolong the conflict without changing its outcome.

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More Democrats Call on Biden to End 2024 US Presidential Campaign - Statements

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - More Democratic lawmakers are calling on President Joe Biden to end his 2024 reelection campaign and step aside for an alternative nominee.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 07/15/2024 1:02:49 PM

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Democrats began expressing concerns about Biden's viability as a candidate after a lackluster debate performance against Republican challenger Donald Trump. The concerns have been further exacerbated by a number of public gaffes during recent events.

On Thursday evening, Congressman Jim Himes urged Biden to "step away" from the presidential campaign. Biden is not the strongest candidate to defeat Trump, Himes said.

Congressman Brad Schneider on Thursday also called on Biden to step aside for a new generation of Democratic leaders.

On Friday, Congresswoman Brittany Pettersen likewise called on Biden to "pass the torch" to other Democratic leaders so that the party has the best chance to defeat Trump in the 2024 race.

The Democratic lawmakers join numerous others who have previously called on Biden to end his campaign, although top Democratic congressional leaders have declined to publicly call on Biden to drop out of the race.

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US Congressman Meets With Biden to Convey Democratic Caucus' Conclusions on Path Forward

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - US House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries said on Friday that he met with President Joe Biden to share the Democratic Caucus' perspectives and conclusions on the way forward.

"On behalf of the House Democratic Caucus, I requested and was graciously granted a private meeting with President Joe Biden. That meeting occurred yesterday evening," Jeffries said. "In my conversation with President Biden, I directly expressed the full breadth of insight, heartfelt perspectives, and conclusions about the path forward that the Caucus has shared in our recent time together."

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 dismal showing in the first presidential debate with challenger Donald Trump on June 27.

Biden appeared confused and incoherent throughout the debate, reinforcing rather than refuting ongoing concerns about his cognitive abilities at age 81.

Biden's poor performance has led numerous Democratic politicians and donors as well as others to call for his removal as a presidential candidate.

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Jill Biden to Lead US Delegation to Olympic Games' Opening Ceremony in Paris - White House

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden has decided that First Lady Jill Biden will lead the US delegation to the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in Paris, the White

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House said on Friday.
"Dr. Jill Biden, First Lady of the United States, will lead the delegation to the opening of the Olympic Games. The opening ceremony will take place on July 26, 2024," the statement said.
Second Gentleman Douglas Emhoff will lead the US delegation to the closing ceremony on August 11, the statement said.
Biden also directed US Senator Tammy Duckworth to lead the delegation during the opening of the Paralympic Games on August 28.
In addition, the White House said US Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra will head of the US delegation to the closing of the Paralympic Games on September 8.
The individual members of each delegation will be announced at a later date, according to the statement.

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Increase in Public Debt Has Led to Deterioration in US Investment Position - IMF

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - The US net international investments position worsened to minus 71% of gross domestic product last year, from 61% in 2022, as its debt grew, the International Monetary Fund said in a report made public on Friday.
"The largest debtor economy remains the United States, whose net international investment position deteriorated from –61 percent of GDP in 2022 to –71 percent in 2023," the IMF said in its 2024 External Sector Report.
The net international investment position of a country is the difference between its foreign assets and liabilities, including those of its government, private sector and citizens. Often expressed as a ratio to GDP, it is used to assess the country's creditworthiness. A negative reading indicates that the country is more vulnerable to international financial market volatility.

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У НАТО сейчас "нет аппетита" принимать Украину в альянс – Сикорский

ВАШИНГТОН, 12 июл - РИА Новости. Министр иностранных дел Польши Радослав Сикорский признал, что члены НАТО в данный момент не настроены принимать Украину в альянс.
"У альянса нет аппетита делать это в данный момент ", - сказал Сикорский, выступая на площадке Института американского предпринимательства, комментируя перспективу членства Украины в НАТО.
При этом он добавил, что у НАТО есть желание продолжать поддерживать Украину до тех пор, пока она не "победит".
По итогам состоявшегося на этой неделе в американской столице саммита НАТО члены альянса пообещали Украине "необратимую дорогу" в альянс, однако не обозначили конкретных сроков вступления.

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Официальный представитель МИД России Мария Захарова назвала решения принятые на саммите НАТО относительно вступления Украины в альянс "показным единством", которое буквально трещало по швам.

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Polish Foreign Minister Says 'No Appetite' at NATO to Admit Ukraine Now

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) – NATO is not willing to make Ukraine its new member now, but is ready to keep supporting it for as long as it takes in the conflict against Russia, Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski said on Friday.

"There is no appetite in the [NATO] alliance to do that now but there is appetite and every willingness and we were yesterday at 31 plus one, so 31 countries were fully committed to long term assistance to Ukraine in winning this [conflict] now," Sikorski said during a discussion hosted by the American Enterprise Institute.

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US Should Roll Back Tariff Barriers, Resolve Trade Disputes With Other Countries - IMF

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund is advising the United States to dismantle its tariffs and trade barriers and resolve any investment disagreements with other countries, according to a report made public on Friday.

“Tariff barriers and other trade distortions should be rolled back, and trade and investment disagreements with other countries should be resolved in a manner that supports an open, stable, and transparent global trading system,” the IMF said in the policy recommendations section of its 2024 “External Sector Report”.

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US Could Be Vulnerable to Shrinking Foreign Demand for Fixed-Income Securities - IMF

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - The United States could be vulnerable to a shrinking in foreign demand for its debt instruments though any fallout will be moderate if the dollar maintains its standing as the world’s dominant currency, the International Monetary Fund said in a report made public on Friday.

“Financial stability risk could surface in the form of an unexpected decline in foreign demand for US fixed-income securities, which is a main component of the country’s external liabilities,” the IMF said in its 2024 External Sector Report. “The risk, which could materialize, for example, as a result of a failure to reestablish fiscal sustainability, remains moderate given the dominant

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status of the US dollar as a reserve currency."

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Increase in Public Debt Has Led to Deterioration in US Investment Position - IMF

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The net international investment position of a country is the difference between its foreign assets and liabilities, including those of its government, private sector and citizens. Often expressed as a ratio to GDP, it is used to assess the country's creditworthiness. A negative reading indicates that the country is more vulnerable to international financial market volatility.

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Russia Foreign Reserves, Exchange Rates Continue Cushioning Its Economy - IMF

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) - Russia's foreign reserves and exchange rates system continue cushioning its economy from shocks, while capital controls offset the impact of sanctions, the International Monetary Fund said in a report made public on Friday.

"Russia's large FX reserves and floating exchange rate regime continue to help absorb shocks," the IMF said in its 2024 External Sector Report. "Remaining capital controls effectively curtailed capital outflows and helped preserve buffers despite sanctions."

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Over Half of Americans Want Immigration Reduced, First Time in Nearly 20 Years - Poll

WASHINGTON, July 12 (Sputnik) – More than half of Americans want to curb immigration to the United States, a number not seen in nearly 20 years, a new Gallup poll revealed on Friday.

"Significantly more U.S. adults than a year ago, 55% versus 41%, would like to see immigration to the U.S. decreased. This is the first time since 2005 that a majority of Americans have wanted there to be less immigration, and today's figure is the largest percentage holding that view since a 58% reading in 2001," the pollster said.

The record high was 65%, recorded in 1993 and 1995, it added.

Only 16% of people would like to see more immigration, while every fourth American agreed to keep it at the current level. According to the survey, both numbers have significantly shrunk

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since the previous polls.

"Also, in the latest survey, 42% describe the situation at the U.S. border with Mexico as a crisis and 35% a major problem, although those figures are little changed from prior readings in 2019 and 2023," it added.

On average, since 1965, 42% of Americans have favored reduced immigration, 35% preferred keeping the status quo, and 18% wanted increased immigration, the poll said.

The poll highlighted that all three major voter groups were significantly less supportive of immigration than a year ago.

"This includes a 15-point increase among Republicans (to 88%), an 11-point increase among independents (to 50%) and a 10-point increase among Democrats (to 28%)," it added.

The poll was conducted from June 3-23 among 1,005 adults in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia.

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