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7/15/24 Monday

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UK Early Prison Release Faces Challenges, Thousands of Prisoners to be Released

The UK justice secretary said jails had been operating at 99% capacity since the start of last year.

In an effort to combat overcrowding, the UK will plan to release thousands of prisoners at the start of September. UK Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood said her plan would allow some prisoners to be released after they have served just 40% of their sentence in England and Wales, rather than the current 50%.

But the head of a prisons watchdog has warned that the early-release program could face a "challenge", because a previous plan saw prisoners sent "straight back" to prison, Financial Times reported. Charlie Taylor, the chief inspector of prisons, warned ministers that they need to properly prepare prisoners before their release.

"We saw with the early release scheme that was being done by the last government that quite a lot of guys were being released and coming straight back into custody on recall," Taylor told Financial Times, adding that some prisoners do not have homes to go to when they are released.

"Certainly, it's always going to be a challenge when you introduce any sort of scheme like the government has introduced."

But according to the report, Taylor admitted that an early release plan may be the best to tackle problems with overcrowding in prisons.

For weeks leading up to the UK's recent general election, the UK government had been warned that overcrowding in prisons in England and Wales was reaching an "operational breaking point", Tom Wheatley, president of the Prison Governors' Association told the Financial Timesin early July.

Wheatley also warned at the time that the UK's criminal justice system would likely "grind to a halt" if immediate changes were not implemented. According to Wheatley, the recent Conservative government had ignored repeated warnings about overcrowding. He explained that official data had shown jails would not be able to take in any more inmates within "a week or two" of the UK general election.

Mahmood echoed Wheatley's sentiments, and also warned of the "total collapse" of the prison system and a "total breakdown of law and order" without urgent action to address prison overcrowding. The justice secretary accused Rishi Sunak and the former Conservative government of a "disgraceful dereliction of duty" for failing to address the issue.

Mahmood said the first batch of prisoners released will be "in the low thousands", and further releases will take place over the next 18 months. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) told BBC that they estimate up to 4,000 male prisoners and fewer than 1,000 female prisoners will be released under these new measures, BBC reported.

Ex-Labour MP Harriet Harman spoke out about the number of women being locked up for non-violent crimes. She told the BBC that most women in prison have been victims of violence,

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and that 40% of female prisoners in UK jails are foreign nationals who should be serving their sentences in their own countries.
Regarding the crimes of those being released: sentences for serious violent offenses of four years or more and sex offenses will be excluded from the change, as well as the early release of offenders in prison for domestic abuse-related crimes like stalking and choking.
Mahmood acknowledged that the plan for early prison release may not be popular with some, but said she had been “left with no choice at all” due to the previous government’s lack of action.
The most recent statistics published by the Ministry of Justice on June 28 showed the prison population standing at 87,360, while the capacity (with assigning two prisoners to the same cell) is 88,818 in England and Wales.

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'Everything to Sabotage the Negotiation': Israel's Smoke and Mirrors Approach to Ceasefire Talks

The correspondent also highlighted that Netanyahu recently criticized his American counterparts, despite the Biden administration's unrelenting support for Israel.
In an article published on Sunday, the veteran Middle East War correspondent Elijah Magnier, reported on the recent speech made by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Following a hundred days of absence from the local press, the prime minister reaffirmed Israeli war efforts against Hamas and called for “absolute victory”, Magnier reported.
On Monday, Magnier joined Sputnik’s The Critical Hour to discuss the war between Israel and Hamas which will likely reach its anniversary of a year in October. The death toll in the Gaza Strip has reached over 38,000, with the injury toll well over 88,000, the enclave’s health ministry said.
“Netanyahu is doing everything to sabotage the negotiation. He promised [US] President Joe Biden he'd send him all details of the points that he would like to achieve, and then he criticized these points, saying, ‘well, what Biden said is inaccurate,’” Magnier explained.
“First of all, [Netanyahu] does not delegate any power to decision-making authority, like the head of the Moss, the head of the Shin Bet when they go to negotiate in Doha or in Cairo,” he added. “Secondly, when they return with a reasonable proposal from Hamas that Hamas agreed to more than once, then Netanyahu comes up with new ideas and blows everything up.”
“And additionally, he's saying the war will never stop until he kills every single Hamas member from the top leader to the simple militant. Again, this is a violation of any proposal that is offered to Hamas or even to President Biden who said this is an Israeli proposal. And Netanyahu is contradicting it because if he wants to continue killing, it means he doesn't want the ceasefire,” the correspondent explained.
Israel Defense Forces (IDF) spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari openly admitted in late June that Hamas cannot be made to “vanish”, and the idea that it is “possible to destroy Hamas” is like “throwing sand in the eyes of the public”. Netanyahu’s office then corrected the spokesman’s remarks with a blunt response, saying that the IDF is still committed to their war goals of destroying Hamas.

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“So Netanyahu wants to continue the fight endlessly. He creates unachievable conditions and a new reality on the ground to sabotage the discussion with Hamas, hoping that Hamas is going to say that they reject the proposal, but Hamas has not done that since May,” said Magnier. “What he wants is Hamas to come out, raise the white flag and leave Gaza for another country. This is not going to happen because this is not how negotiations happen.”

Sputnik’s Garland Nixon then commented that Israel has come to the conclusion that former president Donald Trump is likely to win the upcoming US presidential election. And because of this, their government has become more critical of Biden.

“Now we see that Netanyahu knows that Biden has little chances to win this election in his mentality, or at least in his wishful thinking, he wants Trump to win because he believes Trump is going to give him a free hand to do what he wants,” Magnier responded.

“Not because Biden is withholding bombs from Netanyahu, because he has delivered more than 57,000 bombs to Israel and with help 3,500 of which 3,000 he has delivered after a few months,” he added. “But Israel is in a place where it has its own industry, an armament industry that is manufacturing bombs. So, at the end of the day, yes, Israel is using disproportionate firepower and this is why it needs a lot of bombs to drop on Gaza.”

“At the end of the day, every single US president is beating his predecessor on how much he is going to support Israel. [Former President] Barack Obama initiated $3.5 billion yearly to the Israelis and Biden abided by it and at the beginning of the war he took it up with 17.5 billion additional to the $3.5 [billion] and increased also with the resupply of the Iron Dome interceptor missiles,” he added.

“So he has been extremely generous. The behavior of Netanyahu is only an intervention in the US elections because he wants a free hand and he wants a US president who will tell him exactly what Trump said - finish them off.”

On Sunday, it was reported that the US launched “several rounds of strikes” on Yemen over the past few days in its war against the Houthis in the Red Sea. The report added that since the US and the UK began their bombing in Yemen in January, the Houthis have escalated their attacks on Israel-associated shipping and other commercial shipping. The Houthis have maintained that they will stop their attacks if there is a ceasefire in Gaza.

“Lebanon has started this war with Israel, like Yemen, to support the people of Gaza from a humanitarian approach because the Palestinians in Gaza are left alone. The international community is complaining about what Israel is doing, the disproportionate attack, the killing of so many civilians,” the correspondent told The Critical Hour.

“The US spokesperson at the White House and the State Department said there are too many civilians killed but nobody is effectively doing anything," he added. "Nothing so far has managed to stop the Israelis and make Netanyahu change his mind about his objective to destroy Gaza, to destroy the infrastructure, to destroy all the EU/UN institutions, to kill journalists - kill civilians, mainly."

"But he's still facing a very harsh reaction from the resistance in Gaza and he's not managing to defeat them. So what he's doing is he's going [after] civilians and this is why the front from Lebanon is supporting the civilians of Gaza and will immediately stop the day Netanyahu ends this."

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More Israeli Strikes on Monday Following a Weekend of Violence

It was reported that the IDF made their fifth attack on or near a school in just eight days on Sunday.

On Monday, Israel struck the southern and central Gaza Strip, shortly after a weekend strike from their military killed at least 90 Palestinians in an airstrike and hundreds of others were wounded in what was supposed to be a designated humanitarian zone.

The weekend strike turned the al-Mawasi area, which is located near the Mediterranean coast, into a charred wasteland “littered with burning cars and mangled bodies”, Reuters reported.

Those who survived a weekend of violence were displaced soon after.

"Those moments as the ground shook underneath my feet and the dust and sand rose to the sky and I saw dismembered bodies - was like nothing I have seen in my life," said Aya Mohammad, 30, a market seller in Mawasi, who spoke to Reuters.

"Where to go is what everybody asks, and no one has the answer."

Further fighting took place on Monday in Rafah, residents reportedly said. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) blew up several homes in the western and central parts of the city. Medical officials also said they recovered 10 bodies of Palestinians in the eastern areas of the city killed by the IDF whose bodies had already begun to decompose.

The IDF has also begun increasing their aerial and tank shelling in central Gaza in the Al-Bureij and Al-Maghazi refugee camps, said Reuters. And at least five Palestinians were killed in an IDF airstrike on a house in the Maghazi camps, said health officials.

Also on Sunday, at least 22 Palestinians were killed and 100 were wounded in a separate strike on a UN-run school in central Gaza that was being used as a shelter, said the Palestinian health ministry. The IDF excused the attack saying that they had targeted a number of Hamas militants, however witnesses told BBC Arabic that there were no armed fighters there and that children were among the casualties. It was the fifth attack on or near a school in just eight days.

One woman who experienced the strike on Abu Oraiban School in the urban Nuseirat refugee camp described the horror she had seen.

“As soon as the explosion occurred the walls of the room collapsed on us,” she said. “I saw a little boy whose leg was bleeding and a dismembered corpse which people covered with blankets. I also saw a little boy lying in a pool of blood, with his whole face bleeding.”

“I quickly ran out of the school. I found my aunt at the school gate, hugging her burnt young son. When I left the school, I saw many injured people lying on the ground and bodies torn to pieces.”

The IDF said they had been targeting a Hamas leader during their strikes over the weekend, but they have not been able to prove that Mohammed Deif was killed.

On Saturday, two Egyptian security sources said that 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. The sources also accused Israeli mediators of behavior that revealed “internal discord”.

The death toll in the Gaza Strip has reached over 38,000 since last October, while over 88,800 have been injured, according to the Palestinian enclave's health ministry's estimates. According

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to the UN, an estimated 1.9 million people - 90% of Gaza's population - have been forced to leave their homes including some of those who have been displaced up to 10 times.

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Did Democrats' Anti-Trump Rhetoric Lead to Saturday's Assassination Attempt?

Trump's supporters have faulted Democrats' rhetoric casting Trump as a unique and existential threat to the United States.

An attempt on the life of former US President Donald Trump this weekend has spurred calls for reflection and unity after the startling incident.

"Have you taken a step back and done a little soul searching on things that you may have said that could incite people who are not balanced?" asked journalist Lester Holt during an interview with President Joe Biden Monday. The inquiry typifies questions that have emerged in the days after the shooting, although it remains unknown whether there was a political motive behind the attack.

Special attention has been paid to Democrats' rhetoric in recent months casting Trump as a particular threat to US democracy for his attempts to overturn the outcome of the 2020 election. Biden has insisted on focusing on the subject even as more traditional issues like abortion and the economy weigh heavily on voters' minds.

With the country still in shock after the first assassination attempt against a presidential candidate in several decades, much of the response has followed a familiar pattern after increasingly-common violent incidents in the US, with Biden's political opponents alleging liberal rhetoric contributed to an environment that led to Saturday's event.

Journalist Daniel Lazare and political scientist Wilmer Leon joined Sputnik's Fault Lines program Monday to respond to the claims and examine the evidence behind accusations that Trump is an existential threat to the United States' system of governance.

"First of all, I would note that if Trump hadn't just sort of cocked his head in a certain way that that bullet would have struck his skull and would have killed him instantly," said Lazare. "It was an assassination attempt which was very nearly successful."

"The language, without a doubt, has gotten heated," said Leon, co-host of Sputnik's The Critical Hour program. "It's gotten heated on both sides. [Trump] calls migrants animals… the vitriol definitely swings both ways."

Host Melik Abdul asserted there is "an ideological perspective built in to how people have responded to this," alleging a political motivation behind claims of violent rhetoric.

"Did we not see the same type of rhetoric when a Bernie Sanders supporter shot [Republican Representative] Steve Scalise and how that played into what Democrats were doing and Bernie Sanders' rhetoric?" asked Abdul.

The Louisiana lawmaker was seriously wounded when a left-wing activist opened fire during a Congressional baseball game in 2017. The incident, which the FBI has since branded an act of "domestic terrorism," sparked some scrutiny over Sanders' anti-capitalist rhetoric. Sanders repudiated the attack and rejected the use of political violence.

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Leon agreed the incident demonstrates hostility among supporters of both major parties but claimed Trump has been more willing to imply support for violence, leading to a discussion of liberal claims that Trump is a “fascist” and a threat to democracy. Any “tempering” of language after Saturday’s shooting will prove to be short-lived, Leon claimed, because Democrats’ portrayal of Trump as an existential threat is so central to their identity and campaign.

“That’s not calling for violence, when you are making historical comparisons to behavior and to action, calling him a fascist,” the analyst argued. “That's not them saying that the man needs to be assassinated. That’s pointing out some consistency that we see in behavior with particular types of political individuals.”

Democrats’ logic would imply that Joe Biden should end his campaign, Leon said, agreeing with host Jamarl Thomas’s assertion that the octogenarian leader’s insistence on remaining in the race symbolizes the steady decline of the US political system.

Lazare agreed with the assessment, arguing that Trump’s 2017 Muslim ban demonstrated “racist” and “authoritarian” tendencies. But the author insisted the former president’s emergence on the political scene as well as Saturday’s shooting should both be interpreted as signs “the US system is falling apart.”

“Clearly it’s the structure that is disintegrating and itself is generating violence and itself is generating this kind of heightened, feverish rhetoric,” he claimed. “We’re sort of watching the entire system explode as it destabilizes and no one knows where this is all heading.”

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Ukraine Military Brigade Celebrated Trump Assassination Attempt - Report

A prominent Ukrainian air unit responded with delight to the attempted assassination of former US President Donald Trump, who has criticized Western support for Kiev's proxy war against Russia.

The social media channel of Ukraine’s 79th Air Assault Brigade celebrated the shooting of former US President Donald Trump Saturday, according to a Sputnik contributor, appearing to jokingly take credit for the assassination attempt.

Security analyst Mark Sleboda made the revelation on Sputnik’s The Critical Hour program Monday.

“As soon as [the shooting] happened, the first thing that popped into my mind was, hmm, Mirotvorets,” said host Garland Nixon, referring to the Ukrainian government-connected website that appears to endorse the killing of those it deems enemies of Ukraine. “Was it crazy for me to think that it could have been Ukraine immediately without any information to suspect that Ukraine could have been behind it?”

“It's not crazy because actually the Kiev regime's official social media channel of the 79th [Air Assault] Brigade, they celebrated it,” said Sleboda. “They thought it was their own [intelligence].”

A post on the Ukrainian 79th Air Assault Brigade’s Telegram channel appeared to satirically take credit for the assassination attempt, comparing it to the killing of Russian philosopher Aleksandr Dugin’s daughter Darya Dugina and the bombing of Russia’s Crimean Bridge.

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“[The Ukrainian intelligence service] has made great progress in operations,” the post read in Ukrainian. “We should have looked for a better shooter. But this is not the end yet!”
Another post included an image of the dead would-be assassin, mocking him as an “incel.”
“I'm pretty sure that it wasn't [Ukrainian intelligence,” Sleboda added. “But they said our intelligence, our SBU is great. They celebrated it. I guess they were unhappy, of course, that it didn’t [succeed]. But that goes, I think, to the nature of the regime in Kiev that the West is supporting and its most ideological militants and supporters.”
“They would have been quite happy to see Donald Trump assassinated,”the international relations expert concluded.
Sleboda also commented on the recent developments in the Western-backed Ukraine proxy war as Russia continues to gradually grind down Kiev’s forces.
“The neocon plan to fight their proxy war against Russia to the last Ukrainian seems to be nearing its goal as military age men drown as they flee certain death on the front lines,” said host Garland Nixon, referring to reports of Ukrainian draft-age men dying while trying to escape to Romania.
“Previous articles in the Western media have also noticed that during the winter, Ukrainian men are dying of exposure in the mountains, trying to escape across the mountains,” Sleboda noted. “Ukraine has been a one big prison for its own male citizens since Russia's intervention in the Ukrainian civil conflict began in 2022. While initially millions of Ukrainian men escaped as soon as the borders with the EU were opened, once the conscription began very quickly those borders were sealed shut.”
“People are still actively trying to escape,” he added. “So there are multiple ways that Ukrainian men are dying trying to flee the regime that the West is supporting in their country, sending them to fight and die for the West’s proxy war on Russia. They don't want to do it. They don't want to fight and die for this regime.”
“And increasingly, European politicians are talking about how do they make Ukrainian men who are refugees in Europe go back and fight and die for them in Ukraine? They're continually talking about how to do this as the Kiev regime is running out of those Ukrainians to conscript.”
Nixon noted the antipathy towards the Zelensky regime of the more than half of Ukraine’s former citizens who supported the ousted Viktor Yanukovych government, which was overthrown in a Western-supported coup in 2014. Ukraine has moved to outlaw the Russian Orthodox Church, Eastern Ukrainian political parties and media outlets, and even the speaking of the Russian language in public since the US-backed putsch.

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Where Does Trump Running Mate JD Vance Stand on US Foreign Policy?

Vance has angered anti-Russia hawks in the Republican Party by criticizing the United States' backing of Ukraine, but he takes a more conventional line on support for Israel.
As Washington is abuzz over news of former President Donald Trump's selection of Senator JD Vance (R-OH) as his running mate in the 2024 presidential election, Sputnik takes a look at some of the lawmaker's positions on US foreign policy:

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Ukraine

The Ohio Senator has been strongly critical of continued military aid to the Kiev regime, writing in an editorial in The New York Times that “the math on Ukraine doesn’t add up.” Vance claims the US lacks “the capacity to manufacture the amount of weapons Ukraine needs us to supply to win the war.”

The 39-year-old lawmaker also noted the average Ukrainian soldier is older than he is as the Kiev regime struggles to draft enough men to fight the conflict. "Everyone with a brain in their head knows that this is going to end with negotiations," Vance said during a television appearance on CNN, claiming Ukraine lacks the ability to force Moscow out of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics.

Russia

Vance has called plans to seize Russian assets to offset the cost of the Ukraine proxy war “dangerous.” Late last year, he claimed Volodymyr Zelensky should give up claims to newly-Russian territory east of Ukraine and negotiate a deal to end the country’s conflict with Moscow.

These views have put him in conflict with establishment figures in the Republican Party such as Senator Lindsay Graham, who take a strongly anti-Russia position.

Palestine-Israel

The Trump running mate is a staunch supporter of Israel who favors efforts to pursue normalization agreements between Tel Aviv and Arab states. He supports continued aid to the Netanyahu government for its operation in Gaza, which has killed over 38,000, and has claimed the United States’ status as “the largest Christian-majority country in the world” compels the US to support its Middle Eastern ally.

However, he has cautioned against the threat of escalation between the country and its regional foe Iran.

Who is JD Vance?

Ohio Senator JD Vance was elected to Congress during the Republican Party’s “red wave” of 2022.

After graduating from Ohio State University and Yale Law School, Vance worked at Chicago’s Sidley Austin LLP law firm before moving to San Francisco to pursue a career as a Silicon Valley venture capitalist. In 2016 he became a principal in conservative entrepreneur Peter Thiel’s firm Mithril Capital.

Vance’s memoir Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisisbriefly made him a liberal darling as he reflected on the socioeconomic concerns of rural Appalachia, writing about his family’s background in Kentucky and Middletown, Ohio. The Washington Post declared him the “voice of the Rust Belt” while The New York Times wrote that his account was “one of the six best books to help understand Trump's win” in 2016.

JD Vance was initially highly critical of Donald Trump, calling him “reprehensible” and claiming he was a “never-Trump guy.” Vance changed his views by 2018, claiming Trump “recognizes the frustration that exists” in post-industrial parts of Ohio and other Midwestern US states. He strongly supported Trump’s reelection campaign in 2020 and claimed the real estate magnate lost due to far-reaching voter fraud.

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Trump's selection of Vance as his VP pick provides him with a running mate from a perennial US swing state as the former president seeks to appeal to voters who proved crucial to his 2016 victory in Midwest states like Michigan, Pennsylvania, Iowa and Wisconsin.
What has Trump's VP pick JD Vance said on matters of US foreign policy?

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● Vance has called plans to seize Russian assets to offset the cost of the Ukraine proxy war "dangerous." Late last year, he claimed Volodymyr Zelensky should give up claims to newly-Russian territory east of Ukraine and negotiate a deal to end the country's conflict with Moscow. These views have put him in conflict with anti-Russia hawks in the Republican Party such as Senator Lindsay Graham.

● The Trump running mate is a staunch supporter of Israel who favors efforts to pursue normalization agreements between Tel Aviv and Arab states. He supports continued aid to the Netanyahu government for its campaign against Hamas and has claimed the United States' status as "the largest Christian-majority country in the world" compels the US to support its Middle Eastern ally. However, he has cautioned against the threat of escalation between the country and its regional foe Iran.

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Did Democrats' anti-Trump rhetoric lead to Saturday's assassination attempt?

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"Have you taken a step back and done a little soul searching on things that you may have said that could incite people who are not balanced?" asked journalist Lester Holt during an interview with President Joe Biden Monday. The inquiry typifies questions that have emerged in the days after the shooting, although it remains unknown whether there was a political motive behind the attack.

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Host Melik Abdul asserted there is "an ideological perspective built into how people have responded to this." "Did we not see the same type of rhetoric when a Bernie Sanders supporter shot [Republican Representative] Steve Scalise and how that played into what Democrats were doing?" asked Abdul.

Lazare insisted Trump's emergence on the political scene and Saturday's shooting should both be interpreted as signs "the US system is falling apart."

"Clearly it's the structure that is disintegrating and itself is generating violence and itself is generating this kind of heightened, feverish rhetoric," he claimed. "We're watching the entire system explode as it destabilizes and no one knows where this is all heading."

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"They said our intelligence, our SBU is great… That goes, I think, to the nature of the regime in Kiev that the West is supporting and its most ideological militants and supporters. They would have been quite happy to see Donald Trump assassinated," the analyst clarified.

Despite the air unit's boast, there is no evidence linking Ukraine to Saturday's incident.

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Vance's memoir Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis briefly made him a liberal darling as he reflected on the socioeconomic concerns of rural Appalachia, writing about his family's background in Kentucky and Middletown, Ohio. The Washington Post declared him the "voice of the Rust Belt" while The New York Times wrote that his account was "one of the six best books to help understand Trump's win" in 2016.

JD Vance was initially highly critical of Donald Trump, calling the former US president "reprehensible" and claiming he was a "never-Trump guy." (https://t.me/geopolitics_live/28906) Vance changed his views by 2018, claiming Trump "recognizes the frustration that exists" in post-industrial parts of Ohio and other Midwestern US states. He strongly supported Trump's reelection campaign in 2020 and claimed the real estate magnate lost due to far-reaching voter fraud.

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IMF Expects Global Trade Growth to Recover to About 3% Annually in 2024-25 - WEO

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) – The International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects that global trade growth will recover to about 3% annually in 2024-25, according to its updated World Economic Outlook (WEO) released on Tuesday.
"Trade makes a recovery. World trade growth is expected to recover to about 3¼ percent annually in 2024–25 (from quasi stagnation in 2023) and align with global GDP growth again," the IMF said in the report.

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IMF No Longer Expects Global Oil Prices to Decline in 2024, Predicts 0.8% Growth - WEO

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) – The International Monetary Fund (IMF) no longer expects global oil prices to decline in 2024, predicting a 0.8% growth, according to the updated World Economic Outlook (WEO) released on Tuesday.

In April, the IMF projected global oil process will decrease 2.5%.

In addition, the IMF adjusted its forecast for a decline in oil prices in 2025. In April, the fund expected the prices to contract by 6.3% next year. According to updated data, the prices will decrease by 6% and total $76.38.

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IMF Revises Forecasts for China Upward to 5% in 2024, 4.5% in 2025

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) – The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has revised upward its forecast for economic growth in China to 5% in 2024 and to 4.5% in 2025, according to the updated World Economic Outlook (WEO) released on Tuesday.

"For China, the growth forecast is revised upward to 5 percent in 2024, primarily on account of a rebound in private consumption and strong exports in the first quarter. In 2025, GDP is projected to slow to 4.5 percent," the IMF said.

The growth will continue to decelerate over the medium term to 3.3% by 2029, because of headwinds from aging and slowing productivity growth, it added.

In its WEO in April, the IMF projected China's economic growth at 4.6% in 2024 and at 4.1% in 2025, according to the report.

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IMF Expects Global Inflation to Come Back to Target by End of 2025 - WEO

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - Global inflation will continue to decline and will come back to the target level by the end of 2025, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said in its updated World Economic Outlook (WEO) report on Tuesday.

"Global inflation will continue to decline. In advanced economies, the revised forecast is for the pace of disinflation to slow in 2024 and 2025," the report said. "The gradual cooling of labor markets, together with an expected decline in energy prices, should bring headline inflation back to target by the end of 2025."

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IMF Increases Euro Zone Growth Forecast to 0.9% in 2024, Leaves 2025 Projection Unchanged

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) slightly improved its forecast for euro zone growth to 0.9% in 2024 and left the estimate for 2025 unchanged at 1.5%, according to the updated World Economic Outlook (WEO) released on Tuesday.
"In the euro area, activity appears to have bottomed out. In line with the April 2024 projection, a modest pickup of 0.9 percent is expected for 2024 (an upward revision of 0.1 percentage point), driven by stronger momentum in services in the first half of the year; growth is projected to rise to 1.5 percent in 2025," the IMF said.

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IMF Revises US Growth Forecast Downward to 2.6% in 2024, Leaves 2025 Projection Unchanged

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) – The International Monetary Fund (IMF) lowered its growth forecast for the US to 2.6% in 2024 but maintained its 2025 projection unchanged at 1.9%, according to the updated World Economic Outlook (WEO) released on Tuesday.
"In the United States, projected growth is revised downward to 2.6 percent in 2024 (0.1 percentage point lower than projected in April), reflecting the slower-than-expected start to the year. Growth is expected to slow to 1.9 percent in 2025 as the labor market cools and consumption moderates, with fiscal policy starting to tighten gradually," the IMF said.
By the end of 2025, growth is projected to taper to potential, closing the positive output gap, it added.

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IMF Maintains Forecast for Global Growth in 2024 at 3.2%, Revises 2025 Projection to 3.3%

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) maintained its forecast for global economic growth in 2024 at 3.2% and revised upward the 2025 projection to 3.3%, an updated World Economic Outlook (WEO) report said on Tuesday.
"Global growth is projected to be in line with the April 2024 World Economic Outlook (WEO) forecast, at 3.2 percent in 2024 and 3.3 percent in 2025, the report said.
The IMF projected in April that global growth for 2024 and 2025 would be 3.2%, the report said.
"Global activity and world trade firmed up at the turn of the year, with trade spurred by strong exports from Asia, particularly in the technology sector," the report added.

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IMF Maintains Russia's Growth Forecast for 2024 at 3.2% - World Economic Outlook

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) kept its economic growth forecast for Russia unchanged at 3.2% for 2024 and revised downward its 2025 projection to 1.5%, the updated World Economic Outlook (WEO) report said on Tuesday.
Though the IMF's 2024 forecast remains unchanged from its previous estimate in April, while the IMF reduced its projection for 2025 by 0.3 percentage points to 1.5%, the report said.

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imf expects global trade growth to recover to about 3% annually in 2024-25 - world economic outlook

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imf revises us growth forecast downward to 2.6% in 2024, leaves 2025 projection unchanged - world economic outlook

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imf no longer expects global oil prices to decline in 2024, predicts 0.8% growth - world economic outlook

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imf maintains its forecast for global economic growth in 2024 at 3.2%, revises 2025 projection upward slightly to 3.3% - world economic outlook

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Musk Donates $100,000 to Victims of Trump Rally Shooting

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) – US entrepreneur Elon Musk has donated $100,000 to the victims of the shooting that occurred during former President Donald Trump's rally last Saturday, according to the GoFundMe platform.
Musk made two donations of $50,000 each, the page for the fundraising campaign, named

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Support For Butler PA Victims - President Trump Authorized, showed.

As of Tuesday morning, over 57,000 people donated more than $4.75 million in total, according to the page.

On Saturday afternoon, shots were fired during a Trump campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. The Republican presidential hopeful sustained a gun wound to his right ear and was briefly hospitalized. The gunman killed one person and critically injured two others in the audience before the Secret Service neutralized him.

The FBI is treating the incident as an assassination attempt and potential domestic terrorism. The suspected gunman was identified as 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania.

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DNC Seeks to Confirm Biden as Democratic Nominee by End of Month - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) – Democratic National Committee leaders are seeking to confirm US President Biden as the Democratic presidential nominee by the end of the month, The New York Times reported on Tuesday, citing four unnamed sources.

The DNC's rules committee, which has more than 180 delegates, the majority of whom remain loyal to Biden, will hold a video call on Friday. Thereafter, the more than 4,000 delegates will begin casting their ballots on Monday, with the vote to take place over a week.

The majority of delegates are expected to continue to support Biden as the nominee. Party rules dictate that he can only be replaced if he agrees to withdraw from the race and release his delegates.

The push to confirm Biden comes as internal opposition to his candidacy persists after his presidential debate with Trump last month reinforced rather than refuted ongoing concerns about his mental fitness to serve a second presidential term at age 81.

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Biden Calls for Capping Corporate Rent Increases at 5% - White House

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden is proposing legislation to cap corporate rent increases on existing units at 5% and make landlords ineligible for federal tax breaks if they fail to comply.

"Today, I'm sending a clear message to corporate landlords: If you raise rents more than 5% on existing units, you should lose valuable tax breaks," Biden stated in the release.

Biden also announced other measures to lower housing costs, including repurposing public land to enable building as many as 15,000 affordable housing units in Nevada, and rehabilitating distressed housing, building more affordable housing, and revitalizing neighborhoods.

He also called for Congress to pass his plan to build 2 million new homes and provide $10,000

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in relief for mortgage holders.

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US Transportation Command Issues $750Mln in Global Logistics Contracts - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - Twenty three transportation companies have received three quarters of a billion dollars in US Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) contracts to deliver and move US military logistical support of different kinds around the world outside the continental United States, the Department of Defense announced in a press release.

"[The companies] have been awarded [a] ...with an estimated cumulative face value of $750 million," the release said on Monday.

The purpose of the contract was to obtain commercial port operations and related transportation services in locations outside the continental United States, the Defense Department said.

"The contract provides international ocean transportation and intermodal, time definite, port-to-port and door-to-door transportation service using ocean common, or contract carriers offering regularly scheduled commercial service, including shipment of both containerized and breakbulk cargo," the release said.

The contract will extend to the companies involved for one year from September 1, 2024, to August 31, 2025, the Defense Department said.

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Biden Says He to Debate Trump as Agreed, In September

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said that he will hold a debate with former leader Donald Trump in September as previously agreed.

“I am going to debate him when we agreed to debate, and I am going to debate him in September,” Biden said in an interview with NBC News on Monday when asked whether he would be open to do a debate in the next few weeks before the one expected to take place in September.

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Biden Makes It Harder for Israel to Win War on Gaza - Vance

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - US presidential candidate Donald Trump’s running mate Ohio Senator J.D. Vance said that US President Joe Biden made it more difficult for Israel to win its war on Gaza by prolonging it.

“Joe Biden's made it harder and harder for Israel to win that war,” Vance said in an interview

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with Fox News on Monday.

Vance added that two things needed to happen. The first thing is to end the war as quickly as possible because the longer it went on, the more difficult Israel's situation was, and the second one is to restart the normalization talks between Israel and Saudi Arabia.

He also concurred that Israel did not have a better friend than Trump.

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JD Vance Says Trump Proved to Be Great President Despite Initial Skepticism

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - US Senator JD Vance said in an interview that he was initially skeptical of former US President Donald Trump in 2016 but now views him as a great president.

"I don't hide from that. I was certainly skeptical of Donald Trump in 2016, but President Trump was a great president, and he changed my mind. I think he changed the minds of a lot of Americans because he delivered that peace and prosperity," Vance said on Monday.

The remarks were in response to the interviewer Sean Hannity's question about a 2016 text where US Senator JD Vance described Trump as a cynical figure like Nixon and compared him to America's Hitler.

"I bought into this idea that somehow he was going to be so different, a terrible threat to democracy. It was a joke," Vance said.

JD Vance added that US President Joe Biden is undermining American law and order by attempting to imprison his political opponents and destabilize the nation's legal system.

Earlier on Monday, Trump announced that Vance would be his running mate in the 2024 US presidential election. However, Biden said he does not intend to let the duo win the White House and asked people to donate to his reelection effort.

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Trump Would Negotiate 'Rapid Close' to Russia, Ukraine Conflict – Vance

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - US presidential candidate Donald Trump's running mate Ohio Senator J.D. Vance said Monday that Trump would negotiate with Russia and Ukraine to bring their conflict to a rapid close.

"I think what President Trump has promised to do is go in there, negotiate with the Russians and Ukrainians, bring this thing to a rapid close so that Americans can focus on the real issue, which is China. That's the biggest threat to our country," Vance said in an interview with Fox News.

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Biden Says Nothing Changed in Recent Days About His Decision to Stay in Race

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Monday that nothing has changed in recent days about his decision to remain in the presidential race.
"No," Biden said in an interview with NBC News when asked whether anything changed in his decision in the last several days regarding staying in the presidential race.

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Biden Says Was Not Surprised Florida Judge Dismissed Trump's Secret Documents Case

WASHITNGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said that he was not taken by surprise by the dismissal of the case involving former US President Donald Trump's alleged mishandling of classified materials.
"I am not surprised," Biden said in an interview with NBC News on Monday. "It comes from the immunity decisions the court ruled on."
US District Judge Aileen Cannon dismissed the classified documents case against Trump, saying the appointment of Special Counsel Jack Smith violated the Constitution, an order filed on Monday said.

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Biden Says He Feels Safe With Secret Service

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said that he feels safe with the Secret Service after assassination attempt of former President Donald Trump.
"I feel safe the Secret Service," Biden told NBC News in an interview on Monday.
When asked if the incident became a massive security failure, Biden pointed out that he met twice with all the intelligence communities in the Situation Room. "I have asked for the totally independent analysis," he said.
On Saturday afternoon, 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.

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Biden Says Does Not Know If Shooting at Trump Rally Changed Presidential Race Trajectory

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden has said that he does not know whether the trajectory of the presidential race has been altered by the shooting at the rally of former President Donald Trump.
"I don't know, and you don't know either," Biden said in an interview with NBC News. "I've

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thought less about the trajectory of the case than two things: One, what his health is, that he's secure, number one."

Biden went on to say that the thing that he thought is what will now be happening regarding the coverage.

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Biden Says Call With Trump After Shooting Was 'Cordial,' Thanked Him For Calling

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden told ABC News that his telephone call with Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump after the shooting was cordial and he thanked him for calling.

"Very cordial," Biden said on Monday of the call. "I told him how concerned I was, and wanted to make sure I knew how he was actually doing. He sounded good, said he was fine, and he thanked me for calling him."

On Saturday afternoon, 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 a member of the audience and critically injured two others in the crowd before the Secret Service neutralized him.

Trump told the Washington Times newspaper that he plans to deliver a speech at the Republican National Convention on Thursday that will call for more unity in the United States and around the world.

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US Secret Service Director Landed Role Due to Close Ties With Jill Biden's Team - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - US Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle landed in that position due to her favorability among First Lady Jill Biden and her team, the New York Post reported, citing four sources close to the Biden family.

Cheatle was well liked by Jill Biden and senior aides like Anthony Bernal, who pushed her as an option to lead the Secret Service, the report said on Monday.

However, White House spokesman Andrew Bates said that Cheatle was selected due to her qualifications, including more than two decades of experience in the Secret Service.

Cheatle has come under scrutiny following the assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump on Saturday. Law enforcement were reportedly aware of the suspect nearly 30 minutes ahead of a shooting, which injured Trump and killed one audience member.

Cheatle said that she will not resign from her role in the wake of the assassination attempt She is expected to attend a US House Oversight Committee hearing on the matter on July 22.

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US Secret Service Chief Says Will Not Resign After Attempted Assassination on Trump

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - US Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle told ABC News that she would not resign from her position following the attempted assassination on former President Donald Trump.

The report said on Monday that Cheatle has reached out to Trump but has not yet spoken with him.

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Biden Says His Age is Legitimate Question to Ask, But 'Mental Acuity Good'

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden told NBC News that US voters' concerns about his age are legitimate but he claims that his mental acuity is good.

“I’m old,” Biden said. “But I’m only three years older than Trump, number one. And number two, my mental acuity has been pretty damn good."

Biden added that he understands people get concerned that he's 81 years old and that it's a legitimate question to ask.

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Police Spotted Trump Shooter Nearly 30 Minutes Before Assassination Attempt - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - A law enforcement officer spotted a gunman on the roof of a building near former US President Donald Trump’s campaign rally in Pennsylvania nearly 30 minutes before the shooter attempted to assassinate the Republican presidential candidate, local Pittsburgh news outlet WPXI reported.

The law enforcement officer took a picture of the gunman and called it in to other officers 26 minutes before he shot Trump in the ear, killed one audience member and wounded two others, the report said on Monday, citing multiple law enforcement sources.

Another law enforcement officer also saw the shooter, identified as Thomas Crooks, on the ground before the assassination attempt and called him in as a suspicious person, the report said on Monday.

An independent investigation into the US Secret Service’s handling of the event will soon commence, US Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said earlier in the day.

US Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle will also testify before the US House Oversight Committee on July 22.

Additionally, the US Senate Homeland Security Committee will investigate the assassination

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attempt, US Senator Gary Peters said.

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VP Kamala Harris Accepted CBS News Debate with JD Vance, Is 'Eager' - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - The Biden campaign announced that Vice President Kamala Harris has agreed to a CBS News debate and is eager to face JD Vance, White House reporter Matt Viser wrote on X on Monday.

Earlier today, Former US President Donald Trump said that he picked Republican US Senator JD Vance to serve as his running mate for the 2024 race.

The announcement comes amid the Republican National Convention, where delegates are set to confirm Trump and Vance as the party's 2024 ticket.

Biden said he did not intend to let the duo win the White House and asked people to donate to his reelection effort.

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Biden Says Mistake to Use Word 'Bullseye' When Discussing Trump

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden told NBC News that it was a mistake to use the word WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden told NBC News that it was a mistake to use the word "bullseye" when talking about former President Donald Trump during a private call with a donor last week.

"It was a mistake," Biden said in the interview that aired on Monday.

Biden said he meant to tell donors that they need to focus on competing against Trump instead of trying to end his reelection bid after his dismal debate performance last month.

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US Not Ready to Comment on Possibility of Meeting With Lavrov During UN Visit - State Dept

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - The United States is not ready to comment on the possibility of meetings with Russian officials during Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's visit to the United Nations this week, a State Department spokesperson said in a statement to Sputnik.

"Generally, we don't comment on private diplomatic discussions," the spokesperson said on Monday.

Lavrov will be in New York to attend a UN Security Council session where he will raise issues pertaining to multilateralism and the indivisibility of security, as well as seek clarification on events in the Ukrainian city of Bucha.

Lavrov will take part in the UN Security Council debate on multilateral cooperation and the

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Middle East from July 16-17.

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Republican Party Will Not Change Policy Following Assassination Attempt on Trump-Ramaswamy

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - The US Republican party will not change its policy following the assassination attempt on former president Donald Trump, former US presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy told RIA Novosti.
"The policy is the same but we need to unite the country," Ramaswamy said on Monday on the sidelines of the Republican National Convention.

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Biden Calls US Senator Vance 'Clone of Trump,' Says Sees No Difference Between Them

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden said on Monday that his opponent Donald Trump's running mate US Senator JD Vance is merely an ideological clone of the former US president, the White House press pool said.
"A clone of Trump on the issues. I don't see any difference," Biden said on Monday.
Earlier on Monday, Trump announced that Vance will be his running mate in the 2024 US presidential election.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) -

TRUMP ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT
* The US Secret Service will fully participate in an independent review of the assassination attempt on Trump, Director Kimberly Cheatle said on Monday.
* The US Secret Service said it has adjusted Trump's security detail since Saturday's assassination attempt on the presumptive Republican presidential nominee in order to ensure his protection for the remainder of the campaign.
* The White House does not yet know the motive of the shooter who attempted to assassinate Trump, nor whether he had any help or support, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said.
* Russian President Vladimir Putin has not contacted former US President Donald Trump after

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the attempt on his life and no contacts are planned, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION

* Former US President Donald Trump said on Monday that he picked US Senator JD Vance as his running mate for the 2024 race.
* The US Secret Service told Sputnik that weapons are not allowed in the inner perimeter of the RNC venue.
* The US Secret Service has strengthened the security plan for the RNC this week following the assassination attempt on former Trump, Director Kimberly Cheatle said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* The United States has discussed with Kiev Russia's possible participation in the second summit on Ukraine and would support Kiev if it decides that Moscow should be invited, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Monday.
* The United States is prohibiting Ukraine from firing US-supplied weapons deep into Russia is an "appropriate step" for Washington to take, Miller said.
* Sensible forces in Europe understand the risks of further involvement of NATO in the conflict in Ukraine, as well as the risks of continuing the discussion of Kiev's possible membership in the alliance, Konstantin Gavrilov, the head of the Russian delegation at the talks in Vienna on military security and arms control, told Sputnik.
* The Ukrainian armed forces have lost up to 585 soldiers in battles with Russia's Zapad (West) group of forces in the past 24 hours, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

* The European Union expanded sanctions against Israeli settlers on Monday for repeated violations of the Palestinians' rights, adding five persons and three entities to the lists, according to a document published in the Official Journal.
* The United States still has a shipment of 2,000-pound bombs for Israel halted and under review, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said.
* Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz held a meeting in Jerusalem with new UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy and said that Palestinian movement Hamas needed to realize that ceasefire in the Gaza Strip was impossible without the release of Israeli hostages.

US COURT DISMISSES TRUMP "CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS" CASE

* US District Judge Aileen Cannon dismissed a superseding indictment against former US President Donald Trump in the classified documents case against him, an order filed on Monday said.
* Trump said that courts should dismiss all cases related to him, following the dismissal of the case involving his alleged mishandling of classified materials and an assassination attempt against him.

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Oil Price Wobbles as New Week Starts on China Demand Worries

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - Crude prices fell on Monday extending losses from last week on concerns about weakening demand in China, the world's largest oil importer.

US West Texas Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude settled at $81.91 per barrel, down 30 cents, or 0.4%. WTI lost 1.1% last week, snapping a four-week rally prior to that.

UK-origin Brent crude finished the US trading session at $84.85 per barrel, down 18 cents, or 0.2% on the day. Brent lost 1.7% last week.

The latest slide in prices came after data showing China's refinery output fell 3.7% in June from a year earlier, down for a third month on planned maintenance. Lower processing margins and lackluster fuel demand also pushed independent Chinese refineries to cut output.

Both WTI and Brent lost ground last week after Chinese customs data showed crude imports dropped 2.3% in the first half of this year from the January-June period of 2023.

The Paris-based International Energy Agency (IEA) also revised down last week its expectations for Chinese oil demand.

"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.

The run-up in crude prices has lately 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.

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Fed Chair Powell Says Will Stay Till Term-End In 2026, Won't Comment On Extension

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said Monday he will be on the job until his term expires in 2026, although he refused to say whether he will consider another extension.

Powell joined the Fed twelve years ago when President Barack Obama nominated him to the Fed's board of governors in 2012 and was elevated to the position of chairman in 2018 by President Donald Trump. He was reappointed to the job in 2023 by President Joe Biden.

"Your term as chair goes through I think, May of 2026. So, any thought about staying through all the way; you're going to do that?" Powell was asked by the moderator during an interview at the

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Washington Economic Club, held before a live audience.

"Yes," answered the Fed chief.

But he was non-committal when asked about the likelihood of serving even longer.

"If some person came along and said 'Well, you did a great job; I'd like to reappoint you. Would you consider that?" the moderator asked. "I have nothing for you on that today," Powell replied, drawing laughter.

He added that the job had been his life, and one he thoroughly enjoyed.

Powell's fans credit him for his stewardship of the Fed during some of the most troubling times for the US economy including the coronavirus pandemic.

His critics point to the central bank's failure to raise rates quickly enough after the COVID-19 outbreak to prevent runaway inflation — a move the Fed has admitted was a "mistake". Under Powell's watch, the Fed also oversaw a systematic banking failure in 2023 that the central bank's policy-makers say they should have flagged earlier.

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Mayorkas Says Spreading Rumors of Trump Assassination Attempt Being A Plot 'Preposterous'

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - US Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said on Monday it is preposterous and dangerous to spread false rumors that the Trump assassination attempt had allegedly been planned by the Biden administration.

"That is preposterous, and it is also dangerous to propagate rumors that are so unequivocally false and provocative," Mayorkas said.

On Saturday afternoon, 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 a member of the audience and critically injured two others in the crowd before the Secret Service neutralized him.

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Trump Meets With RFK Jr to Discuss National Unity, But Not Dropping Out of Race - Campaign

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - Independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. met with Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump to discuss national unity, but this does not mean he will drop out of the presidential race, Kennedy Campaign Press Secretary Stefanie Spear said in a statement to Sputnik on Monday.

"Yes, Mr. Kennedy met with President Trump today to discuss national unity, and he hopes to meet with leaders of the Democratic Party as well," Spear said. "And no he is not dropping out of the race. He is the only pro-environment, pro-choice, anti-war candidate who beats Donald Trump in head-to-head polls."

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US Lawmakers Should Stop Pushing Bills to Contain, Suppress China - Embassy

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - US lawmakers should stop pushing bills to contain China and instead work constructively to develop relations between Washington and Beijing, Chinese Embassy spokesperson Liu Pengyu said in a statement to Sputnik.

"China urges relevant people in the US to abandon the Cold War mentality and ideological prejudice, stop inciting and drumming up hostile sentiments, and stop pushing bills in the US Congress aimed at containing, suppressing and smearing China," the statement said.

Last week, US House Speaker Mike Johnson said that House lawmakers are working on a sanctions package to punish Chinese military firms that allegedly provide material support to Russia and Iran.

House lawmakers are also considering options to restrict outbound investment in China, Johnson said.

The United States should do more constructive work to steadily develop US-China relations and view such relations in an objective and rational way, the Chinese embassy's statement said.

The US and China stand to gain from cooperation and lose from confrontation, the statement said. It is impossible for the US and China not to engage with one another, the statement added.

Whether the US and China bolster solidarity and cooperation or stoke bloc confrontation will determine the fate of mankind and the planet, the statement said.

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Trump Secures Enough Delegates to Win Republican Party's Presidential Nomination

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump secured enough votes from delegates at the Republican National Convention on Monday to become the party's official nominee for president in the 2024 race.

Trump was the sole Republican presidential candidate heading into the convention, after other candidates dropped out earlier in the race.

Trump is expected to deliver a formal acceptance speech later in the convention.

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Biden Says Vance Talks 'Big Game' About Working Class But Will Raise Taxes on Families

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - US Senator JD Vance, whom Trump selected as his 2024 running mate, claims to support the working class but will raise taxes on families, US President Joe Biden said on Monday.

"Here's the deal about JD Vance. He talks a big game about working people. But now, he and

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Trump want to raise taxes on middle-class families while pushing more tax cuts for the rich," Biden said via social media platform X.

Earlier on Monday, Trump announced Vance as his running mate, amid the Republican National Convention.

Biden said he does not intend to let the duo win the White House and asked people to donate to his reelection effort.

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Mayorkas Says Independent Probe of Security at Trump Rally to Start in Matter of Days

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) – The independent investigation into the Secret Service's handling of the the attempt to assassinate former President Donald Trump will commence in the coming days, US Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas said on Monday.

"[In a matter of] days," Mayorkas said during a White House press briefing when asked when the independent review will be up and running.

Mayorkas said US President Joe Biden directed him to conduct an independent review of the incident to examine the Secret Service's and other law enforcement actions before, during, and after the shooting.

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Biden Remains Confident in Secret Service Director Despite Trump's Shooting - White House

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden continues to have confidence in Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle despite the agency's failure to prevent the assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Monday.

"So, the answer is yes," Jean-Pierre said when questioned on whether Biden remained trustful of Cheatle.

There has been a wave of calls for Cheatle to resign after security was unable to prevent the assassination attempt on Trump during a campaign rally in Pennsylvania on Saturday when a gunman fired several shots using an AR-style assault rifle, grazing Trump's right ear and killing one spectator and critically injuring two others.

US Secret Service agents were able to kill 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks on the scene.

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Trump Secures Enough Delegates to Win Republican Party's Presidential Nomination

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Trump was the sole Republican presidential candidate heading into the convention, after other candidates dropped out earlier in the race.

Trump is expected to deliver a formal acceptance speech later in the convention.

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Mayorkas Says Biden Directed Him to Provide Protection to Robert Kennedy, Jr.

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - US Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said on Monday that President Joe Biden directed him to work with the Secret Service to protect presidential hopeful Robert Kennedy, Jr. following a failed assassination attempt on presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump on Saturday.

"The president has directed me to work with the Secret Service to provide protection to Robert Kennedy, Jr.," Mayorkas said during a White House press briefing.

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FBI Says Successfully Accessed Trump Rally Shooter's Phone, Analyzing Electronic Devices

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The FBI successfully accessed the phone of the deceased gunman who attempted to assassinate former President Donald Trump and authorities continue to sweep through other of his electronic devices, a spokesperson said in a statement to Sputnik on Monday.

"FBI technical specialists successfully gained access to Thomas Matthew Crooks' phone, and they continue to analyze his electronic devices," the FBI said. "The search of the subject's residence and vehicle are complete."

The FBI also noted that it has conducted nearly 100 interviews of law enforcement personnel, event attendees, and other witnesses.

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Mayorkas Says Personnel, Capabilities Added to Increase Security Around Trump

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) – US Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas said on Monday that the Biden administration has added personnel, protective resources, and capabilities to increase the security of former US President Donald Trump in the wake of a failed assassination attempt on him over the weekend.

"I cannot discuss specifics of the protection or the enhancements made as they involve sensitive tactics and procedures. I can say, however, that personnel and other protective resources, technology, and capabilities have been added," Mayorkas said during a White House press briefing.

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Mayorkas Says Both Biden, Trump Constantly Subject of Threats

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump are both consistently the subject of threats, US Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas said on Monday.

"Both President Biden and former President Trump are constantly the subject of threats. We are in a heightened and very dynamic threat environment. The United States Secret Service, we, including the FBI and our other partners across the federal government, take the threats very seriously and adjust security measures as warranted," Mayorkas said during a press briefing.

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Trump Says Picked US Senator J.D. Vance for Vice President

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said on Monday that he picked Republican US Senator JD Vance to serve as his running mate for the 2024 race.
"After lengthy deliberation and thought, and considering the tremendous talents of many others, I have decided that the person best suited to assume the position of Vice President of the United States is Senator J.D. Vance of the Great State of Ohio," Trump said via social media platform Truth.
Vance's campaign activities will be focused on workers and farmers in states like Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio and Minnesota, Trump said.
The announcement comes amid the Republican National Convention, where delegates are set to confirm Trump and Vance as the party's 2024 ticket.

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White House Says Does Not Know Shooter's Motive in Trump Assassination Attempt

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The White House does not yet know the motive of the shooter who attempted to assassinate former President Donald Trump, nor whether he had any help or support, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Monday.
"We do not know the motive of the shooter yet. We don't know whether he had help or support, or if he communicated with anyone else," Jean-Pierre said during a press briefing.

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US Joint Chiefs Chairman to Bolster Indo-Pacific Partnerships on Regional Trip - Statement

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - US Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Charles Brown will enhance US partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region this week by meeting key allies on his second regional trip since taking office, the Defense Department said in a statement on Monday.
"Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. CQ Brown, Jr., will build upon US investments in partnerships throughout the Indo-Pacific this week as he meets with key allies on his second trip to the region since taking office," the statement said.
Brown arrived in the Philippines earlier on Monday to engage with the country's Chief of Staff Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. and other military officials.
"Later in the week, the chairman will travel to Japan to meet with senior government officials and military leaders for discussions on regional deterrence and security cooperation. Brown will also meet with US service members stationed at Yokota Air Base," the statement said.
Brown's trip to the Indo-Pacific follows his engagements during the NATO summit from July

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9-11 and last month's African Chiefs of Defense Conference in Botswana, highlighting the importance of partnership and trust with global allies, the statement added.

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Powell Admits Fed 'Mistake' With Inflation, Vows Not to Do Same With Rate Cuts

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell admitted the central bank's mistake in waiting too long to raise interest rates to the extent that inflation became overwhelming, and vows not to do the same with rate cuts.

"We essentially overestimated how quickly the economy would return to normal," Powell said on Monday, answering questions before a live audience at the Washington Economic Club.

The Fed initially labeled the post-pandemic surge in prices of goods and services as "transitory."

Powell explained that the central bank thought that such inflation "would go away fairly quickly" without the need for an immediate rate hike.

"You don't want to intervene with interest rates if something is going to go away quickly," he said. "You look through things like a temporary oil [price] shock, so that was the mistake — it [the inflation] actually didn't reverse itself."

When the Fed did get on the path of rate hikes, it did so with little restraint, raising them 11 times between March 2022 and July 2023, to clamp down on prices.

For more than a decade before the COVID-19 breakout in March 2020, price growth was below the Fed's long-preached 2%-per-annum. The temporary shutdown of the US economy, disruptions in supply chains and trillions of dollars in government relief spending in response to the pandemic sent inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), to a four-decade high of 9.1% by June 2022.

With the CPI hovering at 3% per annum now, the Fed is being watched for when it would cut rates.

While Powell has refused to share any insight that would even remotely suggest his thoughts on when an easing should occur, he told his audience at the Washington Economic Club that inflation is something with "long and variable lags" and why the Fed shouldn't wait too long to cut.

"The implication of that is that if you wait until inflation gets all the way down to 2%, you've probably waited too long, because the tightening that you're doing, or the level of tightness that you have, is still having effects which will probably drive inflation below 2%," Powell said.

Alternatively, the Fed hoped to have "greater confidence" that inflation was sustainably easing towards its 2% target, he said.

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"What increases that confidence in that is more good inflation data, and lately here we have been getting some of that," Powell added.

The Fed's policy-making Federal Open Market Committee will meet next on July 30-31 for a decision on rates, though money market traders are really betting on an easing occurring at the central bank's September 17-18 meeting.

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US Republican Party National Convention Kicks Off in Milwaukee

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The US Republican Party began its national convention on Monday in Milwaukee, where delegates are set to confirm former President Donald Trump as their nominee for the 2024 race.

Thousands of party delegates from 56 US states and territories are gathering in the city to hear from a number of speakers, approve the Republican Party platform and select a presidential ticket. Trump is expected to announce his running mate later on Monday.

The convention is occurring in the wake of an assassination attempt against Trump over the weekend. However, a Secret Service coordinator said that it will not change its security plans for the convention.

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.

Expected speakers at the convention include Donald Trump Jr., model Amber Rose, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and Ultimate Fighting Championship chief Dana White.

The Democratic Party will hold its national convention on August 19-22 in Chicago.

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US Secret Service Chief to Testify Before Congress July 22 on Trump Assassination Attempt

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - US Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle will testify before the US House Oversight Committee on July 22 regarding the assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump at a campaign rally, Committee Chairman James Comer said on Monday.

"The Secret Service has a no-fail mission, yet it failed on Saturday when a madman attempted to assassinate President Trump, killed an innocent victim, and harmed others," Comer said. "On Monday, July 22, [the US House Oversight Committee] will get answers in a public hearing with Director Cheatle."

There has been a wave of calls for Cheatle to resign after security was unable to prevent the assassination attempt on Trump during a campaign rally in Pennsylvania on Saturday.

A gunman fired several shots using an AR-style assault rifle, grazing Trump's right ear and

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killing one spectator and critically injuring two others, according to the authorities.
US Secret Service agents were able to kill 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks on the scene.

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US Shipment of 2,000 Pound Bombs to Israel Remains Paused, Under Review - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The United States still has a shipment of 2,000-pound bombs for Israel halted and under review, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Monday.
"There is no update with the delivery of that [batch of] 2,000 pound bombs, that shipment remains paused and under review," Miller said during a press briefing.
US President Joe Biden said during a press conference after the NATO summit July 8-11 that he regrets not convincing Israel to scale back its military operation in the Gaza Strip earlier in the conflict.
Biden further said he will continue to withhold US shipments of 2,000-pound bombs meant for Israel due to concerns that they will be used in densely populated areas in Gaza.
The Biden administration has placed on temporary hold one shipment of the 2,000-pound bombs that Israel had requested.

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Trump to Announce Pick for Vice President at 20:30 GMT - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump is expected to announce his pick for the vice president at around 4:30 p.m. (20:30 GMT) during the first day of the Republican National Convention (RNC) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Fox News reported on Monday.
North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum and US Sen. Marco Rubio have already been informed they are not Trump's pick, the report said.

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Canadian Govt. Offers Apology to Dakota, Lakota First Nations for Denying Their Rights

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The Canadian government has offered a formal apology to the Dakota and Lakota First Nations over Ottawa's longstanding denial of their rights, the Ministry of Crown-Indigenous Relations said on Monday.
"Today, the Honorable Gary Anandasangaree, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations,

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delivered an apology on behalf of the government of Canada, to the nine Dakota and Lakota First Nations in Canada for past harms relating to Canada's longstanding denial of their rights," the ministry said in a statement.

Anandasangaree affirmed the nine communities' status as "Aboriginal peoples of Canada" with constitutionally protected Section 35 rights, in a move that seeks to further the healing and reconciliation processes as well as improve nation-to-nation ties, the statement said.

The apology ceremony was held at the Whitecap Dakota Nation and was attended by close to 650 individuals, including First Nations' leadership, elders, youth and community members, the statement said.

"The Government of Canada will continue to work with its Dakota and Lakota partners to rebuild relationships based on respect for rights and advance their visions of a better future for the benefit of their communities," the statement added.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has sought to mend ties and seek greater rapprochement with the country's First Nations, Metis and Inuit, notably by recognizing Canada's past wrongs and investing in Indigenous communities.

Trudeau promised to end all boil-water advisories, launch an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and fulfill the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 calls to action, including investing more than C$30 billion US$21.9 billion) in Indigenous priorities.

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Up to Kiev to Decide Whether to Invite Russia to Second Ukraine Summit - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The United States has discussed with Ukraine Russia's possible participation in the second summit on Ukraine and would support Kiev if it decides that Moscow should be invited, Department of State spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Monday.

"That's something that we discussed with them but as we said before any decisions around diplomatic negotiations are decisions that Ukraine has to make, not the United States, not any other country that's not party to this conflict ," Miller said in a press briefing. "It's for Ukraine to decide when and how and in what shape to undertake diplomatic negotiations. As their partner, as their backer, we will support them if that's the path that they choose to take."

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State Dept. Calls Kremlin's Remarks on Trump's Shooting 'Incredibly Irresponsible'

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) – US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Monday that Russia's comments on former US President Donald Trump's assassination attempt were "incredibly irresponsible."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Sunday that Moscow does not think that the incumbent US authorities were behind the attempt to assassinate Trump. However, the atmosphere created by the current US administration around Trump "provoked what the United States is facing today," Peskov added.

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"Obviously, there were incredibly irresponsible comments from the Kremlin," Miller told reporters during a press briefing when asked to provide his reaction to these comments.
He pointed out that they are "absolutely not true."
On Saturday, a gunman attempted to assassinate Trump at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania, shooting the former president in the right ear, killing one rally attendee and wounding two others.

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State Dept. Says Ban on Strikes Deep Inside Russia 'Appropriate Step' to Take

WASHINGTON, July 25 (Sputnik) - The United States prohibiting Ukraine from firing US-supplied weapons deep into Russia is an "appropriate step" for Washington to take, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said on Monday.
"We have decided that this is the appropriate step for us to take at this time," Miller said during a press briefing.

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Federal Reserve Chair Condemns Attempt on Trump's Life, Says 'Very Sad Day' for US

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell on Monday condemned the attempt on former US President Donald Trump's life, calling it a "very sad day" for America.
"It was a really very sad day for our country," Powell said at the Washington Economic Club. "Political violence has no place in our society and I condemn it in the strongest terms. I know we all do."
On Saturday, a gunman attempted to assassinate Trump at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania, shooting the former president in the right ear, killing one rally attendee and wounding two others.

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US Secret Service Amid Reports Guns Allowed Outside RNC Says Not Allowed in Inner Section

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The US Secret Service (USSS) amid reports that guns are allowed outside the Republican National Convention (RNC) in Milwaukee told Sputnik on Monday that weapons are not allowed in the inner perimeter of the venue.
"The US Secret Service does not permit weapons of any kind to be brought into the inner security perimeters for national special security events, with the exception of working law

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enforcement officers," a USSS spokesperson said.
Another USSS spokesperson added that there have been no recent changes to security measures at the RNC.
The RNC is being held from Monday to Thursday. Former President Donald Trump will officially be made the Republican nominee of the US presidential election.

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US Secret Service amid reports Guns Allowed In Area Outside RNC tells sputnik it doesn't permit weapons to be brought into inner security perimeters

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US Senate Homeland Security Panel Will Investigate Trump Assassination Attempt - Peters

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The US Senate Homeland Security Committee will investigate the assassination attempt against former president Donald Trump, US Senator Gary Peters said on Monday.
"We've announced we're going to be doing a… bipartisan investigation from the Committee on Homeland Security to look at the events that occurred and determine whether or not there were breaches that we need to close," Peters said, as quoted by The Hill.
On Saturday, a gunman attempted to assassinate Trump at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania, shooting the former president in the right ear, killing one rally attendee and wounding two others.
The US House Oversight Committee also said that it will investigate the assassination attempt and hold a hearing on July 22.
House lawmakers will hold committee hearings with Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle and other officials from the FBI and US Department of Homeland Security, House Speaker Mike Johnson said.

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Trump Adviser Grenell Says China Peace Plan on Ukraine Has Some Good Elements - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump's adviser Richard Grenell believes the Chinese plan to reach a peace in Ukraine is not perfect but has some good elements in it, Bloomberg reported on Monday.
In February 2023, China presented its 12-point plan for achieving peace in Ukraine. Among other things, Beijing's peace proposal includes a ceasefire, abandoning the Cold War mentality, and resuming peace talks. Both Ukraine and its Western allies met the document with

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skepticism, noting that it lacked some critical points.
"I caution you, I'm not saying that I embrace the Chinese peace plan, I'm saying they had elements that were quite good," Bloomberg quoted Grenell as saying.
In April 2024, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that the Chinese general principles to reach peace in Ukraine have been the most reasonable plan proposed so far.
Russian President Vladimir Putin said in June that Russia would immediately cease fire and begin negotiations with Ukraine after it withdraws troops from the regions incorporated into Russia in 2022 and officially abandons plans to join NATO. Kiev has so far rejected the possibility of this and demands a return to its pre-2014 borders. China has pledged support to any peace process that would be recognized by both sides.

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Canadian Security Agencies Exercising 'Increased Vigilance' After Trump Shooting –Minister

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) – The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) are exercising "increased vigilance" following the assassination attempt on presumptive US presidential candidate Donald Trump, said the Minister of Public Safety Dominic LeBlanc.
"This morning, I convened and was briefed by @Safety_Canada officials along with the Commissioner of the @rcmpgrcpolice and the Director of @csiscanada. They have assured me that they are exercising increased vigilance and are in close contact with their American partners," LeBlanc said via X on Sunday.
The Minister added that he was confident in the security and intelligence agency's ability to keep the country safe from threats and noted that although the incident appears to have no ties to Canada, CSIS and the RCMP stand ready to assist their US counterparts.
Trump was slightly injured in his ear when shots from at least one rifle with a telescopic sight were fired at him at a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, on Saturday. The shots killed one attendee and critically injured two others before the Secret Service neutralized the gunman.

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ANALYSIS - Trump Assassination Attempt to Backfire on Biden Reelection Chances

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The unsuccessful assassination attempt on Republican presumptive presidential candidate Donald Trump on Saturday afternoon will backfire on and further reduce the reelection prospects of incumbent President Joe Biden, analysts told Sputnik.
Trump was slightly injured in his ear when shots from at least one rifle with a telescopic sight were fired at him at a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, on Saturday. The shots killed one attendee and critically injured two others before the Secret Service neutralized the gunman. The assassination attempt came as Trump is due to be officially named as the Republican presidential nominee at the party's national convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin from July

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ESCALATING RHETORIC

The attack came following a period of escalating rhetoric from Democrats against Trump, including comparing him to Adolf Hitler.

"Thankfully, Donald Trump appears to have survived what appears to have been an assassination attempt," former hedge fund manager and political analyst Charles Ortel said. "This coming shortly following 'Dark Brandon' exhorting his supporters to 'put a bullseye on Trump.'"

Dark Brandon is an Internet meme embraced by the Biden campaign.

During a private call on July 8, Biden assured his donors that he is the best to beat Trump in the 2024 election, saying "it's time to put Trump in a bullseye" and stop talking about his own dismal debate performance, Politico reported.

Biden condemned all political violence in a live broadcast from the White House on Sunday and said there would be an independent inquiry into the assassination attempt. He also said it is time to cool down the political rhetoric in the country.

The alleged shooter, Thomas Matthew Crooks, 20 from Bethel, Pennsylvania was shot dead by Secret Service snipers immediately after the attack. Biden acknowledged the young shooter's motives were not yet discernable.

The attack looks certain to significantly boost Trump's national support, Ortel stated.

"One thing is crystal clear—Joe Biden will never clinch re-election. Democrats need to retire Biden and [Vice President Kamala] Harris and they need to dial back their dangerous rhetoric 'bigly,'" he said.

Ret. US Marine Corps Maj. and noted military historian Donald Vandergriff agreed that the assassination attempt was the outgrowth of and was made possible by the sustained political rhetoric of hate and delegitimization against Trump.

"The bad thing is the Democrats have caused this simply through their horrible language promoting violence," he said.

Many US military veterans were outraged that the security protection around Trump was not more extensive and that the assassination attempt, which was carried out from the relatively close distance of 150 yards, or around 140 meters, had been possible at such relatively close range in the first place, Vandergriff pointed out.

"I am hearing from a lot of my Special Forces and Ranger friends. They are not pleased with how it went at the assassination attempt," he said.

Biden said in his television broadcast on Sunday afternoon that Trump had been provided with all available Secret Service resources necessary for his protection.

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US Focuses on Keeping Old Minuteman ICBMs Working as Sentinel Delays Soar - General

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The US Air Force is giving top priority to keeping its aging force of Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) operational through the 2030s as delays and costs continue to soar out of control on the replacement Sentinel ICBM program, US

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Air Force Chief of Staff for Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration Gen. Andrew Gebara said on Monday.

"Work needs to be done to ensure that Minuteman III sustainment is unbroken," Gebara told a Mitchell Aerospace Institute podcast. "Our Air Force is absolutely committed to ensuring that Minuteman is sustained until Sentinel stands [up]."

Stages one, two and three of the upgraded and modernized Minuteman have been successfully test-fired already, Gebara said.

The Sentinel is a three-stage intercontinental ballistic missile intended to replace the aging US arsenal of Minuteman III ICBMs by 2038, with the missile itself originally expected to be adopted by the US military around 2030. The missile is expected to carry several W87-1 thermonuclear warheads with a blast yield of 475 kilotons each, and have a range of at least 9,000 miles or 15,000 kilometers, according to published sources.

However, the modified Sentinel program is now on track to cost $140.9 billion, an increase of 81% compared to a 2020 estimate, according to a recent official report.

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US Shifts Back to Far Larger Strategic Manned Bomber Force With B-21 Aircraft - General

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The US Air Force will again greatly expand the depleted manned bomber element of the strategic nuclear Triad - the land, undersea and airbase legs of its nuclear deterrent - when it deploys the B-21 aircraft, US Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration General Andrew Gebara said on Monday.

"We are shifting from 20 low observable [Stealth-capable] bombers to far larger numbers [with the B-21 program]," Gebara told a Mitchell Aerospace Institute podcast. "The B-21 is succeeding in its flight tests but it still isn't there yet. We still have a lot of work to do."

Gebara said the Air Force was looking at deploying a force of 140 to 175 B-21 bombers.

The Northrop Grumman B-21 Raider is being developed as a long-range, stealth intercontinental strategic bomber that can deliver conventional and thermonuclear weapons. It is designed to replace the Rockwell B-1 Lancer and Northrop Grumman B-2 Spirit stealth aircraft by 2040, and possibly the Boeing B-52 after that.

The aircraft, which made its maiden flight in November 2023, is widely seen as the US equivalent of the Russian Tupolev PAK DA and it is expected to be capable of subsonic flight at Mach 0.8, according to published reports.

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Trump After Assassination Attempt Says RFK Jr. Deserves US Secret Service Protection

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - Independent US presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. deserves protection from the US Secret Service, former US President Donald Trump said on Monday.

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On Saturday, a gunman attempted to assassinate Trump at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania, shooting the former president in his right ear.

"In light of what is going on in the world today, I believe it is imperative that Robert F. Kennedy Jr. receive Secret Service protection – immediately," Trump said via Truth Social.

Providing RFK Jr. with Secret Service protection is the obvious and right thing to do, considering the Kennedy family's history with assassinations, Trump said.

The Biden administration has so far denied Kennedy's requests for Secret Service protection.

Last week, Kennedy described the decision to deny him protection as a troubling "weaponization" of law enforcement.

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Trump Says 'Supposed to Be Dead' After Assassination Attempt at Campaign Rally

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said that he was supposed to be dead following an assassination attempt at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania over the weekend, during which a gunman shot him in the ear.

"I'm not supposed to be here, I'm supposed to be dead," Trump said on Sunday in an interview with the New York Post.

On Saturday, a gunman shot Trump in the right ear, killed one audience member and wounded two others.

Trump said that the assassination attempt was a "surreal experience" that tore off a small piece of his right ear. A doctor that treated Trump described the incident as a miracle, the former president said.

"By luck or by God, many people are saying it's by God I'm still here," Trump said.

Trump said that US Secret Service agents hit him so hard in response to the shooting that his shoes came off. Trump said that he wanted to continue delivering his speech but Secret Service agents told him it was unsafe.

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Nearly 70-Year-Old B-52 Bomber Modernization to Boost Range by Over 2,000 Miles- General

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik)- The modernization program for the venerable almost 70-year-old B-52 strategic bomber will increase its range by at least 2,200 miles, making it an effective weapon of the US nuclear triad deterrent for decades to come, US Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration General Andrew Gebara said on Monday.

"We are putting new engines, new radars ...and new weapons on the B-52s," Gebara told a Mitchell Aerospace Institute podcast. "The B-52 already has an 8,800-mile range. [You can] add 25% to that."

Both the B-52's current 8,800 range and its future extended range of 11,000 miles will be

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reached without the need for aerial refueling, which will further extend its flight time durations. The upgraded aircraft will be capable of carrying long-range, stand-off air-cruise missiles (ALCMs) and may eventually carry air-launched hypersonic glide strike weapons that are being developed too, according to published sources.

The manned bomber force adds a flexibility component to the Triad, the US air-undersea and ground-based nuclear deterrent system, Gebara explained.

The B-52 is expected to remain in service with the US Air Force until at least 2050. The USAF still has 72 active B-52H bombers in its inventory, according to published sources.

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ANALYSIS - Trump Assassination Attempt to Backfire on Biden Reelection Chances

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - The unsuccessful assassination attempt on Republican presumptive presidential candidate Donald Trump on Saturday afternoon will backfire on and further reduce the reelection prospects of incumbent President Joe Biden, analysts told Sputnik.

Trump was slightly injured in his ear when shots from at least one rifle with a telescopic sight were fired at him at a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, on Saturday. The shots killed one attendee and critically injured two others before the Secret Service neutralized the gunman. The assassination attempt came as Trump is due to be officially named as the Republican presidential nominee at the party's national convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin from July 15-18.

ESCALATING RHETORIC

The attack came following a period of escalating rhetoric from Democrats against Trump, including comparing him to Adolf Hitler.

"Thankfully, Donald Trump appears to have survived what appears to have been an assassination attempt," former hedge fund manager and political analyst Charles Ortel said. "This coming shortly following 'Dark Brandon' exhorting his supporters to 'put a bullseye on Trump.'"

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US Air Force Says There's Hope for Nuclear Non-Proliferation After New START Treaty Expiry

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) – There is "absolutely a hope" for future nuclear non-proliferation after the New START treaty between Russia and the United States expires in 2026, US Air Force Lt. Gen Andrew Gebara said on Monday.

“There's absolutely a hope for future new nuclear non-proliferation,” Gebara said during a Mitchell Aerospace "Aerospace Nation" webinar when asked what happens after the New START treaty expires in 2026.

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Trump Says US Courts Should End Other ‘Witch Hunts’ After Classified Docs Case Dismissed

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said on Monday that courts should dismiss all cases related to him, following the dismissal of the case involving his alleged mishandling of classified materials and an assassination attempt against him.

"As we move forward in Uniting our Nation after the horrific events on Saturday, this dismissal of the Lawless Indictment in Florida should be just the first step, followed quickly by the dismissal of ALL the Witch Hunts – The January 6th Hoax in Washington, DC, the Manhattan DA’s Zombie Case, the New York AG Scam, Fake Claims about a woman I never met … and the Georgia ‘Perfect’ Phone Call charges," Trump said via social media platform Truth.

The US Justice Department coordinated all of the cases in an attempt to interfere with the 2024 US presidential election, Trump said.

On Saturday, a gunman attempted to assassinate Trump during a campaign rally in Pennsylvania. On Monday, a US judge dismissed the superseding indictment in the classified

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materials case.

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trump says dismissal of classified documents case should be just first step, followed by dismissal of 'all the witch hunts'

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US Federal Court Dismisses Trump Classified Documents Case - Order

(Update: Modifies headline and lede, adds background, details in paras 5-8)
WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - US District Judge Aileen Cannon dismissed the classified documents case against former US President Donald Trump, saying the appointment of Special Counsel Jack Smith violated the Constitution, an order filed on Monday said.
"Former President Trump's Motion to Dismiss Indictment Based on the Unlawful Appointment and Funding of Special Counsel Jack Smith is granted in accordance with this Order. The Superseding Indictment is dismissed because Special Counsel Smith's appointment violates the Appointments Clause of the United States Constitution," the order said.
Smith's use of a permanent indefinite appropriation also violates the US Constitution's Appropriations Clause, the order said.
Smith initially charged Trump with 37 counts related to his alleged mishandling of classified materials, and later filed a superseding indictment adding three more counts.
Trump has characterized the case, among others, as a form of weaponization of government against him amid the 2024 US presidential election.
The US Attorney General was not authorized to appoint a special counsel with the prosecutorial powers wielded by Smith, the order said. Such a special counsel must be authorized by the US Congress, the order said.
"Upon careful study of the foundational challenges raised in the Motion, the Court is convinced that Special Counsel's Smith's prosecution of this action breaches two structural cornerstones of our constitutional scheme – the role of Congress in the appointment of constitutional officers, and the role of Congress in authorizing expenditures by law," the order said.
The order directs the clerk of the court to close the case, cancel any scheduled hearings and deny any pending motions.
Smith has not yet commented on the dismissal of the case or indicated whether he might appeal Cannon's ruling.

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Mexico Overtook China as Largest US Trading Partner in 2023 - State Dept.

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WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - Mexico overtook China as top trading partner of the United States, while Canada ranks second, US Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Brian Nichols said on Monday.

"Our deep economic bonds with Latin America and the Caribbean grow stronger by the day. The United States ranks as Latin America's largest trading partner and its largest source of foreign direct investment," Nichols told reporters. "In 2023, US trade with Latin America and the Caribbean totaled over $1.1 trillion, and Mexico overtook China as our top trading partner."

Nichols pointed out that Canada is the United States' second largest trading partner.

Nichols remarks come ahead of the America's Partnership for Economic Prosperity Ministerial that will take place on July 17. The event will be hosted by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

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Canadians Traveling With Dogs Might Be Unable to Cross US Border Amid New Rules - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - Canadians traveling with dogs and seeking to cross the border into the United States might face difficulties starting in August due to recent US regulatory changes on canine travel, CBC News reported on Monday.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) said in late May that starting on August 1, dogs entering or returning to the United States would need to meet new requirements depending on where the animals were six months prior to their admission into the country.

Among the new rules, dogs must be at least six months old at the time of their entry in the United States and appear healthy upon their arrival. Animals will not be allowed in if they are carrying diseases. In addition, the pets will need an implanted International Organization for Standardization compatible microchip and owners a CDC dog import form receipt that needs to be filled two to ten days prior to the arrival.

Canada-US cross-border travel with dogs might be rendered impossible unless an agreement is reached between Ottawa and Washington, the report said. This is due to the Canadian Food and Inspection Agency (CFIA) inability to approve the CDC dog import form.

The CDC form requires that a section be filled out by the dog's veterinarian with the approval of an "official government veterinarian" from the export country. CFIA has said that it is unable to provide that service and further acknowledged that it might pose challenges to travelers.

CFIA and the CDC continue to actively work on developing a specific process for dogs going from Canada to the US and more information will be available in the coming weeks, according to the Canadian agency.

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US Court Dismisses Superseding Indictment in Trump Classified Documents Case - Order

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) - US District Judge Aileen Cannon dismissed a superseding indictment against former US President Donald Trump in the classified documents case against him, an order filed on Monday said.

"Former President Trump's Motion to Dismiss Indictment Based on the Unlawful Appointment and Funding of Special Counsel Jack Smith is granted in accordance with this Order. The Superseding Indictment is dismissed because Special Counsel Smith's appointment violates the Appointments Clause of the United States Constitution," the order said.

Smith's use of a permanent indefinite appropriation also violates the US Constitution's Appropriations Clause, the order said.

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Man Killed at Trump Rally Dived to Shield His Family - Pennsylvania Governor

WASHINGTON, July 15 (Sputnik) – The man killed during the assassination attempt on Republican presidential frontrunner Donald Trump on Saturday died shielding his family from the gunfire, Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro said.

Corey Comperatore, 50, was attending Saturday's rally with his wife and two daughters.

"We lost a fellow Pennsylvanian last night: Corey Comperatore. Earlier today, I spoke to his wife and his two daughters. They asked me to share that Corey died a hero — diving on his family to protect them from danger," Shapiro wrote on X.

Comperatore was a "girl dad" and firefighter. He went to church every Sunday, and was also an avid supporter of former President Trump, the governor said.

Pennsylvania State Police identified the two injured attendees as David Dutch, 57, and James Copenhaver, 74, who are in a stable condition.

Trump sustained a minor injury to his right ear from a bullet. The shooter, identified as Thomas Matthew Crooks, 20, of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, was killed by the Secret Service.

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