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7/16/24 Tuesday

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Moon Cave Offers Hope as Exploration Base

The cave is 45 meters wide and nearly 80 meters long; an area which could be covered by about 14 tennis courts, one report revealed.

Scientists for the first time have discovered a cave on Earth's moon. The underground cave, which is accessible from the surface, could be the perfect spot to build a future lunar base. The cave lies about 492 feet below the moon's surface, and could offer shelter from the harsh surface environment, the study published in Nature on Monday said.

The 147-foot wide and 262-foot long cave is located about 250 miles from where the Apollo 11, carrying astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, landed 55 years ago. The researchers note that is just one in probably hundreds of caves hidden in an "underground, undiscovered world".

Radar data collected by NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter revealed the cave to be what is most likely an "empty lava tube".

Lunar orbiters first saw these "subsurface openings" more than a decade ago, and it is believed that many of them connect to underground caves, such as lava tubes, that form through volcanic processes.

This particular cave was found by Lorenzo Bruzzone and Leonardo Carrer at the University of Trento in Italy. The researchers used radar to penetrate the opening of a pit on a rocky plain called the Mare Tranquillitatis which is visible to a stargazer's naked eye.

"It's really exciting. When you make these discoveries and you look at these images, you realize you're the first person in the history of humanity to see it," Carrer said. "Life on Earth began in caves, so it makes sense that humans could live inside them on the Moon."

Helen Sharman, the first British astronaut to travel to space, told BBCthat the cave could be a good spot for those inhabiting the moon to seek shelter from radiation, extreme temperatures and space weather. She also suggested that humans may begin living in lunar pits in two to three decades.

Katherine Joy, a professor in Earth sciences at the University of Manchester in the UK also noted that lunar cave systems have "been proposed as great places to site future crewed bases", because "the thick cave ceiling of rock is ideal to protect people and infrastructure from the wildly varying day-night lunar surface temperature variations and to block high energy radiation which bathes the lunar surface".

"However, we currently know very little about the underground structures below these pit entrances."

Researchers hope to use ground-penetrating radar, cameras and even robots to map the cave, which could help with the exploration of caves on Mars in the future. But for the time being, the Moon's cave could tell us about its history as well as the history of our solar system. The rocks inside may have been preserved, and could offer an exciting research opportunity for scientists.

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UK Soldiers Accused of Soliciting Sex in Kenya After Ban Prompted by Murder of 21-Year-Old

Army chiefs first passed the ban on prostitution after the murder of a young Kenyan mother sparked outrage.

The UK military has reportedly investigated 24 allegations of soldiers soliciting sex in Kenya since it was banned two years ago, a report from Declassified claims. But this is not the first time British soldiers have been accused of committing sex crimes in Kenya.

Under JSP 769: Zero Tolerance to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, which banned the solicitation of prostitutes in 2022, troops were warned that sex workers are "frequently trafficked, coerced or underage". But in a letter to parliament, written by the Ministry of Defence (MoD), they claimed that they could not find any evidence of "transactional sex" in Kenya by soldiers.

However, the letter was issued after the MoD told Kenny MacAskill, a Scottish politician, that there had been three incidents despite there having been 24 allegations.

According to the Declassified report, the ban on soliciting prostitutes in Kenya was first passed following the outrage of Agnes Wanjiru's murder. Wanjiru was a young Kenyan mother who was allegedly killed by a British soldier in 2012. The 21-year-old's body was found in a septic tank after she went out partying with British soldiers at a hotel in the town of Nanyuki, where the British army has a permanent garrison.

In 2021, Britain's The Sunday Times newspaper reported that a soldier had admitted to his comrades that he killed Wanjiru and showed them her body. The Times said that the murder was taken to military superiors, but no further action was taken. The victim's family filed a lawsuit against the British army in Kenya as well as other authorities who failed to address her murder.

This year, recent reports from British media have revealed that the prime suspect behind the 21-year-old's murder is "still at large in England" as police and the army have failed to address the crime. At least five soldiers have identified the same man they say killed Wanjiru.

Wanjiru's niece, Esther Njoki has expressed her disappointment that none of the 24 suspected prostitution cases will lead to justice.

"It's saddening that no one has been prosecuted even after the policy was passed," Njoki told Declassified. She also expressed frustration that her aunt's murder has yet to be solved after a decade. "How is this still continuing even after all these stories come to light? Nothing has changed."

Emma Norton, the director of the Center for Military Justice, said the new policy isn't working. "Our new Government needs to urgently understand why the policy isn't working, because the purchasing of sex by soldiers from local women in places where the British Army is deployed is an obvious and appalling abuse of power," said Norton.

Declassified said they visited Nanyuki a few months after the ban was passed, and asked if it was working. One hospitality worker, a barman, said there was "no way" UK soldiers were following that rule. And said that "every night of every week they are going out with girls".

CNN interviewed a group of mixed-race children who were conceived through the rape of Kenyan women by British soldiers, the women said, according to a report form mid-June.

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The CNN report added that mixed-race children continue to be born in remote villages where the British Army trains its soldiers. Nanyuki is where the British Army Training Unit (BATUK) is located. BATUK fell under investigation by the Defense, Intelligence and Foreign Relations committee of Kenya's National Assembly, as of mid-June.
UK military courts have a terrible track record for handling violence against women cases, as well. Military courts have a 23% conviction rate for rape, while civilian courts have a 70% conviction rate.

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Elon Musk Cuts Ties With California and Announces Texas as New X, SpaceX Headquarters

The billionaire's views aren't political - they're personal.
Elon Musk, the entrepreneur and owner of companies X and SpaceX, said he will be moving the headquarters of said companies from California to Texas. The Tesla CEO is outraged due to California's new law, which is intended to protect transgender students at school.
The bill, signed by Governor Gavin Newsom (D-CA), prevents policies which force educators to tell the student's parents if the child has asked to use a different name or different pronouns.
"This is the final straw," Musk said on X a day after Newsom signed the bill. "Because of this law and the many others that preceded it, attacking both families and companies, SpaceX will now move its HQ from Hawthorne, California, to Starbase, Texas."
"The state will take away your kids in California," Musk added in a follow-up post on X.
Musk also said he would transfer X from its art-deco headquarters in San Francisco to Austin - a threat he has made in the past after complaining of having to dodge "gangs of violent drug addicts just to get in and out of the building". The billionaire has already moved Tesla's headquarters from Palo Alto in Silicon Valley to Austin, Texas, but his engineering headquarters is in California.
A potential move could affect thousands of employees across X and SpaceX, as Musk required employees to return to their offices following the pandemic.
It is reported that Elon Musk, 53, has 12 children with three different women, though he has only been married to one of the women whom he shares children with. The richest man in the world shares three children with Neuralink executive Shivon Zilis, six with Canadian author Justine Wilson, and three with the musical artist Grimes.
Musk's desire to break ties with the state of California may come from a personal rift between him and his own transgender child. Musk's daughter legally changed her name to Vivian Jenna Wilson in 2022 and came out as trans when she was 16, but she did not tell her estranged father that she was trans.
Walter Isaacson, the author of Musk's biography, said that Musk partially blames his daughter's ideology on a progressive school she attended in Los Angeles.
According to Isaacson, when Musk learned of his child transitioning he became "generally sanguine" or optimistic. But his daughter cut Musk out of her life when she became a "fervent Marxist". She also requested her name to be changed from her father's because she "no longer

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live[d] with or wish[ed] to be related to [her] biological father in any way, shape or form." The source said that Musk became “pained” by the rift between him and his child.
This estranged relationship is why Musk has developed a more conservative point of view in recent years, and has adopted his “anti-woke sentiments”, the source explained. The entrepreneur has often been heard speaking of the “woke mind virus” in interviews, as well as sharing his thoughts on the matter over X.

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UK soldiers accused of soliciting sex in Kenya after ban prompted by murder of 21-year-old

“Our new Government needs to urgently understand why the policy isn’t working, because the purchasing of sex by soldiers from local women in places where the British Army is deployed is an obvious and appalling abuse of power,” said Emma Norton, the director of the Center for Military Justice. The UK military has reportedly investigated 24 allegations of soldiers soliciting sex in Kenya since it was banned two years ago, a report from Declassified claims. But this is not the first time British soldiers have been accused of committing sex crimes in Kenya. Under JSP 769: Zero Tolerance to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, which banned the solicitation of prostitutes in 2022, troops were warned that sex workers are “frequently trafficked, coerced or underage”. But in a letter to parliament, written by the Ministry of Defence (MoD), they claimed that they could not find any evidence of “transactional sex” in Kenya by soldiers. Declassified said they visited Nanyuki a few months after the ban was passed, and asked if it was working. Nanyuki is where the British Army Training Unit (BATUK) is located. BATUK fell under investigation by the Defense, Intelligence and Foreign Relations committee of Kenya's National Assembly, as of mid-June. One hospitality worker, a barman, said there was “no way” UK soldiers were following that rule. And said that “every night of every week they are going out with girls”. UK military courts have a terrible track record for handling violence against women cases, as well. Military courts have a 23% conviction rate for rape, while civilian courts have a 70% conviction rate.

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Is Donald Trump Elites’ Last Hope to Rescue a Dying US Empire?

As Biden struggles to project power, the former president promises to leverage imperial might in its undisguised form.
Iran’s mission to the United Nations issued a statement rejecting claims the country is seeking the assassination of Donald Trump three days after an attempt on the former US president’s life at a campaign event in rural Pennsylvania.
“These associations are unsubstantiated and malicious,” the mission said. “From the perspective of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Trump is a criminal who must be prosecuted and

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punished in a court of law for ordering the assassination of General Soleimani. Iran has chosen the legal path to bring him to justice."

Coming during the final year of his tenure in the White House, Trump's targeting of the Iranian military officer shocked observers and briefly prompted concerns the United States would find itself in an armed conflict with the formidable West Asian power. The real estate magnate is often characterized as a foreign policy "isolationist," winning the presidency in part due to his criticism of the US-led war in Iraq. But the surprising incident demonstrated Trump's characteristic impulsiveness as well as the influence of neoconservative hawks like former CIA director Mike Pompeo in his administration.

Four years later Trump is once again casting himself as an antiwar figure amid dissatisfaction with President Biden's proxy war in Ukraine, but his record of aggression towards Afghanistan, Syria, and China tells another story. Commentator Ryan Cristian joined Sputnik's The Final Countdown program Tuesday to discuss the implications of Trump's candidacy and consider whether the mercurial figure is elites' choice to reassert US power amid the emergence of a multipolar world.

"I think it's fair to say that Donald Trump is riding very high for a man who is just missing a small bit of a body part," said host Ted Rall. "He just created an iconic photo of himself that's likely to go down in history books. He survived this assassination attempt… He just made a pretty bold choice in the form of JD Vance as his running mate."

"Joe Biden seems to be playing a completely different game," he mused. "Basically he's running out the clock."

"Joe Biden has been destroying his entire administration and everything they've been planning, every amount of influence or support he had from either side, because of his support for Israel," responded Cristian. "I mean, his own party in many cases calls him 'Genocide Joe.'"

"JD Vance is an example of someone who appeases the Never Trumpers," he claimed, referring to the former president's venture capitalist running mate. "He's also aggressively pro-Israel, you know, and I think that's something we have to take into consideration. I know a lot of people don't want to hear that. They don't want to believe that that might be the case."

Although he has carved out a similar identity to Trump as a skeptic of foreign US military intervention, Vance as a strident Christian Zionist, once claiming his religious faith compels him to back the Israeli government. "The idea that there is ever going to be an American foreign policy that doesn't care a lot about that slice of the world is preposterous," he once said in a speech at the Quincy Institute.

Vance has signaled strong support for controversial Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has presided over the killing of tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians after Hamas' October 7 uprising last year.

Rall questioned why political elites seem unbothered by the prospect of keeping Joe Biden at the top of the Democratic ticket, despite mounting evidence of his unpopularity both among the broader public and within his own party.

"When you have this apparent effort to keep Joe Biden in no matter what, is that going to reduce voter turnout and destroy down ballot races?" the host asked. "Senate? Congress? Governors? City council?

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“Why are they doing this?” he wondered. “They're not just destroying their chances of keeping the White House, they're shifting control of the Senate, the House and state legislators and they don't seem to have any problem with that.”
“I think Trump is the aim, the direction for the empire,” Cristian suggested. “Whatever the driving force – not Democrat versus Republican – Trump is kind of a selected choice for what's happening next. That's why that would be where this goes. It's a large teeter-totter.”
“It is a corrupt system… I will be clear. I think they're individuals. I think Pelosi, for example, hates Donald Trump. I think that's very clear. But that doesn't mean that they're not going to be driven to take larger action through lobbying and through other interests when it comes down to real things like war, right?”
Just three months into Trump’s chaotic term in the White House, the former president enjoyed bipartisan praise in April 2017 when he lobbed a volley of missiles at targets in Syria. The former president’s insistence he would remain uninvolved in the country, where the CIA has carried out a covert dirty war for over a decade, had prompted concern over the abandonment of a crucial arena for the United States to project its imperial might.
But Trump’s show of force calmed those concerned over Trump’s stewardship of the American empire, prompting liberal pundit Brian Williams to wax poetic on the “beauty” of US munitions.
Figures within America’s foreign policy establishment have suggestedtime is running out for the United States to secure its place as the global hegemon, with some suggesting the country must go to war with China within just a few short years. The influential RAND Corporation once warned the bloody showdown must occur by 2025.
With Israel struggling, the Ukraine proxy war stalling and de-dollarization continuing apace, perhaps elements of the Western ruling class are ready to once again take a chance on Trump, fully abandoning the pretense of belief in any rules-based order and brandishing US power in its raw and brazen form.

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Biden to Blame Pro-Palestine Protesters for ‘Climate of Violence’ After Trump Shooting – Report

A study by British medical journal The Lancet estimated the final death toll of Israel’s monthslong campaign in the Gaza Strip will reach 186,000.
As Saturday’s assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump complicates Democrats’ strategy leading up to this fall’s election, US President Joe Biden has found a new target of attack for his floundering campaign: pro-Palestine protesters.
The plan was revealed during an interview between senior Biden administration officials and the British news outlet Reuters one day after the shooting.
“This changes everything,” said one campaign operative of the shocking event. “We’re still assessing. Making the case against Trump, drawing that split screen will get much harder.”
In response, the president’s team has devised a strategy of criticizing a “climate of violence” and will seek to “draw on the president’s history of condemning all sorts of political violence including his sharp criticism of the ‘disorder’ created by campus protests over the Israel-Gaza conflict.”

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Biden's campaign was reportedly previously set to craft a message condemning the former president's character, a strategy employed by former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's failed 2016 candidacy. Central to the plan were attacks on Trump over his recent felony conviction in the Stormy Daniels hush money case and attempts to overturn the results of the 2020 election. The octogenarian president's task will be complicated by the fact many Democratic Party voters, and increasing numbers of Americans as a whole, now side with Palestinians in the long running conflict over the Israeli ethnonationalist colonial project.

A string of peaceful protests against Israel's deadly campaign in Gaza took place on US college campuses earlier this year, with students demanding their universities disclose and divest from financial interests tied to the Zionist occupation. Mainstream media frequently portrayed the demonstrations as threatening and anti-Semitic, although the most notable instances of violence were spurred by police and pro-Israel counterprotesters.

The Israeli military has killed nearly 38,700 during its months-long operation in the Gaza Strip, although the figure is thought to undercount thousands of people trapped underneath the rubble of IDF airstrikes.

A recent study by British medical journal The Lancet estimated the ultimate death toll of the conflict will exceed 186,000. More than half of the dead are thought to be women and children, including six-year-old Hind Rajab, who was killed after an Israeli tank operator fired 355 bulletsat the car carrying the young girl and her mother.

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US Defense Official Confirms 2 Drones Intercepted at Al-Asad Base in Iraq, No Injuries

WASHINGTON, July 17 (Sputnik) - A US defense official confirmed to Sputnik on Wednesday that two drones were intercepted at Al-Asad airbase in Iraq this week but no US-led coalition forces were injured.

"Initial reports confirm that US and Coalition forces at Al-Asad Airbase, Iraq, successfully intercepted two unmanned aerial systems," the official said. "All personnel are accounted for, and no injuries are reported."

The official noted that the situation is evolving and further updates will be provided by US Central Command.

On Tuesday, a source in the coalition told Sputnik that two booby-trapped drones had attacked Al-Asad airbase in the Al Anbar governorate in western Iraq, but caused no damage to the base.

Some Iraqi Shia paramilitaries had reportedly threatened that they may resume their attacks against US bases in Iraq and Syria, media reported. Since February, these groups had focused their attacks on Israeli ports.

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US DHS Inspector General to Probe Secret Service's Handling of Trump Rally - Notice

WASHINGTON, July 17 (Sputnik) - US Department of Homeland Security's Inspector General will investigate the Secret Service's handling of the Pennsylvania rally where a gunman tried to assassinate former President Donald Trump, according to a notice published Wednesday.

The iInspector General will “evaluate the United States Secret Service's (Secret Service) process for securing former President Trump's July 13, 2024 campaign event,” the notice said.

Last Saturday, a 20-year-old man attempted to assassinate Trump during a campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. The Republican presidential nominee sustained a gun wound to his right ear and was briefly hospitalized. The gunman, shooting from a rooftop, killed a man in the audience and critically injured two others 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 Thomas Matthew Crooks of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania.

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Over Half of US Voters Believe Democrats Can't Win Election With Biden - Poll

WASHINGTON, July 17 (Sputnik) - Over half of likely US voters think that the Democrats cannot win the November election with President Joe Biden on the ticket, according to a Rasmussen Reports poll published on Wednesday.

"The latest Rasmussen Reports national telephone and online survey finds that 54% of Likely U.S. Voters agree with Clooney’s claim that Democrats 'are not going to win in November' with Biden as their presidential candidate, including 38% who Strongly Agree," the pollster said.

About one-third (34%) disagree with that, including 19% who strongly disagree. Another 12% have no specific opinion on the matter, it added.

The poll was conducted on July 10-11 and 14, 2024, by phone and online among 1,110 Americans who will likely vote in November.

US actor George Clooney said in a New York Times opinion piece earlier this month that President Biden should step aside as he cannot win "the fight against time." His call followed Biden's dismal performance in the debate against Republican challenger Donald Trump on June 27.

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Netanyahu Tries to Regain Trump’s Favor After Rift in Relations - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 17 (Sputnik) - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is trying to regain former US President Donald Trump’s favor behind the scenes with some progress made in the wake of the assassination attempt against the latter, Axios reported on Wednesday.

Relations between Trump and Netanyahu went downhill after the Israeli prime minister

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congratulated current US President Joe Biden on his victory in the 2020 election.
"I haven't spoken to him since," the report quoted Trump as saying in his 2021 interview. "F**k him."
Over the past three years, Netanyahu's aides have met with Trump on at least four occasions in a bid to restore the ties, the report said.
On one occasion, an aide brought a copy of Netanyahu's book to Mar-a-Lago and read passages praising Trump, the report added.
Netanyahu was also among the first world leaders to condemn the assassination attempt on Trump followed by three social media posts expressing solidarity with the former US President, according to the report.
Despite all the difficulties in the relationship between the two politicians, Netanyahu's aides are optimistic it can be fixed, the report said.
While the Israeli prime minister is expected to visit Washington next week, there are no known plans of him to meet with Trump, the report added.

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US Signs $400Mln Deal with GlobalWafers to Boost Silicon Wafer Production – Commerce Dept.

WASHINGTON, July 17 (Sputnik) – The Biden administration will provide Taiwanese tech firm GlobalWafers with up to $400 million to promote US-based production of the silicon wafers used in semiconductors, the Commerce Department said in a press release on Wednesday.
"Today, as part of the Investing in America tour, the Biden-Harris Administration announced that the US. Department of Commerce and GlobalWafers America, LLC and MEMC LLC, subsidiaries of GlobalWafers Co., Ltd., have signed a non-binding preliminary memorandum of terms to provide up to $400 million in proposed direct funding under the CHIPS and Science Act to help onshore critical semiconductor wafer production and advance US technology leadership," the release stated.
The proposed investment aims to help build the first 300-mm silicon wafer manufacturing facility for advanced chips in Sherman, Texas, and a new manufacturing facility for 300-mm silicon-on-insulator wafers in Peters, Missouri. It would also create an estimated 1,700 construction jobs and 880 manufacturing jobs.
Silicon wafers are critical foundational components used in all chips. There are five leading companies, including GlobalWafers, that currently hold over 80% of the global 300-mm silicon wafer manufacturing market. Approximately 90% of silicon wafers are currently sourced from East Asia.

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US, Philippines Hold Coast Guard Exercise in South China Sea - US 7th Fleet

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WASHINGTON, July 17 (Sputnik) - The United States and the Philippines have conducted a coast guard exercise in the South China Sea, the US 7th Fleet said on Wednesday.

"The U.S. Coast Guard and the Philippine Coast Guard joined together to conduct bilateral operations in the South China Sea, July 16," the statement said.

The bilateral operations involved the US Coast Guard Legend-class cutter USCGC Waesche (WMSL 751) and the Philippine Coast Guard Teresa Magbanua-class patrol vessel BRP Melchora Aquino (MRRV-9702), it added.

"Operations included a joint sail and conducting search and rescue training, personnel transfer evolutions, and bilateral sailing," the statement said.

Waesche's commanding officer, Capt. Tyson Scofield, pointed out that the US military strives to preserve a free and open Indo-Pacific.

"Sharing lessons learned and best practices through person-to-person exercises is the best way to improve our ability to operate together on the unforgiving ocean," he said.

The US Coast Guard will continue regular operations with its partners in the region to train, exercise and develop tactical interoperability across allied navies, according to the statement.

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Belarus Committed to Practical Cooperation Within SCO Framework - Deputy Foreign Minister

UNITED NATIONS, July 17 (Sputnik) - Belarus is committed to deep and practical cooperation with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) within the framework of membership in the organization, Belarusian Deputy Foreign Minister Yury Ambrazevich told Sputnik.

"We are now actively studying, all of our branch ministries are studying the agenda - for the coming months and further into the future - of participation in various formants and events. We await a very deep and practical interaction," Ambrazevich said in assessing the prospect of Belarus' membership in the SCO.

The SCO is not only a political structure that has extended its influence and membership to the European continent, but also includes an entire network of very practical formats for interaction, Ambrazevich said.

There will be serious work to formulate added value for cooperation with states with which Belarus has a bilateral agenda, Ambrazevich added.

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Belarus Delegation in UN Discussed Food Security in Context of Supporting Africa-Deputy FM

UNITED NATIONS, July 17 (Sputnik) - The Belarusian delegation, during its visit to the United Nations, discussed food security issues in the context of opportunities to support African countries, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, Yuri Ambrazevich told Sputnik.

"Food security is discussed in the sense that Belarus has the unique expertise and industrial

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capabilities to support any African country, any developing state with our export of tractors and agricultural equipment, and financial assistance to exports," Ambrazevich said on Tuesday.
According to the Deputy Minister, it regards among other things, the support, in partnership with those countries with which Minsk constantly works, including Russia and China.

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Belarus Delegation in UN Discussed Food Security in Context of Supporting Africa- deputy foreign minister to sputnik

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Belarus Delegation to UN Meets With Range of Partners, Including From Africa - Deputy FM

UNITED NATIONS, July 17 (Sputnik) - The Belarusian delegation to the United Nations is holding meetings with representatives from a range of countries, including with the country's African partners, Belarusian Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Yury Ambrazevich told Sputnik.
"We are here to take advantage of the presence of more than 100 delegations represented at the political level ranging from the deputy minister and above to hold a series of bilateral meetings on our bilateral agenda, primarily with states relatively remote from Belarus, like Africa," Ambrazevich said on Tuesday.
Belarus has been actively engaged with African colleagues in recent years to find effective and successful ways of bilateral cooperation, including financial support for exports.
"We had interesting and useful meetings, including with the Prime Minister of Uganda. I just agreed with my colleague from Mozambique that in the next two months, we will hold the next meeting of the intergovernmental commission on economic cooperation with this country," Ambrazevich added.

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Boeing Says Handed Over Core Stage II of Super-Rocket for Artemis II Mission to NASA

WASHINGTON, July 17 (Sputnik) - Boeing has delivered the second stage of the giant Space Launch System (SLS) rocket, which will carry four Artemis II mission astronauts to lunar orbit next year, to NASA to be transported to the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, the company has announced in a press release.
"Boeing has provided NASA with the second core stage of the SLS rocket," Boeing said on Tuesday. "Built at NASA's Michoud Assembly Facility (MAF), the core stage is designed to send the Artemis II crew to lunar orbit for the first time in 50 years."
The rocket stage is the single-largest component of the Artemis II mission. Next, it will be loaded onto NASA's Barge Pegasus and transported 900 miles (1,448 kilometers) to the

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Kennedy Space Center, Boeing said.

"Once there, it will be integrated with the other Artemis II components, including the upper stage, solid rocket boosters, and NASA's Orion spacecraft inside the Vehicle Assembly Building. This integration is a crucial step in preparation for the Artemis II launch, scheduled for 2025," the release said.

The Core Stage II is over 200 feet (61 meters) tall and is powered by four RS-25 engines, which, with two solid-fuel booster rockets, will provide the 8.8 million pounds (399,000 kilograms) of necessary thrust to propel Artemis II and future missions into space, Boeing said.

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US Police Say Arrested Suspicious Man Wearing Mask, Illegally Carrying Gun Near RNC Venue

WASHINGTON, July 17 (Sputnik) - The Milwaukee Police Department recently arrested a suspicious person who was wearing a ski mask and was in illegal possession of a firearm in public near the venue where the Republican National Convention is being held, a police spokesperson has said in a statement to Sputnik.

"Milwaukee Police arrested a 21-year-old man for carrying a concealed weapon on July 15, 2024, at approximately 1:00 p.m., on the 1200 block of N. 11th Street," police said late Tuesday night. "United States Capitol Police initially observed the suspect looking suspicious, wearing a ski mask and a large tactical backpack in the street."

US Capitol Police stopped the suspect and discovered that he was unlawfully concealing a firearm in his backpack, police said.

According to police, the suspect was arrested, and charges are pending review by the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office.

Fox News reported, citing a federal law enforcement source, that the suspect was several blocks away from Fiserv Forum, where the RNC is being held. The suspect reportedly had an AK-47 pistol with a full magazine.

The suspect's intentions are still not clear.

On Saturday, a 20-year-old man attempted to assassinate Republican presidential nominee Trump during a campaign rally in the state of Pennsylvania but only grazed his right ear. However, the gunman fired several shots from his AR-style assault rifle, killing a spectator and critically injuring two others before he was killed by US Secret Service agents. The gunman's motive remains unknown, according to according to US law enforcement.

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Belarus, Russia Collaborate Very Effectively at UN - Deputy FM

UNITED NATIONS, July 17 (Sputnik) - Russia and Belarus collaborate with the highest efficiency at the UN, like true allies, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, Yuri Ambrazevich told Sputnik.

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"Colleagues in the missions cooperate, in my opinion, with the highest efficiency. We don't have any problems, misunderstandings, disagreements - we are true allies," Ambrazevich said on Tuesday.

The deputy foreign minister added that Moscow and Minsk also regularly interact at the level of foreign ministers, maintaining constant contact at various forums.

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Biden's Foreign Policy on Mideast 'Largely Unsuccessful' - Muslim American Council

WASHINGTON, July 17 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden's policy in the Middle East has been largely unsuccessful considering he's been unable to resolve any issues in the region, US Council of Muslim Organizations Secretary General Oussama Jammal told Sputnik.

"Biden's foreign policy in the Middle East has been largely unsuccessful, with no notable achievements in Syria, Yemen, Libya, Sudan, Iraq, or Tunisia," Jammal said. "There isn't a single issue in these regions where he can be credited with success or resolution."

Jammal also highlighted the chaotic US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the rapid fall of the US-backed Afghan government to the Taliban (under UN sanctions for terrorism).

Jammal also mentioned the United States has not done anything meaningful to settle the situation in Myanmar.

"Given these disappointments with President Biden's policies, some Muslim Americans may consider supporting alternative candidates who better align with their values and concerns," Jammal said. "This could include third-party candidates or even abstaining from voting, which would significantly impact the electoral landscape."

In March, the Council on American-Islamic Relations said it conducted a poll that found that a combined 37% of Muslim American voters would prefer a third-party candidate over Biden and Republican nominee Donald Trump.

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Belarus Spoke at UN Security Council About Collapse of Global Multilateralism - Deputy FM

UNITED NATIONS, July 17 (Sputnik) - Belarus raised the issue of the collapse of multilateralism in the world during a meeting of the UN Security Council chaired by Russia, Belarus Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Yury Ambrazevich told Sputnik.

"Naturally, we used this opportunity to speak at a meeting of the UN Security Council, which is currently chaired by the Russian Federation," Ambrazevich said. "We shared our assessments about the role of multilateralism in the modern world, or more precisely about its collapse. We spoke about this in detail in our remarks."

Ambrazevich explained that the Belarusian delegation's agenda is to continue contacts with the United Nations Secretariat, which is the body responsible for sustainable development goals.

"We are working with those people who, in our view, will be able to visit Belarus in the near

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future on the topics of Eurasian security, and sustainable development, since this is good support in the context of promoting Belarusian interests specifically on a multilateral platform," Ambrazevich said.

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Muslim American Council Says Upset US Politicians Not Doing Enough to End Gaza War

WASHINGTON, July 17 (Sputnik) - Muslim Americans feel alienated this election season over frustrations that Democrats and Republicans alike are not doing enough to help resolve the conflict in the Gaza Strip, US Council of Muslim Organizations Secretary General Oussama Jammal told Sputnik.

"The ongoing crisis in Gaza has intensified feelings of frustration and helplessness within our Muslim American community," Jammal said. "There is a perception that both parties are not doing enough to advocate for a just and equitable resolution of the conflict, leading to a sense of disenfranchisement and disillusionment with the political process."

The Republican and Democratic parties have candidates whose policies and actions have been less than favorable to the Muslim American community, leaving them feeling politically homeless as neither side seems to fully align with their values and concerns, Jammal added.

Jammal explained that the Republican Party has traditionally taken a strong pro-Israel stance that can sometimes marginalize the perspectives and concerns of Muslim Americans regarding Middle Eastern policy, particularly on the Palestinian issue.

There is also concern about the Republican party's stance on immigration and national security, which has at times included rhetoric perceived as anti-Muslim, Jammal said.

The Democratic Party has been more open to engaging with the Muslim American community, but there are still divisions within the party regarding its stance on Israel and Palestine and they can lead to inconsistent policy positions and a lack of clear support for the rights and concerns of Palestinians, Jammal said.

Some Muslim American voters feel that Democratic candidates often take their support for granted without making substantial commitments to address their specific issues, Jammal also said.

Some Muslim Americans may consider supporting alternative candidates who better align with their values and concerns or even abstain from voting, which would significantly impact the electoral landscape, Jammal added.

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Russia Gathers Major Powers in Security Council to Discuss Multilateralism - Ambrazevich

UNITED NATIONS, July 17 (Sputnik) - Russia managed to gather all significant regional powers at the UN Security Council to discuss multilateralism under the chairmanship of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Belarusian Deputy Foreign Minister Yury Ambrazevich told Sputnik.

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"I assess the very audience of the Security Council today as a real achievement of the Russian Federation and its allies in terms of having everyone in the hall, without exception, all significant regional powers to one degree or another," Ambrazevich said.

Countries are working with Russia on the goals stated in Lavrov's speech on the revival and restoration of multilateralism, on the exclusion of hegemony, individual actions and incomprehensible rules, and on the return of the spirit of the UN as laid down by its founders, Ambrazevich said.

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US Muslims 'Disillusioned' by Gaza War, Unlikely to Vote Biden - American Muslim Council

WASHINGTON, July 17 (Sputnik) - Many Muslim Americans are unlikely to support President Joe Biden in his run for reelection due to disappointment with his handling of the Gaza conflict, US Council of Muslim Organizations Secretary General Oussama Jammal told Sputnik.

"Indeed, Muslim Americans played a key role in Biden's 2020 win, contributing significantly to his success in key swing states," Jammal said. "However, whether we will continue to stand behind him in the upcoming election is uncertain. Many Muslim Americans are deeply disappointed with Biden's policies regarding Gaza."

Jammal noted that Biden falsely claimed the latest ceasefire proposal was offered by Israel when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu never openly or officially accepted or agreed to it.

Jammal also pointed out that the Muslim American community feels significant discontent with Biden over his continued military, diplomatic, political, and financial support for Israel even after it has been discovered that US-supplied bombs are allegedly killing civilians, mostly children and women.

"Many Muslim Americans had high expectations from President Biden, hoping for meaningful changes in both domestic and foreign policies that would positively impact our communities," Jammal said. "The perceived lack of significant progress on issues such as civil rights, immigration reform, and countering Islamophobia has led to a sense of disillusionment."

Despite the disapproval of Biden's policies, it is highly unlikely that a significant number of American Muslims will vote for Trump, even in light of economic concerns like inflation, Jammal said.

While economic issues like inflation are important, Trump's economic plans remain unclear and are often characterized by grandiose promises and misinformation that make it difficult for voters to trust his economic policies, Jammal said.

Both Trump and President Biden have similar policies regarding the conflict in Gaza, but the former US president seeks to be seen as more pro-Israel, making him an unattractive option for the Muslim American community, who are deeply concerned about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, according to Jammal.

Moreover, Jammal pointed out that Trump has a well-documented history of Islamophobic rhetoric and policies, such as his so-called Muslim ban targeting several Muslim-majority countries.

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"His inflammatory comments about Muslims have left a lasting negative impression," Jammal said. "This history makes it highly unlikely that Muslim Americans would turn to him as a viable alternative."

The Muslim American community also feels isolated from Trump because his policies and positions are heavily influenced by extreme-right evangelicals who often hold views that are in direct opposition to the interests and values of their community, Jammal said.

Some Muslim Americans may consider supporting alternative candidates who better align with their values and concerns or even abstain from voting, which would significantly impact the electoral landscape, Jammal added.

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US House Panel Says Biden Admin. Delaying Planned Briefing for Lawmakers on Trump Shooting

WASHINGTON, July 17 (Sputnik) - The US Department of Homeland Security delayed a previously scheduled briefing for lawmakers related to the US Secret Service's failure to prevent an assassination attempt on Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump, a US House Oversight Committee spokesperson said in a statement to Sputnik:

"After the Secret Service agreed to brief members of the House Oversight Committee on Tuesday, the Department of Homeland Security took over communications with the Committee and has since refused to confirm a briefing time," the spokesperson said on Tuesday.

The Committee is prepared to subpoena US Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle if she no longer plans to testify before lawmakers on July 22 on the Trump rally shooting.

The Committee is being cautious that the Department of Homeland Security could attempt to backtrack on Cheatle's appearance after canceling Tuesday's briefing, the spokesperson added.

Cheatle must answer to Congress and the American people about the "historic failure" that occurred on her watch, the Committee said.

On Saturday, a 20-year-old man tried to assassinate Trump at a campaign rally in the state of Pennsylvania, but the bullet from the gunman's AR assault rifle grazed Trump's right ear. US Secret Service agents killed the gunman moments after he was able to fire several rounds toward the stage, killing one spectator and critically injuring two others.

The FBI continues to investigate the shooting but the suspect's motive remains unknown, according to US law enforcement.

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RPT- Trump Says Does Not 'Love' Sanctions Regarding US Efforts to Punish Russia - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 17 (Sputnik) - Former President Donald Trump told Bloomberg News that he does not love sanctions regarding a possible response by the United States to protect Taiwan and address Russia's special military operation in Ukraine.

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"I don't love sanctions," Trump said as quoted by the report on Tuesday.

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Trump Says Considering JPMorgan CEO As Potential Treasury Secretary-Reports

WASHINGTON, July 17 (Sputnik) - US presidential race contender Donald Trump has said in a media interview that if he returns to the White House he will consider appointing JPMorgan Chase & Co Chief Executive Jamie Dimon as treasury secretary.

"He is somebody that I would consider," Trump, referring to Dimon as a likely candidate for the top treasury job, told Bloomberg Businessweek in the interview published Tuesday.

Trump met privately last month with dozens of US CEOs, including Dimon, Apple's Tim Cook, and Bank of America's Brian Moynihan, at a so-called fireside chat. Among the attendees were business leaders who had criticized Trump after his supporters stormed the US Capitol building in 2021, angered by his loss of the 2020 US election to Joe Biden. Cook, Dimon, and Moynihan had all condemned the violence.

But earlier this year, Dimon turned in his outlook on Trump, saying the former president had been right about some things at least.

"Be honest," Dimon said at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in January. "He was kind of right about NATO, kind of right about immigration. He grew the economy quite well. Tax reform worked. He was right about some of [the things on] China. … He wasn't wrong about some of these critical issues, and that's why they [his supporters] are voting for him."

Trump had previously attacked the JPMorgan CEO on his Truth Social platform, labeling him the "Highly overrated Globalist Jamie Dimon", before changing tack this year to consider him as a potential treasury secretary.

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Ex-White House Official Indicted For Allegedly Acting As Agent of South Korea - Filing

WASHINGTON, July 17 (Sputnik) - Former senior White House National Security Council official Sue Mi Terry has been indicted in US court for allegedly acting as an unregistered foreign agent of the South Korean government, according to court documents obtained by Sputnik.

"For more than a decade, SUE MI TERRY, the defendant, who previously served as an employee of the Central Intelligence Agency and as a senior official of the White House National Security Council, has worked as an agent of the Government of the Republic of Korea, also known as South Korea," US Attorney for the Southern District of New York Damian Williams said in the indictment provided on Tuesday.

According to the indictment, the South Korean government directed Terry to advocate for South Korean policy positions, including in published press articles and during media appearances.

Terry also disclosed non-public US government information to South Korean intelligence officers, and facilitated access for South Korean government officials to US government officials,

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the court document stated.

In return for these actions, South Korean intelligence officers provided Terry with luxury goods, high-priced dinners, and more than $37,000 in covert funding for a public policy program focusing on Korean affairs that Terry controlled, court documents stated.

Terry never registered as a foreign agent with the US Attorney General, as required by law, despite engaging in extensive activities for and at the direction of South Korean Government officials, federal prosecutors said.

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Trump Says If He Returns As President Will Let Fed Chair Powell Serve Out Term-Reports

WASHINGTON, July 17 (Sputnik) - US presidential race contender Donald Trump has told a media interview that if he returns to the White House, he will allow Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell to finish his term as head of the central bank.

Trump told Fox News in February that he wouldn't reappoint Powell but stated unequivocally in a Bloomberg Businessweek interview published Tuesday that he'll let the Fed chair remain on the job, well into what would be a second Trump administration.

"I would let him serve it out," Trump told Bloomberg, adding that this was "especially if I thought he was doing the right thing."

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 Trump. He was reappointed to the job in 2023 by President Joe Biden.

Powell told the Washington Economic Club on Monday that he planned to stay as Fed Chair until his term expires in 2026, although he refused to say whether he will consider another extension.

During his time as president, Trump clashed with Powell over interest rates, insisting the Fed cut them when the central bank saw reasons to hike instead in order to get both inflation and the economy moving.

Although now, Trump told Bloomberg that the Fed should not cut them in the near term.

Wall Street expects the Fed to make at least two rate reductions before the end of this year, with the first slated for September 18.

Trump, however, warns that the central bank should abstain from any easing before the presidential election on November 5 that would give a boost to the economy and — more, importantly — his challenger Biden.

"It's something that they know they shouldn't be doing," Trump insisted.

Powell, in his Monday appearance at the Washington Economic Club, said the Fed acted independently of the White House and none of its decisions were political.

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Iran Will Pursue Issue of Soleimani Murder Through Legal System - Acting Foreign Minister

UNITED NATIONS, July 17 (Sputnik) - Iran will pursue the issue of Gen. Qassem Soleimani's assassination in a US drone strike through the international legal system, acting Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani said.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran will definitely, through the international legal systems and mechanisms, follow the issue of the assassination of General Soleimani," Kani said on Tuesday.

The United States killed Soleimani, the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force, in a drone strike in Baghdad on January 3, 2020. Washington claimed Soleimani was involved in organizing the December 31, 2019 attack on the US Embassy in Baghdad.

In March, US Northern Command chief Gen. Gregory Guillot said that Iran is committed to retaliating for the assassination, potentially with attacks against current and former US officials.

However, the Iranian mission to the United Nations told Sputnik on Tuesday that former US President Donald Trump must be prosecuted and punished in a court of law for ordering Soleimani's assassination, stressing that Iran has chosen the legal path to bring him to justice.

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Biden Administration Refusing to Give Protection to Ex-Trump Advisor O'Brien - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 17 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is refusing to give US Secret Service protection to former Trump national security advisor Robert O'Brien, the Wall Street Journal reported.

Lawmakers have been pressuring the Biden administration to provide security to O'Brien, after his Secret Service protective detail ended on August 1, 2023, the report said on Tuesday.

The Biden administration has refused to provide security to O'Brien despite purported threats to his life, the report said. The threats began after the United States killed Iranian General Qassem Soleimani in a drone strike in January 2020.

O'Brien reportedly objected to having his security detail ended, but to no avail. However, the FBI has continued to provide briefings to O'Brien on the threats against him.

Lawmakers including US Congressman Mike Turner and Senator Mike Lee have urged the Biden administration to reinstate protective detail for O'Brien.

The report comes amid scrutiny of the Secret Service, following an assassination attempt against former US President Donald Trump at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania on Saturday.

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Iranian Acting Foreign Minister Says No Plans to Visit Moscow But Exchanging Delegations

UNITED NATIONS, July 17 (Sputnik) - Iranian interim Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani told Sputnik that he has no specific plans to visit Moscow, but Iran and Russia are regularly

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exchanging delegations.
"We regularly are exchanging delegations between Tehran and Moscow, but right now we do not have any specific plans to visit Moscow," Kani said on Tuesday.
In May, the Russian Foreign Ministry said that Kani and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov reaffirmed their commitment to continue efforts to form a strategic partnership between Iran and Russia.

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Trump Says Presidential Debate Caused Major Shift in State Dynamics - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 17 (Sputnik) - US Former President Donald Trump said in an interview with Bloomberg Businessweek that the presidential debate had a significant impact, with many states now showing substantial changes.
"The debate certainly had a big impact," Trump said as quoted by the report on Tuesday, "A lot of the states are just starting now to come out, and it shows a very big swing."
Trump added when asked about Biden's potential withdrawal from the presidential race that it was up to Biden to make that decision, but expressed that he believes the country faced significant danger regardless of Biden's choice.
On June 27, Biden appeared confused and incoherent throughout his first debate with Trump, reinforcing rather than refuting ongoing concerns about his cognitive abilities at age 81. His poor performance has led some Democratic politicians and donors to call for his removal as a candidate.

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Biden Says at NAACP Convention US Politics Have Gotten 'Too Heated'

WASHINGTON, July 17 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden said at the 115th National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) national convention that the political climate in the United States has become "too heated."
"It's time for an important conversation in this country. Our politics have gotten too heated," Biden said on Tuesday.
Biden's remarks came after a gunman tried to assassinate his challenger in the 2024 election - Donald Trump.
"We all have a responsibility to lower the temperature and condemn violence in any form," Biden said.
On Saturday, 20-year-old gunman Thomas Matthew Crooks shot at Trump from a rooftop in Butler, Pennsylvania, during a campaign rally, hitting the former president in the ear with the bullet grazing his face.
The gunman killed a member of the audience and injured two others in the crowd before the

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US Secret Service killed him.

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Iranian acting foreign minister tells Sputnik no specific plans to visit Moscow right now, but exchange of delegations between countries regular

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Trump Says Plans To Reduce US Corporate Taxes To 15%

WASHINGTON, July 17 (Sputnik) - US presidential race contender Donald Trump has said in a media interview that he plans to reduce corporate taxes in the world's largest economy to 15% from a current 21%.

In an interview with Bloomberg Businessweek published Tuesday, Trump said it was he who slashed the US corporate tax rates after he was elected president in 2016, to serve until 2020. He said he cut the rate then to 21% from 39% (Bloomberg says the actual corporate tax rate prior to the cut was 35%).

"They loved it, they were happy," Trump said, referring to the business community. Now, he wants to get the corporate tax rate down even more, he said, adding. "I would like to get it down to 15."

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Trump Says Does Not 'Love' Sanctions Regarding US Efforts to Punish Russia - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 17 (Sputnik) - President Donald Trump told Bloomberg News that he does not love sanctions regarding a possible response by the United States to protect Taiwan and address Russia's special military operation in Ukraine.

"I don't love sanctions," Trump said as quoted by the report on Tuesday.

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Police Officer Shoots Dead Homeless Man Near Republican Convention in Milwaukee - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 17 (Sputnik) - A police officer shot and killed a homeless man in Milwaukee nearly a mile away from the venue where the Republican National Convention (RNC) is taking place, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported, citing law enforcement sources.

The report said on Tuesday that the man killed by police lived in a tent encampment and was well-known in the local neighborhood.

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More than 100 police officers responded to the scene to assist in the incident.
There are more than 4,000 police officers from outside of Milwaukee helping to secure the city during the RNC this week. The officer involved in the incident was from Columbus, Ohio.
The incident comes just days after a 20-year-old man tried to assassinate former President Donald Trump at a campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania.
The US Secret Service has since been much criticized for not covering the roof from which the gunmen tried to murder Trump and for not reacting in time to eliminate the threat.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, July 17 (Sputnik) –
IMF FORECAST
* 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.
* The IMF no longer expects global oil prices to decline in 2024, predicting a 0.8% growth, according to the updated WEO.
* Global inflation will continue to decline and will come back to the target level by the end of 2025, the IMF said.
* The IMF kept its economic growth forecast for Russia unchanged at 3.2% for 2024 and revised its 2025 projection downward to 1.5%, the updated WEO report said.
* The IMF maintained its forecast for global economic growth in 2024 at 3.2% and revised the 2025 projection upward to 3.3%, an updated WEO report said.
RUSSIA-HUNGARY TALKS
* Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto said on Tuesday that he plans to discuss the conflict resolution in Ukraine with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on the sidelines of an event at the UN.
* Lavrov and Szijjarto discussed issues on the international agenda, including the situation in Ukraine, during a meeting, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.
* Szijjarto said that he discussed Prime Minister Viktor Orban's recent visit to Moscow during a meeting with Lavrov.
* Lavrov emphasized the importance of implementation of agreements between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Orban.
LAVROV'S ADDRESS AT UN SECURITY COUNCIL SESSION
* Concrete steps directed at removing threats to Russia emanating from the West are necessary for the settlement of the crisis in Europe, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Tuesday.
* Lavrov called Germany's decision to deploy US missiles on its territory another example of "humiliation."
ROSTOV NPP MALFUNCTION IN RUSSIA
* Energy consumption was limited by 1.5 GW in Russia's south due to a malfunction of the

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generating equipment of the Rostov nuclear power plant, the country's energy ministry said.
* The automation system that shut down power unit No. 1 of the Rostov nuclear power plant worked in accordance with the design algorithms, there were no limits breach, NPP operation was safe, and the radiation background was normal, the NPP's press service said.
CONFLICT IN UKRAINE
* Czech ammunition manufacturer Sellier & Bellot intends to build an ammunition plant in Ukraine, Prime Minister Petr Fiala said on Tuesday.
* The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) staff have visited a total of 3,100 prisoners of war in Russia and Ukraine, Russian Ombudswoman Tatiana Moskalkova said.
* The Ukrainian armed forces have lost up to 560 soldiers in battles with Russia's Yug (South) group of forces in the past 24 hours, the Russian Defense Ministry said.
MIDDLE EAST
* Two Israeli strikes on Tuesday killed at least 40 people in the Gaza Strip and injured almost 100 more, the media office of the Palestinian enclave's government said in a statement.
* Israeli security forces are currently blocking access roads to the city of Eilat due to a suspected security incident, the Israel Police said.
* The Palestinian movement Hamas will not hold a separate meeting with the Fatah movement in Beijing and will be preparing for a meeting of all the Palestinian factions, Basem Naim, a member of the political office of Hamas, told Sputnik.

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Iran Rejects 'Malicious' Claims About Tehran Plotting to Kill Trump - Mission to UN

UNITED NATIONS, July 16 (Sputnik) - Allegations of Iran plotting to kill former US President Donald Trump are "unsubstantiated and malicious," the Iranian mission to the UN told Sputnik on Tuesday.
"These associations are unsubstantiated and malicious. From the perspective of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Trump is a criminal who must be prosecuted and punished in a court of law for ordering the assassination of General Soleimani," the mission said. "Iran has chosen the legal path to bring him to justice."
CNN reported earlier in the day that US intelligence authorities in recent weeks have uncovered an alleged plan by Iran to kill Trump without any known link to the assassination attempt during a rally in Pennsylvania on Saturday.

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UPDATE - Fed Gov. Kugler Suggests Rates Hold If Inflation Sticky, Casting Doubts On Sept. Cut

(Adds inflation context in paragraphs 3-4, Kugler's cautious stance in paragraph 12)
WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - Federal Reserve Governor Adriana Kugler suggested on

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Tuesday no change to US interest rates until inflation came in line with the central bank's target, casting doubts on Wall Street's bets for a September rate cut.

"If incoming data does not provide confidence that inflation is moving toward the 2% target, it may be appropriate to hold rates steady a little longer," Kugler, one of the Fed's seven governors, said in a speech delivered to a business seminar in Washington.

Inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), grew 3% in the year to June, versus the Fed's 2%-per-annum target.

For more than a decade before the COVID-19 breakout in March 2020, inflation was well below the Fed's target. 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 CPI to a four-decade high of 9.1% by June 2022.

Now, with inflation down almost 70% from that 2022 peak, the Fed is being watched for when it would cut rates.

The central bank'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.

Kugler's remarks suggested the Fed might further pause on a change in September.

The Fed governor told her audience that while headline inflation remained well above the central bank's desired level, supply and demand — the basic forces of the economy — were coming into better balance.

"Upside risks to inflation, downside risks to employment have become more balanced," she said. "The labor market has seen substantial rebalancing. This continued rebalancing suggests that inflation will continue to move down toward our 2% target."

The US labor market has outperformed expectations over the past three years, creating the best picture for employment since the 1960s that has also encouraged Americans to spend well above levels forecast by economists.

"If the labor market cools too much and unemployment continues to increase and is driven by layoffs, I would see it as appropriate to cut rates sooner rather than later," Kugler said.

But by and large, her speech advocated caution over rates, rather than a risky approach.

Fed Chairman Jerome Powell, answering questions before another business gathering in Washington on Monday, admitted the central bank's mistake in waiting too long to raise rates to the extent that inflation became overwhelming. He, interestingly, vowed not to do the same with rate cuts.

If the Fed misses the opportunity to make a rate change in September, it has two more chances left before the year-end: November 7 and December 18.

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Oil Price Extends Slide Pushing US Crude Toward $80 Per Barrel Test

NEW YORK, July 16 (Sputnik) - Crude oil prices fell for a third running day of this week, extending last week's decline as weaker demand for energy in China saps away at the 2024 oil rally.

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US West Texas Intermediate (WTI), crude's most-actively traded contract for delivery in September, settled Tuesday's trade at $80.56 per barrel - down 96 cents, or 1.2%.

WTI has struggled to stay above the key $80 per barrel mark over the past week despite hitting a two-month high of nearly $85 in early July and remaining up almost 12% on the year.

UK-origin Brent crude finished the US trading session at $83.73 per barrel, down $1.12, or 1.3% on the day. Brent hit a two-month high of $87.95 on July 5 and is up 9% on the year.

The Chinese economy grew 4.7% in April-June, official data showed, the slowest rate since the first quarter of 2023 and missing a 5.1% forecast. It slowed from the previous quarter's 5.3% expansion, hamstrung by a protracted property downturn and job insecurity.

Oil traders often look to China for a guide on demand.

The slide in crude prices began last week when data showed China's refinery output fell 3.7% in June from a year earlier.

WTI and Brent also 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.

On top of that, 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'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.

By June, the rally in oil was 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.

Since July began, the market has been under pressure on concerns that the run-up in oil prices had been expedited by bets of damage that could be done to US energy installations by Hurricane Beryl - a threat that never materialized.

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Federal Reserve's Kugler Suggests Holding US Rates 'Steady' if Inflation Remains Sticky

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - Federal Reserve Governor Adriana Kugler on Tuesday suggested that interest rates should not be changed until inflation came in line with the US central bank's target of 2% per year.

"If incoming data does not provide confidence that inflation is moving toward the 2% target, it may be appropriate to hold rates steady a little longer," Kugler, one of the Fed's seven governors, said.

Inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), grew 3% in the year to June.

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

Kugler's remarks suggested the Fed might further pause on a change in September.

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While headline inflation remained well above the central bank's desired level, supply and demand were coming into better balance, she said.

"Upside risks to inflation, downside risks to employment have become more balanced," Kugler said. "The labor market has seen substantial rebalancing. This continued rebalancing suggests that inflation will continue to move down toward our 2% target."

The US labor market has outperformed expectations over the past three years, which has encouraged Americans to spend above levels forecast by economists.

"If the labor market cools too much and unemployment continues to increase and is driven by layoffs, I would see it as appropriate to cut rates sooner rather than later," Kugler said in advocating caution rather than a more risky approach.

On Monday, Fed Chairman Jerome Powell admitted the central bank's mistake in waiting too long to raise interest rates to the extent that inflation became overwhelming. Powell vowed not to do the same with interest rate cuts.

If the Fed misses the opportunity to make an interest rate change in September, it has two more opportunities left before the year-end - on November 7 and December 18.

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RPT- Musk Says SpaceX And X Will Now Move Headquarters From California to Texas

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik)- US Billionaire Elon Musk announced on Tuesday that SpaceX and X, formerly known as Twitter, will move its headquarters from California to Texas after the former adopted another controversial law related to transgender self-identification at schools.

"This is the final straw. Because of this law and the many others that preceded it, attacking both families and companies, SpaceX will now move its HQ from Hawthorne, California, to Starbase, Texas," Musk said in an X post.

Musk also added that X will also move their HQ to Austin, Texas.

The "final straw" for Musk became the signing of the AB1955 law by California Governor Gavin Newsom earlier this week which banned public schools from making rules that require parental notification if a child identifies as transgender.

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Trump to Speak at Rally in Michigan Just One Week After Assassination Attempt

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump and his running mate JD Vance will speak at a rally in Michigan on Saturday, just one week after the assassination attempt against the Republican nominee, according to a campaign statement on Tuesday.

"President Donald J. Trump, 45th President of the United States of America and Vice Presidential Nominee Senator JD Vance will deliver remarks at a Rally in Grand Rapids, Michigan on Saturday, July 20, 2024, at 5:00PM EDT. This will be President Trump and Senator

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Vance's first rally after officially accepting the Republican Nomination for President and Vice President of The United States of America," the statement said.

Trump on Monday announced that Vance would be his running mate in the 2024 US presidential election. Vance's campaign activities will be focused on workers and farmers in states like Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio and Minnesota, Trump said.

On Saturday, a gunman attempted to assassinate Trump at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania. The shooter wounded Trump's ear, killed one audience member and injured two others.

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Iran Rejects 'Malicious' Claims About Tehran Plotting to Kill Trump - Mission to UN

UNITED NATIONS, July 16 (Sputnik) - Allegations of Iran plotting to kill former US President Donald Trump are "unsubstantiated and malicious," the Iranian mission to the UN told Sputnik on Tuesday.

"These associations are unsubstantiated and malicious. From the perspective of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Trump is a criminal who must be prosecuted and punished in a court of law for ordering the assassination of General Soleimani," the mission said. "Iran has chosen the legal path to bring him to justice."

CNN reported earlier in the day that US intelligence authorities in recent weeks have uncovered an alleged plan by Iran to kill Trump without any known link to the assassination attempt during a rally in Pennsylvania on Saturday.

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Musk Says SpaceX And X Will Now Move Its HQ From Hawthorne, California to Starbase, Texas

US Billionaire Elon Musk announced on Tuesday that SpaceX and X, formerly known as Twitter, will move its headquarters from California to Texas after the former adopted another controversial law related to transgender self-identification at schools.

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US House Majority Leader Says Trump Will Be Better Leader After Assassination Attempt

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - US House Majority Leader Steve Scalise said on Tuesday that he expects the near death experience Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump went through at a rally on Saturday will make him a better leader that will put him on a different level.

"I do think there is a different focus that he has now, that will make him a better leader, and he's already been a great leader, but I think this just brings him to a different level," Scalise said in a Politico interview.

Scalise added that he has been frustrated with the lack of information about the events that led to the shooting at the Pennsylvania rally.

Earlier, Trump Organization Executive Vice President Donald Trump Jr. said that the assassination attempt on his father was made possible by a serious breach of US Secret Service protocol.

On Saturday afternoon, shots were fired during a Trump campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. Trump 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.

Following the incident, the US Secret Service said it had adjusted Trump's security detail since Saturday's assassination attempt to ensure his protection for the remainder of his campaign.

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US Congressman Says Failure to Secure Buildings Around Trump Rally 'Fundamental Issue'

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - The failure of law enforcement to secure the buildings around Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump's rally is the fundamental issue related to the assassination attempt against Trump, US Congressman Jim Jordan said on Tuesday.

"The failure to secure the buildings, that is huge. That's the fundamental issue. That's not supposed to happen," Jordan said in an interview with Politico.

On Saturday, a gunman attempted to assassinate Trump at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania. The shooter wounded Trump's ear, killed one audience member and injured two others.

Jordan declined to call on US Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle to resign, adding that he wants to wait for all the facts to come in first.

Jordan said that he would like lawmakers to interview Cheatle and other federal law enforcement officials, as well as law enforcement agents who were present at the rally.

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Police in Milwaukee Shoot Person Near Republican National Convention - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - Police in Milwaukee shot a person some two miles away from the Republican National Convention, local ABC affiliate WISN reported on Tuesday.

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Police shot the person approximately 2.4 miles away from the Fiserv Forum, which is the main venue for the Republican event, the report said.
There is a large police presence and an ambulance on the scene, the report added.
On Saturday, a gunman attempted to assassinate former US President Donald Trump at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania.

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US to Accelerate, Continue Development of Hypersonic Missiles – Pentagon

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) – The United States will continue the development of its hypersonic programs and work to accelerate the development and testing of hypersonic missiles, Pentagon press secretary Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder said on Tuesday.
"With regards to hypersonics, we will continue to develop a range of hypersonic-based programs, and will work to accelerate development and testing on these programs," Ryder said during a press briefing.
Ryder added that a recent flight test of a hypersonic missile from the Pacific Missile Range in the US state of Hawaii provided data on the performance of a Conventional Prompt Strike (CPS).

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US Uncovers Alleged Iranian Plot to Assassinate Trump, Unrelated to Shooting – Reports

(Adds details in paras 3-4, background in paras 5-6)
WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) – US intelligence authorities in recent weeks have uncovered an alleged plan by Iran to kill former President Donald Trump without any known link to the

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assassination attempt during a rally in Pennsylvania on Saturday, CNN reported on Tuesday.
The intelligence obtained from a human source made US authorities boost security around Trump in recent weeks, the report said.
The US Secret Service has repeatedly provided the Trump campaign with general warnings about the potential risks of holding outdoor rallies, the report said.
The warnings led to the campaign at one point during the election cycle stopping holding spontaneous off-the-record events without the Secret Service checking guests, the report added.
On Saturday afternoon, shots were fired during a Trump campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. The Republican presidential nominee 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.
Following the incident, the US Secret Service said it had adjusted Trump's security detail since Saturday's assassination attempt on the Republican presidential frontrunner to ensure his protection for the remainder of his campaign.

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US to Continue Partnering With Georgia Forces Despite Cancellation of Exercise - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - The United States will continue to partner with Georgia's Defense forces despite the recent cancellation of the exercise, Pentagon spokesperson Patrick Ryder said on Tuesday.
"We'll continue to partner with Georgian Defense Forces and we'll continue to look for ways to strengthen Georgia's ability to safeguard its sovereignty and maintain its territorial integrity," Ryder said in a press briefing when asked whether the Pentagon still sees Georgia as a US-friendly ally or sees the country moving closer to Russia.
In May, the Pentagon said that the United States has indefinitely delayed a planned military exercise with Georgia as part of a comprehensive review of the bilateral relationship.

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Trump Jr. Says Breach of Secret Service Protocol Contributed to Assassination Attempt

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - Trump Organization Executive Vice President Donald Trump Jr. said on Tuesday that the assassination attempt on his father, Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump, was made possible by a serious breach of US Secret Service protocol.
"That doesn't happen without a serious breach of something," Trump Jr. said in an interview with Axios.
Trump Jr. said he wanted to avoid seeming conspiratorial but his familiarity with Secret Service protocol made the shooter's proximity to his father during an election rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, particularly baffling.

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"To find out that [the shooter] got inside of 150 yards, that's, that's like a six inch putt for a shooter. That just does not happen. It does not happen," Trump Jr. added.

Earlier on Tuesday, the US House Homeland Security Committee announced an investigation into the assassination attempt. An oversight hearing will be held on July 23.

A gunman attempted to murder Donald Trump from a rooftop in Butler, Pennsylvania, while the Republican presidential nominee held an election rally. Trump was hit in the ear and the bullet grazed his face after which he was briefly hospitalized. An attendee at the rally was killed and another was critically injured.

The authorities identified the gunman as 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks of Bethel Park, Pennsylvania.

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Biden Administration Provoking Russia in Context of Ukraine - Trump Senior Adviser

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration is provoking Russia and risks igniting World War II by enabling Ukraine to launch American-made missiles into Russian territory, Trump campaign senior adviser Chris LaCivita said on Tuesday.

"We are on the brink of World War Three. We just authorized the Ukrainians the ability to launch American-made missiles into Russia. It's serious stuff, and [Russian President Vladimir] Putin's looking for an excuse to expand, and it's almost like we're inviting it," LaCivita said at the Republican National Convention.

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US Uncovers Alleged Iranian Plot to Assassinate Trump, Unrelated to Shooting - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) – US intelligence authorities in recent weeks have uncovered an alleged plan by Iran to kill former President Donald Trump without any known link to the assassination attempt during a rally in Pennsylvania on Saturday, CNN reported on Tuesday.

The intelligence obtained from a human source made US authorities boost security around Trump in recent weeks, the report said.

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US Court Sets October 29 Sentencing Date, Curfew on Sen. Menendez After Found Guilty

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - A US court will sentence Sen. Bob Menendez on October 29 and will place him on a mandatory curfew after a jury convicted him on bribery charges, a spokesperson for the US District Court of the Southern District of New York told Sputnik on Tuesday.

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"He was convicted on all [16] counts, not remanded in custody, they're going to agree on a post-trial motion and sentencing date," the spokesperson said. "Defendant will continue on release, but he's now on curfew, 8 p.m. to 9 a.m., and home detention on the weekend."

The spokesperson later confirmed that a sentencing date for Menendez has been set for October 29.

Menendez said he will appeal the jury's decision.

Earlier, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer called on Menendez to resign after a US jury convicted him on 16 charges for accepting bribes to benefit the governments of Egypt and Qatar.

Menendez was accused of committing bribery, wire fraud, acting as a foreign agent and obstruction of justice. Menendez pleaded not guilty to the charges against him.

Prosecutors said that Menendez received bribes in exchange for using his authority to assist the Qatari government and benefit Egypt. Prosecutors also accuse Menendez's wife of engaging in a scheme to return the alleged bribe money under the guise of loan repayment.

Menendez had stepped down from his post as a chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee when his legal troubles began, and he's currently running for reelection as an independent candidate.

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US Prosecutor Says Senator Menendez's Years of Selling Office to Highest Bidder Over

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - US Senator Bob Menendez's years of selling out his office to the highest bidder has come to an end after he was convicted in US court on bribery charges, US Attorney for the Southern District of New York Damian Williams said on Tuesday.

"A jury in this courthouse convicted Senator Robert Menendez of corruption and national security offenses," Williams said during a press conference. "This case has always been about shocking levels of corruption... This wasn't politics as usual. This was politics for profit. And now that a jury has convicted Bob Menendez, his years of selling his office to the highest bidder have finally come to an end."

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer called on Menendez to resign after a US jury convicted him on 16 charges for accepting bribes to benefit the governments of Egypt and Qatar.

Menendez was accused of committing bribery, wire fraud, acting as a foreign agent and obstruction of justice. Menendez pleaded not guilty to the charges against him.

Prosecutors said that Menendez received bribes in exchange for using his authority to assist the Qatari government and benefit Egypt. Prosecutors also accuse Menendez's wife of engaging in a scheme to return the alleged bribe money under the guise of loan repayment.

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First US Nuclear Weapon Test Contaminated Environment - National Security Archive

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - The United States' first nuclear weapon test in the New Mexico desert resulted in radioactive contamination over hundreds of square miles, according to documents published by the George Washington University's National Security Archive on Tuesday.

"The first trial of a plutonium implosion weapon, the explosion on the ground produced radioactive fallout contaminating over 1,100 square miles of the state, although some debris spread as far north as Canada," the archive said in a statement on the documents.

The documents were published on the 79th anniversary of the first nuclear weapon test on July 16, 1945.

Six weeks after the test, there was a "swath of fairly high radioactivity" on the ground covering an area of approximately 100 miles long by 30 miles wide, a Los Alamos Laboratory report said.

Newly released materials also reveal that the US prepared for possible evacuations, fallout monitoring and the eventual discovery of nearby people that were exposed to potentially hazardous levels of contamination, the archive said.

The biological and public health impact of low-level radiation remains a contested issue, the archive said.

However, researchers at the National Cancer Institute have concluded that the test's fallout contributed to an excess number of thyroid cancer cases, the archive added.

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US Senate Majority Leader Schumer Calls on Menendez to Resign After Bribery Conviction

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - US Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer on Tuesday called on his Democrat colleague Sen. Bob Menendez to resign after he was convicted in US court for accepting bribes to benefit the governments of Egypt and Qatar.

"In light of this guilty verdict, Senator Menendez must now do what is right for his constituents, the Senate, and our country, and resign," Schumer said in a statement via X.

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Letter Urging Delay in Early Roll Call on Biden Nomination Circulates in Congress -Reports

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - There is a letter circulating in Congress asking Democratic lawmakers to cancel plans for an early roll call to nominate President Joe Biden amid mounting calls for him to leave the election race, Punchbowl News reported on Tuesday.

"We respectfully but emphatically request that you cancel any plans for an accelerated 'virtual

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roll call' and further refrain from any extraordinary procedures that could be perceived as curtailing legitimate debate or attempting to force an early resolution of the party nomination," the letter said.

US media has been reporting since May that the Democratic Party has decided not to have a formal roll call during the Democratic National Convention on August 19th in Chicago. Instead, they chose to add Biden to the ballot during a virtual meeting scheduled for July 21.

"All of us, however, agree that stifling debate and prematurely shutting down any possible change in the Democratic ticket through an unnecessary and unprecedented 'virtual roll call' in the days ahead is a terrible idea," the letter said.

Earlier on Tuesday, the New York Times reported that Democratic National Committee leaders are seeking to confirm Biden as the Democratic presidential nominee by the end of the month.

The push to confirm Biden comes as opposition to his candidacy has grown after his dismal performance at the presidential debate with challenger Donald Trump last month. The poor performance reinforced rather than refuted concerns about Biden's mental fitness to serve a second presidential term at age 81.

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Trump Jr. Says Assassination Attempt on Trump Changed His Dad, Will Have Lasting Impact

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - Donald Trump Jr. said on Tuesday that the assassination attempt changed his father, former President Donald Trump, and will have a lasting impact.

"I think actually yes," Trump Jr. said when asked if the shooting changed his father.

The ex-president's son added that he thinks this change in his father will last for a significant period.

On Monday, Trump was officially nominated to be the Republican nominee in the US presidential election. Trump Jr. said his father overhauled the speech he intended to give on Thursday at the Republican National Convention following the shooting at a rally over the weekend.

Trump Jr. said his father's speech will be very different, toned down, and seek to de-escalate political tensions in the United States.

Trump Jr. recalled the moment he was notified about the assassination attempt that nearly took his father's life on Saturday in Pennsylvania. He said he was in Florida fishing when he got the news but he wasn't able to get in touch with his father until about 90 minutes after the incident.

It was a "tough moment," Trump Jr. added.

Trump Jr. said law enforcement officers swarmed his house shortly after the shooting as a precautionary measure.

Trump Jr. said he jokingly asked his dad if his iconic hair was fine after a bullet grazed his right ear.

"The hair is fine. Don. The hair is fine. There's a lot of blood in it, but it's fine," Trump Jr. said, doing an impression of his father's response.

Trump Jr. said a big question his family has at the moment is how the gunman was able to get

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past security and come so close to killing his father.

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Szijjarto Urges UN to Avoid Over-Politicization,Affirms Hungary's Peace Efforts in Ukraine

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto said on Tuesday that the UN organizations should not be over-politicized and added that Hungary would continue peace efforts on Ukraine.

"The United Nations has not been established to be a platform for like-minded countries, there are other organizations for that. UN has been established to give a platform for those who do not agree with each other, who are in a hostile relationship with each other, who are at war with each other to talk to each other," Szijjarto said during the UN Security Council. "Therefore, I think over-politicization of the UN organizations is unacceptable."

Szijjarto pointed out that it is equally unacceptable to restrict countries from negotiating with those they want to, especially in the framework of the United Nations.

The top diplomat also shared that Hungary is now under very heavy attacks from those representing pro-war positions

"But I have to tell you that such kind of attacks will give us further encouragement to continue our peace mission, and we will continue our peace mission," he stated. "We want peace instead of war and only peace will make Europe great again."

Earlier in July, Orban met with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping as part of his diplomatic effort to open up lines of communication to resolve the conflict in Ukraine. Later, he also met with US presidential candidate Donald Trump.

European lawmakers demanded that Hungary be deprived of the right to vote in the European Union after Prime Minister Viktor Orban's trips to Russia and China, Politico reported on Tuesday, citing a letter from 63 lawmakers to EU leadership.

On Monday, European Commission spokesman Eric Mamer said the commission had canceled a traditional visit scheduled for this fall to the capital of Hungary, which has taken over the EU presidency.

Politico reported on Thursday, citing two EU diplomats, that EU countries were considering imposing punitive measures against Hungary for stepping out of line and traveling to Moscow to talk with President Vladimir Putin without the Council's approval.

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Homeland Security Committee to Investigate Trump Assassination Attempt - Letter

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - The US Homeland Security Committee has asked top intelligence and security officials including the head of the Secret Service to testify in a July 23 hearing on the attempted assassination of former President Donald Trump, according to a letter published Tuesday.

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"The Committee on Homeland Security will hold an oversight hearing to examine the facts and circumstances surrounding the July 13, 2024 assassination attempt of President Donald J. Trump on Tuesday, July 23, 2024," Chairman Mark Green said in a letter to Homeland Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, FBI Director Christopher Wray, and Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle.

Last week, 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, shooting from a rooftop, killed a man in the audience and critically injured two others 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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US Jury Finds Senator Menendez Guilty on Criminal Charges in Corruption Trial - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - A US jury has found Senator Bob Menendez guilty on criminal charges related to accepting bribes to benefit the governments of Egypt and Qatar, CNN reported on Tuesday.

Menendez, a Democrat, was indicted for crimes including bribery, wire fraud, acting as a foreign agent and obstruction of justice. Menendez had pleaded not guilty to the charges against him.

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Trump Jr. Says Would 'Love to See' Kennedy Endorse Trump Campaign

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - Trump organization Executive Vice President Donald Trump Jr. said on Tuesday that he would love to see independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. endorse his father's campaign.

"I'd love to see that," Trump Jr. said in an interview with Axios when asked whether he expects Kennedy to endorse his father.

On Monday, Kennedy and Donald Trump held a call to discuss national unity, following an assassination attempt against Trump on Saturday.

However, the call should not be viewed as an indication that Kennedy intends to drop out of the race, Kennedy Campaign Press Secretary Stefanie Spear said in a statement to Sputnik.

Trump Jr. also said that there may be a place somewhere for Kennedy in the Trump administration.

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US Jury Reaches Verdict in Senator Menendez's Corruption Trial - Court to Sputnik

NEW YORK, July 16 (Sputnik) - A New York jury has reached a verdict in US Senator Robert Menendez's corruption trial, a spokesperson for the US District Court of the Southern District of New York told Sputnik on Tuesday.

"The verdict has been reached, it has not been read out yet," the spokesperson said.

Menendez faces the possibility of up to 20 years in prison on 16 criminal charges including bribery, acting as a foreign agent, extortion, wire fraud and obstruction of justice.

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Vance Could Become US President After Potential Second Trump Term - Trump Jr.

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - US Senator JD Vance could become president after a potential second term by Donald Trump, Trump Organization executive vice president Donald Trump Jr. said on Tuesday.

“I think there’d be a very high chance,” Trump Jr. said in an interview with Axios, in response to a question about whether Vance could become president after his father.

On Monday, Donald Trump announced Vance as his running mate for the 2024 US presidential race.

Vance speaks to “America First” voters, Trump Jr. said.

Billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk and US journalist Tucker Carlson reportedly pushed for Vance as vice president behind the scenes.

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US Jury Reaches Verdict in Senator Menendez's Corruption Trial - Court to Sputnik

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NATO Expansion Hinders Efforts to Deal With Ukraine, Middle East Crisis- China's UN Envoy

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - NATO's expansion is hindering efforts to deal with the Ukraine and Middle East crises, Chinese Ambassador to the UN Fu Cong said on Tuesday.

“Against the backdrop of the crisis in Ukraine and ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, countries are highly concerned about international common security and many peace-loving countries and people are working tirelessly to bring peace,” Fu said during a UN Security Council meeting. “However, NATO, an original military bloc leftover from the Cold War, has been seeking to expand its influence, stopping at nothing to create false narratives, pouring oil on the fire wherever they go, stirring up a confrontation between camps, and even resorting to shifting the blame to countries outside the region to frame them on the issue of Ukraine.”

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He stressed that it is the opposite of what the international community is doing to promote peace.

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Vance Became Trump's Last Minute VP Pick With Musk, Carlson Pushing for Him - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - The choice for a running mate in the 2024 presidential race was far from clear for Donald Trump and it took him a long time to end the frequent conversations with lobbying groups and choose US Senator JD Vance, CNN reported on Tuesday.

Trump announced on Monday that Vance will be his running mate in the 2024 US presidential election. The announcement comes amid the Republican National Convention, where delegates formally nominated Trump and Vance as the party's 2024 ticket.

Monday's announcement was preceded by a final meeting between Trump and Vance at the former's Mar-a-Lago residence on Saturday right before Trump departed for Butler, Pennsylvania, where an assassination attempt on him failed, the report said.

US billionaire Elon Musk and journalist Tucker Carlson were among those who pushed for Vance behind the scenes, with the former calling Trump in the last moments urging him to select the Ohio senator, the report said.

Once a "Never Trump guy," for a long time nobody seriously considered Vance had any chance to become Trump's pick. However, this situation began to change in June when the senator received his vetting papers for the running mate process in early June, the report said.

Former Trump senior adviser Steve Bannon, Carlson and the former President's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., played a key role in making the case for Vance and ultimately persuading Trump that he would be the most loyal to serve as vice president, the report said.

The other prominent lobbyists for Vance included tech investor David Sacks, real estate investor and Trump's close friend Steve Witkoff, Senator Tommy Tuberville and Congressman Jim Banks, the report added.

Following Trump's announcement, President Joe Biden said that Vance is merely an ideological clone of Trump and that 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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UN Needs Reform Based on Meaningful, Positive Evolution - US Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, July 16 (Sputnik) - The United Nations needs to undergo reform based on a meaningful and positive evolution rather than one that is accompanied solely by calls for cooperation, US Ambassador to the world body Linda Thomas-Greenfield said on Tuesday.

"The United Nations needs reform … certainly not one accompanied by merely calls for cooperation but rather meaningful and positive evolution," Thomas-Greenfield said.

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The US ambassador made the comment during a UN Security Council meeting on international peace and security, which was chaired by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

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US, Saudi Arabia Sign New Space Joint Exploration Cooperation Agreement - NASA

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - The United States and Saudi Arabia have signed a new agreement to cooperate closely on the joint exploration of outer space, NASA announced in a press release on Tuesday.

"The United States and Saudi Arabia signed a framework agreement that opens new possibilities for cooperation with NASA in areas such as space science, exploration, aeronautics, space operations, education, and Earth science," the release said.

NASA Administrator Bill Nelson signed on behalf of the United States and Saudi Space Agency CEO Mohammed bin Saud Al-Tamimi signed on behalf of Riyadh, the release continued.

“Building on my visit to Saudi Arabia earlier this year, I look forward to strengthening our cooperation for the future of exploration,” Nelson said.

The new Framework Agreement establishes the overall legal framework to facilitate and strengthen mutually beneficial collaboration between the two countries in space exploration and development, NASA explained.

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Democratic US Congressman Warns Donors of Electoral Losses With Biden on Ticket - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - Democratic US Congressman Adam Schiff told donors that Democrats will likely lose control of the Senate and remain a minority in the House of Representatives if President Joe Biden remains the party’s 2024 presidential nominee, the New York Times reported on Tuesday.

"I think if he is our nominee, I think we lose," the report quoted Schiff as saying during the private meeting with donors, citing a person with access to a transcript of the event.

One donor reportedly said that they left the meeting dejected and with the impression that donors should focus on supporting downballot candidates instead of the Biden campaign.

Some Democrats have expressed concerns about Biden’s viability as a candidate after a dismal debate performance against Republican challenger Donald Trump. Some Democratic lawmakers have even called on Biden to end his campaign and allow an alternative candidate to emerge.

The Biden campaign has dismissed such calls and insisted that they remain focused on moving forward with Biden as the Democratic nominee.

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IMF Says It Sees 'Explosion' of Trade Restrictions, 3,000 Such Measures in 2023

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) – The global economy has faced an "explosion" of trade restrictions over the past year, International Monetary Fund (IMF) Economic Counselor and Director of the Research Department Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas said on Tuesday.

"We see an explosion in the number of trade-restrictive measures. We have seen upwards of 3,000 such measures implemented in 2023," Gourinchas told reporters.

This number is three times higher than in 2019, when there were 1,000 trade restrictions, he added.

"That was already a high number," he said.

Gourinchas emphasized that these restrictions affect exports and industrial policies and lead to relevant responses.

"We see that, when a country imposes these trade-restrictive measures, there are retaliations from other trading partners that are imposed in a very short order," he added.

Gourinchas pointed out that this situation reduces or impacts bilateral trade, increases uncertainty in the global economy and leaves countries more vulnerable.

The IMF said in its updated World Economic Outlook (WEO) earlier on Tuesday that global trade growth will recover to about 3% annually in 2024-25.

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US Sanctions 3 People, 4 Companies Linked to Mexican Cartel - Treasury

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - The United States sanctioned three people and four companies in Mexico linked to the Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generacion (CJNG), the US Department of the Treasury said in a statement on Tuesday.

"Today, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned three Mexican accountants and four Mexican companies linked, directly or indirectly, to timeshare fraud led by the Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generacion," the statement said.

The Financial Crimes Enforcement Network issued a notice with OFAC and the FBI to financial institutions in which it provides an overview of timeshare fraud schemes in Mexico associated with CJNG and other transnational criminal organizations based in that country, the statement said.

CJNG traffics a significant proportion of the illicit fentanyl and other deadly drugs that enter the United States. Such transnational criminal organizations operate call centers in Mexico with scammers that impersonate US-based timeshare brokers, attorneys or sales representatives, the statement said.

The scammers defraud US owners of timeshares in Mexico through complex schemes and victims are often retargeted in schemes where perpetrators impersonate law firms as well as the

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US, Mexican and international authorities, the statement added.
The sanctions are part of a whole-of-government effort to counter the global threat posed by the trafficking of illicit drugs into the United States, according to the statement.

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Advanced Economies Can Face 'Bumps' on Disinflation Path - IMF

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - The advanced economies can face issues on their disinflation path, International Monetary Fund (IMF) Economic Counselor and Director of the Research Department Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas said on Tuesday.
"There could be bumps on the disinflation path in advanced economies," Gourinchas told reporters.
This situation could force central banks, including the Federal Reserve in the United States, to keep borrowing costs higher for even longer, Gourinchas said.
"That would put overall growth at risk with increased upward pressure on the dollar and harmful spillovers to emerging and developing economies," Gourinchas said.
However, good news is that inflation came down without the economies entering a recession, he said.
"The bad news is that energy and food prices are now almost back to pre-pandemic levels in many countries, while overall inflation is not yet," Gourinchas added.
The IMF said in its updated World Economic Outlook report released earlier that global inflation will continue to decline and will reach the target level by the end of 2025.

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Robert Kennedy Jr. Apologizes to Trump After Video of Their Phone Call Leaked

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - Independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. on Tuesday apologized to former President Donald Trump after a video of him having a phone call with the latter was purportedly leaked by his son.
"When President Trump called me, I was taping with an in-house videographer. I should have ordered the videographer to stop recording immediately. I am mortified that this was posted. I apologize to the president," Kennedy said via the social media platform X.
In the one-and-a-half-minute video, which allegedly shows Kennedy talking on the phone with Trump, the latter reiterates his negative views on vaccinating kids and also calls President Joe Biden a "very nice guy" after he phoned him following an assassination attempt over the weekend.
Earlier on Monday, the video of the call was published on X by Bobby Kennedy III, the son of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. He later deleted his post and explained that he decided to remove it "for mistaking sarcasm for real life."
The two presidential candidates met on Monday to discuss national unity, but Kennedy

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Campaign Press Secretary Stefanie Spear said in a statement to Sputnik that it did not indicate any intention of RFK to drop out of the election race.

Kennedy's presidential bid has garnered significant support relative to most independent campaigns. Kennedy could secure 12% of the popular vote, according to statistics from the Democracy Institute.

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CIA Believes Hamas Leader Under Increased Pressure to Accept Ceasefire Deal - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) – The CIA believes Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar has come under increased pressure from his military commanders to accept a ceasefire deal with Israel, CNN reported on Tuesday.

CIA director Bill Burns shared this assessment during a closed conference on Saturday as talks have been stalled for over a month now after US President Joe Biden detailed Israel's three-phase deal proposal in May.

While Sinwar is not "concerned with his mortality" he is facing growing pressure due to the scale of suffering in embattled and starving Gaza, Burns told the conference.

Burns also said on Saturday that there is a "fragile possibility before us" to get Hamas and Israel to sign the deal and that the chances of a ceasefire are at the moment greater than they have ever been, the report said.

On Friday, US President Joe Biden said that Israel and Hamas agreed to a framework for a Gaza ceasefire. On Saturday, Israel carried out airstrikes on Khan Yunis's Al Mawasi district, killing 70 and injuring almost 290 people, according to the Gaza health ministry.

On May 31, Biden said that Israel had offered the Palestinian movement Hamas a new three-phase proposal with a road map that would lead to an enduring cessation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip and the release of all hostages.

The first phase includes a complete ceasefire, the withdrawal of Israeli troops from all Gaza population centers, and the release of some of the hostages held by Hamas. The second phase involves an indefinite cessation of hostilities in exchange for releasing the remaining hostages. The third phase of the initiative is to begin the reconstruction of the war-torn Gaza Strip.

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Trump Says Assassination Attempt Has 'Had Impact' on Him

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump has said that the attempt to assassinate him during a rally in Pennsylvania when a bullet ripped the upper part of his ear has left an impact on him.

"I don't like to think about that, but, yes," Trump told ABC News when asked about whether the attempted assassination "changed him."

The incident "has an impact," Trump added.

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Trump described his conversation with President Joe Biden, who called him several hours after the shooting, as "very nice." "He couldn't have been nicer," Trump said.

Trump also said his right ear is doing fine and that he hopes the bandage will be off by the time he speaks on Thursday at the Republican National Convention.

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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US Donates $5.8Mln Worth of Demining Equipment to Ukrainian Government – State Department

WASHINGTON, July 16 (Sputnik) – The United States has donated $5.8 million worth of demining equipment to Ukraine's State Special Transport Service, the US Department of State said on Tuesday.

"On July 16, the Department donated $5.8 million in new demining equipment to Ukraine's State Special Transport Service (SSTS) to support humanitarian demining operations in areas liberated from Russia's forces," the department said in a statement.

The donation includes four GCS-100 remotely operated demining vehicles with a range of attachments to address varied explosive hazards and environments, the statement said. It further comes with spare parts; mobile maintenance workshops; and trucks, trailers, and cranes to transport the machines to the field.

In addition, the US donated four armored excavators, vehicles as well as personal protective equipment, the statement added.

Since the onset of Russia's special military operation, the US has provided over $182 million in support of "humanitarian" demining efforts in Ukraine, supporting training and equipment to Kiev. It has also deployed contractor and non-governmental organizations demining teams throughout nine Ukrainian oblasts.

Since June 2023, the US has been supplying the Ukrainian military with cluster bombs, designed to leave bomblets on ground that explode when stepped on or moved. The decision was widely criticized by human rights activists and lawmakers alike and prompted the Pentagon to assure it would assist Ukraine in demining efforts where it will use US-supplied cluster munitions.

Then Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu had warned that Moscow would be forced to use similar weapons, of which it has plenty of stocks, against the Ukrainian military if the US supplied cluster bombs to Kiev.

Cluster munitions are banned by the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which has been ratified by 123 countries. The US, Ukraine, Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and South Korea have

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not signed the convention.

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