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7/29/24 Monday

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Planet Earth Marks Its Four Hottest Ever Days

To make matters more eerie, temperatures have not only peaked in the summer, but are spiking during other seasons too.

This past Sunday was the warmest single day ever recorded, according to the Copernicus Climate Change Service, which is funded by the European Union. But then Monday followed as the hottest day in recorded history with an average global temperature of 17.16 C (62.88 F). And with Tuesday and Wednesday being similarly hot, the week ended with the four hottest days ever observed by scientists.

NASA also confirmed July 22, 2024 as being the hottest day on record according to an analysis of global daily temperature data. Researchers who have devoted their lives to studying climate change are shocked by the unprecedented heat, the Washington Post reported.

“In a year that has been the hottest on record to date, these past two weeks have been particularly brutal,” said NASA Administrator Bill Nelson.

This shocking heat streak follows 13 months of unprecedented temperatures around the globe, which was influenced in part by an El Niño climate pattern. Our planet’s average temperature has been recorded as being at least 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) higher than pre-industrial levels. What makes these temperatures so alarming, is that they are made up of the averages of thousands of data points recorded from the Arctic to the South Pole and therefore include places that are experiencing winters as well as summers.

Remote places are also experiencing an increase in temperatures including areas of Canada, Russia and Greenland. The worst heat of the week was concentrated in Antarctica, where temperatures were at least 12 C (21.6 F) above normal.

“Let’s face facts,” said António Guterres, secretary general of the U.N., who addressed the global heat wave on Thursday. “Extreme temperatures are no longer a one-day, one-week or one-month phenomenon. If there is one thing that unites our divided world, it’s that we’re all increasingly feeling the heat. Earth is becoming hotter and more dangerous for everyone, everywhere.”

This year, at least 1,300 people died after traveling for this year’s hajj, an Islamic pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia where temperatures reached 120 degrees. Across India, dozens of poll workers also died while working during recent elections. India has had to open up heat stroke wards in their hospitals as a way to tackle the overwhelming heat.

Some cities, including Lisbon, Medellín, and Colombia have been able to reduce the temperatures of their cities by planting millions of new trees and shrubs, while other cities have painted rooftops and sidewalks white in order to reflect heat.

In early July, The Guardian reported that heat-related deaths in Phoenix, Arizona had nearly doubled when compared to the same period as last year. As of June 29, the number of possible heat-related deaths for the city stood at 175 - jumping 84% since the same period last year.

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More recent figures released last week predict that heat will cause over 400 deaths this year in the US state's Maricopa County. Those numbers will rival the heat-related deaths that occurred last year in metro Phoenix during a heat wave that saw temperatures of 110 F (43.3 C) or higher and that did not ease for over 30 days.

The primary cause of global climate change is, of course, the use of fossil fuels including coal, oil and gas which account for over 75% of global greenhouse gas emissions and nearly 90% of all carbon dioxide emissions, the UN said. But wealthy Western countries, including the US and the UK, are leading a hypocritical charge in fossil fuel expansion, according to a report from The Guardian that was published on Wednesday.

While wealthier countries have sworn to oblige the Paris accords and lead a transition away from fossil fuels to cleaner orangery sources, they are actually the countries that are "spearheading the latest drilling frenzy", the report writes, after handing out 825 new licenses in 2023. And under the Biden administration, the US has handed out 1,453 new oil and gas licenses, "accounting for half of the total globally and 83% of all licenses handed out by wealthy nations."

"The hypocrisy of wealthy nations, historically responsible for the climate crisis, is staggering as they continue to invest heavily in fossil fuels – putting the world on track for unimaginable climate catastrophe while claiming to be climate leaders," said Harjeet Singh, the global engagement director for the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative.

Developed countries have increased the sour effects of climate change the most while also benefitting the most from fossil fuels. But on the other side of that coin, there are developing countries who have contributed the least to climate change but have suffered the adverse affects of climate change the worst.

"Despite having the economic means to transition away from fossil fuels, these nations are petrostates choosing profit over the planet, undermining global efforts to avert the climate emergency," Singh added.

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'Breach of Trust': GOP Pushes for Impeachment Against VP Harris

While no US vice president has ever been impeached, at least three presidents have been impeached by the US House including: President Andrew Johnson, President Bill Clinton, and President Donald Trump who was impeached in 2019 and 2021.

Last Tuesday, Representative Andy Ogles (R-TN) filed articles of impeachment against US Vice President Kamala Harris as part of an increase in Republican attacks on the VP as she starts her presidential campaign. In part, the impeachment calls on what Republicans have said was Harris' failure to secure the border.

The second article in the filing claims that Harris concealed US President Joe Biden's mental well-being, and constituted a "breach of public trust" after she failed to invoke the 25th Amendment against Biden which would have made her acting president.

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“Kamala Devi Harris has knowingly misled the people of the United States and the Congress of the United States, principally to obfuscate the physical and cognitive well-being of the President of the United States, Joe Biden,” the filing reads.

On Monday, Sputnik’s The Final Countdown spoke to the author of the filing, Representative Ogles. The businessman has been the US representative for Tennessee's fifth congressional district since last year. In the beginning of the interview, Steve Gill, a US attorney, asked Ogles about the likelihood of an investigation, taking into account that US House Republicans have started their summer break early.

“I was talking to the media right before we left and I said, you know, we're not done with our appropriations. We should stay and work during August until we get it done. So this idea that we just are dismissed for the month of August should be contingent upon getting the appropriations done, or in this case, also adjudicating these articles of impeachment,” the representative explained.

Despite the GOP leaders’ original schedule to continue work next week, the Republicans decided to cancel next week’s session and “sent lawmakers home for a six week summer recess with little to brag about to constituents and voters heading into the final months before the election,” MSNBC reported citing NBC News. The House will not return until September 9, which will leave them just three weeks to avert a government shutdown.

“I think it's important that we force this conversation, because, again, what we see here over and over again is that the media is complicit. They were complicit with the cover up of Joe Biden's mental state. Quite frankly, they've been complicit, until recently, in covering up the state of the southern border."

“Look[ing] at the state of play in our country, you know, there's been a willful breach of trust both with the southern border and by its mental state,” said Ogles.

On Wednesday, the House voted unanimously for a resolution to establish a bipartisan task force to investigate the attempted assassination of former President Donald Trump, which took place on July 13 during one of Trump’s campaign speeches.

Four hundred-sixteen members voted in favor of the resolution, while 16 members did not vote. The bipartisan committee will be made up of six Democrats and seven Republicans and will deliver their final report to the House by December 13. Beyond the task force, the Department of Homeland Security has also opened reviews into three aspects of the USSS’ planning and preparedness during the shooting.

“[Looking at] the breaches, the lack of security, the breakdown in protocols and communication that the Secret Service has, whether you like or dislike Trump, the outcome of that is that Biden is less safe now. Kamala Harris is less safe now,” he explained. “Someone like [former President] Barack Obama, who is a former president who would have a detail, is less safe. And the world was watching. The world saw.”

“And so I think that's why you saw a bipartisan unanimous vote on this issue is because the Secret Service, just like the FBI, they're storied institutions, we've got to restore the American people's trust in those institutions. And, right now, I don't trust the FBI to investigate this. I don't trust the Secret Service to investigate themselves. So we have to have this task force.”

Sputnik’s Ted Rall pressed Ogles on his effort to impeach the Vice President after he requested that she invoke the 25th amendment against Biden to have him removed from office on the grounds of his mental state; “Isn't there kind of a conflict between that and you're calling for her

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to be impeached? You're gonna impeach her at the same time that she's gonna pull the 25th on Joe? Then what?"

"You point out the fact, you make a call that, hey, there's a mechanism in place to hold the president accountable. And, keep in mind, if she were to invoke, or the cabinet were to invoke the 25th amendment, he could appeal to the House of Representatives, to Congress and a vote could be taken," Ogles explained.

"So, she was given the opportunity to do the right thing to uphold her constitutional obligation. She didn't do it. So she can't point backwards and say, well, you didn't give me enough time to invoke the 25th. We sent a letter. We called her out. She did not take action. She's more worried about running for president, raising money and [laughing] instead of upholding her oath of office."

According to a Wall Street Journal poll, Harris is trailing Trump 47% - 49%, but with a margin error of 31. But 44% of those who were asked if they had a favorable view of Harris said "yes", and the same percentage said "yes" about Trump as well.

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Rubio, Burgum Contending for Secretary of State Role in Trump Administration – Reports

WASHINGTON, July 30 (Sputnik) – Florida Sen. Marco Rubio and North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum are vying for the secretary of state position in a potential Trump administration, Axios reported on Tuesday, citing unnamed sources.

Preliminary lists of potential cabinet members and senior staff include predominately white, male, populist candidates whom Trump views as loyal, the report said. Trump constantly says he felt betrayed by his staff during his first administration.

Tennessee Sen. Bill Hagerty and Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton are also under consideration for the secretary of state position, although Cotton would prefer to be the Pentagon chief. Former CIA director John Ratcliffe is a possible contender for the Pentagon role too or another national security position.

Former ambassador to Germany Ric Grenell and former House Speaker Kevin McCarthy are in the running for White House chief of staff, while Trump's campaign co-manager Susie Wiles is also lobbying for the job.

JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon and hedge fund manager Scott Bessent are under consideration for Treasury secretary. Former Small Business Administration head Linda McMahon, and Dallas entrepreneur Ray Washburn are in the running for commerce secretary. The position could also be a back-up for Rubio, McCarthy, or South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott.

Former advisor Stephan Miller is expected to make a return in some sort of senior advisor role with a broad purview in a second Trump administration.

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US Agrees to Arm Ukraine's F-16s With Advanced Missiles, Other Weapons – Reports

WASHINGTON, July 30 (Sputnik) – The United States has agreed to arm the Ukrainian F-16 jets with advanced American-made missiles and other weapons, the Wall Street Journal said on Tuesday.

Despite its limited inventory, the Pentagon will supply the F-16s with air-to-ground munitions, precision-guidance kits for bombs and advanced air-to-air missiles, the report said, citing a senior US official.

"We are confident that we will be able to supply all of those [weapons], at least the critical volumes that they need," the official said, as quoted by the report.

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us agrees to arm ukraine's f-16 jets with advanced American-made missiles, other weapons - wall street journal

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New 'Mentor' Programs Will Spread Use of AI Across US Armed Forces - Raytheon

WASHINGTON, July 30 (Sputnik) - The US Navy has approved two new Raytheon programs to advance the widespread use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) across the Pentagon and the US armed forces, the US giant defense contractor announced in a press release.

"Raytheon was awarded two strategic Mentor-Protégé Agreement initiatives from the Department of the Navy Office of Small Business Programs to support the development of operational Artificial Intelligence for Department of Defense platforms and programs," the release said on Monday.

With joint sponsorship from NAVAIR and the Office of Naval Research, Raytheon will mentor Anacapa Micro Products and Nara Logics through two three-year contracts to provide mentorship for operational AI on system design, software architecture, systems integration, IT security constraints and authority-to-operate requirements, the release explained.

"Through this partnership, we'll leverage commercial innovations that can make meaningful contributions to our defense capabilities and ultimately, the success of our servicemen and women," Raytheon President of Advanced Technology Colin Whelan said.

Through the program, Raytheon will develop a new technology roadmap aligned with emerging commercial technologies of industry leading small business capabilities, the release said.

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Native American Peoples Lack Sufficient Access to Healthy Food - Official US Report

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WASHINGTON, July 30 (Sputnik) - Native American peoples including those in Alaska suffer from food insecurity to a much greater extent than the general US population, the US Government Accountability Office (GAO) said in a report released on Monday.

"Food insecurity - not having regular access to healthy food - among American Indian/Alaska Native households is much greater than for all US households," the report says.

Tribal representatives reported multiple challenges to food security, the GAO acknowledged.

These problems included "economic barriers such as unemployment, distance to grocery stores, limited access to transportation and healthy food, and environmental factors like weather," it said.

Representatives of six of nine Native American tribes told the GAO that the high cost of food and inflation were barriers to food security, the report says.

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Trump Calls Paris Olympics Opening Ceremony 'Disgrace'

WASHINGTON, July 30 (Sputnik) - Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump believes the controversial opening ceremony at the Paris Olympics last week, which included a fragment mocking the Last Supper, was a disgrace.

"I thought that the opening ceremony was a disgrace," Trump said in the interview with Fox News that aired on Monday.

On Sunday, Paris Olympics spokeswoman Anne Descamps apologized to those whose religious feelings had been offended by the apparent drag parody on Leonardo da Vinci's "The Last Supper" performed at the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics.

The ceremony took place in Paris on Friday. Numerous social media users voiced their outrage over the drag parody that included members of the LGBT movement (banned in Russia as extremist).

The 2024 Summer Olympics are taking place from July 26 to August 11.

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Biden Doesn't Have Enough Support in Congress to Reform US Supreme Court - Trump

WASHINGTON, July 30 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden does not have enough support from Congress to make his plan to overhaul the US Supreme Court a reality, former President Donald Trump said in an interview.

"It's going nowhere," Trump told Fox News on Monday. "They need 75% and it's going nowhere. He [Biden] can't get it. He knows that too."

About Biden not advising congressional leaders about his Supreme Court reform plan, Trump described the move as a "typical Biden con."

Earlier on Monday, Biden proposed reforms including a constitutional amendment that would limit presidential immunity from federal prosecution after Supreme Court had ruled in July that

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some actions of former presidents related to their duties could not be prosecuted.
Biden also proposed that the Congress impose term limits and a binding code of conduct on Supreme Court Justices.

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Trump Says He Will Debate Harris But Hints That He Could Decide to Cancel

WASHINGTON, July 30 (Sputnik) - Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump that he intended to debate presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris but also mentioned that he could make the case to cancel those plans.
"The answer is yes. I'll probably end up debating. The answer is yes, but I can also make a case for not doing it," Trump said in the interview with Fox News aired on Monday.
Trump and Harris are currently set to participate in a ABC-hosted debate on September 10.
Trump explained that he could decide to cancel a debate because he did not want to reward "fake news," adding that ABC could end up making tens of millions of dollars off the debate.
He also described the ABC network as a "terrible outfit."

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Trump Says His Wife Melania Traumatized By Assassination Attempt, Shows She Loves Him

WASHINGTON, July 30 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said that his wife Melania had not been able to talk about the assassination attempt on his life, but he's okay with that because it shows she loves him.
"She can't really even talk about it, traumatized, which is okay, because that means she likes me. She loves me. That's good," Trump said in the interview with Fox News aired on Monday.
On July 13, Trump suffered a gunshot wound to his right ear and was briefly hospitalized following an assassination attempt at his rally in Butler. Thomas Crooks, 20, killed a member of the audience and injured two others in the crowd before the Secret Service neutralized him.
The FBI continues to investigate the assassination attempt.
The incident prompted US Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle to resign following criticism of the agency for not preventing the assassination attempt.

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Trump Says Will Talk to FBI on Thursday About Assassination Attempt

WASHINGTON, July 30 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said in an interview that he would talk to the FBI on Thursday about the attempt on his life at a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, earlier this month.

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"[The FBI are] coming in on Thursday to see me," Trump told Fox News on Monday.
Trump further said that he believed there should have been security officers on the roof of the building where the gunman had been positioned during the shooting.
Moreover, the Republican presidential nominee said that the US Secret Service should have been communicating with the local police, which there wasn't.
On July 13, Trump suffered a gunshot wound to his right ear and was briefly hospitalized following an assassination attempt at his rally in Butler. Thomas Crooks, 20, killed a member of the audience and injured two others in the crowd before the Secret Service neutralized him.
The FBI continues to investigate the assassination attempt.
The incident prompted US Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle to resign following criticism of the agency for not preventing the assassination attempt.

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Lugansk Student Urges Trump to Stop Arms Deliveries to Ukraine

LUGANSK, July 30 (Sputnik) - Faina Savenkova, a young writer and school student from Lugansk whose name was placed on a Ukrainian 'kill list,' has sent an open letter to former US President Donald Trump asking him to stop arms deliveries to Ukraine.
In 2021, then 12-year-old Savenkova recorded a video message to members of the UN Security Council and called on the organization to remember that children of Donbas have the right to childhood and peaceful life. In the fall of the same year, the notorious Ukrainian website "Mirotvorets" included the girl on its hit list. Later, Savenkova repeatedly appealed to various international organizations with calls for a ceasefire in Donbas.
The girl pointed out that it was not her first letter to Trump and confided that she believes he is the only adequate politician in the US now.
“Yes, Mr. Trump is not a friend of Russia, but rather the opposite, and he is a patriot of his country, but he is the only one who is able to stop the Democrats and other Western politicians from sliding into the third world war. By the way, he promised this,” she told Sputnik.
Faina in her letter asked Trump to stop the flow of Western weapons to Ukraine.
“Mr. Turmp, my name is Faina Savenkova. I am a teenager living in Donbass. I am 15 years old, and I am a young writer and journalist. However, the Ukrainian government sees me just as one of many civilian targets in this war. In my short life, I have had to endure the horrors of war due to the weapons that Western countries supply to Ukraine,” she wrote.
Faina also mentioned the recent assassination attempt against Trump, saying she was happy that everything ended up with minimal consequences for him.
“I know that there was recently an attempt on your life. I am very glad that the perpetrator did not succeed because human life is the greatest gift given to us by God. But the deadly threat that you face is the threat that the children of Donbass face every day at the hands of Ukraine’s extremist government,” the girl said.
She pointed out that July 27 is the Day of Remembrance for the Child victims of the war in Donbass. “On July 27, 2014, the Ukrainian military launched a massive artillery strike on Horlivka, resulting in the deaths of 22 civilians, including children," she said in her letter.

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Savenkova also implored Trump to do everything possible to bring an end to the conflict and to re-establish US relations with Russia.

"You said that you want to make America great again. Mr. Trump, the greatness of a country depends not only on the amount of weaponry it supplies to other countries, such as Ukraine, but also on whether this country can stop supplying those weapons that kill innocents. President Biden started the war in Ukraine, and now every day, hundreds of Ukrainians die on the battlefield. You may not consider yourself a friend of Russia, but I am sure that you can help bring this conflict to a speedy end. I also hope that Russia and the United States can establish a dialogue for the sake of mankind's future and the entire planet. Respectfully, Faina," she wrote.

Russia has been conducting a special military operation in Ukraine since February 24, 2022. President Vladimir Putin has said the operation aims to "protect people subjected to genocide by the Kiev regime for eight years." According to the president, the ultimate goal of the operation is to liberate Donbass and create conditions that guarantee Russia's security.

Russia earlier sent a note to NATO because of arms supplies to Ukraine. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said any cargo that contains weapons for Ukraine will become a legitimate target for Russia.

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Germany Trapped in Nuclear Crossfire Because US Scrapped INF Treaty - Ex-CIA Analyst

WASHINGTON, July 30 (Sputnik) - Germany is doomed to be caught in the nuclear crossfire between the United States and Russia because former President Donald Trump was so determined to scrap the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in 2019, retired CIA analyst Raymond McGovern told Sputnik.

"What country will become the target for Russian medium- and short-range missiles Moscow would deploy in response [to US actions]?" McGovern asked. "Germany, of course," he replied.

August 2 will mark the fifth anniversary of the expiration of the 1987 INF treaty after then-US President Donald Trump refused to renew it, McGovern noted.

As a result, one German government after another fearfully followed US dictation against their own best interests in escalating tensions with Russia, he said.

"Will the Germans ever say no to the United States, even when it creates increasing danger to them?" McGovern said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin was still trying in vain to alert Germany's leaders and public to their deadly danger, he said.

"In his Navy Day speech on Sunday. Putin tried to show the Germans they have been 'had' – once again," he said.

The German government of Chancellor Olaf Scholz had agreed to let the United States put long-range missiles in Germany starting in 2026, McGovern said.

"Putin made it indirectly but abundantly clear that, as far as the US long-range threat is concerned, Russia has that covered," McGovern said.

German leaders appeared incapable of breaking away from the suicidal policies that

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Washington continued to impose upon them, McGovern added.

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Biden Extends US National Emergency on Lebanon for Another Year - White House

WASHINGTON, July 30 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden is extending the US national emergency pertaining to Lebanon due to Iran's alleged transfer of weapons to Hezbollah in the region, the White House said in a notice.

"Certain ongoing activities, such as Iran's continuing arms transfers to Hezbollah - which include increasingly sophisticated weapons systems - serve to undermine Lebanese sovereignty, contribute to political and economic instability in the region, and continue to constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States," the notice said on Monday.

The notice added that because of these US concerns, the national emergency declared on August 1, 2007, will continue for one more year after August 1, 2024.

This measure authorizes the United States to impose sanctions on individuals allegedly undermining stability in Lebanon.

The United States has said it is trying to keep a wider conflict from erupting between Israel and Hezbollah after a deadly strike in the Golan Heights over the weekend.

Israel and the United States claim it was a missile strike conducted by Hezbollah, but the movement is denying responsibility for the incident.

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Reelecting Trump in November Best Option for Crypto World - Expert

NASHVILLE, July 30 (Sputnik) - Reelecting former US President Donald Trump in November would be the best news for the entire field of cryptocurrency, US entrepreneur and U-topia CEO Emmanuel Quezada told Sputnik in an interview.

"For the crypto world, definitely Trump [is the best option]," Quezada said on the sidelines of the annual Bitcoin Conference held in Nashville from July 25-27.

Quezada said he believes that Trump is the embodiment of US society manifested in one human being.

"Most of their [Americans' values] are reflected in Trump," Quezada said.

Reelecting Trump means that the "old" United States as it was once known is coming back, Quezada said.

The investor said he is personally a fan of Robert F. Kennedy Jr., but acknowledged that all eyes are currently on Trump.

The Bitcoin Conference in Nashville had notable speakers, including presidential hopefuls Robert F. Kennedy Jr, former Donald Trump and Vivek Ramaswamy, all of whom expressed their utmost support for Bitcoin.

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Kennedy vowed to make all US-held Bitcoin a strategic asset if elected in November while Trump promised to make the United States the "crypto capital of the planet."

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Bitcoin Will Not Replace Governmental Currencies, Will be Storage of Value - Expert

NASHVILLE, July 30 (Sputnik) - Bitcoin will not replace government-issued currencies, however, it can be an efficient storage of value, US entrepreneur and U-topia CEO Emmanuel Quezada told Sputnik in an interview.

"I don't think that it's a fair statement to say that Bitcoin is going to replace governmental currencies. What I believe is that Bitcoin is going to bring mass adoption and is going to be the storage of value," Quezada said on the sidelines of the annual Bitcoin Conference held in Nashville from July 25-27.

Quezada said Bitcoin will be another trading opportunity for everyone to get on board, another commodity.

"When you talk about Bitcoin, if you focus on the digital value, we can just revolutionize that," Quezada said, emphasizing the unique aspects Bitcoin has in comparison to fiat currencies.

The Bitcoin Conference in Nashville had notable speakers, including presidential hopefuls Robert F. Kennedy Jr, former Donald Trump and Vivek Ramaswamy, all of whom expressed their utmost support for Bitcoin.

Kennedy vowed to make all US-held Bitcoin a strategic asset if elected in November while Trump promised to make the United States the "crypto capital of the planet."

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US Deficit Poses National Security Risks - National Defense Strategy Commission

WASHINGTON, July 30 (Sputnik) - The United States' deficit poses national security risks, the congressionally established Commission on the National Defense Strategy said in a report.

The commission was tasked with examining and making recommendations based on the US National Defense Strategy.

"The ballooning US deficit also poses national security risks," the report said on Monday.

On Monday, the US national debt hit $35 trillion, according to US Treasury Department data.

The United States should increase security spending, accompanied by additional taxes and reforms to entitlement spending, the report said.

The commission recommends that Congress pass a supplemental appropriations bill to begin a multiyear investment in national security innovation and the industrial base.

The RAND Corporation think tank, which provided administrative and analytic support to the commission, said that the US risks losing in the event of multiple conflicts with peer and

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near-peer adversaries.

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US Risks Losing in Event of Multiple Conflicts With Adversaries - Defense Commission

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - The United States risks losing in the event of multiple conflicts with adversaries due to a lack of capabilities and capacity, the congressionally established Commission on the National Defense Strategy said in a report released Monday.

The commission, which received administrative and analytic support from the RAND Corporation think tank, was tasked with examining and making recommendations based on the US National Defense Strategy.

"The United States confronts the most serious and the most challenging threats since the end of World War II. The United States could in short order be drawn into a war across multiple theaters with peer and near-peer adversaries, and it could lose," the think tank said in a statement on the commission's report.

The US military lacks both the capabilities and capacity required to be confident in its ability to deter and prevail in combat, the report said.

China and Russia are fusing military, diplomatic and industrial strength to expand global power and coerce neighbors, the report said. The US needs a similarly integrated approach to address China and Russia, the report said.

Russia intends to outlast the willingness of Western countries to support Ukraine and seek a favorable outcome to the conflict, the report said. If Russia gains control over Ukraine, its borders with NATO would expand from the Arctic to the Black Sea, presenting significantly more demands for deployed NATO forces, the report said.

However, China remains the "preeminent challenge" to US interests and its most formidable military threat, the report said.

The commission recommends more effectively and efficiently building its future force instead of perpetuating its existing one. The US Congress should pass a supplemental appropriation bill to begin a multiyear investment in the industrial base and national security innovation, the report said.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, July 30 (Sputnik) -

ELECTION IN VENEZUELA

* The National Electoral Council of Venezuela has proclaimed Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro the winner of the presidential election for the 2025-2031 term, Council Chairman Elvis Amoroso said on Monday.

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* Russia intends to comprehensively develop relations with Venezuela, including in sensitive areas, this is in the interests of the two countries, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.
* The United States will take into account the "new scenario" in Venezuela as it considers changes to US sanctions policy toward Caracas amid concerns over the last election, a senior Biden administration official said.
* UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres hopes that all issues related to the last election in Venezuela will be resolved peacefully and calls on all parties to behave with moderation, United Nations spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said.

MIDDLE EAST TENSIONS

* Flights of the United Arab Emirates' air carrier FlyDubai are flying to Lebanon on schedule despite heightened tensions in the Middle East following Saturday's attack on the Golan Heights, a spokesperson for FlyDubai told Sputnik on Monday.
* The office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Palestinian movement Hamas had not responded to the initial ceasefire proposal and proposed more than 20 other changes to it, while Israel had not added any new conditions to the proposed deal.
* The White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby affirmed that the US continues to see the occupied Golan Heights as a legitimate part of Israel.
* The United States has no indication that the deadly weekend strike in the Golan Heights will impact the ongoing Gaza deal negotiations, White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby said.

WESTERN MILITARY AID TO UKRAINE

* The US Defense Department on Monday announced a new package of security assistance for Ukraine worth $1.5 billion with additional air defenses, fires and anti-tank weapons.
* The US Defense Department is announcing a significant package for the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI) to support Ukraine's defense needs over the long term, including bolstering its long-range fire capability, White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby said.
* The United States is providing Ukraine with a new $200 million security assistance package that includes additional munitions for the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), javelin missiles and air defense interceptors, Kirby said.
* Germany has handed over 21,000 rounds of German-made Gepard self-propelled anti-aircraft guns, ten drone boats and, in cooperation with Denmark, eight Leopard 1A5 tanks to Ukraine as part of a new military aid package, an updated list of the military equipment sent to Kiev from Berlin showed.

TRUMP ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT

* The man who attempted to assassinate former US President Donald Trump had functional explosive devices in his vehicle, FBI Special Agent in Charge at the Pittsburgh Field Office Kevin Rojek said on Monday.
* Trump has agreed to an interview as part of an investigation into the attempt to assassinate him at a rally in Pennsylvania, Rojek said.

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Pentagon Official Says Military Recently Initiated Hypersonic Test, Unclear If Successful

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - A US defense official told Sputnik on Monday that the Army and Navy recently initiated a test of a conventional hypersonic system but avoided commenting on whether the test was successful.

"The US Army and Navy recently initiated a test of a conventional hypersonic system at the Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, Florida," the official said. "This test was an essential benchmark in the development of operational hypersonic technology."

Vital data on the performance of the hardware and software was collected that will inform the continued progress toward fielding hypersonic weapons, the official added.

The US military was scheduled to test the US Army's Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon (LRHW), developed by Lockheed Martin, over the Caribbean last week, media reported.

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Biden Says Will Find Way to Implement His Supreme Court Reform Plan

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden told reporters on Monday that he will find “a way” to implement his proposed Supreme Court reforms after House Speaker Mike Johnson called the plan “dead on arrival.”

Earlier on Monday, Biden proposed reforms including a constitutional amendment that would limit presidential immunity from federal prosecution after Supreme Court ruled in July that some actions of former presidents related to their duties could not be prosecuted. Biden also proposed that Congress impose term limits and a binding code of conduct on Supreme Court Justices.

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RPT - Trump Says OPEC Trying to Lower Oil Prices to Aid Harris’ 2024 US Presidential Campaign

(Repeats to fix typo in headline)

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - Member states of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) are attempting to lower oil prices to aid US Vice President Kamala Harris’ 2024 presidential campaign, former US President Donald Trump said on Monday.

“OPEC nations are going all out to drive down oil prices in the hope that Crazy Kamala Harris will win,” Trump said via social media platform Truth. “Then they will really reap the rewards!”

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On Monday, crude oil prices dropped to a nearly two-month low. UK-origin Brent crude finished Monday's New York session at $79.78 per barrel, down 1.7%.
However, the Russian Central Bank said on Friday that it will keep its forecast for the average price of Brent crude oil in 2024 at $85 per barrel.
OPEC member states include Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, Iran, Nigeria and others, which collectively account for a significant amount of global oil production.
Harris is the Democratic Party's presumptive presidential nominee for the 2024 election, following US President Joe Biden's departure from the race. Trump secured the Republican Party's nomination earlier this month.

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(Updates with background in paras 5-8)
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The US military was scheduled to test the US Army's Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon (LRHW), developed by Lockheed Martin, over the Caribbean last week, media reported.

Earlier this month, the White House announced that the United States will begin episodic deployments of non-nuclear "long-range fires capabilities" to Germany in 2026, which will include developmental hypersonic weapons that will have a significantly longer range than current land-based US missile systems deployed in Europe.

On Sunday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Russia will no longer be bound by a moratorium on deploying medium- and short-range strike weapons if the United States deploys these types of missile systems to Germany.

The LRHW, also known as Dark Eagle, is one of a few US hypersonic weapons systems under development that has the best chance to be fielded soon. It missed its target date to be fielded by 2023 but the new goal is to have it ready for deployment by next year.

According to the US Government Accountability Office (GAO), the Army cannot field an operational system until it conducts a successful end-to-end missile flight test, as the two most recent tests in 2023 were incomplete due to launcher and launch sequence issues.

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Oil Price Near 2-Month Low as Israel Cools Heat Over Gaza War

NEW YORK, July 29 (Sputnik) - Crude prices plunged near two-month lows on Monday as Israel's apparent desire to limit the Middle East's fallout from the Gaza war further reduced oil's geopolitical risk.

US West Texas Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude settled at $75.81 per barrel, down $1.35, or 1.8%. WTI's low for the session was $75.36, marking a bottom not seen since early June. July had been a torrid month for bulls in the oil market, with WTI on track to lose about 7% or more - the most since October 2023.

UK-origin Brent crude finished Monday's New York session at $79.78 per barrel, down $1.35, or 1.7%. For July, Brent was on track to fall nearly 9%, its biggest losing month since May 2023, or more than a year.

Oil's latest swoon came after reports that Israeli officials wanted to avoid dragging the Middle East into an all-out war while responding to a deadly rocket strike in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights over the weekend.

Two Israeli officials were quoted as telling Reuters on Monday that Israel wanted to hurt the Iranian-backed Lebanese group Hezbollah, which it blamed for the attack, without sparking a region-wide conflict. Israeli jets hit targets in southern Lebanon on Sunday despite Hezbollah denying responsibility for the attack.

Israel's security cabinet authorized Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government to decide on the manner and timing of a response to the attack - a departure from the previous Israeli stance of responding forcefully to attacks without too much deliberation over the impact of its own actions.

Bob Yawger, director of energy futures at Mizuho in New York, said the new Israeli stance "implies that a Gaza ceasefire might not be too far off in the future."

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Egypt and Qatar have intensified their efforts over the past month to broker a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. Netanyahu told families of hostages held by Hamas earlier this month that a deal to secure their release could be near.

The Gaza war zone and its proximity to some of the world's biggest oil producers - including Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates - had been a boon to the 2024 oil rally, especially after some disruption to crude shipments from rockets fired by Hamas.

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США протестировали гиперзвуковое оружие, но информации об успехе испытаний нет - Пентагон

ВАШИНГТОН, 29 июл - РИА Новости. Американский военный чиновник заявил РИА Новости, что Соединенными Штатами была осуществлена попытка тестового запуска гиперзвукового оружия, но не стал уточнять, был ли этот запуск успешным.

"Армия и ВМС США недавно провели испытание обычной гиперзвуковой системы на космической станции на базе Космических сил США на мысе Канаверал во Флориде… Это испытание стало важным этапом в разработке оперативной гиперзвуковой технологии", - заявил чиновник.

Чиновник добавил, что в ходе теста были получены важные данные для дальнейшего прогресса США в гиперзвуком оружии.

СМИ ранее сообщали, что на прошлой неделе должно было пройти испытание гиперзвуковой ракетной системы LRHW Dark Eagle в Карибском море. Систему разрабатывает концерн Lockheed Martin, ее ввод в строй планировался на 2023 год, однако он был отложен несмотря на отставание США в этой сфере от России и Китая, где гиперзвуковое оружие уже поступило в войска.

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Netherlands Signs Deal to Buy US JASSM-ER Air-Launched Missiles - Lockheed Martin

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - The Netherlands has signed an agreement to buy US Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile (JASSM) missiles for the first time, Lockheed Martin announced in a press release on Monday.

"US and Netherlands officials formalized a Letter of Offer and Acceptance (LoA) agreement to purchase Lockheed Martin's Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile Extended Range (JASSM-ER)," the release said

The agreement makes the Netherlands the fifth international customer for the missile system, Lockheed Martin said.

"The latest generation of JASSM-ER includes enhancements to hardware and software, providing increased capabilities and more flexible options to match the warfighter's evolving mission sets," the release said.

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JASSM provides continued significant long-range, precision engagement capabilities for air-to-ground missions and is designed to destroy high-value, well-defended targets from significant standoff range, Lockheed Martin said.

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Biden Did Not Consult Congressional Democrats on Supreme Court Reform Plan - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration did not coordinate the president's proposal to overhaul the Supreme Court with either Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Dick Durbin or other congressional Democrats, Axios reported on Monday.

The absence of consultation with Capitol Hill suggests that Biden's Supreme Court proposals are aimed more at influencing public opinion before the election than at immediate legislative action, according to the report.

A source from the House Democratic leadership said it is not uncommon for the White House to bypass consulting lawmakers when unveiling new policies, the report said.

The report added that the White House did not provide a comment when asked.

Earlier on Monday, Biden proposed a constitutional amendment limiting presidential immunity from federal prosecution. It came after the Supreme Court ruled earlier in July that former US President Donald Trump can claim immunity from prosecution on election subversion charges as it relates to official acts as president, although he could still face prosecution for unofficial acts.

Biden also suggested introducing term limits on Supreme Court justices and a binding code of conduct for them.

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ANALYSIS - Kamala Harris Campaign 'Honeymoon' Will Carry Her to Chicago Convention But Not Beyond

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - The current wave of support and mainstream media coverage will carry Vice President Kamala Harris through to the Democratic Party national convention in Chicago next month but it is unlikely to last beyond that, US analysts told Sputnik.

President Joe Biden chose Harris as his successor right after announcing that he was withdrawing from the Democratic party nomination for a second four-year term in the White House. Since then, mainstream Democratic leaders, including former President Barack Obama and former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, have rallied to Harris' support.

Nevertheless, Harris's current wave of popularity, which has given her a small thought from the overwhelming boost in national opinion polls, will not last beyond the convention in Chicago, financial columnist and former merchant banker Martin Hutchinson said.

"This honeymoon can carry her to the convention - not beyond," Hutchinson said. "Her honeymoon will last till after the Democratic convention."

Hutchinson pointed out that while Harris has national experience as vice president, her real policies and priorities had yet to be exposed to public scrutiny and success in the race would also depend on whom she chose as her vice-presidential running mate.

"Thing to watch is whether she picks a sensible vice president. [Pennsylvania Governor Josh] Shapiro, [Kansas Governor Laura] Kelly, or [North Carolina Governor Roy] Cooper are her best choices, but the Financial Times wants her to pick [Secretary of Transportation Pete] Buttigieg, which would reinforce everyone's negative view of her," Hutchinson said.

While Harris's skill as a direct debater might make her a formidable opponent for Republican nominee and former President Donald Trump, her appeal would likely diminish during the prime campaigning season of September and October, Hutchinson said.

"I think Trump's chances remain good though not overwhelming, as air in Harris will slowly deflate in September/October," Hutchinson added.

California State University Emeritus Professor of Political Affairs Beau Grosscup agreed that Harris was currently benefiting from a wave of adulation that would not last.

"Honeymoons are notoriously short. It's what the word means," Grosscup said.

Nevertheless, Harris brought significant strengths to the Democratic ticket that the aging and obviously infirm Biden had clearly lacked, Grosscup said.

"Her prospects against Trump are good. She has solved the age/dementia issue - pointing now to Trump. She should re-rally women/independents on the Dobbs decision [regarding abortion] as Biden left that issue to her," Grosscup said.

US ECONOMY IS A MAJOR ISSUE FACING HARRIS

The US political landscape unpredictability notwithstanding, Harris's past record made the flubs and embarrassments inevitable throughout her presidential campaign, Political analyst Charles Ortel said.

"Harris is a remarkably undistinguished 'public servant' whose track record and policy inclinations are both rash and juvenile," Ortel said.

Harris's many allies in the established media would do their best to promote her through the Democratic convention, Ortel added.

US constitutional historian and political commentator Dan Lazare recommended election

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watchers not be misled by the relatively restrained and polite tone of the Harris and Trump campaigns so far.

"With something like a hundred days to the election, the process is just getting underway. The Harris campaign is indeed in the honeymoon stage, and how much longer it lasts - a few days, a few weeks - is impossible to say. But we can be sure that it will end by some point, and that's when the real mud wrestling will begin," Lazare said.

Both candidates had yet to reveal their strategies and opening moves but none of the general adulatory coverage of Harris so far had dared to point out the very real drawbacks she suffered from in her professional record, he said.

"Kamala has got a lot of baggage - her law-and-order prosecutor years that are a guaranteed turn-off for liberals, her political shallowness, her demeanor, and that god-awful laugh," Lazare said.

Lazare noted that a major issue for Harris and for most Americans is the US economy.

"This a real problem for Harris since if she runs on Bidenomics, she will incur the wrath of all who have been hurt by inflation, that is the entire working-class population, while if she runs away from Bidenomics, she'll come off as a disloyal opportunist. She's damned if she does and damned if she doesn't," Lazare added.

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Biden, Harris Aligned on Foreign Policy Including on Israel - White House

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris have been aligned on foreign policy matters, including on Israel, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said on Monday.

“When it comes to Israel, the President and the Vice President have been aligned. Our support for Israel’s security is iron clad,” Jean-Pierre said.

On Thursday, Harris said after her meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that although she reaffirmed the United States' commitment to defending Israel, she would not stay silent about Israel's handling of the Gaza war, especially the high death toll of Palestinian civilians killed by Israeli troops. In addition, Harris said it is time for Netanyahu to end the conflict.

Netanyahu was in Washington last week to address a joint session of Congress and meet with President Joe Biden, Harris and other US officials.

Netanyahu's speech was met by a mass demonstration of anti-war and pro-Palestine protesters near the US Capitol building.

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US National Debt Nears $35 Trillion - Treasury Department

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WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - The United States' national debt is set to hit $35 trillion on Monday, according to US Treasury Department data.

The US Treasury lists the national debt at $34.997 trillion and rounds up the figure to $35 trillion.

The unofficial US Debt Clock has the figure at over $35 trillion as of this writing.

US government spending is "driving America bankrupt," billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk said on social media platform X, in response to the $35 trillion national debt figure.

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US defense official tells sputnik army and navy recently initiated test of conventional hypersonic system, avoids saying whether test was successful

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US Awards 4.5Mln-Barrel Oil Reserve Refill Deal to Exxon, Macquarie

NEW YORK, July 29 (Sputnik) - The Department of Energy (DoE) said on Monday that ExxonMobil and Macquarie have been awarded the supply of 4.6 million barrels which are to be added to the national oil reserve by December.

"As of July 26, 2024, the following contracts for the purchase of 4.65 million barrels, totaling $357,680,000.00, have been finalized," the DoE said in a statement of the contracts meant for the refill of the US Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR).

It added that ExxonMobil Oil Corporation would supply 3.9 million barrels and Macquarie the balance 750,000. The crude oil is to be delivered to the SPR site at Bayou Choctaw in the state of Louisiana between October and December.

The DoE has been working to procure millions of barrels of crude at below market prices to refill the SPR. At a rounded-up $358 million, its latest procurement cost was $77 a barrel.

When the purchase for the 4.65 million barrels was first announced on July 10, a barrel of benchmark US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude was trading at just above $82. By the time the contract award was announced nearly three weeks later, WTI had fallen to around $75.

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

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

Biden, in his defense, had said he was only acting to reduce record high pump prices of gasoline, which stood at above $5 per gallon in June 2022 and had stabilized since at between $3 and $3.50. The president has also blamed high crude prices for US inflation getting to four-decade highs of above 9% per annum in mid-2022.

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

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Level of Destruction in Gaza Immense, 87% of Medical Facilities Destroyed - UN Official

UNITED NATIONS, July 29 (Sputnik) - Large parts of the Gaza Strip have been completely destroyed, and 87% of territory's medical facilities are non-functioning, senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza Sigrid Kagg said on Monday.

"If you look at the level of destruction, each time I visit Gaza, to my eye, it is almost incomprehensible and it just translates itself into statistics - i.e., 87 percent of medical facilities destroyed," Kagg told UN reporters during a virtual briefing from Jordan.

On October 7, 2023, Palestinian movement Hamas launched a large-scale rocket attack against Israel and breached the border, attacking both civilian neighborhoods and military bases. Nearly 1,200 people in Israel were killed, while some 240 others were abducted during the attack.

Israel launched retaliatory strikes, ordered a complete blockade of Gaza and started a ground incursion into the Palestinian enclave. According to the enclave's health ministry, the death toll from the Israeli offensive has passed 39,200, with more than 90,400 others injured.

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UNSC Underlines Its 'Grave Concern' About Humanitarian Situation in Sudan - Russian Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, July 28 (Sputnik) - The UN Security Council members believe the humanitarian situation in Sudan is dire and mainly affects women and children, Russian Deputy Representative to the UN Anna Evstigneeva said on Monday.

"Council members underline their grave concern at the security situation and dire humanitarian situation and acute food insecurity in Sudan that affects especially women and children," Evstigneeva told journalists after a closed meeting of the Security Council.

The Council urged the international community to scale up humanitarian assistance, she added.

On April 15, 2023, clashes broke out between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. The parties to the conflict have since introduced several temporary nationwide ceasefires, but none has helped settle the conflict.

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US House Leaders Announce Lawmakers Selected for Trump Assassination Attempt Task Force

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - US House Speaker Mike Johnson and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries on Monday announced which lawmakers will serve on a special task force to investigate the July 13 assassination attempt against former US President Donald Trump.

The panel will be chaired by Congressman Mike Kelly, who resides in Butler, Pennsylvania, where the assassination attempt occurred, Johnson said via social media platform X.

Republican lawmakers Mark Green, Dave Joyce, Laurel Lee, Mike Waltz, Clay Higgins and Pat Fallon will also serve on the task force, Johnson said.

"We have the utmost confidence in this group of steady, highly qualified, and capable Members of Congress," Johnson said.

Democrats serving on the panel will include Jason Crow, Lou Correa, Madeleine Dean, Chrissy Houlahan, Glenn Ivey and Jared Moskowitz.

The task force will investigate the assassination attempt, assess accountability efforts and work to prevent similar incidents in the future. The panel will release a final report on its findings by December 13.

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Canadian Environment Minister Says All Wildfires Within Town of Jasper Extinguished

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - Every wildfire burning within the town of Jasper in Canada's province of Alberta has been put out, Canadian Minister of Environment and Climate Change Steven Guilbeault said on Monday.

"I'm happy to report that all the fires within the community have been put out," Guilbeault said during a federal update on the wildfire situation in Jasper.

Guilbeault explained that crews are currently extending the buffer zone around the township by another 3 kilometers (1.9 miles).

In addition, power is being brought back in preparation for a staged re-entry of civilians to the community, though there are no firm timelines for the process, he also said.

However, several fires continue to pose a threat to the town and teams are working on stabilizing the wildfire situation throughout Jasper National Park, Guilbeault added.

On July 23, residents of Jasper and individuals at Jasper National Park were ordered to evacuate the region toward neighboring British Columbia due to the looming threat of wildfires. Close to 17,000 individuals have fled their homes.

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US to Discuss With OAS, G7 'Consequences' for Maduro in Wake of Election- Official

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - The United States will discuss potential actions against Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro with G7, the Organization of American States (OAS) and other partners if he allegedly fails to abide by the will of the people, senior administration officials told reporters on Monday.

"We will work with partners around the world, whether it's the OAS or the G7 or many other partners, to discuss a collective way forward that continues to both encourage the kinds of changes and reforms that the Venezuelan people have called for, but also exact consequences on Maduro and those around him, if they fail to move in that direction," the officials said.

Earlier in the day, Venezuela's National Electoral Council declared Maduro the winner after the 61-year-old secured 51.2% of the vote, with 80% of the ballots counted. Edmundo Gonzalez, his main rival, gained 44.2%. Maduro will begin his third term in office on January 10, 2025.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has congratulated Maduro on his reelection, the Kremlin said.

The United States has serious concerns about the accuracy of presidential election results in Venezuela, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said.

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US National Debt Nears $35 Trillion - Treasury Department

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - The United States' national debt is set to hit $35 trillion on Monday, according to US Treasury Department data.

The US Treasury lists the national debt at $34.997 trillion and rounds up the figure to $35 trillion.

The unofficial US Debt Clock has the figure at over $35 trillion as of this writing.

US government spending is "driving America bankrupt," billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk said on social media platform X, in response to the $35 trillion national debt figure.

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Canada Concerned Over Venezuela Election Outcome, Backs 'Democratic Opposition' - Freeland

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - The Canadian government is concerned by the election outcome in Venezuela and has supported for several years the Venezuelan democratic opposition, Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland said on Monday.

Venezuela's National Electoral Council declared President Nicolas Maduro the winner of the country's presidential election after he secured 51.2% of the votes with 80% of ballots counted. The upcoming presidential term will be Maduro's third in a row, having headed the country since 2013. Maduro will be inaugurated for a term of six years on January 10, 2025.

Maduro has been congratulated on his victory by the presidents of Russia, Belarus, China,

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Bolivia, Honduras and Cuba, among others.

"Canada, like many of our other allies, like many of the world's democracies, has serious concerns about the election in Venezuela. We're working closely with our partners," Freeland told reporters when asked whether Ottawa would recognize the elections results.

The minister noted that Canada has been supporting Venezuela's opposition and condemning the Maduro government, which she said was an increasingly harsh authoritarian regime.

Earlier, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that Washington had serious concerns that the results of Sunday's presidential election in Venezuela do not reflect the will of the people. Maduro's victory has also been questioned by several regional leaders.

The presidents of Argentina, Costa-Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic and Uruguay issued a joint statement requesting an urgent meeting of the Organization of American States and demanding the complete revision of the voting results by independent electoral observers.

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'New Scenario' in Venezuela May Influence Possible Change to US Sanctions Policy -Official

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - The United States will take into account the "new scenario" in Venezuela as it considers changes to US sanctions policy toward Caracas amid concerns over the last election, a senior Biden administration official said on Monday.

"Now that we are faced with potentially a new scenario, we are going to take that into account as we map forward where we may head with respect to sanctions towards Venezuela," the official told reporters.

The official said the National Electoral Council's claim that Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro won the election on Sunday lacks credibility and is urging for full transparency of the results.

However, Venezuela's National Electoral Council declared Maduro the winner of the election after he secured 51.2% of the votes with 80% of ballots counted.

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UN Chief Trusts All Venezuela Electoral Disputes Will Be Resolved Peacefully - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, July 29 (Sputnik) - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres hopes that all issues related to the last election in Venezuela will be resolved peacefully and calls on all parties to behave with moderation, the United Nations spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Monday.

"The Secretary-General trusts that all electoral disputes will be addressed and resolved peacefully, and calls on all Venezuelan political leaders and their supporters for moderation," Dujarric said during a press briefing.

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US Adversaries Outsourcing Efforts to Influence 2024 Elections - Reports

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - The United States' adversaries are outsourcing efforts to influence 2024 US elections, Reuters reported on Monday.

Foreign countries are turning to marketing and communications firms to conduct influence activities, the report said, citing a US intelligence official.

Moscow is using "influence-for-hire" companies based in Russia to alter public opinion in the US, the report said.

Beijing is likewise using China-based technology companies to bolster its influence activities in the US, the report said.

US adversaries are adapting their influence activities in the wake of US President Joe Biden's decision to withdraw from the 2024 race, the report said. US intelligence agencies appear to anticipate that adversaries will shift their focus to Vice President Kamala Harris, whom Biden endorsed as his replacement, the report said.

Earlier this month, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said that US elections are an internal matter with which Russia does not interfere.

Chinese Ambassador to the US Xie Fang also said that Beijing will not interfere in US domestic affairs.

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US Not Considering Revoking Venezuela Sanctions Waivers for Chevron, Others - Official

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - The United States is not looking into retroactively changing licenses that have been given to Venezuela over the last year, senior Biden administration officials told reporters on Monday.

When asked if any changes to sanctions waivers for Chevron and other energy companies may be made amid concerns about the last election in Venezuela, the officials said, "It is not currently under consideration that we would retroactively alter licenses that have previously been given."

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Pentagon Announces $1.5Bln in Ukraine Funds for Air Defense, Anti-Tank Weapons

WASHINGTON, JULY 29 (Sputnik) - The US Department of Defense (DoD) announced in a release on Monday a new package of security assistance for Ukraine worth $1.5 billion with additional air defenses, fires and anti-tank weapons.

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"DoD is announcing a significant package of support using approximately $1.5 billion in Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI) funds. This package includes capabilities to augment Ukraine's air defenses, fires, and anti-tank weapons, as well as funding to sustain equipment previously committed by the United States," the release said.

The security package includes munitions for National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems (NASAMS); RIM-7 missiles for air defense; Electronic Warfare equipment; and ammunition for High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS), the release said.

Additionally, the new funding will enable the United States to supply Ukraine with 155mm and 105mm artillery rounds, 120mm mortar rounds, Tube-Launched, Optically-Tracked, Wire-Guided (TOW) missiles, Javelin and AT-4 anti-armor systems, the release added.

Earlier on Monday, White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby announced the authorization of a Presidential Drawdown Authority (PDA) package worth $200 million to provide Ukraine with air defense interceptors, munitions for rocket systems and artillery and anti-tank weapons.

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un secretary-general trusts that venezuela electoral disputes will be resolved peacefully, urges political leaders to show moderation - spokesperson

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White House Announces New $200Mln Ukraine Aid Package, Includes Munitions For HIMARS

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - The United States is providing Ukraine with a new $200 million security assistance package that includes additional munitions for the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), javelin missiles and air defense interceptors, White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby said on Monday.

"The Biden-Harris administration is announcing new security assistance to meet Ukraine's critical security and defense needs," Kirby said. "This includes a presidential drawdown authority package to provide Ukraine with key capabilities for the fight that they're in, including air defense interceptors, Munitions for US-provided HIMARS, artillery and mortar rounds, javelin anti-tank missiles and other anti-tank weapons."

Kirby later noted that the latest military aid package is worth $200 million.

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US Has 'Serious Concerns' About Accuracy of Venezuelan Election Results - White House

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - The United States has serious concerns about the accuracy

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of presidential election results in Venezuela, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said on Monday.

"We've seen the announcement by Venezuelan electoral authorities, and quite frankly, we have serious concerns that the result as announced does not reflect the will and the votes of the Venezuelan people," Kirby said during a press briefing.

Venezuela's National Electoral Council declared President Nicolas Maduro as the winner of the election after he secured 51.2% of votes with 80% of ballots counted.

Kirby said it is critical that every vote is counted fairly and transparently and election officials should share information with the opposition and work with independent observers.

Electoral authorities should also publish the full, detailed tabulation of votes, Kirby said, adding that the United States will withhold judgment until that time.

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US Affirms Golan Heights as Israeli Territory - Kirby

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) – The White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby affirmed on Monday that the US continues to see the occupied Golan Heights as a legitimate part of Israel.

"Yes," he said, during a press briefing, when asked point-blank by an Israeli reporter whether the US saw the Golan Heights as a part of Israel or not.

In March 2019, then-US President Donald Trump recognized Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Golan Heights, seized from Syria in 1967.

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No Indication Weekend Strike in Golan Heights Will Impact Gaza Talks - White House

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - The United States has no indication that the deadly weekend strike in the Golan Heights will impact the ongoing Gaza deal negotiations, White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby said on Monday.

"There's no indication that we see at this point in time that the weekend strike by Hezbollah into the Golan area is going to negatively affect those discussions," Kirby said during a press briefing.

Kirby emphasized that the United States is urging parties not to escalate tensions in the region, noting that the US policy on the Golan Heights has not changed.

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FBI Still Has No Motive for Shooter in Trump's Assassination Attempt - Deputy Director

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WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - The FBI still has no knowledge about the motive of the shooter in former President Donald Trump's assassination attempt earlier in July, FBI Deputy Director Paul Abbate said on Monday.

"Our priorities are to identify the shooter's motive, which is still not clear, and to determine whether any co-conspirators or associates were involved in or aware of the plot," Abbate said.

The FBI does not rule anything out but has no evidence at present that any other co-conspirators were involved, he said.

Abbate also pointed out that this investigation remains urgent and ongoing, adding that law enforcement is focused on building the timeline of events.

On July 13, a gunman attempted to assassinate Trump during a campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, but Trump evaded death by tilting his head at the last second and only sustained a wound to his right ear.

The gunman, Thomas Crooks, killed a member of the audience and injured two others before the US Secret Service sniper team eliminated him.

The incident prompted US Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle to resign.

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US to Announce Long-Term Aid For Ukraine That Includes Long-Range Weapons - White House

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - The US Department of Defense is announcing a significant package for the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI) to support Ukraine's defense needs over the long term, including bolstering its long-range fire capability, White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby said on Monday.

"That package includes capabilities to augment Ukraine's air defenses, long-range fires and anti-tank weapons, and to sustain equipment previously committed by the United States," Kirby said during a press briefing.

The Defense Department will have a press release on this USAI package shortly, Kirby added.

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White House Announces New $200Mln Ukraine Aid Package, Includes Munitions For HIMARS

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - The United States is providing Ukraine with a new $200 million security assistance package that includes additional munitions for the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), javelin missiles and air defense interceptors, White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby said on Monday.

"The Biden-Harris administration is announcing new security assistance to meet Ukraine's critical security and defense needs," Kirby said. "This includes a presidential drawdown authority package to provide Ukraine with key capabilities for the fight that they're in, including air defense interceptors, Munitions for US-provided HIMARS, artillery and mortar rounds, javelin anti-tank

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missiles and other anti-tank weapons."
Kirby later noted that the latest military aid package is worth $200 million.

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us policy on golan heights has not changed - white house

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First US Hypersonic Weapons Will Not Be Effective Even When Fielded - GAO

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) – America's first hypersonic weapon prototypes will not be effective or affordable when fielded, according to a new report published by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) on Monday.
"Years of effort and billions of dollars spent on hypersonic weapon development have yielded considerable progress, but DOD [the Department of Defense] has yet to field its first operational hypersonic weapon system. Yet even fielding these first prototypes will not ensure an effective or affordable capability," the report said.
The Pentagon has repeatedly named hypersonic weapons a priority area for the development of the US armed forces, but unlike China and Russia, it is far behind its rivals in fielding these virtually unstoppable missiles that can travel five times faster than sound.
In March, the Biden administration requested a record $9.8 billion for a mix of hypersonic and long-range subsonic missiles in the Fiscal Year 2025 budget.
NATO Science and Technology Organization Executive Officer for Applied Vehicle Technology Kerstin Huber said in June that the United States and NATO will not be able to develop and deploy operational hypersonic weapons for at least another 20 years and possibly longer because they are so far behind in the vital technologies.
The US Congressional Budget Office acknowledged in a 2023 report that repeated test failures in recent years have delayed US progress in developing new weapons.

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US House Speaker Johnson Says Biden's Proposal to Overhaul Supreme Court 'Dead on Arrival'

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden’s proposal to overhaul the US Supreme Court is "dead on arrival," US House Speaker Mike Johnson said on Monday.
"President Biden’s proposal to radically overhaul the US Supreme Court would tilt the balance of power and erode not only the rule of law, but the American people’s faith in our system of justice," Johnson said in a post via X. "This dangerous gambit of the Biden-Harris Administration is dead on arrival in the House."

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Earlier on Monday, Biden proposed a constitutional amendment that would limit presidential immunity from federal prosecution after the Supreme Court ruled in July that some actions of former presidents related to their duties could not be prosecuted. The amendment would also impose term limits on Supreme Court justices.

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US Believes There's Still Time for Diplomatic Solution to Israel-Hezbollah Tension - Kirby

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - The United States believes there is still time and space for Israel and Hezbollah to reach a diplomatic solution to deescalate tensions along the Blue Line, White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby said on Monday.
"We believe that there is still time and space for a diplomatic solution," Kirby said during a press briefing.

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us announces new military assistance for ukraine that includes air defense, long range fires, anti-tank missiles - white house

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us believes there is still time and space for diplomatic solution to lebanon-israel conflict - white house

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Pentagon Unable to Accurately Estimate Cost of Hypersonic Weapons - GAO

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) – The US Department of Defense (DoD) lacks tools to accurately estimate the costs associated with the development and fielding of hypersonic weapons, according to a new report published by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) on Monday.
"While DOD has identified and analyzed cost risks, the cost of these [hypersonic] weapons is difficult to estimate," the report concluded.
The Pentagon has repeatedly named hypersonic weapons a priority area for the development of the US armed forces, but unlike China and Russia, it is far behind its rivals in fielding these virtually unstoppable missiles that can travel five times faster than sound.
In March, the Biden administration requested a record $9.8 billion for a mix of hypersonic and long-range subsonic missiles in the Fiscal Year 2025 budget.

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The report also raises questions about the Pentagon's inadequate level of communication with Congress regarding the ongoing challenges in developing and equipping the US military with hypersonic weapons.

"DOD is not comprehensively communicating and reporting to Congress its progress on managing risks. Reporting comprehensive information would enable Congress to better understand and oversee DOD's progress in managing risks at the enterprise level for offensive hypersonic weapons," the report said.

NATO Science and Technology Organization Executive Officer for Applied Vehicle Technology Kerstin Huber said in June that the United States and NATO will not be able to develop and deploy operational hypersonic weapons for at least another 20 years and possibly longer because they are so far behind in the vital technologies.

The US Congressional Budget Office acknowledged in a 2023 report that repeated test failures in recent years have delayed US progress in developing new weapons.

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FBI Says Trump Shooter Had Functional Explosive Devices, Bought Precursors Online

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - The man who attempted to assassinate former US President Donald Trump had functional explosive devices in his vehicle, FBI Special Agent in Charge at the Pittsburgh Field Office Kevin Rojek said on Monday.

"Regarding explosive devices: we recovered two explosive devices in the trunk of the subject's vehicle near the site of the rally… The FBI laboratory has determined that both IEDs [improvised explosive devices] recovered from the subject's vehicle did not explode adjacent to the site of the rally due to the receivers both being in the off position," Rojek said. "Explosive experts at the FBI lab assess the devices from the subject's vehicle were capable of exploding."

The shooter bought precursor chemicals for the explosive devices online using aliases and foreign-based encrypted email accounts. The shooter also searched for info on IEDs and power plants online, Rojek said.

The FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit characterized the shooter as "highly intelligent" but did not find evidence of previously documented mental health issues, Rojek added.

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Pentagon Unable to Accurately Estimate Cost of Hypersonic Weapons - GAO

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Drone Spying Scandal at Paris Olympics Big Embarrassment for Canada - Sports Minister

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - The scandal that erupted following the alleged use of a drone by the women's national soccer team to spy on rival teams has caused a "significant embarrassment" to Canada and Canadians, Minister of Sports Carla Qualtrough said on Monday.

"This issue [spying scandal] has caused significant distraction and embarrassment for Team Canada and all Canadians here in Paris and at home. It is deeply regrettable. As events continue to unfold on this issue, I encourage Canadians to cheer on all our incredible Olympic athletes," Qualtrough said in a statement.

The minister said using a drone to spy on other teams is cheating and such actions are unfair to Canadian players, opponents, and undermine the games' integrity, Qualtrough said. Funds relating to suspended Canada Soccer officials will be withheld for the duration of their FIFA sanction, she added.

Qualtrough pledged to get to the bottom of the matter and noted Ottawa would closely monitor the ongoing investigation and its outcomes.

Last week, the New Zealand's Olympic Committee filed a complaint with the International Olympic Committee about the use of a drone to spy on its practice field prior to the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, French police detained a staffer of the Canadian team on suspicion of flying the drone. This prompted the Canadian Olympic Committee to remove the head coach of the

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women's national soccer team, Bev Priestman, over the alleged spying incident.

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FBI Says Trump Agreed to Interview as Part of Probe Into Assassination Attempt

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) – Former US President Donald Trump has agreed to an interview as part of an investigation into the attempt to assassinate him at a rally in Pennsylvania, the special agent in charge of the FBI Pittsburgh field office said on Monday.
"We have contacted former President Trump, and he has agreed to participate in a victim interview," Kevin Rojek told reporters.

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fbi says trump agreed to interview as part of investigation into assassination attempt

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Quad Alliance Calls Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons 'Unacceptable' in Ukraine

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) – The Quad security alliance on Monday said the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons in the conflict in Ukraine was "unacceptable," according to a joint statement of its foreign ministers.
"In the context of this war, we share the view that the use, or threat of use, of nuclear weapons is unacceptable," according to the release from the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and the foreign ministers of Australia, India, and Japan following their meeting in Tokyo on Monday.
They also said that all states must refrain from the threat or use of force against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of any state.
They called for the importance of upholding international law, including in achieving a lasting peace.
During a meeting with the heads of major international news agencies in June, Russian President Vladimir Putin was asked about the risk of the use of nuclear weapons amid the conflict in Ukraine. Putin said there are constant attempts to accuse Russia of threatening to use nuclear arms, which is not true.
The United States is the only country to have used nuclear weapons in war, he recalled. Putin warned against letting the situation get to not only the use but also the threat of use of nuclear weapons.
In accordance with its nuclear doctrine, Russia could use all means at its disposal if its sovereignty and territorial integrity are under threat, Putin said.

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US 'Laser-Focused on Lebanon,' Urges Citizens to Plan Ahead - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) - The US Department of State said on Monday that it was "laser-focused on Lebanon" and urged US citizens to proactively make a crisis plan of action amid fears that Israel will escalate its war with Hezbollah following the Majdal Shams killings over the weekend.

"First, I want to assure you that Washington is laser-focused on Lebanon. The US Department of State has no higher priority than the safety and security of US citizens overseas," US Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Rena Bitter said in a prerecorded video.

Bitter recommended that US citizens develop a crisis plan of action and leave before a crisis begins while communications and transportation networks were operating normally. She also said that if commercial flights became unavailable, people in Lebanon should be prepared to shelter in place for long periods of time.

Bitter reminded Americans to register in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive alerts from the US embassy and renew passports with less than six months of validity. She also called for people in Lebanon to discourage their relatives overseas from visiting for the time being given the potential difficulties in arranging emergency departures.

On Saturday, an apparent rocket attack on a soccer field in the predominantly Druze village of Majdal Shams in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights killed 12 children and injured 20 others. Israel blamed Hezbollah, which has denied any responsibility for the attack.

Since October 7, Hezbollah has launched attacks on a number of military sites in Israel, refraining from targeting civilians.

Amid the conflicting claims, Israel is expected to launch heavy attacks on Lebanon in retaliation. Flights to and from Beirut have been delayed or canceled, with the Lufthansa Group and Air France suspending flights to Beirut for the next few days.

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Quad Nations Warn Against Unilateral Actions in East and South China Seas - Statement

WASHINGTON, July 29 (Sputnik) – The United States and its partners from the Quad expressed concerns on Monday over the situation in the East and South China Seas and warned against unilateral actions that could alter the status quo.

The foreign ministers from the US, Australia, India and Japan met in Tokyo earlier in the day.

"We are seriously concerned about the situation in the East and South China Seas and reiterate our strong opposition to any unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo by force or coercion," they said in the statement following the meeting.

They expressed their concerns about the militarization of disputed areas, and "coercive and intimidating maneuvers" in the South China Sea, according to the statement.

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"We also express our serious concern about the dangerous use of coast guard and maritime militia vessels, the increasing use of various kinds of dangerous maneuvers, and efforts to disrupt other countries' offshore resource exploitation activities," they said.

The Quad also called on all countries to resolve maritime disputes peacefully and in accordance with international law.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry on Monday criticized the Quad's statement. It accused the alliance of stoking tensions in the region, inciting antagonism and confrontation, and seeking to curb the development of other countries.

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