

8/8/24 Thursday

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RPT - Washington DC Remains Under Flash Flood Warning After Tornado Alert Cleared

(Repeats to correct day of week in lede)

WASHINGTON, August 9 (Sputnik) – A flash flood warning has been issued for Washington DC until 11:00 a.m. EDT (15:00 GMT) Friday, while a tornado alert has been discontinued, the DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA) said.

"A FLASH FLOOD WARNING is in effect for this area until 11:00 AM EDT. This is a dangerous and life-threatening situation. Do not attempt to travel unless you are fleeing an area subject to flooding or under an evacuation order," the notice said.

A tornado warning for the area was in place until 8:45 a.m. EDT. The United States Capitol Police (USCP) had urged personnel within the Capitol Complex to move to their offices' shelter amid the tornado alert.

After the warning cleared, police said that normal operations may resume throughout the Capitol Complex.

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AUKUS Members Test AI-Enabled UAVs in First Real-Time Trials - UK Gov't

WASHINGTON, August 9 (Sputnik) – The members of the AUKUS trilateral defense partnership have tested for the first time AI-enabled unmanned aerial vehicles in a real-time military

environment, the UK government said on Friday.

"In a significant landmark for AUKUS, the 3 nations have trialled a futuristic integration of autonomy and artificial intelligence (AI) for the first time," the government said in a statement. "Testing saw the deployment of a series of AI-enabled uncrewed aerial vehicles that allow a human operator to locate, disable and destroy targets on the ground."

The trial took place as part of the annual US-hosted multinational Project Convergence experimentation exercise. It was part of the AUKUS Resilient and Autonomous Artificial Intelligence Technologies trials, according to the statement.

AUKUS is a trilateral defense partnership announced by the US, the UK and Australia in September 2021. The first pillar of the partnership concerns the creation of an Australian fleet of nuclear submarines using US and UK technology.

The second pillar involves the development of a range of technologies, including underwater robotics, quantum electronics, cybersecurity and electronic warfare capabilities, supersonic weapons and defense mechanisms against them.

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US Doesn't Expect Resumption of Gaza Deal Talks to Be Swift, Much Work Remains - Official

WASHINGTON, August 9 (Sputnik) - The United States does not expect the resumption of Gaza deal talks next week to lead to an immediate ceasefire as much work remains to be resolved between Israel and Hamas, a senior US administration official told reporters.

Earlier, the leaders of Egypt, Qatar and the United States issued a joint statement urging Israel and Hamas to resume ceasefire talks on August 14 or 15 in Doha or Cairo.

"It's not like the agreement is going to be ready to be signed on Thursday, there's still a significant amount of work to do," the official said on Thursday.

The official noted that there are about four or five tough issues that Israel and Hamas need to work out but the United States is confident that they can be resolved with the assistance of all the parties involved, including Egypt and Qatar.

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Ex-Green Beret's DNA Found on Smuggled Arms Meant for Failed 2020 Venezuela Coup - Filing

WASHINGTON, August 9 (Sputnik) - US federal investigators found that former US Green Beret Jordan Goudreau's DNA was found on some of the 60 assault rifles he allegedly smuggled from the United States to South America for a failed coup attempt against Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro in 2020, court documents revealed.

"Goudreau's DNA was recovered from two of the rifles that Colombian authorities seized, including one that the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms has concluded meets the definition of machine gun under the National Firearms Act," prosecutors stated in the court

document.

Goudreau was arrested in New York last week on federal arms smuggling charges.

According to court documents, from at least as early as November 2019 and through March 23, 2020, Goudreau and others are alleged to have unlawfully exported AR-type rifles, night vision devices, laser sights, and other equipment from the United States to Colombia to carry out an armed incursion into Venezuela. Court documents also stated that Goudreau enlisted the unpaid services of US persons who, among other things, helped assemble approximately 60 firearms that were smuggled into Colombia.

On March 23, 2020, Colombian National Police seized a cache of approximately 24 semi-automatic rifles, two fully automatic rifles, laser sights, silencers, and other military-type equipment at a highway checkpoint, the court document added.

The US Justice Department said in a separate statement that Goudreau faces up to 45 years in prison if convicted.

Although Goudreau lived in New York, he frequently traveled to Tampa, Florida, where he usually lived on a boat that is docked at an Air Force base that he had access to, Goudreau's attorney noted in the court document.

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Northrop Grumman to Help S Korea Company Make Airborne Laser Mine Detectors - Release

WASHINGTON, August 9 (Sputnik) - Northrop Grumman has signed an agreement with South Korea's Genohco to help it manufacture air-carried laser mine detectors for battlefield use, the giant US defense contractor announced in a press release.

"Northrop Grumman and Genohco have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in connection with the Republic of Korea's Mine Countermeasures Helicopter (KMCH) program," the release stated on Thursday.

The agreement complements Northrop Grumman's long-standing industrial cooperation with South Korea's Defense Acquisition Program Administration and defines the work that Genohco will perform as a supplier, the release explained.

"This MOU follows Korea Aerospace Industries' (KAI) 2023 contract for Northrop Grumman to provide Airborne Laser Mine Detection System (ALMDS) solutions and technical support for the Engineering, Manufacturing, and Design phase of the Republic of Korea's KMCH program," the release said.

Under the agreement, Genohco will support the manufacturing of ALMDS hardware components. Already, Northrop Grumman has delivered 24 ALMDS units to the US Navy and four to the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF), the company noted.

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Northrop Grumman Builds, Tests New Solid Rocket Motor Using Digital Design - Release

WASHINGTON, August 9 (Sputnik) - Northrop Grumman has built a new large solid rocket motor after designing it digitally and has now successfully test-fired it under US Air Force supervision, the company announced in a press release.

"[A] Northrop Grumman digitally designed and manufactured, large solid rocket motor successfully completed a static fire test at US Air Force Arnold Engineering Development Complex," the release stated on Thursday.

All test objectives were met during the test and performance data anchoring the digital model confirmed the motor's performance, the company said.

"We are using digital solutions across our business to produce solid rocket motors with speed, which is transforming how we design, test, and manufacture the next generation of systems ...[and] to deploy an advanced approach for newly developed rocket motors that are pushing model-based tools further than ever before." Northrop Grumman Vice President for Propulsion Systems Jim Kalberer said in the release.

Northrop Grumman used advanced model-based systems engineering (MBSE) to design the high-performance second-stage motor and a digital environment was also applied to the facilities and tools to manufacture the propulsion system, the release said.

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Earlier, the leaders of Egypt, Qatar and the United States issued a joint statement urging Israel and Hamas to resume ceasefire talks on August 14 or 15 in Doha or Cairo.

"It's not like the agreement is going to be ready to be signed on Thursday, there's still a significant amount of work to do," the official said on Thursday.

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Consequences of Possible Iranian Attack on Israel 'Significant'- Senior Admin. Official

WASHINGTON, August 9 (Sputnik) - The consequences of a potential Iranian attack on Israel would be significant, a senior US administration official said.

"I think the consequences of such a direct attack could be quite significant, including for Iran," the senior administration official said on Thursday.

There is no legitimate basis for an Iranian attack on Israel, the official said.

The United States has bolstered its military preparation in the region in preparation for a

potential attack on Israel by Iran, including deploying additional F-22 Raptor jets to the region.

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US Expects Talks to Begin Soon to Prepare for Revival of Gaza Deal Negotiations - Official

WASHINGTON, August 9 (Sputnik) - The United States and other partners will soon begin talks to prepare for the resumption of Gaza deal negotiations expected next week, a senior US administration official told reporters.

"So the [joint] statement calls on both sides to resume these discussions on Thursday next week, either in Doha or Cairo...I think we'll likely begin preparatory talks to really kind of build up to that probably here fairly soon," the official said on Thursday.

Earlier, the leaders of Egypt, Qatar, and the United States in a joint statement urged Israel and Hamas to resume ceasefire talks on August 14 or 15 in Doha or Cairo.

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Biden, Austin Discuss Military Deployments to Middle East - Senior Administration Official

WASHINGTON, August 9 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin discussed ongoing US military deployments to the Middle East in preparation for a potential attack on Israel by Iran, a senior administration official said.

"Today, we met with the President in the Oval Office together with Secretary Austin again to just review our military deployments, which are ongoing and quite significant and substantial," the senior administration official said on Thursday.

The Pentagon has said that Austin is leading efforts to bolster US forces in the region, amid concerns about a potential Iranian attack on Israel.

Earlier on Thursday, US Central Command said that additional F-22 Raptor jets arrived in the Middle East to counter "threats" posed by Iran.

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US doesn't believe Iran has legitimate basis to launch attack on Israel, warns consequences of direct attack would be 'significant' - official

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US doesn't expect agreement to be signed on Thursday, still significant amount of work to be done- senior administration official

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Biden, Austin met today to discuss 'significant' military changes in Middle east - Senior administration official

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Ex-US Intel Officer Ritter Says Now Certain His Passport Was Seized Over Ongoing FBI Probe

WASHINGTON, August 9 (Sputnik) - Former US Marine intelligence officer and now-political analyst Scott Ritter told Sputnik that he is confident his passport was confiscated by authorities due to the ongoing FBI investigation.

"I have a fairly high degree of certainty now that my passport was seized in relation to this ongoing FBI investigation," Ritter said.

In June, Ritter told Sputnik that the US Department of State had forced him off a commercial flight and confiscated his passport as he was on his way to Russia to participate in the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum as a guest speaker.

Ritter said on Thursday that the search of his home earlier in the week was an "act of intimidation" triggered by his cooperation with Russia's Sputnik and RT news agencies.

On Wednesday, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) confirmed to Sputnik that federal agents had searched a house belonging to Ritter as part of an ongoing federal investigation.

No crime has been or is being committed, the analyst said, adding that he is not a foreign agent and he is not in violation of the US Foreign Agent Registration Act, and that the FBI knows it.

Ritter also said that while he had no problem with agents executing the search warrant, he did have a problem with the warrant itself.

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Canadian Troops to Participate in Australian-led Exercise KAKADU in September – Blair

WASHINGTON, August 9 (Sputnik) — Hundreds of Canadian troops will participate in the Australian-led exercise KAKADU in September to train for maritime warfare, among other scenarios, Minister of National Defense of Canada Bill Blair said during a press conference with Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles.

"This coming September, hundreds of Canadian Forces members will participate in the Royal Australian Navy-led exercise KAKADU, where they will train for a number of scenarios, including maritime warfare," Blair said on Thursday.

According to a joint statement on Strengthening the Canada-Australia Defense Relationship, Canadian Ship Vancouver is expected to participate in the exercise next month.

Earlier this week, Marles took part in the 34th Australia-US Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN), which, according to the Pentagon, aimed to enhance force posture cooperation across various

domains, including land, maritime, air, and space, ensuring both countries can respond more quickly and effectively in the region.

The last iteration of KAKADU occurred in the summer of 2022 and involved 15 warships, 34 aircraft, and more than 3000 sailors from more than 20 nations.

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Canada, Australia Intend to Facilitate Defense, Operational Cooperation – Defense Minister

WASHINGTON, August 9 (Sputnik) – Canada and Australia intend to continue work to reduce barriers to cooperation by means of agreements to facilitate bilateral defense industrial and operational cooperation, Minister of National Defense of Canada Bill Blair said during a press conference with Australia Defense Minister Richard Marles.

“We further intend to reduce barriers to cooperation, including through agreements to facilitate defense industrial activities, and greater operational cooperation,” Blair said on Thursday.

As part of Marles’ visit to Vancouver this week, the two allies have discussed and agreed to enhance the interoperability of their armed forces, including through exploring opportunities to conduct more joint sales and deployments, and to participate in more multilateral exercises together, Blair added.

According to a joint statement on Strengthening the Canada-Australia Defense Relationship, Ottawa and Canberra will explore opportunities for mutual learning and training to increase the interoperability and skillset of military members on shared platforms, including the F-35 fighter aircraft, the P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft, and new warships.

Earlier this week, Marles took part in the 34th Australia-US Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN) aimed at enhancing force posture cooperation across various domains, including land, maritime, air, and space, ensuring both countries can respond more quickly and effectively in the region, according to the Pentagon.

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Canada Recognises Many of Its Air, Naval Fleets Need To Be Replaced - Defense Minister

WASHINGTON, August 9 (Sputnik) - Ottawa recognizes that many of its air and naval fleets need to be replaced, Bill Blair, Minister of National Defense of Canada said.

“We recognize that, and through our Defense policy I think we made very clear that there are new challenges facing our National Defense and that we have to invest significantly in upgrading our platforms,” Blair said on Thursday. “Although we have great confidence in what we are currently sailing on and flying, we recognize that many of those fleets - both air and naval - are aging and need to be replaced and we are making those very significant investments to do just exactly that.”

Blair noted that while they have included money for the maintenance they are also undertaking

a program of updating the country's surface combatant fleet.

"We are also undertaking a very ambitious program of updating our surface combatant fleet," Blair said. "We are also undertaking and beginning the process of identifying the right submarine capability for our Royal Canadian Navy."

Blair made his comments during a joint press conference with Australia's Deputy Prime Minister Marles.

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Pennsylvania Police Release Bodycam Footage of Officer Trying to Confront Trump Shooter

WASHINGTON, August 9 (Sputnik) - Police in Pennsylvania released body camera footage of an officer who attempted to confront the Trump shooter in the moments before he attempted to assassinate the former US president.

The footage released Thursday shows an officer trying to get on a rooftop before the shooter, Thomas Crooks, opened fire on Trump. However, the officer quickly gets down from the rooftop without reaching Crooks.

Officials have previously said that a local law enforcement officer attempted to climb on to the rooftop but retreated after Crooks pointed a rifle at the officer.

On July 13, Crooks attempted to assassinate Trump at a campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. Crooks shot Trump in the ear, killed one audience member and wounded two others.

The incident prompted scrutiny of the US Secret Service's failure to prevent the assassination attempt, ultimately leading the agency's director to resign.

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UPDATE - US Stocks Rally Anew As Risk Takers Move On From 'Black Monday 2.0'

(adds info in paras 6-8)

NEW YORK, August 9 (Sputnik) - US stocks rallied anew Thursday as investors attempted for the third time in as many days to steady the market from its epic selloff at the start of the week.

Wall Street's three main stock indexes — the S&P 500, the Nasdaq Composite, and the Dow Jones Industrial Average — closed up between two and three percent each. The S&P was the outlier of the three, gaining the most in 18 months.

"We're trading a little bit on fundamentals today, but the market is still in assessment mode," Rob Haworth, senior investment strategist at US Bank Wealth Management, said in comments carried by CNBC.

The S&P, Nasdaq, and Dow plummeted at the start of the week, joining world stock markets lower, in an episode some have taken to calling "Black Monday 2.0" after the original Black Monday of October 19, 1987, where a global crash in stocks presaged one of the darkest days in the modern investing era.

Following a partial recovery on Tuesday, Wall Street fell again at Wednesday's close amid anxiety about a potential US recession after unemployment in the world's largest economy hit 2,5 year highs.

In Thursday's session, the S&P, which tracks stocks of 500 high-performing US companies, closed up 2.3% in the biggest one-day leap on the S&P since February 2023. The rally also drew a contrast to the index's 3% slump on Monday which marked its worst day since September 2022.

The Nasdaq, which comprises pricey stocks such as Amazon, Apple, Netflix, and Google, finished the latest session up 2.9% after Monday's 3.4% tumble.

The Dow, the broadest indicator for US equity markets and one that often reflects stocks of value, ended up 1.8% after the 2.6% deficit at the start of the week.

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Oil Bulls Rebuild 2024 Rally, Helped by Demand Data, Wall Street & Middle East

NEW YORK, August 8 (Sputnik) - The 2024 oil rally, nearly wiped out at the start of the week, is being rebuilt, aided by strong draws in US crude, the recovery of stock prices on Wall Street, and fears of the Middle East being drawn into a multi-nation war.

US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude settled New York trading on Thursday at \$76.19 per barrel, up 96 cents, or 1.3%, on the day.

"I am just bullish on WTI here and yesterday's price action gives me even more confidence," said Scott Shelton, a broker in crude oil futures at ICAP in Durham, North Carolina.

WTI rose 2.8% on Wednesday and 0.4% on Tuesday. Year-to-date, the US crude benchmark is up 6%, after rallying as much as 18% earlier.

UK-origin Brent crude finished Thursday's New York trading up 83 cents, or 1.1%, adding to its prior rise of 2.4% on Wednesday and 0.2% on Tuesday.

A global benchmark for crude, Brent is up almost 3% on the year, after a prior rally of almost 20%.

WTI hit a six-month low of \$71.69 at the start of this week while Brent slumped set a new bottom for 2024 as global markets were pummeled on fears of a contagion to a potential US recession.

Over the past three sessions though, crude prices regained their upward stride, with the recovery accelerating after healthy weekly consumption numbers for crude reported by the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) on Wednesday.

US crude stockpiles fell by 3.728 million barrels for the week ended August 2, adding to the prior week's tumble of 3.426 million, the EIA said. US crude inventories have fallen more than 30 million barrels over the past six weeks, a tabulation of data from the agency showed.

Also helping the run-up in crude was Thursday's strong finish in US stock prices. Wall Street's three key stock indexes — the S&P 500, the Nasdaq Composite, and the Dow Jones Industrial Average — rose between two and three percent each as global equity markets steadied from their epic selloff at the start of the week. The S&P, particularly, had its biggest one-day gain in 18 months.

The rally in oil saw further momentum as traders continued to speculate on the potential of a greater war in the oil-rich Middle East as Israel's foes, including Iran, planned to respond to its killing last week of senior leaders from Palestine's Hamas and Lebanon's Hezbollah.

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Harris Says Looking Forward to September 10 Debate With Trump

WASHINGTON, August 8 (Sputnik) - US Vice President Kamala Harris said on Thursday that she is looking forward to a debate with Republican nominee Donald Trump on September 10. "I am looking forward to debating Donald Trump, and we have a date of September 10," Harris said, as quoted by NBC News.

Earlier on Thursday, Trump said that he agreed to three televised debates with Harris: a Fox debate on September 4, an ABC debate on September 10, and an NBC debate on September 25.

Harris has not yet said whether she will participate in the other two proposed debates.

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US Expects Domestic Uranium Market to Grow After Ban on Russian Imports - EIA

WASHINGTON, August 8 (Sputnik) - The United States expects the domestic uranium market to grow after the Biden administration banned imports of Russian uranium, the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) said on Thursday.

"The passage of the ban on uranium imports from Russia also unlocks \$2.72 billion in funding to build out the domestic nuclear fuel supply chain and support new and existing nuclear power plant operators," the EIA said in a press release.

The release noted that US domestic production of uranium oxide is showing signs of growth this year following the ban on Russian supply.

Last year, Russia accounted for 12% of all foreign uranium supply imported into the United States.

The EIA highlighted that in the first quarter of 2024, the United States produced more than 82,000 pounds of uranium concentrate, more than in all of 2023.

The number of uranium mining sites in the United States has also spiked over the last three years, soaring to 1,930 in 2023 compared to 260 mines in 2021, according to the release.

In May, US President Joe Biden signed the Prohibiting Russian Uranium Imports Act, which bans the imports of Russian uranium until 2040.

The bill envisages limiting the import of low-enriched uranium produced in Russia or Russian-based companies, but also authorizes the US energy secretary in coordination with the secretary of state and the commerce secretary to lift the ban if other sources of uranium supplies are unavailable or the import of Russian nuclear fuel is in the national interests of the United States.

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US Does Not Support Long-Range Ukrainian Attacks Into Russia - Pentagon

WASHINGTON, August 8 (Sputnik) - The United States does not support long-range attacks into Russia, and the weapons it provides to Ukraine are intended for crossfire, Deputy Pentagon Press Secretary Sabrina Singh said on Thursday in response to a question about a potential assault on Moscow.

"We don't support long-range attacks into Russia, these [weapons] are more for crossfire, I'm not going to put a specific range on it," Singh said.

On Tuesday, the Russian Defense Ministry said Ukrainian forces had launched an offensive to seize territory in the Kursk region. The next day, Russian Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov said the attack, attempted by up to 1,000 Ukrainian fighters, had been stopped.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has accused Kiev of launching a large-scale provocation. He has also said that Ukrainian troops shelled Russian regions indiscriminately, firing at civilian infrastructure and ambulances.

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Pentagon Says Shia Militia Group Responsible for Launching Missiles at Al Asad Base

WASHINGTON, August 8 (Sputnik) – The United States believes that it was an Iranian-backed Shia group that launched missiles at Al Asad Airbase in Iraq earlier this week, Pentagon deputy spokesperson Sabrina Singh said on Thursday.

"It was two rockets launched by what we believe to be an Iranian-backed Shia militia group that impacted Al Asad Airbase in Iraq," Singh said during a press briefing.

Singh clarified that three missiles were fired at the base, one of which was intercepted before it could impact the base.

A US defense official said in a statement to Sputnik on Tuesday that five US troops and two US contractors were wounded in the rocket attack on Al Asad Airbase in Iraq earlier this week, but they are all in stable condition.

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Galant on Tuesday called the attack on the US airbase in Iraq, where US troops were stationed, a "dangerous escalation," blaming Iran and its allied Shiite militia, the Pentagon said in a statement.

On Wednesday, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said that the United States expects Iraq to take action against those responsible for the attack on the base, but it is prepared to take its measures if Baghdad does not respond appropriately.

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Trump Says Ex-Rival Hillary Clinton Far Superior, Smarter Than Harris

WASHINGTON, August 8 (Sputnik) - Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump told reporters on Thursday that his former Democrat rival Hillary Clinton is far superior and smarter than the current Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris.

"So I've run against Hillary and I've run against various other people. I would say that in terms of intelligence, Hillary was far superior," Trump said during a press conference. "I would say that Hillary was smart. She was her own worst enemy in many ways, but she was smart, very smart."

Trump said he has agreed to participate in debates with Fox News on September 4, ABC on September 10, and NBC on September 25.

However, Trump noted that he's still waiting for confirmation that Harris will participate in these debates as well. Media reported that Harris is locked in for the September 10 debate.

Trump further criticized Democrats for pushing Biden out of the presidential race, adding that the incumbent president had the right to stay in the race regardless of whether he had a chance to win or not.

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US Not Concerned About Escalation Over Ukraine's Actions in Kursk Region – Pentagon

WASHINGTON, August 8 (Sputnik) – The United States is not concerned about escalation with Russia over Ukraine's operation in the Kursk region, Pentagon deputy spokesperson Sabrina Singh said on Thursday.

"We don't feel like this is escalatory in any way. Ukraine is doing what it needs to do to be successful on the battlefield," Singh said during a press briefing.

On Tuesday, the Russian Defense Ministry said that up to 300 Ukrainian fighters, supported by 11 tanks and more than 20 armored vehicles, attacked Russian state border protection units in the region.

Russian President Vladimir Putin accused Kiev of launching a large-scale provocation. He said Ukrainian troops were shelling the Russian regions indiscriminately, firing at civilian infrastructure and ambulances.

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US Stocks Rally Anew As Risk Takers Attempt To Move On From 'Black Monday 2.0'

NEW YORK, August 8 (Sputnik) - US stocks rallied anew Thursday in another attempt over the past three days to steady the market from the epic selloff at the start of the week.

With two hours to the close, Wall Street's three key stock indexes — the S&P 500, the Nasdaq Composite, and the Dow Jones Industrial Average — were up between two and three percent each. The S&P was the outlier of the three, gaining the most in 18 months.

"We're trading a little bit on fundamentals today, but the market is still in assessment mode," Rob Haworth, senior investment strategist at US Bank Wealth Management, said in comments carried by CNBC.

The S&P, Nasdaq, and Dow plummeted at the start of the week, joining world stock markets lower, in an episode some have taken to calling "Black Monday 2.0" after the original Black Monday of October 19, 1987, where a global crash in stocks presaged one of the darkest days in the modern investing era.

After a partial recovery on Tuesday, Wall Street fell again at Wednesday's close amid anxiety about a potential US recession after unemployment in the world's largest economy hit a two-and-a-half year high.

In Thursday's session, the S&P, which tracks stocks of 500 high-performing US companies, was up 2.4% by 2:30 PM Eastern US Time (7:30 PM London).

If those gains hold till the close at 4:30 PM ET, they would account for the biggest one-day leap on the S&P since February 2023. They would also draw a contrast to Monday's 3% slump that marked the index's worst day since September 2022.

The Nasdaq, which comprises pricey stocks such as Amazon, Apple, Netflix, and Google, was up 2.94% after Monday's 3.4% tumble.

The Dow, the broadest indicator for US equity markets and one that often reflects stocks of value, rose 1.8% after the 2.6% deficit at the start of the week.

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"We don't support long-range attacks into Russia, these [weapons] are more for crossfire, I'm not going to put a specific range on it," Singh said.

On Tuesday, the Russian Defense Ministry said Ukrainian forces had launched an offensive to seize territory in the Kursk region. The next day, Russian Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov said the attack, attempted by up to 1,000 Ukrainian fighters, had been stopped.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has accused Kiev of launching a large-scale provocation. He has also said that Ukrainian troops shelled Russian regions indiscriminately, firing at civilian infrastructure and ambulances.

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us not concerned about potential escalation with russia over ukraine's operation in kursk region
- pentagon

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Trump Says 'Of Course' There Will Be Peaceful Transfer of Power After US Election

WASHINGTON, August 8 (Sputnik) - Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump said on Thursday that he believes there will be a peaceful transfer of power after the November vote, but emphasized that he also hopes the elections will be fair.

"Of course there will be a peaceful transfer, and there was last time, and there will be a peaceful transfer. I just hope we're going to have honest elections," Trump said during a press conference.

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trump says 'of course' there will be peaceful transfer of power after us election

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Trump Says Agreed to Three Televised Debates With Harris in September

(Update: adds Trump campaign clarification in para 4)

WASHINGTON, August 8 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said on Thursday that he agreed to three separate televised debates with US Vice President Kamala Harris in September.

"I think it's very important to have debates, and we've agreed with Fox on a date of September 4. We've agreed with NBC – fairly full agreement, subject to them – on September 10. And we've agreed with ABC on September 25," Trump said during a press conference.

However, some minor details for the debates have yet to be determined, Trump said. Harris must agree to the terms, Trump said, adding that he is unsure whether she will ultimately agree.

The Trump campaign later clarified that the ABC debate is set for September 10 and the NBC debate for September 25.

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Trump Says Dems Took Presidency From Biden, He Had Right to Run for Reelection

WASHINGTON, August 8 (Sputnik) - Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump said on Thursday that the Democratic party took away the presidency from President Joe Biden and emphasized that the sitting US president had the right to run for reelection regardless of whether he had a chance to win or not.

"The presidency was taken away from Joe Biden, and I'm no Biden fan...they took the presidency away," Trump said during a press conference. "People were saying he lost after the debate, he couldn't win. Well, I don't know that that's true, necessarily, but whether he could win or he couldn't win, he had the right to run. And they took it away."

Trump claimed that Biden is very angry at Barack Obama and former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi right now after they reportedly forced him to step down from the presidential race.

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Miller Says Ukraine's Use of US Weapons Across Russian Border Is Decision for Ukraine

WASHINGTON, August 8 (Sputnik) - State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Thursday that it is up to Ukraine to decide on their actions regarding the offensive near the Russian border, while US policy permits Ukraine to respond to attacks from that area.

"That is for the Ukrainian Government to speak to when it comes to their decision-making around this offensive but the policy that we announced was to allow Ukraine to respond to attacks coming just over the Russian border, and yes, in the area where they are currently operating across the Russian border, we have seen attacks come from there," Miller said.

Miller added that he would not comment on the reasons behind Ukraine's offensive.

On Tuesday, the Russian Defense Ministry said that up to 300 Ukrainian fighters, supported by 11 tanks and more than 20 armored vehicles, attacked Russian state border protection units in the region.

Russian President Vladimir Putin accused Kiev of launching a large-scale provocation. He said Ukrainian troops were shelling the Russian regions indiscriminately, firing at civilian infrastructure and ambulances.

A Pentagon spokesperson told Sputnik on Wednesday that the Defense Department is reaching out to learn more about Ukraine's attempted offensive in Russia's Kursk region but declined to comment on whether US weapons may have been used.

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Trump Says Agreed to Three Televised Debates With Harris in September

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However, some minor details for the debates have yet to be determined, Trump said. Harris must agree to the terms, Trump said, adding that he is unsure whether she will ultimately agree.

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Countries Must Prevent Afghanistan From Again Becoming Terrorism Hotbed - UN Official

UNITED NATIONS, August 8 (Sputnik) - The international community should unite in order to prevent Afghanistan from again becoming a hotbed of terrorism, UN Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism Vladimir Voronkov said on Thursday.

"The activity of Da'esh [Islamic State or IS, banned in Russia] and other terrorist groups in Afghanistan remains a significant concern. We must unite to prevent Afghanistan from once again becoming a hotbed of terrorism," Voronkov said during a UN Security Council meeting. Voronkov further emphasized that the terror group's affiliate in Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISIS-K) has improved its financial and logistical capabilities over the past six months, including by tapping into Afghan and Central Asian diasporas for support and intensifying its recruitment efforts.

He also noted that the recent activities of the group had resulted in elevated threat levels in Europe.

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US in Touch With Austria on Terror Plot That Targeted Taylor Swift Concert - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 8 (Sputnik) - The United States remains in touch with Austrian authorities on the plot that targeted a Taylor Swift concert in Vienna, US State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Thursday.

"We are in touch with the Austrian government about this, they've said it's an ongoing investigation," Miller said.

Miller said the US still considers Austria a "level one" country, meaning that the State Department deems it safe to travel to the country.

The Austrian Interior Ministry said on Wednesday that a 19-year-old Austrian national, suspected of planning a terrorist attack on one of Swift's concerts in Vienna, had been detained in the city of Ternitz. The police carried out more arrests later on Wednesday as part of an investigation into the case.

Organizers canceled Swift's Vienna concerts, which were scheduled to take place on August 8, 9, and 10 at the Ernst-Happel-Stadion as part of the Eras Tour. Each concert was expected to gather up to 65,000 visitors and 15,000 to 20,000 Swift fans beyond the stadium.

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Russia to Hold Informal UNSC Meeting Tuesday on Ukraine's Attacks on Civilians - Mission

UNITED NATIONS, August 8 (Sputnik) - The Russian Mission to the UN will hold an informal meeting of the Security Council on Tuesday to provide evidence Kiev's attacks against civilians, including in the Kursk region, Russian Deputy Ambassador to the UN Dmitry Polyanskiy told Sputnik on Thursday.

"On Tuesday morning we will conduct an Arria Formula on the crimes of Ukraine, including touching on Kursk. We will provide evidence of targeted attacks by the Ukrainian Armed Forces on civilians," Polyanskiy said.

On Tuesday, the Russian Defense Ministry said Ukrainian forces had launched an offensive to seize territory in the Kursk region. The next day, Russian Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov said the attack, attempted by up to 1,000 Ukrainian fighters, had been stopped.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has accused Kiev of launching a large-scale provocation. He has also said that Ukrainian troops shelled Russian regions indiscriminately, firing at civilian infrastructure and ambulances.

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UN Cannot Verify That Ukrainian Forces Killed Civilians in Kursk - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, August 8 (Sputnik) - The United Nations is unable to verify that the Ukrainian military killed civilians in Russia's Kursk region because it does not have a presence on the ground there, UN Deputy Spokesman Farhan Haq said on Thursday.

"We don't have a presence on the ground in that region, so I can't verify the reports you're talking about," Haq said during a press briefing when asked whether the UN could verify reports that Ukrainian forces killed civilians, including medics during the attack.

The UN nonetheless calls on all parties to act responsibly and ensure the protection of civilians, Haq added.

Kursk's acting Governor Alexei Smirnov said earlier on Thursday that Ukrainian armed forces shelled civilians and ambulances during the attack.

On Tuesday, the Russian Defense Ministry said Ukrainian forces had launched an offensive to seize territory in the Kursk region. The next day, Russian Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov said the attack, attempted by up to 1,000 Ukrainian fighters, had been stopped.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has accused Kiev of launching a large-scale provocation. He has also said that Ukrainian troops shelled Russian regions indiscriminately, firing at civilian infrastructure and ambulances.

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OAS Will Hopefully Hold Another Meeting on Venezuela Next Week - US Envoy

WASHINGTON, August 8 (Sputnik) - The Organization of American States (OAS) will hopefully hold another meeting on Venezuela next week to revisit a resolution after the body failed to adopt a statement urging Caracas to be fully transparent with the results of the presidential election, Francisco Mora, US ambassador to the OAS said on Thursday.

"We are now working on a process that hopefully will lead next week to another special meeting on Venezuela where we could work towards a resolution," Mora said. "

The presidential election in Venezuela was held on July 28, and the National Electoral Council declared Nicolas Maduro the winner. The next day, protests against the election results broke out in the country, with clashes between security forces and protesters in Caracas and other cities, who began throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails at law enforcement officers. More than 250 police outposts were destroyed, multiple acts of vandalism and robbery were reported, and two servicemen were killed.

In the week following the elections, law enforcement officers detained more than 2,000 people, who were accused of destroying state infrastructure, inciting hatred, and terrorism. Violent unrest in Venezuela continued for one day after the elections, after which the government regained control of the situation on the streets. In the following days, supporters of both the president and the opposition held numerous rallies, declaring their victory, but they were peaceful and did not involve clashes.

Without waiting for the results of the vote count and subsequent audit, Washington called on the international community to recognize Gonzalez as the winner of the presidential election in Venezuela. US and EU lawmakers overseeing international relations on Friday threatened Maduro with "responsibility" if he did not voluntarily give up his powers as head of state after the election, calling the results of the vote fabricated.

After the announcement of the official results of the election in Venezuela, Moscow said that the Venezuelan opposition should admit its defeat. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov warned third countries against supporting attempts to destabilize the situation in Venezuela.

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US Bancorp Told to Fix 'Money-Laundering Deficiencies' in 2 Months - Federal Reserve

WASHINGTON, August 8 (Sputnik) - The Federal Reserve said Thursday it had ordered an overhaul of money-laundering detection within The Bancorp Group after finding "significant deficiencies" in scrutiny at two units of the Wilmington, Delaware-based lender, which counts as America's fifth largest bank.

The two Bancorp units — Customers Bancorp and Customers Bank, which are both based in Pennsylvania — have been given two months to improve their detection of suspicious transactions and "risk management practices and compliance with the applicable laws, rules,

and regulations relating to anti-money laundering,” the central bank said.

The deficiencies within Bancorp were discovered during an audit conducted by the Philadelphia chapter of the Fed. In an agreement with the Fed on August 5, the Bancorp subsidiaries pledged to fix shortcomings within 60 days.

In a copy of the agreement, made public on Thursday, the Fed said it expected a revision in scrutiny procedures at Bancorp that would “reasonably ensure the identification and timely, accurate, and complete reporting by the bank of all known or suspected violations of law or suspicious transactions to law enforcement and supervisory authorities.”

Bancorp is the fifth-largest US commercial bank by asset size, with a total of \$8.145 billion under the group. Four of its five-largest shareholders are also America’s biggest asset managers, namely BlackRock, JPMorgan, Vanguard Group and State Street.

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RPT- US Military Bases Are Being Used to Pump Out and Steal Syrian Oil - Russia’s UN Mission

UNITED NATIONS, August 8 (Sputnik) - US military bases in Syria are being used to pump out and smuggle Syrian oil, Russian Deputy Ambassador to the UN Dmitry Polanskiy said on Thursday.

"US military bases built in Syria as a result of the West's aggression against this country are used inter alia to pump out and smuggle Syrian oil - essentially to steal it," Polyanskiy said during a UN meeting on terrorism.

Moreover, the regions seized and occupied by the US military have led to the formation of a "real terrorist ghetto" around their bases, he added.

"The situation in these places is nothing but a humanitarian and food crisis," Polyanskiy said. Syria has been torn by conflict since 2011. Parts of its hydrocarbon-rich east are controlled by the United States and allied militants. After 13 years of instability, more than half of the country’s population requires food assistance, with millions being displaced, according to UN figures.

The United States refused to leave the country after it invaded it in 2016 amid the Syrian civil war on the pretext of fighting terrorists. The government of Syria has repeatedly stated that it deems the presence of the US and Turkish troops on its territory as an act of military aggression and demanded that they immediately withdraw from the country.

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UN Concerned About Kursk Offensive, Seeks More Information on Incident - Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS, August 8 (Sputnik) - The United Nations would like to get more information about what happened in the Kursk region and calls on everyone to act responsibly, UN Spokesman Farhan Haq said on Thursday.

"We would like to get more information about exactly who is behind this violence, but certainly

we're concerned. We want all concerned there to act responsibly and ensure the protection of civilians," Haq responded at a UN briefing when asked if the organization has sufficient insight into the Kursk attacks.

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Pro-Palestine Protesters Target Columbia University Official's Building – Reports

WASHINGTON, August 8 (Sputnik) – Pro-Palestine protesters targeted the apartment building of a Columbia University administrator on Monday, setting crickets loose in the lobby and splattering red paint on the exterior in response to the institution's violent crackdown on campus protests earlier this year, The New York Post reported.

"Did you enjoy our present? Did it make you uncomfortable? What you felt was incomparable to the pain you made Columbia students feel when you signed off on their brutalization because they stood against the genocide of Palestinians," a note left at the building of Columbia's Chief Operating Officer Cas Holloway stated, as quoted by the tabloid.

In April, as Columbia's President Minouche Shafik testified at a congressional hearing on anti-Semitism, Columbia students erected tents on a central lawn on campus to form a "Gaza Solidarity Encampment." The following day, Shafik authorized the New York Police Department in a controversial move to clear out the encampment, which also involved the suspension and arrest of more than 100 people.

Shafik's escalation spurred students and faculty at dozens of universities around the country to organize pro-Palestinian protests and encampments in solidarity with their Columbia counterparts.

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US CENTCOM Informs F-22 Raptor Jets Arrived in Middle East to Counter 'Iran Threat'

WASHINGTON, August 8 (Sputnik) – The United States Central Command (CENTCOM) said on Thursday that additional F-22 Raptors have arrived in the Middle East to counter "threats posed by Iran" and the groups it backs.

On Friday, media reported that the US would dispatch additional combat aircraft to the Middle East to counter "threats from Iran" and Iranian-allied groups in Gaza, Lebanon, and Yemen who expressed the intent to launch retaliatory attacks on Israel to avenge the death of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh.

"U.S. Air Force F-22 Raptors arrived in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility Aug. 8 as part of U.S. force posture changes in the region and to address threats posed by Iran and Iranian-backed groups," CENTCOM said via X.

Israel carried out dual assassinations of Hezbollah and Hamas leaders in Beirut and Tehran, respectively, last week. Iran and Hezbollah are expected to launch retaliatory attacks on Israel.

NBC News reported, citing an unnamed Israeli official, that the Jewish state was preparing for a potential prolonged attack by both Hamas and Hezbollah, keen to avenge the deaths of their leaders.

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Russian National Pavel Kublitskii Arrested in US on Cybercrime Charges - Court Document

WASHINGTON, August 8 (Sputnik) - Russian citizen Pavel Kublitskii and Kazakhstan national Alexandr Khodyrev have been arrested in the United States on cybercrime charges, according to the court documents, obtained by Sputnik on Thursday.

The suspects were arrested in Florida on Tuesday, and the first hearing in their case is scheduled for August 9.

According to the arrest warrant for the suspects, US law enforcement agencies consider them involved in the administration of a platform for data exchange and sale of illegally obtained information on the WWH darknet.

The suspects are charged with "Conspiracy to traffic in unauthorized access devices," and "Conspiracy to possess 15 or more unauthorized access devices," prosecutors said in documents.

Both suspects arrived in the United States in 2022 and applied for asylum. They settled in Florida, where they have lived a luxurious lifestyle without official employment, according to the court documents.

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More Than 100 Homes Damaged in Alaska's Capital as Burst Ice Dam Causes Severe Flooding

WASHINGTON, August 8 (Sputnik) - More than 100 homes were damaged in severe flooding in the Alaskan capital of Juneau after a burst glacial ice dam caused widespread flooding, the city said in a statement.

"Over 100 homes have been damaged or impacted by floodwaters. The community is now facing a long recovery," the City and Borough of Juneau said on Wednesday.

The city said the Mendenhall River peaked at 15.99 feet following the ice dam burst near the Mendenhall Glacier.

However, by midday the same day, the floodwaters had receded, and houses were drying in the sun.

No one was killed or injured in the flooding, according to local officials.

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US Loans \$1.45Bln to South Korean Company Building Solar Plant in Georgia – Energy Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 8 (Sputnik)—The US Energy Department said on Thursday that it will support a South Korean company's plans to build a solar panel plant in Georgia by guaranteeing up to \$1.45 billion in loans.

"The Department of Energy's Loan Programs Office announced today a conditional commitment for a loan guarantee of up to \$1.45 billion to Qcells, a leading North American crystalline silicon solar manufacturer," the department said in a press release.

According to the release, the US government will provide the guarantee to the South Korean company's North American branch and support Qcells' facility in Cartersville, Georgia. The facility is expected to produce ingots, wafers, cells, and finished solar panels.

The release said the factory will become the largest ingot and wafer plant ever built in the United States and the first fully integrated silicon-based solar facility constructed in the country in over a decade.

The release added that the plant is expected to produce 3.3 gigawatts of solar panels annually, enough to supply about 500,000 American households.

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Russia Urges UN to Investigate Western Involvement in Kursk Terrorist Attacks- UN Mission

UNITED NATIONS, August 8 (Sputnik) - The Russian UN Mission urged the UN Secretariat to examine evidence of Western Special Services' role in Kursk Region terrorist attacks, Deputy Ambassador to the UN Dmitry Polanskiy said on Thursday.

"We call on specialized experts for UN bodies to at least now not just shrug off this data, but carefully study it and assess on the basis of this the role of Western special services and their Ukrainian disciples and the organization in abetting of this type of terrorist attacks," Polyanskiy said during a UN meeting on terrorism.

On Tuesday, the Russian Defense Ministry said that up to 300 Ukrainian fighters, supported by 11 tanks and more than 20 armored vehicles, attacked Russian state border protection units in the region.

Russian President Vladimir Putin accused Kiev of launching a large-scale provocation. He said Ukrainian troops were shelling the Russian regions indiscriminately, firing at civilian infrastructure and ambulances.

A Pentagon spokesperson told Sputnik on Wednesday that the Defense Department is reaching out to learn more about Ukraine's attempted offensive in Russia's Kursk region but declined to comment on whether US weapons may have been used.

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More than Two Thirds of Americans Concerned About State of Democracy – Poll

WASHINGTON, August 8 (Sputnik) – More than two-thirds of Americans are concerned about the state of democracy amid the upcoming presidential elections, according to an AP-NORC poll released on Thursday.

Fifty-nine percent of respondents said that "democracy in the US could be at risk depending on who wins the 2024 presidential election" and 18% said that it was "already so seriously broken that it doesn't matter who wins the 2024 presidential election."

At 67%, Democrats were markedly more likely than Republicans (58%) or independents (42%) to believe democracy was at risk depending on the winner.

In contrast, Republicans were much more likely believe that the upcoming elections would impact the issues of the economy and immigration.

The poll of 1,143 adults was conducted July 25-29 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.1 percentage points.

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Pelosi Says 'Startled' by Biden's Debate Performance Against Trump

WASHINGTON, August 8 (Sputnik) - Former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said on Thursday that she was "startled" by US President Joe Biden's June debate performance against Republican challenger Donald Trump, after predicting that he would perform well.

Pelosi said in an interview with The New Yorker that she has never seen Biden in such an alarming and confused state.

"[Biden] felt great. And I had confidence in him. I didn't think it wouldn't be good. I just didn't want him to be seen with that guy [Trump]. And then that happened, and I think everybody was

stunned. It was stunning,” Pelosi said.

Biden’s poor debate performance against Trump prompted some Democrats to call on him to end his campaign, which he ultimately did. Biden then endorsed US Vice President Kamala Harris as his replacement.

However, Trump suggested on Tuesday that Biden could “crash” the Democratic National Convention later this month in a bid to retake the nomination from Harris. Biden feels like he made a mistake and wants to resume his presidential aspirations, Trump said.

Pelosi said that she believes Biden is in a “good state,” but that his legacy will be lost if Trump wins the White House in November.

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US Weekly Jobless Claims Dip From Year-High, Calming Recession Fears

WASHINGTON, August 8 (Sputnik) - Weekly jobless claims filed by Americans have fallen from one-year highs, the Labor Department reported on Thursday, sending a measure of relief to investors and economists fearing the country may be headed for a recession as unemployment spikes.

First-time filings for jobless benefits totaled 233,000 during the week ended August 2, down 17,000 from the one-year high of 250,000 in the prior week to July 27, the department reported. Economists on Wall Street had anticipated around 240,000 filings for the just-ended week. The Labor Department’s report of some 7,000 lower than that was welcomed by those fearing a bust in the US jobs market, which had been holding up the economy since it began recovering from the COVID-19 outbreak of 2020.

“Anything in that range tends to suggest a fairly healthy labor market,” economist Joseph Brusuelas wrote on the X platform, formerly known as Twitter, referring to claims in the bracket of 230,000 to 240,000.

Predictions for a US recession have grown since the Labor Department reported that unemployment rose to 2-½ year highs at the end of July as non-farm payrolls grew by just 114,000 that month — the smallest since the jobs boom that began with the recovery that set in after the pandemic.

Many economists have since blamed the Federal Reserve’s spree of interest rate hikes in the aftermath of the pandemic for the situation, saying the central bank had overtightened monetary policy in its overzealousness to bring inflation down.

Inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, jumped well past the Fed’s 2% per annum target to reach a four-decade high of 9.1% by June 2022, at the height of the economic fallout from the pandemic. In June this year, it stood at 3%.

Rates, on the other hand, remain at a two-decade high of 5.25-5.5%, thanks to the 11 hikes instituted by the Fed between March 2022 and June 2023.

The Fed has signaled that it may cut rates for the first time in four years at its September 18 policy meeting. If it foregoes that opportunity, it will have another two chances to make amends on rates before the year ends — at the November 7 and December 18 policy meetings.

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US Bans Imports From 5 Chinese Companies Over Forced Labor Allegations – Homeland Security

WASHINGTON, August 8 (Sputnik) – The United States has banned imports from five Chinese companies over alleged use of forced labor in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (UAR), according to a Department of Homeland Security notice scheduled to be published on Friday.

The DHS has updated its list of entities allegedly using Uyghur forced labor with five companies from China, including two working with the government of the UAR to recruit, transport, transfer, harbor, or receive forced labor, two entities that source material from the UAR, and one entity that fits both categories.

According to the notice, the list of the five banned entities includes Kashgar Construction Engineering (Group) Co., Ltd., Xinjiang Habahe Ashele Copper Co., Ltd., Xinjiang Tengxiang Magnesium Products Co., Ltd., Century Sunshine Group Holdings, Ltd., and Rare Earth Magnesium Technology Group Holdings, Ltd.