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8/14/24 Wednesday

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'Complete Hypocrisy': US Continues to Serve Israel as Fear of Middle East Conflict Grows

Hamas has reportedly expressed that they no longer see the US as being able to bring about a deal that would solidify a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. And following the assassination of one of their leaders, the US has continued to support Israel indefinitely.

Tensions in the Middle East are growing as Israel anticipates a retaliatory attack from Iran in response to the assassination of Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh. The US has expressed their full support of Israel, and approved an $18.82 billion sale of 50 F-15IA multirole fighter jets and other related equipment to the Israeli government, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) said on Tuesday.

On Wednesday, Robert Fantina, an author, journalist, and activist joined Sputnik's The Backstory to discuss the growing tensions in the Middle East, as well as the prevalent hypocrisy of the US in its interference of the region.

"Yes, this is just showing the cracks in the facade of a united Israeli government because that doesn't exist. There are people there, I hate to call them more reasonable minds because I don't think anyone there is reasonable, but they recognize that there cannot be victory over this ideology," Fantina explained.

"The people of Palestine in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and Jerusalem and so on have been oppressed by the Israelis for decades and they are angry. They want their basic human rights that are guaranteed to them under international law. So, Israel can kill as many Palestinians, unless it kills the entire population, Hamas - the resistance anyway - is going to continue to exist and grow in one form or another."

"What's required to defeat Hamas is adherence to international law, the removal of the illegal settlers from the West Bank. The establishment of Palestine, at least, on the pre-1967 borders and peace. The slaughter of innocent men, women and children in Gaza isn't going to defeat Hamas," the journalist added.

Osama Hamdan, a Hamas Political Bureau member, said in an interview that the US is no longer being seen as a reliable negotiator who is capable of bringing about a ceasefire in Gaza, Sputnik reported on Wednesday. The bureau member added that Hamas no longer sees Israel as negotiating in good faith and that they believe the Biden administration can no longer influence Israel to make a deal.

Ahmed Abdel Hadi, a Hamas representative in Lebanon, also told Sputnik that Hamas will not participate in ceasefire talks that were scheduled for August 14-15. This follows the Israeli assassination of Ismail Haniyeh, the political leader of Hamas, who was attacked while in the Iranian capital of Tehran on July 31.

"And Hamas leaders have said that the agreement that US President Joe Biden introduced back in May was acceptable to them - Biden at the time said it had been accepted by Israel. As soon as Hamas said that they would accept it, Israel began moving the goalposts, wanting more

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conditions, putting things, putting in conditions that Hamas simply wasn't going to allow and agree to," said Fantina.

"Since October 7th, people in Israel are angry that there are still hostages being held by Hamas and they want him to get them released and the best way to do that is by having a ceasefire. However, the most radical right-wing members of his cabinet are threatening to resign from the government if he agrees to a ceasefire, which would then cause the government to dissolve and would require new elections," Fantina explained.

"Netanyahu knows he would not win in another election. He's also under indictment for some very fairly serious charges and he hopes that by maintaining the office of prime minister he will not have to be accountable for those. So, he wants to stay in power, he wants to stay out of prison and in order to do that he has to appease these right-wing zealots in his cabinet," he added.

"But the facts are, as you stated, Hamas has made concessions, has compromised as people do when they're trying to make an agreement of any kind - each side has to give a little to get what it wants. Hamas has done that. It's Israel that keeps saying no. That once the agreement is basically in place, Israel decides on some other conditions that it wants. So a ceasefire is not in Benjamin Netanyahu's best interest for himself."

Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has vowed to retaliate for the assassination of Hamas negotiator Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran whom he referred to as a "dear guest in our home", though speculation about how or when Iran will strike continues.

Meanwhile, the US has continued its military support of Israel by stockpiling the country with shipments as ordered by US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin Iranian acting Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri has suggested that retaliation from Iran will help stabilize the region rather than disrupt it, Sputnik reported on Tuesday.

"It's complete hypocrisy. The US spokespeople say they're working tirelessly for a ceasefire. They, the US is providing the weaponry that's causing this genocide, that's being used in this genocide. So, the US could have ended this, this genocide on day one or any time since then by simply telling Israel no more money, no more weapons," said Fantina.

"Israel is interested in fostering more war in the area, getting more support from the US, eliminating any potential rivals in the Middle East, whether that's military rivals or economic rivals. And, Iran is their chief rival for power influence in the Middle East. So if Israel can foment a war with Iran, knowing that the US will come to its defense, well, that's in Israel's best interest as a rogue and pariah state," he explained.

The office of the Palestinian Authority's president is reportedly holding the US government accountable after approximately 100 people, including at least 11 children and six women, were killed this weekend from a bombing attack in which US-provided missiles were used. At least 6,000 displaced Palestinians were being housed at the al-Taba'een (or Al-Tabin) school when bombs struck the school at about 4:30 AM on August 10, said Mahmoud Bassal, the Gaza civil defense spokesman.

Nabih Abu Rudeineh, the spokesperson for the Palestinian presidency, condemned the attack and said the Palestinian Authority held the Biden administration "responsible for the massacre due to its financial, military, and political support for Israel," cited a report from Common Dreams.

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'They Need a Scapegoat': US Favored Japanese Leader to Step Down

At the end of 2023, Kishida had announced that he was stepping down as the leader of the Kochikai faction of the ruling LDP following a years-long ticket sales scandal. Five LDP factions were accused of allegedly underreporting income in political funds reports.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has announced his plans to step down as leader of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). The move comes after Kishida's sinking approval ratings which follow a corruption scandal surrounding the party, as well as rising living costs and a weakening yen, Sputnik reported.

In November, Kishida had reportedly taken drastic action to replace top members of his cabinet following voter anger in response to a fundraising proceeds scandal. Lawmakers in Japan's ruling party had been accused of underreporting funds with over 100 million yen ($680,000) of fundraising proceeds failing to be officially reported on.

On Wednesday, peace activist, writer, and teacher, K.J. Noh joined Sputnik's The Critical Hour to explain how US interference has hampered Japan's economy and spurred China to continue its pacifist approach to foreign policy.

"...certainly the LDP is corrupt from beginning to end, and it's essentially a party that is run and built from slush funds. It was built by the CIA. The CIA created this slush fund, and then it put them into power along with the backing of the gangster class. It put the unrepentant militarists back into power in 1955, and they've been essentially a one-party state," Noh explained.

"Japan has been a one-party state since that period. And so, to casually dismiss that is nonsense. But, what it does show is that they do need a scapegoat. Japan's economy is crashing. It's going the way of Germany or the UK. And so, they need a scapegoat," the analyst added.

In summarizing the economic history of Japan, Noh suggested that Japan became rich and modernized early on thanks to German imports which included "German fascism".

Following its failure in World War II, Noh explained that Japan became a "tenant farmer" of the US and participated in war profiteering during the Vietnam War and quickly grew to become a wealthy country that was becoming "a little bit too big for its britches" and "got slapped down in the Plaza Accords" during which the US "essentially put it back into its box".

"They put Kishida in after Abe was shot and he was shot, essentially, because of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) slush funds with the Moonies. So let's banish any notion that the LDP is clean and sober. But since the US has pushed Japan into its junior partner in its escalation to war against China, it has forced it to increase its military spending, by multiples, so that Japan will have very shortly the third-largest military budget on the planet," Noh explained.

In Japan, it is common for lawmakers to hold fundraising events. The money that is fundraised typically comes from ticket sales and whatever leftover profits there are following the costs of the event goes to the organizers. These large-scale parties are a major source of revenue for factions. In 2022, the Kishida faction received ¥229.35 million in revenue with 80% coming from fundraising parties, according to a Japanese news source.

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“And, it also forced it to sanction both China and Russia. So, the key areas where Japan was competitive- that is, advanced chemicals, chip technology, electronics- all of that was banned. All that trade was banned or forced to be decoupled from China, and that has gutted Japan’s economy,” he added.

“And then on top of that, when the US forced Japan, as a member of the G7, to stop importing oil and natural gas from Russia, that put an even greater impact on an already ailing economy. And so, they need a scapegoat for this economic collapse. And so, Kishida is on his way out,” Noh continued. “He's going to fall on his sword and they're going to put in somebody who's essentially a clone.”

“And then they will continue the escalation to war. And, simply, Japan is yet another sacrifice zone in the US global economic war against China. It's essentially a bumper, a crash test dummy,” the educator added.

“It's like a calf being fattened for slaughter. And Japan and Korea were getting big for their britches. And then essentially they were taken down, dismantled. And now they get to reconstitute themselves a little bit as long as they stay in their place,” he added.

Washington, DC has grown angry in response to China’s growing power which is now keeping the US on its toes, a recent article published in the New Eastern Outlook writes. However, the US' constant attempts to provoke China to violence has had the opposite effect, with Beijing only reinforcing its pacifist approach to foreign diplomacy.

“...the United States strives to portray East-West tensions as a conflict of hierarchy between two models of governance: liberal democracies, synonymous with the West, and autocracies, synonymous with emerging powers,” the article writes.

“The US wants to see if it can either continually infringe on China and do what it did to Japan and Korea, which is not likely to happen, but essentially put it back into its spot. How dare China challenge US hegemony, US supremacy? How dare it not follow the rules-based international order, i.e. US arbitrary dictates,” Noh explained from the viewpoint of US powers.

“And so, what it is doing right now is continually putting pressure on China and it's trying to see if they can salami slice and continue to box China in. They're just coming closer and closer, boxing it in, closer and closer," he said. "...if China reacts and it reacts violently, tries to push its way out, then the US will have a pretext for war. And then when it starts to have that war, that will divert China from its key goal in development, which is economic development, peaceful development. And, therefore, there will be a kinetic war that will also derail China.”

“Either way, the US is seeking to undercut and derail and undermine China, put it back into its box like Korea and Japan,” Noh explained. “What China is doing is it's going to use a peaceful method to overcome war. And it does that by building up good relations with all the countries of the Global South without forcing them to choose.”

Tensions in the Middle East are growing as Israel anticipates a retaliatory attack from Iran in response to the assassination of Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh. The US has expressed their full support of Israel and approved an $18.82 billion sale of 50 F-15IA multirole fighter jets and other related equipment to the Israeli government, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) said on Tuesday. “It’s complete hypocrisy. The US spokespeople say they’re working tirelessly for a ceasefire. They, the US is providing the weaponry that's causing this genocide, that's being used in this genocide. So, the US could have ended this, this genocide on day one or any time since then by simply telling Israel no more money, no more weapons,”

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said Robert Fantina, an author, journalist, and activist who joined Sputnik's The Backstory on Wednesday to discuss the growing tensions in the Middle East. Osama Hamdan, a Hamas Political Bureau member, said in an interview that the US is no longer being seen as a reliable negotiator who is capable of bringing about a ceasefire in Gaza, Sputnik also reported on Wednesday. The bureau member added that Hamas no longer sees Israel as negotiating in good faith and that they believe the Biden administration can no longer influence Israel to make a deal. "Netanyahu knows he would not win in another election," Fantina added. "So, he wants to stay in power, he wants to stay out of prison and in order to do that he has to appease these right-wing zealots in his cabinet." "Israel is interested in fostering more war in the area, getting more support from the US, eliminating any potential rivals in the Middle East, whether that's military rivals or economic rivals. And, Iran is their chief rival for power influence in the Middle East. So if Israel can foment a war with Iran, knowing that the US will come to its defense, well, that's in Israel's best interest as a rogue and pariah state," said Fantina. 👉 Follow the link for more details

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"They are just reports," US Dept of State Deputy Spokesperson downplays monstrous reports of IDF soldiers using Palestinians as 'human shields'

"But I also just want to stress, Saeed, that they are just reports at this point," Principal Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel sheepishly told one reporter. "And that is why we would encourage Israel to look into what's going on." "So do you condemn the Israelis for using Palestinians for the same purpose that you condemn Hamas?" a reporter insisted. However, the spokesperson did not condemn the Israelis' alleged, unethical acts. "So what makes these reports about Hamas using Palestinians as human shields as fact on the ground? Because you're not there and you don't really verify," the reporter insisted bravely. "Nadia, we know with incredible certainty that Hamas has a clear track record of using civilian infrastructure and protected facilities as areas of operation as bases and using civilians as human shields. That is not a hyperbole," Patel said. "Two weeks ago, I asked you about a photo of Israeli soldiers posing in front of the Turkish-Palestinian friendship hospital. And there were also reports that the IDF was using this hospital as their military base... Do you have any updates on that?" another reporter cornered Patel. "I don't have any specifics to offer as it relates to that at this time," the spokesperson replied, before yet again shifting the US' responsibility of answering the question.

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Democracy and its discontents: pro-Israel lobby overrides US public opinion on Gaza

Independent journalist Dr. Jim Kavanagh joined Sputnik's The Critical Hour program to discuss the Biden administration's foreign policy and the growing gulf between public opinion in the United States and its actions on the world stage.

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"Israel has crossed all and everybody's red lines," writes Kavanagh in a recent piece published on the website The Polemicist. "Israel is telling the world it will kill anyone and any number of people, anywhere, at any time of its choosing and it does not give a damn about what anyone in the world thinks of it."

"Israel is only slightly less contemptuous of Americans than the Palestinians," the journalist claimed, noting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's skill in manipulating the United States to serve his interests. "Palestinians they consider subhuman and dispensable persons versus the Americans they consider necessary fools whom they have to pretend they're interested in ceasefires and two-state solutions for because the Americans are stupid enough to believe it."

"They just got to keep the Americans around because the Americans are their patrons," he continued. "The United States of America is the indispensable patron of Israel. They could not do anything that they're doing without it. And we are completely complicit in it."

The longtime Israeli Prime Minister once claimed the United States is "a thing you can move very easily" in private comments secretly recorded in 2001. Since then the controversial leader has often publicly waded into US politics, perhaps most famously in 2015 when he gave a speech to a session of the United States Congress denouncing former President Barack Obama's Iran nuclear deal.

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Serbia remains island of independence from 'globalist' US empire – Analyst

Serbian-American journalist Nebojsa Malic joined Sputnik's The Backstory program this week to discuss the latest developments in Serbia, which strives to maintain sovereignty as it navigates a path independent from the influence of the United States and other global powers.

"Ever since the color revolution of 2000 any sort of mass protest, no matter how legitimate, always gets hijacked by elements sort of recruited by foreign governments," said Malic, referring to the so-called "Bulldozer Revolution" that overthrew the independent-minded Slobodan Milošević.

"They always end up on high alert for any sort of mass event, and that was the case this time," he continued, referring to recent protests over the Serbian government's signing of a deal with a German conglomerate to exploit the country's lithium. "Russia actually took the unprecedented step of warning Belgrade… that there are some foreign services that might be plotting to use this as an anti-government [riot], basically hijacking this protest for the purpose of regime change."

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Central and Eastern Europe have been rocked by several so-called “color revolutions” since the 1990s during which Western-backed forces have succeeded in overthrowing governments deemed to be working against US interests. Among such events have been Ukraine’s 2014 Euromaidan coup, Georgia’s 2003 “Rose Revolution” and Ukraine’s 2004 “Orange Revolution.”

These events utilize and perfect so-called non-violent protest tactics developed by the American political scientist Gene Sharp. By training and providing unlimited resources to a small cadre of dedicated US-backed influencers and activists, Western interests are able to create the conditions for regime change through destabilization and careful manipulation of the media.

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Patriotic Russians Volunteer in Droves as US Tries to Divert Blame for Nord Stream Sabotage

Support among Russians for the special military operation is at a high as Western governments scramble to cover up the United States' increasingly sloppy crimes.
Two decades from the outset of the United States’ war in Iraq a 2023 opinion survey found 61% of Americans disagree with the decision to launch the ill-fated invasion.
The finding is the culmination of years of soul searching on the part of the American public, which has grown increasingly wary of US military intervention in recent years. A large majority of Russian citizens, on the other hand, have indicated they approve of the country’s special military operation against Ukraine with healthy military recruitment figures serving as the latest evidence the citizenry is united behind President and Commander-in-Chief Vladimir Putin.
International relations and security analyst Mark Sleboda joined Sputnik’s The Final Countdown program Wednesday to discuss the latest developments in the Western proxy war on Russia as well as the curious case of the Nord Stream pipeline explosion as the German government claims to have found a suspect for the crime.
“The German news that broke is pretty interesting,” said Sleboda, referring to the German government’s release of the name of a supposed suspect behind the presumed sabotage of the Russo-German Nord Stream Pipeline in 2022. “This Volodymyr Z – according to German privacy laws, the full name is not released… this is the absolutely complete bull feces, cockamamie cover-up story that the United States and Germany have centered on.”
“They can’t admit that the United States blew up the Nord Stream pipelines, because that would mean the end of NATO,” the analyst added. “It would be a member of NATO attacking a member of NATO. They can’t admit that. So they came up with this.”
In a case of reality sometimes proving to be stranger than fiction, the German government has claimed an amateur Ukrainian scuba diver by the name of “Volodymyr Z” is responsible for the explosion that blew up the Nord Stream 2 pipeline that formerly transported cheap natural gas from Russia to Europe.
But critics claim the “discovery” of the alleged culprit, whose last name is purportedly “Zhuravlev,” is itself another fiction of Western intelligence agencies, which insist on offering an alternative explanation for the environmental disaster which is widely presumed to be the work of the United States.

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“It [was] a methane release,” Sleboda noted. “And methane is a greenhouse gas some 28 times more potent than carbon. So, yes, it is also the largest man-made release of carbon environmental catastrophe [of] that scale. But these things go by the wayside when geopolitics is concerned.”

“As far as I'm concerned the Seymour Hersh version of events is probably very close to the actual story,” he added, referring to the investigative journalist’s analysis of the incident.

“To believe that a group of rando Ukrainians on a rent-a-day little pleasure dinghy out of Poland managed to lay serious military explosives at the bottom of the Baltic Sea, a NATO lake just off an island in Denmark that NATO routinely does military exercises [in] – in fact amazingly enough, just a week earlier, there [were] US ships involved in military exercises, military ships that may very well have actually been involved in leaving some explosives on the bottom of the Baltic Sea – I mean, this story is so ridiculous and, conveniently enough, their mysterious Volodymyr Z just disappeared.”

Western governments’ refusal to implicate the United States in the incident and reluctance to investigate the matter has further damaged support for the Ukraine proxy war as European leaders fear former President Donald Trump would end US support for the conflict if reelected in November.

Meanwhile, Russian citizens remain united behind Moscow’s war effort, with Ukraine’s attempt to mount an incursion onto the Kursk region of Russia only heightening Russians’ patriotic fervor.

“It's just further cementing support for the [special military operation],” noted Slebeda. “By all domestic accounts the number of young men signing up as volunteer contract soldiers for the SMO – which was already around 1,000 a day, at least at the last word by the minister of defense – has jumped again because people feel that Russia has been attacked and Russia has been insulted.”

“The statements in the press make it quite clear that the US and Europe were at some level completely behind this. So that increases Russian society's anger and desire for getting some payback.”

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Zombie ‘Russiagate’ Conspiracy Persists as US Stokes Fear, Hatred of Moscow

The narrative has proven to be a useful tool as the United States supports economic, diplomatic, and military aggression against Russia.

“Russiagate continues to survive like a science fiction monster, resilient to bullets,” writes former CIA analyst Ray McGovern in a piece on the website Consortium News, noting the longevity and usefulness of the conspiracy in continuing to stoke hostility towards Moscow among the American public.

The notion that Russia interfered in the 2016 US presidential election or played a role in hacking leaked Democratic Party emails has persisted even after sworn testimony from the cyber security firm CrowdStrike confirmed the lack of evidence for the claim.

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“The mainstream media has been incredibly adept at suppressing all this stuff,” McGovern noted on Sputnik’s The Critical Hour program Wednesday. “No matter what we write in Consortium News or other outlets – it's on antiwar.com now, too – or however much you and I share this information, we're fighting an uphill battle.”

“Why is this important? Just to remind folks who might not reflect on this, Russia has been demonized to the point where Donald Trump has been blamed on the Russians – think what you will of that,” he continued.

“And all kinds of other things have been blamed on the Russians to the point where if these not very emotionally stable people in the White House decide to go after the Russians in Ukraine or even get involved against the Russians in Syria or elsewhere in the Middle East, most of the American people say, ‘oh yeah, those damn Russians, didn't they give us Donald Trump?’”

The ingrained hostility towards Russia from the American public – and from Democratic Party supporters, in particular – has served as a useful tool in justifying continued US involvement in Ukraine’s proxy war against the country.

Former CIA head James Clapper, who presided over the agency’s illegal surveillance of the Donald Trump campaign during the 2016 election, has been instrumental in perpetuating the narrative. Clapper has made his distrust of Moscow clear, appearing to suggest nefarious qualities are somehow hardcoded into the DNA of Russian people.

“[Clapper claimed] the historical practices of the Russians [make them] almost genetically driven to co-opt, penetrate, gain favor, whatever, which is a typical Russian technique,” McGovern recalled, calling him a “Russophobe extraordinaire.”

“I was the CIA director… we lied, we cheated, we stole,” declared former CIA director Mike Pompeo during a candid moment in 2019. “We had entire training courses.”

A gene for dishonesty has yet to be found. But if one exists, Pompeo’s comment suggests it is most likely to predominate among CIA officials like Clapper, who have been responsible for the overthrow of dozens of world leaders and the deaths of millions of civilians.

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'Calling All the Shots': US Escalates Ukraine Conflict via Kiev Client State

American imperialism looms large as the Western-backed proxy war on Russia continues. 2022’s Nord Stream pipeline sabotage reemerged in Western headlines Wednesday when the German government announced it was seeking the arrest of a new suspect in the case.

A Ukrainian diving instructor identified as Volodymyr Zhuravlev is claimed to have worked with a team of co-conspirators to install the explosives that caused the destruction of the pipeline almost two years ago. The charge has been met with widespread skepticism, with observers saying only highly trained experts would’ve been able to reach the deep sea pipeline, but Western media outlets like The New York Times have nonetheless faithfully parroted the claim as allied NATO leaders seek to shift the blame away from the United States for the catastrophic environmental disaster.

“I saw the headline and I had to laugh – literally, I had to laugh,” said documentarian Regis Tremblay on Sputnik’s The Critical Hour program Wednesday. “I don't know if this is just a

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distraction but I think it's been pretty well determined by Sy Hersh and others that no individual is capable of doing this."

"Blowing up the Nord Stream pipeline was such a complicated procedure that it absolutely has to have taken a state, the state being the United States of America possibly working with Sweden and who knows who else," said the commentator. "This was such a complicated maneuver and task that no one individual could do this… I can't believe that this is even a cover-up or even a distraction."

The story has brought attention to the likely US role in the incident as the country maintains economic pressure against Russia. Germany's economy has cratered in the wake of Western sanctions against Russian gas, with analysts earlier this year forecasting a GDP increase of only .2%, but German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has nonetheless remained an enthusiastic participant in US-backed attempts to isolate Russia diplomatically and economically.

Meanwhile, Ukraine has launched a provocative incursion into Russia's Kursk region, injuring dozens of civilians and killing at least 12. The Biden White House has denied any role in planning Kiev's attack. But reporting earlier this year identified the 10-year role of the US Central Intelligence Agency in Ukraine, during which the country's intelligence agencies and increasingly the Ukrainian government itself has become a wholly owned subsidiary of the United States.

"If anybody believes that I want to sell you some beach property in Arizona," said Tremblay of the Biden administration's denial of any role in Ukraine's attack. "Anything that comes out from the United States and the West has to be viewed as 180 degrees opposite of what the truth is… [Ukraine] could not have done it without United States reconnaissance, satellite imagery, intelligence on the ground. Ukraine simply does not have the capability to do this."

"So when I read that I just said, 'B.S.' The United States is the one that's calling all the shots in Ukraine," he continued. "And one of the reasons for that is [that] Ukraine basically doesn't have much left. Ukraine basically is just, it's like they're swaying in the wind left and right, there's no sense to what they're trying to do."

"I think that the United States orchestrated this as another attempt to provoke Russia by crossing a really red line, now attacking inside the Russian Federation. Another dangerous escalation. Everybody's waiting to see now what President Putin is going to do."

Deputy Chairman of Russia's Security Council Dmitry Medvedev responded angrily to the assault, saying the Russian military would be forced to move onward to Kiev and Odessa in response, but Tremblay noted President Putin's carefulness and restraint in prosecuting the military operation so far.

"Both these voices must be listened to," Tremblay said, noting Putin and Medvedev's differing perspectives on the conflict. "[But] Putin said the opportunity to dialogue and to negotiate with Kiev is over. This will now be settled on the battlefield."

"Absolutely complete bull feces, cockamamie cover-up story" by German authorities - analyst

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International relations and security analyst Mark Sleboda joined Sputnik's The Final Countdown program to discuss the latest developments in the Western proxy war on Russia as well as the

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sabotage of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline as German prosecutors claim to have identified a suspect for the crime.

“The German news that broke is pretty interesting,” said Sleboda, referring to the German government’s release of the name of a supposed suspect behind the sabotage of the Russo-German Nord Stream Pipeline in 2022.

The German government has claimed an amateur Ukrainian scuba diver by the name of “Volodymyr Z” is responsible for the explosion that blew up the Nord Stream 2 pipeline that formerly transported cheap natural gas from Russia to Europe.

“This Volodymyr Z – according to German privacy laws, the full name is not released… this is the absolutely complete bull feces, cockamamie cover-up story that the United States and Germany have centered on,” the analyst emphasized.

“They can’t admit that the United States blew up the Nord Stream pipelines because that would mean the end of NATO,” Sleboda added. “It would be a member of NATO attacking a member of NATO. They can’t admit that. So they came up with this.”

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Ukraine’s attack on Kursk region "further cementing support for the special military operation" - analyst

Russian citizens remain united behind Russia's special military operation, with Ukraine’s attempt to mount an incursion onto the Kursk region of Russia only strengthening their patriotic resolve.

“It's just further cementing support for the [special military operation],” noted analyst Mark Sleboda. “By all domestic accounts the number of young men signing up as volunteer contract soldiers for the SMO – which was already around 1,000 a day, at least at the last word by the minister of defense – has jumped again because people feel that Russia has been attacked and Russia has been insulted.”

NATO's support for Kiev's terrorism has sparked righteous anger among Russians, the analyst highlighted, who are striving to once again defend their land from European weapons and soldiers trying to capture Russian soil.

“The statements in the press make it quite clear that the US and Europe were at some level completely behind this,” Sleboda concluded. “So that increases Russian society's anger and desire for getting some payback.”

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Zombie ‘Russiagate’ conspiracy persists as US stokes fear, hatred of Moscow

“Russiagate continues to survive like a science fiction monster, resilient to bullets,” writes former CIA analyst Ray McGovern in a piece on Consortium News, noting the longevity and usefulness of the conspiracy in continuing to stoke hostility towards Moscow among the American public.

The notion that Russia interfered in the 2016 US presidential election or played a role in hacking leaked Democratic Party emails has persisted even after sworn testimony from the cyber security firm CrowdStrike confirmed the lack of evidence for the claim.

“The mainstream media has been incredibly adept at suppressing all this stuff,” McGovern noted on Sputnik’s The Critical Hour program. “No matter what we write in Consortium News or other outlets – it's on antiwar .com now, too – or however much you and I share this information, we're fighting an uphill battle.”

“Why is this important? Just to remind folks who might not reflect on this, Russia has been demonized to the point where Donald Trump has been blamed on the Russians – think what you will of that,” he continued.

“And all kinds of other things have been blamed on the Russians to the point where if these not very emotionally stable people in the White House decide to go after the Russians in Ukraine or even get involved against the Russians in Syria or elsewhere in the Middle East, most of the American people say, ‘oh yeah, those damn Russians, didn't they give us Donald Trump?’”

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Ukraine Stocks of Certain Ammunition ‘Critically Low’ - Pentagon Watchdog

WASHINGTON, August 15 (Sputnik) – Ukraine amid the conflict with Russia has run "critically low" on certain types of ammunition that are no longer produced or sourced by the United States, the Department of Defense Office of the Inspector General (OIG) said in a new quarterly report published on Thursday.

"The Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF) continued to ask for donations of munitions, while certain types of ammunition that are no longer produced or sourced by the United States have run critically low," the report said.

OIG believes that the current level of ammunition donations to Ukraine is sufficient for near-term objectives only and may not be enough to support its mid-term offensive goals, the report added.

Moreover, the level of supply of artillery systems will not allow Ukraine to reconstitute and meet its force generation requirements, according to the report.

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Ukrainian forces suffering heavy attrition rates, lack sufficient capacity and munitions to overcome Russia's air and ground advantages - Pentagon IG

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Israel's EL AL Airlines to Purchase Up to 31 Boeing 737 MAX Jets - Statement

WASHINGTON, August 15 (Sputnik) – Israel's national air carrier EL AL Israel Airlines will purchase up to 31 Boeing 737 MAX jets as part of a broader strategy to modernize its fleet, Boeing said in a press release on Thursday.

"Boeing [NYSE: BA] and EL AL Israel Airlines today confirmed the Israeli flag carrier finalized an agreement for up to 31 737 MAX jets, supporting the airline's plans to renew its fleet of Next-Generation 737 airplanes," the release said.

This is the largest deal in EL AL's 76-year history and will allow the airline to modernize and grow its single-aisle fleet, the release added.

"This is a significant milestone for EL AL, which will allow us to offer our customers the most advanced service and technology experience in the industry," CEO of EL AL Israel Airlines Dina Ben-Tal Ganancia said in the release.

Earlier this year, EL AL purchased three 787-9 airplanes with options for six more as the airline further expands its 787 Dreamliner fleet. The company will take delivery of a new 787-9 in 2024 and plans to receive two more new 787-9s on lease in the coming years, according to the statement.

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Harris Spends 10 Times as Much as Trump on Digital Ads - Reports

WASHINGTON, August 15 (Sputnik) - US Vice President and Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris has spent 10 times more on digital advertising than her Republican rival Donald Trump, the Financial Times reported on Thursday.

Since July 21, when incumbent US President Joe Biden dropped put of the race, Harris has spent $57 million on ads on Google and Meta (banned in Russia for extremism), the report said. In comparison, Trump, spent only $5.6 million, according to the report.

The active digital advertising reflects Harris' tactics to reach voters and small-dollar donors who usually take information from the internet, the report said.

Harris' digital ad blitz is part of the $139 million spent on the tech platforms by the Biden-Harris campaign since the beginning of the year, compared with $22.5 million from Trump and his supporters, it added.

Trump's lower spending on digital platforms reflected his decision to rely more on traditional

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ways to collect money, including television ads and in-person meetings, the report said, citing digital strategists.

The report also highlighted that women make up an estimated 65% of impressions on Harris' accounts, compared with 46% of Trump's Meta audience.

The analysis showed that Harris has spent almost twice as much as Trump - $56 million against $30 million - on digital streaming platforms such as Netflix, Hulu, and Peacock, as well as connected TVs such as Roku and Samsung TV.

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Iran Still Intends to Retaliate Against Israel for Haniyeh Assassination – White House

WASHINGTON, August 15 (Sputnik) – The White House said Thursday that its intelligence indicates that Iran still intends to retaliate against Israel for its assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran last month, CNN reported.

"Information that we have tells us that Iran has not moved off its threat to launch some kind of an attack on Israel, perhaps even using their proxies as well, like Hezbollah or the Houthis. So our assumption is that their thinking is still in that vein that they're going to do something, and it could happen in coming days, it could come nearly at any time now," White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby told CNN.

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US Has Information That Iran Has Not Moved Off Its Threat to Launch Attack on Israel - White House's Kirby

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RFK Jr. Willing to Work With Both Trump, Harris on Unity Government - Campaign

WASHINGTON, August 15 (Sputnik) - Independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is willing to work with Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump and Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris to discuss the possibility of a unity government, a Kennedy campaign spokesperson told Sputnik.

Earlier, the Washington Post reported that Kennedy sought a meeting with Harris last week to discuss the possibility of serving in a key role in her administration if she wins the presidential election in November.

"Mr. Kennedy is willing to meet with leaders of both parties to discuss the possibility of a unity government," the spokesperson said on Wednesday when asked about his attempt to meet with Harris.

Kennedy reportedly had a conversation with Trump last month about the possibility of serving in

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his administration as well.

An endorsement from Kennedy could help give either Trump or Harris a slight advantage in the presidential race.

An aggregation of national polls on RealClearPolitics shows that Harris leads Trump 47.9% to 47% as of Wednesday evening.

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Biden, National Security Team Discuss Latest Mideast Developments - White House

WASHINGTON, August 15 (Sputnik) - The White House said in a statement that President Joe Biden received an update from his national security team this evening on the latest efforts to de-escalate tensions in the Middle East.

"President Biden and Vice President Harris were briefed in the White House Situation Room by their national security team on developments in the Middle East," the White House said on Wednesday. "They were updated on US military efforts to support the defense of Israel."

Biden was also briefed on continued diplomatic efforts to de-escalate regional tensions and to achieve a Gaza ceasefire deal, according to the White House.

The White House did not provide any further details about US efforts to ease tensions in the Middle East.

Last week, Egypt, Qatar, and the United States called on Israel and Hamas to resume talks on the terms of a ceasefire on August 14-15. The three countries' leaders said they were ready to present a final proposal to reach a deal.

However, the Palestinian movement Hamas said earlier this week that it will not participate in the negotiations on a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip scheduled for August 15.

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Suspect, Arrest Warrant Announced in Trump Campaign Office Burglary - Sheriff

WASHINGTON, August 15 (Sputnik) - A suspect and arrest warrant have been announced in connection with a break-in at a Trump campaign office in Virginia, the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office said in a statement.

"The Loudoun County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) has secured a warrant for the arrest of Toby Shane Kessler, 39, of no fixed address, on the charge of Burglary in connection with the break in at the local office of Trump for President 2024 campaign in Ashburn, VA, on August 11, 2024," the statement said on Wednesday.

The burglarized office is being leased by the Trump campaign and also serves at the headquarters of the Virginia 10th District Republican Committee, the statement said.

The LCSO's investigation found that Kessler forced entry into the back door of the office, but it is unclear whether he stole anything, the statement said. The investigation is ongoing, the statement added.

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The LCSO is asking for the public's assistance to locate Kessler, who has a history of criminal behavior, according to the statement.

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Tim Walz Says Picked October 1 to Debate Republican Vice Presidential Candidate JD Vance

WASHINGTON, August 15 (Sputnik) - Democratic Vice-Presidential nominee Tim Walz said that he has picked October 1 for his CBS debate with Republican candidate JD Vance.

"See you on October 1, JD [Vance]," Walz said via X on Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, CBS posted on X that it had offered the candidates four dates to choose from: September 17, September 24, October 1 and October 8. The debate will take place in New York City.

However, it remains to be seen whether JD Vance will agree to debate Walz on October 1.

Vance said earlier in August that he wants to debate Walz because he believes it is important for candidates to engage directly with American voters.

Last week, former President Donald Trump said he agreed to debate Vice President Kamala Harris on September 10.

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Trump Says US Economy Will Not Be Able to Fully Recover Under Harris Administration

WASHINGTON, August 15 (Sputnik) - Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump said that the US economy will not be able to fully recover if his Democratic rival Kamala Harris becomes the next US president.

"With four more years of Harris, your finances will never recover," Trump said during a rally in Asheville, North Carolina, on Wednesday. "Our country will never recover."

Trump claimed he would be able to immediately boost the US economy if he wins in November.

Trump told his supporters that Americans' incomes will soar, savings will grow, and young people will be able to afford a home.

The Fed's Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) hiked rates 11 times between March 2022 and June 2023 to curb price growth pressured by trillions of dollars of government relief spending on the pandemic and disrupted supply chains.

However, US consumer prices grew 2.9% in the year to July, dipping below 3% the first time since the highs of the COVID-19 outbreak and inching toward the Federal Reserve's 2% inflation target.

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JD Vance Says US Should Prioritize Domestic Resources Over Global Policing

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) - Republican US Senator JD Vance said on Wednesday that the United States should focus on using its youth domestically rather than deploying them internationally, adding that the US is not the world's police force.

"We're going to stop sending our young people to faraway lands. We are not the policemen of the world. We need to use our young people here at home as the resources that they are and not send them all over the world," Vance said during a rally in Byron Center, Michigan.

Vance added that when leaders, like US Vice President Kamala Harris, involve the country in unnecessary conflicts, the younger generation ultimately shoulders the burden.

The US presidential election will take place on November 5. Former President Donald Trump has been officially nominated by the Republican Party for the post of head of state. Along with him, Ohio Senator J.D. Vance has been approved as a vice-presidential candidate. Minnesota Governor Tim Walz has become the vice presidential nominee on the Democratic ticket.

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SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, August 15 (Sputnik) –

KURSK ATTACK

* Russia is not considering calling a UN Security Council meeting on the situation in the Kursk region but Ukraine may do so because of the significant losses it has been incurring there, Russian Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy said on Wednesday,

* Russia has doubts about whether Ukraine's attack on the Kursk region presents "a lonely act of a madman" or was coordinated with the West, Polyanskiy said.

* The use of US weapons in the attack in Russia's Kursk region is an act of escalation that will have serious consequences, Polyanskiy said.

MIDDLE EAST

* Washington has never discussed with Baghdad the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq as part of bilateral talks on the future of the US-Iraqi military partnership, State Department deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel said on Wednesday.

* Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, Ali Bahreini, sent a letter of strong protest to UN officials, and cited the basis for recognizing the Israeli regime as a terrorist one, the Fars news agency reported.

* Ten people have been injured as a result of an Israeli airstrike on a moving car in the southern Lebanese town of Aabbassiyeh, the Lebanese health ministry said.

CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

* Russian Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov said on Wednesday that he had discussed the situation around the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi.

* The shelling of the ZNPP, using drones is an act of nuclear terrorism, which showed the

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essence of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's government, incited by the West to more and more criminal actions, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said

* An F-16 fighter jet has been spotted over the Kolomyya military airfield in Ukraine's Ivano-Frankivsk region, Sergey Lebedev, the coordinator of the pro-Russian underground network in Mykolaiv, told Sputnik.

* The Ukrainian armed forces lost up to 270 soldiers and 16 armored vehicles, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

* Ukraine has lost up to 690 personnel in the area of operations of Russia's Yug (South) group of forces in the past 24 hours, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

ARREST OF US CITIZEN IN RUSSIA

* A US citizen has been detained in Moscow on suspicion of using violence against a government official, the Moscow Investigative Committee told Sputnik on Wednesday.

* A Moscow district court has sentenced US citizen Joseph Tater to 15 days of administrative arrest in a minor hooliganism case, the court's press service told Sputnik.

* The United States is aware of reports of another US citizen arrested in Russia and is working on acquiring as much information as possible about the matter, including the possibility of consular access, State Department spokesperson Vedant Patel said.

MILITARY AIRCRAFT CRASH IN FRANCE

* Two Mirage military fighter jets crashed on Wednesday in the area of the eastern department of France, Meurthe-et-Moselle, L'Est Republicain newspaper reported.

* French authorities have found one of the pilots of the Mirage fighter jets that collided in France, and he is injured but conscious, L'Est Republicain newspaper reported, adding that three people were on board the jets.

* The plane crash in France's Meurthe-et-Moselle involves two Rafale jets, not Mirage ones, French Defense Minister Sebastien Lecornu said.

NORD STREAM

* A citizen of Ukraine suspected by German special services of involvement in the attack on the Nord Stream gas pipeline, left Poland for Ukraine in early July, a spokeswoman of the Office of the Prosecutor General of Poland, Anna Adamiak, said on Wednesday.

* Ines Peterson, spokesperson for the German Federal Prosecutor's Office told Ria Novosti that the office would not comment on whether it had contacted Moscow about the new data on the Nord Stream gas pipeline, nor would it comment on media reports about a new suspect in the case.

* The United States was not aware in advance of Germany’s decision to issue an arrest warrant for a Ukrainian suspect in the 2022 attack on Russia’s Nord Stream 2 pipeline, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said.

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Democratic Vice Presidential Nominee Walz Says Will See Republican Opponent Vance on October 1 for CBS Debate

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США не полицейские мира, им нужно перестать отправлять молодых на "глупые войны" – Вэнс

ВАШИНГТОН, 14 авг - РИА Новости. США нужно перестать играть в полицейских мира и отправлять своих молодых граждан участвовать в "глупых войнах", в среду заявил кандидат в вице-президенты США от республиканцев, сенатор Джей-Ди Вэнс.

"Мы собираемся прекратить отправлять нашу молодежь в далекие страны. Мы не полицейские мира. Нам необходимо использовать наших молодых людей в качестве ресурса здесь, дома, а не отправлять их по всему миру", - Вэнс заявил на предвыборном мероприятии.

Он обвинил своих конкурентов от демократов, что они отправляют людей воевать в "глупых войнах".

Ранее кандидат в вице-президенты неоднократно критиковал многомиллиардную американскую военную помощь Украине и призывал к переговорам с Россией.

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Google Says Iranian-Linked Cyber Threat Actor Targeting Israel, US Political Figures

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) - Google's Threat Analysis Group (TAG) said on Wednesday that a threat actor backed by the Iranian government has been targeting Israel and accounts linked to the 2024 US presidential election.

"Today Google's Threat Analysis Group is sharing insights on APT42, an Iranian government-backed threat actor, and their targeted phishing campaigns against Israel and Israeli targets. We are also confirming recent reports around APT42's targeting of accounts associated with the U.S. presidential election," TAG said in a statement.

APT42 is associated with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the statement said. The group consistently targets high-profile users in Israel and the United States, including current and former government officials, political campaigns, diplomats and think tanks, the statement said.

The US and Israel accounted for approximately 60% of APT42's known geographic targeting, the statement said.

The group's activities demonstrate their "aggressive, multi-pronged" effort to quickly change its operational focus in support of Iran's political and military priorities, the statement said.

In May and June, APT42 targets included personal email accounts of roughly a dozen people affiliated with US President Joe Biden and former US President Donald Trump, the statement said. The targets included current and former US government officials and people associated with the Biden and Trump campaigns, the statement said.

TAG informed the campaigns of the heightened malicious activity, the statement said. TAG continues to observe unsuccessful attempts by APT42 to compromise accounts linked to Biden,

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Trump and US Vice President Kamala Harris, the statement said.

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Biden Calls Kishida's Leadership 'Historic' After Prime Minister's Decision to Step Down

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden in a farewell statement on Wednesday called the leadership of Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida historic and noted his role in strengthening the trilateral alliance between the United States, Japan, and South Korea.

Earlier on Wednesday, Kishida confirmed that he would not run for reelection as the leader of the country's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in September.

"Prime Minister Kishida Fumio's leadership has been nothing short of historic," the statement said. "[T]ogether with President Yoon of the Republic of Korea, [he] has taken historic steps to usher in a new era of U.S.-ROK-Japan trilateral cooperation, strengthening our collective capacity to take on common challenges."

In his statement, Biden praised Kishida for working side-by-side with the United States to allegedly advance a free and open Indo-Pacific and take the US-Japan alliance to new heights.

In September, elections will be held to choose a new head of the ruling LDP, currently chaired by Kishida, whose approval rating has remained at a record low for several months. The winner will become the country's next prime minister.

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Vance Says Trump Made Remarks About Twitter Employees, Not Michigan Auto Workers

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) - US Senator JD Vance said on Wednesday that former President Donald Trump's comments during an interview with entrepreneur Elon Musk were directed at Twitter employees rather than at Michigan auto workers.

"Donald Trump was not talking about firing Michigan auto workers. He was talking about firing the employees of Twitter who use their power to censor American citizens, those people ought to be fired," Vance said during a rally in Michigan.

Vance's remarks were in response to a reporter's question about his reaction to the backlash Trump faced after his interview with Musk.

On Tuesday, the United Auto Workers (UAW) filed federal labor charges against Trump and Musk, accusing them of illegal attempts to threaten and intimidate workers involved in protected concerted activities, including strikes.

Earlier this week, Trump and Musk discussed during the interview on the Spaces platform the topic of firing striking workers.

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State Department Says Hunter Biden's Outreach to US Embassy for Burisma Normal Practice

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) - US State Department deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel said on Wednesday that Hunter Biden's outreach to the US Embassy in Italy on behalf of Burisma was a normal practice.

"Individuals from all over the world and from varying sectors seek counsel, advice, information from our ambassadors and principal officers at our embassies and consulates around the world," Patel said during a press briefing.

The State Department makes every effort to evaluate those requests on their merits and acts appropriately in response to each one, Patel added.

The New York Times, citing newly-revealed State Department documents, reported that Biden, while serving as a board member of Burisma, sought help from the US government to secure an energy contract in Italy.

Biden had written to then-US ambassador to Rome John Phillips in 2016 on behalf of the Ukrainian energy firm seeking help with the deal.

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Oil Price Back Below $80 as US Crude Stocks End 6-Week Draw

NEW YORK, August 14 (Sputnik) - The leading benchmarks for crude finished Wednesday's trading beneath the key $80-per-barrel level after data showing an end to a two-month consumption streak for oil in the United States.

The US Energy Information Administration reported that crude stockpiles rose 1.357 million barrels during the week ended August 9. Prior to that, draws since early July took out some 30 million barrels from crude inventories as US refiners doubled down on production of gasoline, diesel and airplane fuel, among others, to meet projected summer demand for energy.

Last week's stockpile build in US crude came on the backdrop of easing tensions since the start of this week in the oil-rich Middle East. Until Friday, the region had seen escalation in threats of Iranian attacks on Israel.

The weaker US refiner demand and shifting political ground in the Middle East, combined, drove crude prices lower for a second straight day.

"Overall, my bias is negative," Scott Shelton, a broker in crude oil futures at ICAP in Durham, North Carolina, said of his near-term forecast for oil prices.

In Wednesday's New York trading, West Texas Intermediate (WTI), the benchmark for US crude, descended further into the $70-per-barrel territory it had returned to on Tuesday and which it had previously occupied since July 18.

WTI settled down $1.37, or 1.8%, at $76.98 a barrel, adding to Tuesday's 2.1% decline. Year-to-date, the US crude benchmark is up just around 5%, after rallying 18% earlier.

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UK-origin Brent crude, a global indicator for oil, joined WTI in the $70 price zone on Wednesday, returning where it had been since August 1, save for a two-day respite this week.

Brent finished its New York session down 93 cents, or 1.2%, after Tuesday's 2% slide. Year-to-date, it is up less than 2%, after rallying nearly 20% earlier.

August has been a volatile month for the oil trade. Global markets initially tanked on fears of a US recession and potential contagion effects around the world, sending WTI to a six-month low of $71.69, while Brent set a new 2024 bottom of $76.16.

Oil recovered some of its losses late last week as the odds increased for the Federal Reserve to cut interest rates in September for the first time since 2020. An escalation in Middle East tensions also aided the rebound.

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White House Says Biden Was Not Aware Hunter Sought State Dept Help on Behalf of Burisma

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden was not aware that his son Hunter sought the State Department's help to secure a potential energy project in Italy for Ukrainian firm Burisma, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said on Wednesday.

"The President has never done business with his son, and he was not aware of this," Jean-Pierre told reporters.

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US Not Aware of German Nord Stream Arrest Warrant, Condemns Act of Sabotage - White House

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) - The United States was not aware in advance of Germany's decision to issue an arrest warrant for a Ukrainian suspect in the 2022 attack on Russia's Nord Stream 2 pipeline, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Wednesday.

"We did not know about it or were in support of it. It's not something that we were aware of," Jean-Pierre said during a press briefing, when asked about the matter.

The United States condemns the apparent act of sabotage against Nord Stream 2, Jean-Pierre added.

German prosecutors reportedly issued an arrest warrant to Poland for a suspect tied to the Nord Stream 2 attack, identified as Volodymyr Z.

However, the German Federal Prosecutor's Office told Sputnik that it will not comment on whether they have contacted Russia about the development.

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white house says was not aware that germany would issue arrest warrant for ukrainian nord stream 2 suspect

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NASA Not Looking at Crew-8 to Bring Back 2 Stranded Astronauts - ISS Program Manager

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) - NASA is not considering the Crew-8 mission as an option to bring back astronauts Barry Gilmore and Sunita Williams, the stranded Boeing Starliner crew at the International Space Station (ISS), NASA International Space Station Program Manager Joel Montalbano said on Wednesday.

"At this time, we are not looking at Crew 8," Montalbano said when asked if any assessment was being made on whether to bring back the astronauts on the Crew-8 mission.

Gilmore and Williams were scheduled to stay on the ISS for two weeks and have now been there for more than two months, with another seven month stay until next February now looking possible.

NASA and Boeing engineers are still working on the problem that five of the 28 thrusters of the Starliner that carried them to the ISS in June failed during the mission and five helium leaks through degraded seals were also detected.

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US Defense Contractor Charged for Unlawful Removal of Classified Records - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) - The United States has charged a US defense contractor, who is a dual US and Turkish citizen, for allegedly removing classified documents without authorization, the US Department of Justice said on Wednesday.

"A civilian electrical engineer for the Department of Defense appeared in federal court today on a charge of unauthorized removal and retention of classified material," the Department of Defense said in a press release.

Gokhan Gun, 50, of Virginia, possessed a top secret security clearance through his employment with access to Sensitive Compartmented Information (SCI) and had received training on the proper handling and storage of classified information, the release said.

The release said, citing court documents, that on multiple occasions beginning at least in May 2024, Gun allegedly printed documents, some of which were marked classified, and took them without authorization. In August, the release said, federal investigators observed Gun exiting his workplace with a bag full of hard copy documents before entering two different residences owned by Gun in Virginia.

FBI agents executed search warrants for Gun's two residences along with his vehicle and media storage devices, the release said, adding that they found multiple documents with visible

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classification markings, including pages bearing Top Secret and SCI classification markings.
If convicted, Gun faces a maximum penalty of five years in prison, according to the release.

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State Dept. Still Unable to Confirm Whether US Weapons Used in Kursk Offensive - Spokesman

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) - US State Department deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel on Wednesday was unable to confirm whether US-supplied weapons were used in Ukraine's Kursk offensive.
"I will let our Ukrainian partners speak to their own military operations," Patel said during a press briefing.
Patel added that the United States has not been engaged or involved in any of the planning or preparation of Ukraine's offensive in the Kursk region.
The White House and Pentagon over the last several days have also repeatedly stated that the United States continues to have discussions with Ukraine about its military operation in the Kursk region but have not been able to provide further information.
Russian Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy told reporters earlier that the use of US weapons in the attack in Russia's Kursk region is an act of escalation that will have serious consequences.
UN spokesman Farhan Haq said last week that the Ukrainian military's attack on Russia's Kursk Region increased the risk of conflict escalation.

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Biden Jokes He Is 'Looking for a Job'

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden jokingly said that he is "looking for a job" as he attended a White House event with digital creators and industry professionals on Wednesday.
"I invited you to the White House because I'm looking for a job," Biden said during the White House Creator Economy Conference.
The White House was holding its inaugural Creator Economy Conference earlier in the day, gathering digital creators and industry professionals to discuss critical issues such as privacy, fair compensation, artificial intelligence, and mental health.
The event aimed to facilitate dialogue between industry leaders and administration officials, offering creators a platform to voice their concerns and contribute insights to inform future policy decisions, the White House said in a statement.
In July, Biden announced he was withdrawing from the 2024 election in the best interest of the

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Democratic Party and the United States.

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US Does Not Consider Hamas to Be 'Honest Broker' in Ceasefire Talks - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) - The United States does not consider the Palestinian movement Hamas to be an honest broker in the stalled ceasefire talks, US State Department deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel said on Wednesday.

"The United States doesn't think Hamas is an honest broker," Patel said during a press briefing.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Associated Press reported that Hamas Political Bureau member Osama Hamdan said in an interview that the United States is no longer seen as a reliable negotiator capable of bringing about a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

Hamas representative in Lebanon Ahmed Abdel Hadi told Sputnik on Tuesday that the Palestinian movement will not participate in the negotiations on a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip scheduled for August 15.

Last week, Egypt, Qatar and the United States called on Israel and Hamas to resume talks on the terms of a ceasefire on August 14-15. The three countries' leaders said they were ready to present a final proposal to reach a deal.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken postponed his planned trip to the region amid the uncertain situation in the region and Iranian plans to attack Israel.

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Russia Not Considering Calling UN Security Council Meeting on Kursk Attack - Envoy

UNITED NATIONS, August 14 (Sputnik) - Russia is not considering calling a UN Security Council meeting on the situation in the Kursk region but Ukraine may do so because of the significant losses it has been incurring there, Russian Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy said on Wednesday,

"Not at this point," Polyanskiy said in reference to the possibility Russia may call a UN Security Council meeting. "I think we gave our assessment. Frankly, it is up to Ukraine maybe for this meeting because of the losses they are having because of this absolutely reckless and mad operation."

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US 'at No Point' Discussed Withdrawal of Troops From Iraq – State Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) – Washington has never discussed with Baghdad the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq as part of bilateral talks on the future of the US-Iraqi military

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partnership, State Department deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel said on Wednesday.
"We have held discussions with the Government of Iraq on the future of Operation Inherent Resolve since last year. This includes when Prime Minister [Mohammed Shia' Al] Sudani met with President [Joe] Biden here in [Washington] DC in April, and at no point did we discuss the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq," Patel said during a press briefing.

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Russia Doubts If Kursk Attack 'Act of Lone Madman' or Coordinated With West - Envoy to UN

UNITED NATIONS, August 14 (Sputnik) – Russia has doubts about whether Ukraine's attack on the Kursk region presents "a lonely act of a madman" or was coordinated with the West, Russian Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy said on Wednesday.
"We have some doubts so far, and the question is not answered if this is a lonely act of a madman or if this act of a madman had been coordinated with West," Polyanskiy told reporters.
Moscow is receiving "conflicting" signals, and there are speculations about the involvement of the UK intelligence and the support from the US, he added.
"We do not want to speculate," Polyanskiy said. "We do not have any assessment of whether they were involved or not at this stage."

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state department says US at no point during its talks with iraqi government over past year discussed withdrawal of its forces from iraq

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US Aware of Another American Citizen Arrested in Russia - State Department

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) - The United States is aware of reports of another US citizen arrested in Russia and is working on acquiring as much information as possible about the matter, including the possibility of consular access, State Department spokesperson Vedant Patel said on Wednesday.
"We are aware of these reports of another American citizen being arrested in Russia, and we're looking to get as much information as we can, working to ascertain the consular situation and see if consular access is available," Patel said during a press briefing.
Earlier in the day, a Moscow district court sentenced US citizen Joseph Tater to 15 days of jail for petty hooliganism, the court's press service told Sputnik.
Tater was detained on August 12 for hooliganism and subsequently assaulted a police officer.

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Use of US Weapons in Kursk 'Act of Escalation' to Incur Serious Consequences - Polyanskiy

UNITED NATIONS, August 14 (Sputnik) - The use of US weapons in the attack in Russia's Kursk region is an act of escalation that will have serious consequences, Russian Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Dmitry Polyanskiy said on Wednesday.
"Or course, the use of US weapons in Kursk and in Ukraine or anywhere else for us is an act of escalation and it will have serious consequences," Polyanskiy said.

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US Sentences Russian Citizen Kavzharadze to 40 Months in Prison for Fraud - Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) - The US Justice Department said on Wednesday that Russian citizen Georgy Kavzharadze was sentenced to 40 months in prison after pleading guilty to wire and bank fraud charges.
"Georgy Kavzharadze, 27, of Moscow, Russia, was sentenced today to 40 months in prison for being a prolific vendor of stolen financial information, login credentials, and other personally identifying information (PII) on a criminal internet marketplace called Slilpp," the Justice Department said in a statement.
Kavzharadze listed more than 626,100 stolen login credentials for sale on Slilpp and sold more than 297,300 of them on the illegal marketplace, according to court documents.
In February, Kavzharadze pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit bank fraud and wire fraud. The court also ordered Kavzharadze to pay $1,233,521.47 in restitution.

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US Sentences Russian Citizen Georgy Kavzharadze to 40 Months in Prison on Charges of Bank Fraud, Wire Fraud - Justice Dept.

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use of us weapons in kursk an act of escalation, it will have consequences - polyanskiy

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Hamas Official Says US No Longer Seen as Negotiator Capable of Bringing About Ceasefire

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) - Hamas Political Bureau member Osama Hamdan said in an interview with the Associated Press that the United States is no longer seen as a reliable negotiator capable of bringing about a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

Hamden said Hamas does not see Israel engaging in good faith in the ceasefire negotiations and does not believe the Biden administration can pressure Israeli Prime MInister Benjamin Netanyahu's war cabinet to ink a deal.

Hamas would only participate in Thursday's talks if negotiators were to discuss Israel's peace deal that US President Joe Biden announced in May without any new additions, he said.

"We have informed the mediators that … any meeting should be based on talking about implementation mechanisms and setting deadlines rather than negotiating something new," the outlet quoted Hamden as saying. "Otherwise, Hamas finds no reason to participate."

On Tuesday, Hamas representative in Lebanon Ahmed Abdel Hadi told Sputnik that the Palestinian movement will not participate in the negotiations on a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip scheduled for August 15.

Last week, Egypt, Qatar and the United States called on Israel and Hamas to resume talks on the terms of a ceasefire on August 14-15. The three countries' leaders said they were ready to present a final proposal to reach a deal.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken postponed his planned trip to the region amid the uncertain situation in the region and Iranian plans to attack Israel.

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Biden Calls on Syria to Release US Journalist Austin Tice – Statement

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden called on the Syrian government to release American freelance journalist Austin Tice on the twelfth anniversary of his alleged imprisonment, the White House said in a statement on Wednesday.

"This week marks 12 long, terrible years since American Austin Tice was abducted in Syria. We have repeatedly pressed the government of Syria to work with us so that we can, at last, bring Austin home. Today, I once again call for his immediate release," the statement said.

Tice, 43, a Marine veteran, disappeared in Syria in August 2012 while reporting on the situation in the country amid the nascent standoff between rebels and Syrian authorities. He is believed to be imprisoned to this day.

In 2018, former President Donald Trump's special envoy for hostage affairs Robert O'Brien asked Russia to exert pressure on Syria to release the journalist. However, Damascus reportedly responded that it was unaware of Tice's whereabouts.

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US House Oversight Panel Says Asking Google for Information on Trump Shooting Results

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) - The US House Oversight Committee said on Wednesday that it is requesting information from Google and Meta (banned in Russia) as part of an investigation into whether the companies provided inaccurate information about the assassination attempt against former US President Donald Trump.

"House Committee on Oversight and Accountability Chairman James Comer (R-Ky.) is launching an investigation following recent concerning reports indicating Meta's AI [artificial intelligence] assistant and Google Search's Autocomplete function generated inaccurate or nongermane information related to the assassination attempt of President Donald Trump," the panel said in a statement.

Comer sent a letter to Google CEO Sundar Pichai requesting information about how Google designs its search and autocomplete features.

Google users reported that autocompleted search prompts related to the Trump shooting produced results related to other historical assassination attempts but omitted suggestions related to the assassination attempt against Trump, the statement said.

Comer also sent a letter to Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg requesting information about how Meta's AI chatbot is designed, reviewed, managed and updated.

Meta's AI assistant claimed that the assassination attempt against Trump was a fictional event, the statement said.

The Oversight Committee has long been concerned with how large technology companies leverage their businesses to influence public opinion, especially against the backdrop of an "alarming pattern" of speech suppression and censorship peddled through technology and social media companies, the letter said.

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US-Iranian National Arrested for Violating Sanctions on Aircraft Components - Statement

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) - US and Iranian national Jeffrey Chance Nader has been arrested for violating economic sanctions and other federal laws by procuring US-manufactured aircraft components, the Justice Department announced on Wednesday.

"US-Iranian national Jeffrey Chance Nader, 66, of Arcadia, California, was arrested on an indictment charging him with crimes related to the procurement of US-manufactured aircraft components, including components used on military aircraft, in violation of US economic sanctions and other federal laws," the Justice Department said in a statement.

Nader and others allegedly conspired to purchase and export aircraft components from the United States to Iran, including parts for military aircraft, beginning in 2023, the statement said.

The Justice Department alleges that Nader coordinated the purchases with business associates in Iran and misrepresented himself to US suppliers as the end-user of the items, the statement said.

"Once the aircraft components were obtained, Nader attempted to export the items on multiple separate occasions. The items were then transshipped to the ultimate customer in Iran. None of

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the transactions discussed in the indictment were successfully exported; they were detained on export by a Special Agent with the Department of Commerce," the statement added.

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Biden, White House Team Tracking Tropical Storm Ernesto - Spokesperson

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden and his advisers are tracking tropical storm Ernesto and have contacted the local authorities to make necessary preparations, White House spokesperson Jeremy Edwards said on Wednesday.

"The President and his team are tracking Tropical Storm Ernesto, which passed the US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico overnight and is now 125 miles north of Puerto Rico, and is forecast to strengthen to a hurricane today," Edwards said in a statement.

Biden administration officials are in touch with their territory and local counterparts in Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands, he said.

Edwards pointed out that Biden approved Puerto Rico's emergency declaration request, unlocking additional federal assistance.

"A FEMA distribution center located in Caguas, Puerto Rico is stocked with resources and ready to mobilize the resources as needed, and additional supplies are pre-staged on the US Virgin Islands," Edwards added.

The US National Hurricane Center said earlier on Wednesday that Tropical Storm Ernesto caused flooding and heavy rains across Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands.

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US Consumer Prices Below 3% First Time Since Pandemic Highs, Reaching for Fed's 2% Target

(Adds details, comment and context in paras 5-14)

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) - US consumer prices grew 2.9% in the year to July, dipping below 3% the first time since the highs of the COVID-19 outbreak and inching toward the Federal Reserve's 2% target.

Forecasters on Wall Street had widely expected the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers, simply known as CPI, to grow 3% per annum last month, unchanged from June.

The last time the CPI was below 3% was in April 2021, when it grew at 2.6% per year. It reached a four-decade high of 9.1% in June 2022 from runaway inflation triggered by the pandemic.

The closer the CPI gets to the Fed's 2%-per-annum target, the higher the chance of the central bank cutting interest rates in September, in what would be the first such reduction since the end of the COVID outbreak.

The Fed's Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) hiked rates 11 times between March 2022 and June 2023 to curb price growth pressured by trillions of dollars of government relief

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spending on the pandemic and breakdown in supply chains. The FOMC's next rate review is on September 18.

"On the face of it, it looks like a good report in the case for rate cuts, with the numbers being broadly as expected, with the headline year-on-year [number] lower than expected," analysts at FJElite said, referring to the July CPI report released by the Labor Department.

According to a reading published on Wednesday of money market bets for a Fed rate cut in September, there was a 56.5% chance for a 25 basis-point cut and 43.5% chance for a 50 basis-point cut.

The last time the Fed did a cut was in March 2020, when it instituted a 100 basis-point, or full percentage point, reduction to bring US rates to an all-time low of between zero and 0.25% as the economy began to grapple with the COVID outbreak.

Following that, the Fed hiked rates by 525 basis, or a 5.25 percentage points, over a 15-month stretch to bring rates to a two-decade high of between 5.25% and 5.5%.

Raphael Bostic, president of the Atlanta division of the Fed, said Tuesday the United States was on track for a rate cut — though the timing was still uncertain.

"I am willing to wait for the first rate cut but it is coming," said Bostic, who would be one of the decision makers at the FOMC's September review. "We are at an inflection point where inflation is getting close to target." He added that recent indicators on inflation have given him "more confidence that we can get back to 2%" though the Fed wishes "to see a little more [encouraging] data."

Prior to the pandemic, the Fed had a different problem: Getting inflation to grow. Price growth remained below the central bank's 2% target for a decade, limiting economic potential, as consumers were more frugal with their money amid uneventful job and wage gains.

The COVID outbreak changed all that, as many Americans suddenly saw more disposable cash from the trillions of relief dollars pumped into the economy by the government. And while some 20 million jobs were initially lost to the pandemic, they all came back within months, with the labor market adding millions more to create the best employment situation in the United States since the 1960s.

Now, with growth in jobs and consumer spending slowing and unemployment hitting the highest since December 2021, the Fed might be forced into a rate pivot by September.

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US Believes Israel-Hezbollah Diplomatic Resolution 'Achievable' - Hochstein

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) - US Special Envoy Amos Hochstein said on Wednesday during a visit to Lebanon that the United States still believes it is possible to achieve a diplomatic resolution between Israel and Hezbollah.

"We continue to believe that a diplomatic resolution is achievable, because we continue to believe that no one truly wants a full-scale war between Lebanon and Israel, especially not the Lebanese people and the Israeli people," Hochstein said a press briefing.

Regarding a ceasefire and hostage release agreement between Israel and the Palestinian

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movement Hamas, Hochstein said “there is no more time to waste and there's no more valid excuses from any party for any further delay.”

Hochstein added that a deal would “help enable a diplomatic resolution here in Lebanon, and that would prevent an outbreak of a wider war.”

The region is facing a heightened threat of further escalation toward a full-scale war after Israel carried out at the end of July dual assassinations of Hezbollah and Hamas leaders in Beirut and Tehran, respectively. Iran and Hezbollah are expected to launch retaliatory attacks on Israel.

Hochstein’s visit to Lebanon comes as part of a United States show of renewed talks.

On Tuesday, US Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter the Islamic State Brett McGurk visited Egypt. However, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken delayed a trip to the Middle East this week that had stops planned in Egypt, Israel and Qatar.

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Two-Thirds of US Voters Consider Situation in Middle East ‘Major Crisis’ - Poll

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) - Two-thirds of likely voters in the United States consider the situation in the Middle East a major crisis, according to a Rasmussen Reports poll released Wednesday.

Eighty-nine percent (89%) of respondents consider the situation a crisis, including 66% who consider it a major crisis, the poll report said.

Just 6% of respondents do not consider the situation a crisis at all, the poll report added.

US voters trust former president Donald Trump more than they trust US Vice President Kamala Harris to handle the situation, the poll report said.

The poll comes amid a conflict between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, as well as escalating tensions between Israel and Iran.

The poll surveyed 1,091 likely US voters on August 7-8 and 11 and has a margin of error of plus-or-minus three percentage points with a 95% confidence level.

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Harris Seeks to Distance Herself From Biden's Unpopularity on Economy - Reports

WASHINGTON, August 14 (Sputnik) – US Vice President and Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris plans to distance herself from incumbent White House occupant Joe Biden's unpopularity on the economy and other issues, Axios reported on Wednesday.

While Harris does not intend to disclose this plan publicly, she wants to break with Biden on economic issues and, first of all, on rising prices, the report said, citing the vice president’s advisers. This is part of a "highly choreographed" effort aimed at portraying Harris as a different kind of Democrat, according to the report.

Harris plans to share with voters how she would govern if she wins the November election during her first policy speech in North Carolina on Friday and in the address at the Democratic

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National Convention in Chicago next week, the report said.

In North Carolina, she is expected to share her plans to lower costs of health care, housing and food for the middle class.

Harris also wants to assure the public that she can change some of her positions and to show people that her White House experience helped change her mind, the report said.

"She can't break the glass ceiling with a weak foundation. She knows she has to be tough." Donna Brazile, a former Democratic National Committee chairwoman, said.

Harris leads her Republican challenger Donald Trump 47% to 44%, according to a Morning Consult poll published on Monday.

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